ARE INDIVIDUALS BETTER ABLE TO ACQUIRE AND RETAIN NEWS INFORMATION THAT IS CONSONANT OR DISSONANT WITH THEIRIDEOLOGICAL BELIEFS?

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We the undersigned, certify that we read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree Master of Arts.

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The purpose of this study was to find out whether people can better recall news information that is consonant or dissonant with their personal ideological beliefs. This study is a follow-on study to Joel Turner’s study (2007) that found that people’s perceived biases in the news are often triggered prior to the people reading the actual news information.

The scope of this research was to determine the type of news information people are better able to recall. The two main research questions this study was attempting to find answers for were:

RQ1: Are conservatives better able to recall news information that is consonant or dissonant with their ideological beliefs?

RQ2: Are liberals better able to recall news information that is consonant or dissonant with their ideological beliefs?

The methods used for the study included a literature review involving a variety of studies concerning news biases and a probability sampling survey. The survey included basic demographic questions as well as an area that required respondents to read news stories and then answer questions about the news stories that tested their recall abilities.

The study found that people are better able to recall news information that is dissonant to their personal ideological beliefs. Approximately 75 percent of the respondents recalled correctly the news information from the news source most associated with their opposite political views.
Acknowledgement

This study is a culmination of hundreds, maybe thousands, of hours of work from talented researchers, students, and professors whom I used as catalysts to conduct my own investigation. From the people who wrote the studies that I used to bring about an understanding of my own research, to the faculty and staff at Gonzaga University who lent me their valuable time and expertise to actually conduct a sound research study, I owe a heartfelt thank you. A more dedicated expression of gratitude is owed directly to my advisor and mentor, Nobuya Inagaki, without whom I would have been lost dwindling in my own inconsistent thought processes. I wish, also, to express a tremendous amount of appreciation for my professor in COML 680, and the head of Gonzaga’s Communication Department, Dr. John Caputo for his soft but assured guidance that helped lead me, and no doubt many others, through this sometimes unwieldy journey. I wish to thank my parents, Guy and Gayla, for they gave me the gift of life and are the ones who instilled in me such a great appetite for knowledge. Most of all, I not only thank but dedicate this study to my friend, companion, and partner in life, Kim. For Kim has been my confidant, my chariot, my wind to carry me through this endeavor. And, last but not least, I would not have had the energy or gumption to jump into such a venture if it were not for my three beautiful children, Tyler, Courtney, and Dylan. They are the reason I get up in the morning. It is because of all of these people, and for all of these reasons, that I am successful. Thank you all.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Bias in the media has been an ongoing debate and a popular field of research for many years. There are some that say the media is too liberal, yet others that claim the media is too conservative. Research is able to demonstrate that the perceived ideological bias in television news actually occurs because of cues external to the news stories themselves (Turner, 2007). Turner (2007) is able to show that story origination labels function as ideological signals to viewers to determine whether a news story is biased or not. Turner limited his study to two popular cable news networks, CNN and the Fox News Channel (FNC). He manipulated the labels of several news stories and showed that, irrespective of the substance of the news stories, attribution of those stories to CNN or FNC caused viewers to perceive the stories as ideologically biased. Turner (2007) also found that the perceived biases were “most pronounced among ideologues whose views were most at odds with those of the attributed network” (p. 441).

Whether biases are actually present in news stories doesn’t really matter (Turner, 2007). The fact that Americans believe that the news coming from CNN and FNC is biased is all that really matters for if the news loses its credibility, it loses its ability to convincingly set the public debate. It is the aim of this research to help further the understanding of perceived media bias in order for people to trust the news media.

Importance of the Study

The news media is a vital part of democratic societies for the fact that they inform citizens in order for the citizenry to play an effective role in that democracy (Raiz, 2010). Gamse (2011) believes that the rapid decline in newspaper circulation is directly related to the
perception of news biases found in many of America’s newspapers today. Understanding consumers’ abilities to acquire and retain ideologically consonant or dissonant news information will further Turner’s (2007) study by understanding how American citizens process news information. Understanding how Americans process news could be beneficial in countless ways, such as helping news organizations better avoid accusations of bias, gain trust, and improve their sales.

This research attempts to shed more light on why people perceive bias in the news, what the consequences are, and possible solutions to either stop the phenomenon or use it to the advantage of the news industry.

**Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this research is to find out whether people are better able to remember news information that is more ideologically in line with their beliefs or news that is completely opposite of their beliefs. The theory is that in addition to the agenda-setting function of the media, the readers or consumers of the news also play a part in setting the agenda. At least, they play a major role in setting their own agendas by bringing bias into the conversation. The media may tell the consumer what to think about, but a person’s bias tells that person how to think about that issue regardless of what the news media intended. Turner (2007) demonstrated that regardless of actual news content, consumers have the tendency to see who packaged the news and deducing the appropriate bias from the label rather than content. For example, topping the country’s newspapers recently is news on gun control. The idea of gun control isn’t new but received a lot of momentum after a gunman massacred more than 20 children at Sandy Hook Elementary in December 2012. While that news is tragic and was deservedly presented as the
number one story for a few weeks, the story is still above the fold in many of the country’s top newspapers. The topic quickly moved from the tragic personal stories of families suffering terrible loss to that of the political and divisive nature of gun control. Liberal and conservative individuals will approach this agenda-setting reality in vastly different ways.

Definitions of Terms Used

For this thesis, several terms used need to have their definitions clearly stated such as the few definitions listed here. Presented here are the traditional definitions of each term according to Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (2013) along with the definitions as the terms are used for this thesis.

1) **Bias**: (a) an inclination of temperament or outlook especially; a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment. (b) an instance of such prejudice. In this thesis, *bias* refers to the unreasoned judgment of news consumers in dealing with politically-charged news information.

2) **Liberal**: a political philosophy based on belief in progress, the essential goodness of the human race, and the autonomy of the individual and standing for the protection of civil liberties; such a philosophy considers government as a crucial instrument for amelioration of social inequities (as those involving race, gender, or class). In this thesis, the term liberal refers to a person who espouses and practices these views in their life as a political constituent.

3) **Conservative**: a political philosophy based on tradition and social stability, stressing established institutions, and preferring gradual development to abrupt change; such a philosophy calling for lower taxes, limited government regulation of business and
investing, a strong national defense, and individual financial responsibility for personal needs (as retirement income or health-care coverage). In this thesis, the term conservative refers to a person who espouses and practices these views in their life as a political constituent.

4) **Ideology**: the integrated assertions, theories, and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program. In this thesis, the term ideology is used according to this definition.

**Organization of Remaining Chapters**

Chapter 1 of this thesis introduces the topic of bias in the news, lists the problem biases in the news cause for the news consumer and the American citizen in general, and discusses the importance of the study.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature used to research the issues, lists the philosophical and ethical assumptions, offers the theoretical basis for conducting the study, and presents the research questions to guide the collection of data.

Chapter 3 provides the scope of the study and methodology used to complete the research, as well as discussing the validity and reliability of the methods used in addition to the ethical considerations the study presented.

Chapter 4 discusses the results of the survey and how they relate to the research questions. Chapter 5, summaries and conclusions, wraps up the research paper by discussing the limitations of the research, and offering recommendations for further study with regard to the perceptions of bias in the news and on the recall abilities of people.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Philosophical and Ethical Assumptions

When people consume news in America the assumption is that what is presented to them is an objective observation of events. The news consumer expects unbiased remarks that ultimately inform and entertain consumers—mostly inform. Consumers use this information to make decisions as they go about their life. For example, news consumers use the objectively presented information to make subjective decisions such as who to vote for. The news media is generally considered the watch dog of democracy in the United States (Raiz, 2010). To successfully exist as the watch dog of a democracy, journalists must provide that information in an objective manner being careful not to put their own wants, needs, and desires into the information. To be an objective journalist, is to be an ethical journalist (Merrill, 1985). Several research studies indicate that most Americans believe that bias exists in the news (Morris, 2007). Therefore, if one believes that the foundation for having a successful democracy is having a trusted source of information available to the people, and if one believes that most people think news in America is biased, that the news media is untrustworthy, then one must conclude that the people of America do not think they have a successful democracy.

For sure, to be an ethical journalist means far more than just presenting the news in an unbiased fashion. But Merrill (1985) found in a survey that most journalists do in fact believe that a journalist’s ethical standards are tied very closely with objectivity. Niven (1999) found that Americans consistently rate journalists as one of the most dishonest and unethical professions. Niven reveals that only three other professions rate worse than journalists—car salesmen,
insurance salesmen, and the advertising industry. Ninety percent of Americans believe members of the media enforce their own biases when covering politics (Niven, 1999).

**Theoretical Basis**

In addition to being the *watch dog* of democracy, the news media sets the agenda for what Americans are consuming for their daily news intake. McCombs and Shaw (1972) define the agenda-setting theory as being when the mass media, through the content of its news information and the placement of the news items, determines the importance of political issues for the public. The agenda-setting theory says that the news media tells consumers *what* to think about. Accepting that is true, one can assume when the news media injects a bias into their agenda, they are telling you *how* to think. In essence, when one perceives a bias in the news they are being told *what* to think about and *how* to think about it. But Lee (2005) found that the biases many consumers believe are sure to exist are actually only reflections of their own personal biases.

Lee’s (2005) research shows that conservatives see liberal biases and liberals see conservative biases present in the news media even though the news is presented in an objective manner. Further, Lee found that the more pronounced the person’s political ideology, the more pronounced the biases that are perceived. So, if a person brings their own biases into the news they are consuming aren’t they then helping to set their own agendas? The news media may still tell you *what* to think about, but your biases are determining *how* you think about that news event.

Turner (2007) conducted research concerning the catalyst of the biases people perceive. Research shows that the packaging that the news comes in ultimately determines whether or not
people perceive a bias (Turner, 2007). Research is able to demonstrate that the perceived ideological bias in the news media actually occurs because of cues external to the news stories themselves (Turner, 2007). Turner (2007) is able to show that story origination labels function as ideological signals to viewers to determine whether a news story is biased or not. Understanding whether people are better able to acquire and retain information presented to them that is consonant or dissonant to their own ideological beliefs will help further Turner’s (2007) research, as well as all news bias research, in that it will, hopefully, shed light on the impact the perceptions of bias have on how the American public processes politically charged news events.

The Literature

Bias in the media is a topic ripe with political implications. Political pundits have debated for many years as to the validity of the question of whether the news media is biased for or against certain political ideologies. Both liberals and conservatives accuse the media of being biased in favor of the other. Researchers worldwide have sought to resolve the argument once and for all. And, for the most part, those researchers found that bias does not exist in the American news media. At least not in the form people expected it to be. Research is able to demonstrate that the biases some consumers claim to be present is only there because of their own perception (Lee, 2005). Still, further research finds that perceived ideological biases found in news actually occurs because of cues external to the news stories themselves (Turner, 2007). Turner (2007) is able to show that story origination labels function as ideological signals to viewers to determine whether a news story is biased or not.

Bias in the news, perceived or real, is not good for the business of newspaper sales because it reduces the public trust and damages public opinion of news businesses as sources of
information (Gamse, 2011). Gamse’s research found that print newspaper consumption and advertising sales in newspapers are in steep decline; one of the reasons being that people are finding bias in the news. Other factors causing the decline of the newspaper industry include economic recession and the rise of the Internet and digital technology (Gamse, 2011). The news media has many roles in America. In addition to inform, the news media functions as a watchdog of democracy for Americans (Raiz, 2010).

**Functions of News in American Society**

According to Ochs (1906), the rise of journalism in the 20th Century is responsible for the modern enlightenment of the masses. Journalism enables democracy to flourish by providing information to educate citizens about all sorts of topics, including, but not limited to, informing them about politics. The Founding Fathers designed the U.S. democracy to have a free press that exposes corruption in government and other civic institutions as well as to give the public enough information so that they can be active in the democratic process (Gamse, 2011). Journalists who are objective in their reporting of the news are ethical journalists (Merrill, 1985). In creating reports of events, be they in a range of news genres (e.g., politics, crime, business, or sports), it is the duty of journalists to provide a report that is objective, accurate, and truthful (Merrill, 1985).

But as Raiz (2010), Druckman and Parkman (2005), and many others say, it is nearly impossible for journalists to be purely objective when reporting news events. Many factors can get in the way of that goal such as the reporters own values and morals but also, and most often, it is institutional pressures that hamper objectivity. Raiz (2010) said that the media presents pictures of the world through selective construction, and that the selections can vary depending
on the organization, of the political institutions, and the dominant political ideology of the nation in which a journalist is operating.

**Bias in the News or Bias in the Consumer?**

The news media in the U.S. has been accused of being biased for decades. But, just in the last 20 years there has been a proliferation of news sources due to cable television, satellite television, and Internet access causing audiences to become fragmented (Morris, 2007). This fragmentation reveals the biases of the news media like never before. Prior to the 21st century, and this proliferation, the mass-media denied any biases existed. Any call of bias from the public was scoffed at as a crazy Republican attempt to discredit the “liberal media.” Druckman and Parkin (2005) show in their study that a newspapers’ coverage follows the editorial endorsement of that news organization concerning the incumbent politician in both tone and criticisms published about incumbents. Druckman and Parkin (2005) shows proof of the conspiracy that has eluded other researchers. Of all the research reviewed for this present study, Druckman and Parkin (2005) is the only study that purportedly shows evidence of an actual bias stemming from the news media itself. Most other studies simply say that bias doesn’t exist. Lee’s (2005) study shows that there are indeed biases, but those biases come from the news consumers themselves.

Figdor’s (2010) study found that reporting is subjective and shows that being subjective is inevitable because at some point the reporter has to make decisions about what to leave in a story and what to leave out of a story. That is an act of subjectivity. Further, once reporters give their stories to editors, more subjective decisions are made about that story. James Taranto, a columnist for the Wall Street Journal and the American Spectator, exposed a group of liberal news reporters who conspired in an exclusive e-mail list service to do anything and everything to
discredit and scare the conservatives from going after liberals (Taranto, 2010). Taranto (2010) puts forth evidence that accused these journalists, who gathered their comments on the Journolist, of operating a forum where they could work out talking points for Democratic candidates. This kind of evidence is quite rare. It is difficult to find overt evidence of bias conspiracies in newspaper coverage. But, Taranto is a conservative columnist, the very nature of which is that of subjectivity. More obvious to many are the biases of the television news media.

In 2004, Carolina Productions released Out Foxed: Rupert Murdoch’s War on Journalism highlighting the Fox News Channel’s scandalous actions within their management team to force reporters to report the news with an obvious conservative, or right, slant. Out Foxed revealed interviews with former Fox employees, showed incriminating memos sent out to the reporters from management, and described threats issued to former employees from management attempting to discourage whistleblowers. Rupert Murdoch also owns the Wall Street Journal but as of yet there has been no evidence of the same treatment to the newspaper’s news or editorial teams.

Many times biases committed by news reporters are said to be more because of institutionalized pressures (Peterson, 2001). Newspapers have the tendency to cover political issues, not only with the same slant as its own editorial stance, but also with the same leanings as their advertisers. The reason for a news reporter’s biases coming out in their coverage of events can come from all sorts of directions. Turner (2007) argues that the perception of media bias is so pervasive that one just has to know where a story comes from and the person automatically applies a label of left or right bias. In his study Turner (2007) shows that attaching the CNN or Fox News Channel label on news stories, sometimes purposefully incorrect, triggers an ideological cue to the viewer of the story. Sometimes blindly partisan advocates to one news
source or the other automatically show higher levels of distress about a story labeled with the source with views at odds to their own (Turner, 2007).

Whether partisan bias in news coverage is real or just perceived as real, consumption of the news has drastically decreased over the last 25 years (Tolson, 2004). Tolson gives several reasons for the decrease, one of which is that the public has noticeably more choices from which to get their news. Another reason for the decrease is a clear decline in the public trust. In his article, Tolson notes past and present polls that underscore just how far that trust has fallen. In 1976, a Gallup survey showed that 70 percent of Americans trusted the press (Tolson, 2004, p. 78). The public confidence in news organizations was as high as any other U.S. institution (Toslon, 2004, p. 78). But Tolson showed that a recent Pew Research Center study said that 53 percent of the American public does not trust what news organizations report (2004, p. 78).

**Rationale**

In summary, the literature shows that while actual bias in the news exists, it is a rare event. Most journalists who work for accredited news organizations take pride in their work and in the ability to set aside personal biases in order to report objectively about any number of news events. But, even though objectivity is key to principled journalism many journalists think that achieving objectivity is impossible (Raiz, 2010), and some even think being objective is unnecessary (Fairbanks, 2008). Regardless, the literature shows that most news is presented in an objective manner, and it is the consumers who bring the biases into the news when they consume it (Lee, 2005). At its height of popularity, in 1976, 70 percent of the public trusted news organizations to give them truthful and accurate information. But, in the last 25 years more than half the population does not trust the information provided by news organizations (Tolson,
This decline in trust coincides with a decrease in sales for news organizations of all types—television, radio, newspaper, and Internet. Some of this decline can be attributed to the proliferation of news sources available to the public, but many think it can be directly linked to partisan biases the public perceives the news gatherers have (Druckman and Parkin, 2005).

Not only are the perceived and actual biases destroying the credibility and the business of journalism, but some think a dishonest and manipulative press will drastically harm the U.S. democracy (Gamse, 2011). I believe this is true as well. What happens to the value of journalism? What happens to the value of democracy? If the public is being manipulated in their choice of elected officials does the government remain a republic governed for the people, by the people?

This research is important because it will help shed light on how Americans process news information. Are they better able to acquire and retain news that goes along with their beliefs, or news that is diametrically opposed to their belief system (Turner, 2007)? Turner showed that the message itself doesn’t even matter. His research proved that the package that the news came in signaled to the consumer whether or not the news had a bias or not. If the consumer was liberal and read an article from the Fox News Channel, the consumer reported a conservative bias. If the consumer was conservative and read an article from CNN, the consumer reported a liberal bias. The more pronounced an individual’s ideological beliefs are the more pronounced their bias. Using the same articles without labeling or attribution, consumers reported no bias associated with the stories. Turner (2007) found that the messenger is overwhelming the message. Understanding consumers’ abilities to acquire and retain ideologically consonant or dissonant news information will further Turner’s (2007) study by understanding how American citizens process news information. Understanding how Americans process news could be beneficial in
countless ways, but could help news organizations better avoid accusations of bias, gain trust, and improve their sales.

**Research Questions**

The major questions this research will attempt to answer are:

RQ1: Are conservatives better able to recall news information that is consonant or dissonant with their ideological beliefs?

RQ2: Are liberals better able to recall news information that is consonant or dissonant with their ideological beliefs?

Chapter 3 explains the scope and methodology used to find the answers for this research.
Chapter 3: Scope and Methodology

Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine what kind of news information people are better able to remember and recall—news information from a network that is in line with their political ideology or news from a network that goes against their political ideology. The present study is directly related to the study by Joel Turner (2007) that found that the labels under which a news item is displayed determines whether or not people see biases in that news item. In other words, bias is determined more by the television network or newspaper name than actual content of the news items. Before a politically conservative person reads news from CNN, that person has already determined the story is biased in favor of political liberals. And the same is true for liberals and news items from Fox News Channel. Liberals seeing a story from Fox have predetermined that story to be biased in favor of conservatives.

Understanding whether a person can better recall news from a network that is consonant or dissonant with their political beliefs will help networks in numerous ways. The results from this study will help determine the impact, if any, these perceptions of bias have on how Americans process news.

The breadth of the work for this research is narrow because this study is attempting to find out how Americans process news information. But not just any news information, the present study is trying to find out if people are better able to recall news information that is consonant or dissonant to their own political ideology.

Methodology of the Study
This study will use a probability sampling. The study chose probability sampling because it “allows us to generalize from the sample being observed to the entire population from which the sample is chosen (Rubin, 2010, p.201).” The research will use two groups that, separately, is a representative sample of the population. One group, a list of e-mails belonging to students from Gonzaga’s Organization and Leadership graduate course, and the other group is the author’s social network.

This research will use a simple random sample with the goal of sampling at least 50 people to acquire the information needed to conduct this research. To begin, the survey will gather information from respondents that will determine the respondents’ demographic characteristics and political ideology. To test their memory and recall, this study will use two articles taken from the CNN Web site and two articles taken from the Fox News Web site on March 4, 2013 (see Appendix) for respondents to read and be tested on recall of information within the articles. The stories will be properly labeled so that the respondents know they are looking at articles from the corresponding news sources.

**Validity and Reliability**

This research will explore all available options to provide respondents with the most reliable and valid survey questionnaire possible. Questions for the survey will be divided into two distinct parts—personal and questions directly related to the stories in the survey. The personal area will include multiple choice questions that help the research determine the background of each respondent. For example the survey will seek to answer questions regarding the sex, education level, income, political affiliation, and ethnicity just to name a few. This
portion will be as reliable as the answers themselves are. Rubin defines reliability as dependable, stable, consistent, and repeatable measures in a study (Rubin, 2010, p.203).

The information recall portion of the survey will also be straightforward in that the respondent is expected to read the news item and then answer a series of questions designed to test their recall of that news item. This will be repeated for all four news items. Again, the answers are only as reliable as the answers from the respondents. It is possible that some people may not be good test takers and could freeze in the moment and not recall as much as they would if they weren’t being tested on it. In addition, individuals may have varied comprehension levels and therefore the recall may prove to be difficult for some.

Because this research is a follow up to Turner’s (2007) research, this study will assume that the labels CNN and Fox News attached to each news item will trigger perceptions of bias among respondents. Assumption is not an ideal way of proving a thesis, but because of the time constraint, the present study will proceed as if a continuation of the original and therefore will use Turner’s results as if they were attained from this study. It is understood that in the five years since Turner’s original study attitudes and answers could have changed.

**Ethical Considerations**

The ethical consideration this study presents is that of privacy due to the amount of personal information to be asked for. To assuage anxiety in regard to this personal information a disclaimer will appear prior to, and after, taking the survey to assure respondents that this information will be private and used only anonymously in the collection of answers to fulfill the survey premise. In addition, to assure anonymity, this survey will not require names of respondents. Because the survey will be disseminated through e-mail, I will also assure
respondents via a disclaimer in the e-mail request to the fact that names will not be associated with the final survey results, and that the e-mails containing the completed surveys will be destroyed after completion of the study.

Chapter 4 will report the results and discussion of this research.
Chapter 4: The Study

Introduction

The idea of bias in the media has been around for decades, and whether people find those biases to be liberal or conservative is dependent on many factors. Lee (2005) found that the biases aren’t actually present in the journalism, in most cases, but that the biases are only perceived by news media consumers based on their own personal biased ideologies. Turner’s study (2007) went further finding that often consumers don’t even need to consume the news to trigger the perception of bias being present. All that is needed is a cue signaling the origin of the news. In an effort to augment Turner’s study (2007), the present study sought to find out whether or not people can better recall news information that is consonant or dissonant with their ideological beliefs? Understanding consumers’ abilities to acquire and retain ideologically consonant or dissonant news information provides an understanding for how American citizens process news information. Understanding how Americans process news could be beneficial in countless ways, but could help news organizations better avoid accusations of bias, gain trust, and improve their sales.

Data Analysis

The data from the survey and the reviewed research was analyzed to provide answers to the main research question: Are individuals better able to acquire and retain news information that is consonant or dissonant with their political ideological beliefs?

One part of the survey provided answers that helped determine and categorize the respondents into two groups—liberal and conservative. This part of the survey elicited information that helped describe the respondents and paints a picture about who they are and
explains how they consume their news, what they look for in a news product, and what methods of delivery they expect and like best.

The main part of the survey helped this research determine what information the respondents are able to recall. Information garnered from the whole survey helped put together what the liberal respondents are better able to recall as well as providing the same answers about the conservative respondents.

Results of the Study

The results of the present study were plentiful and varied. One hundred forty-five respondents began and completed most of the study. As much as 40 percent of respondents skipped some of the questions that required the reading of the news stories. The news stories were the main tool for analyzing the respondent’s recall habits. Even though this was the case, enough information was collected to find trends in the data. (See Appendix for the Survey)

Fifty of the 145 respondents reported as Democrats. Of the Democrats, 40 percent indicated that the news is biased in favor of conservatives, 10 percent indicate bias in favor of liberals, 50 percent reported that they don’t feel the news is biased at all. Of the 145 respondents 46 reported as Republicans. Of the Republicans, 77.3 percent indicate that the news is biased in favor of liberals, 9.1 percent indicate bias in favor of conservatives, and 13.6 percent reported that do not feel the news is biased at all (See FIGURE 1). Other survey respondents indicated they were 2.1 percent Libertarian, 18.6 percent Independent, 0.7 percent Constitution, and 12.4 percent indicated they weren’t affiliated with any political party.
The major research questions for this study were:

RQ1: Are conservatives better able to recall news information that is consonant or dissonant with their ideological beliefs?

RQ2: Are liberals better able to recall news information that is consonant or dissonant with their ideological beliefs?

To find the data required to identify whether conservatives and liberals are better able to recall news information that is consonant or dissonant with their ideological beliefs (RQ1 and RQ2) the survey used four news stories, two labeled CNN and two labeled Fox News, and had respondents read the stories one at a time. The labels attached with each story worked as a visual cue to trigger an automatic bias response. Working from Turner’s study (2007) this research is compliant in the notion that it must adopt the assumption that Republicans expect to see a liberal bias in the news coming from CNN, and Democrats see a conservative bias in the news coming from Fox News. After each story a set of three multiple choice questions tested respondent’s abilities to recall the information they just read.
RQ1: The data showed that conservatives are better able to recall news information that is dissonant with their ideological beliefs.

The survey found that Republicans answered correctly 65.8 percent of the time regarding the Fox News stories, and 75.4 percent of the time regarding the CNN stories.

RQ2: The data liberals are better able to recall news information that is dissonant with their ideological beliefs.

Democrats were found to have answered correctly 65.2 percent of the time regarding CNN stories, and 74.8 percent of the time regarding Fox News stories.

These figures were found by filtering the survey responses by political affiliation, gathering the percentage of correct answers for each question, and then finding the average of those percentages.

This data clearly indicates people have better recall of news information that is dissonant to their personal ideologies. It was interesting to see that the disparity between both democrat and Republican respondents answering CNN and Fox News stories correctly was nearly identical—an approximate 10 percent difference.
This research provided a validation and augmentation of Turner’s study (2007) in its attempt to clear up any ambiguous information concerning the misunderstood tendencies of news consumers and their perceptions of bias in the news. This researcher predicted the data would indicate that people can better recall news information that is opposite of their personal political ideologies because people will remember messages that inflame a passion within and what better way to do that than with politically charged anxiety.

One interesting finding is that while both Democrats and Republicans perceive the news media to be biased against their respectively opposite political ideologies, Republicans perceive a 37 percent greater proportion of bias against their personal political beliefs than Democrats.

The findings of this research mean several things, but one point is that Republicans are more likely to perceive a bias in the news media than Democrats are. People will avoid consuming news they feel is biased against their ideology. They will get the news from sources...
with political beliefs like theirs. The majority of all respondents, 40.5 percent, get their news from Internet news sites. Some respondents, 13 percent, get their news from social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Of all Republicans, 26.3 percent get their news from social network sites, and 33 percent get their news from Internet news sites. Conversely, only 7.4 percent of Democrats get their news from social network sites, and 41.4 percent get their news from Internet news sites. This means that McCombs and Shaw’s (1972) agenda-setting theory is working well because Fox News and CNN, the only news organizations studied in this research, are successfully telling news consumers what topics to think about and how to think about them.

At the time of McCombs and Shaw’s original study, though, news organizations ranked as one of the most trusted American institutions (Tolson, 2004). That is not true today as Niven (1999) points out that 90 percent of Americans perceive biases to be present in their news. This study found this to be true today, though the numbers weren’t as high. Seventy-seven percent of Republicans perceive a news bias, but only 40 percent of Democrats perceive news to be biased.

It would be interesting to find out what makes Republicans perceive such a greater chance of bias in their news as opposed to what Democrats perceive.

How can the news media continue being thought of as the watch dog of democracy (Raiz, 2010) when there is such a large percentage of Americans that do not trust what they are reporting? Ochs (1906) may have witnessed the rise of journalism in the 20th century, but people of the 21st century are witnessing its decline only partly because of the fragmentation of the audience (Gamse, 2011).

The data gathered from conducting this study was not surprising considering the research done prior to this one. In fact, much of the data gathered from this study validated previous research such as the fact that the majority of Americans perceive bias in the news (Niven, 1999),
and the fact that the more pronounced a person’s political ideology causes that person to perceive more biases (Lee, 2005). This study found that Republicans are 37 percent more likely than Democrats to perceive bias. Does this also mean that Republicans have 37 percent more pronounced political ideology?

Chapter 5 discusses limitations of this study, recommendations for future research, and the conclusions.
Chapter 5: Summaries and Conclusions

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations in conducting this research. The first limitation was the fact that this research was conducted on the assumption that people’s perceived biases are automatically triggered when they see the labels for the origin of the news story. For example, when a Republican sees CNN, the person is cued to believe that the story is biased in favor of liberals. And when a Democrat sees the Fox News label, the person believes the story to be biased in favor of conservatives.

Another limitation of the study occurred because of how the study tested the recall of respondents. The survey used four news stories, two labeled CNN and two labeled Fox News, for respondents to read and on subsequent pages answer questions regarding information in the stories. The mechanics of the survey would not allow the researcher prevent people from using their browser’s back button to look for the answers in the stories, rather than simply remembering them on their own. There is no evidence to say that respondents did cheat, but there is also no way of knowing that they didn’t cheat.

Another limitation had to do with the number of respondents. One hundred forty-five people started the survey but didn’t complete the survey. It was clear from the analysis that once people came to the reading part of the survey many of them skipped those questions or simply quit the survey. There were enough fully completed surveys to develop patterns in the answers but it would have been a much more robust study had there been several hundred people actually completing the entire survey.
Further Study or Recommendations

As stated, this research augmented a study by Turner (2007) who concluded that people are inclined to bring their perceived biases with them when consuming news, and that those biases are often triggered when consumers see labels of news origin such as CNN or Fox News. This study found that people are more apt to remember news information that is ideologically dissimilar to their own personal political beliefs. Future studies could focus on why this is the case. Is it because people notice things that are different in their environment more so than what is constant, or is it because opposite political views inflame consumer’s passions? Or could it be for some other reasons entirely?

Another realm of possible future studies has to do with the reason why Republicans are more likely to perceive bias in the news than are Democrats.

Conclusions

This study proves that people have the tendency to remember ideas that go against their personal political beliefs. It seems probable that news organizations, such as CNN and Fox News, already know this and are feeding the fire within people so that they keep tuning in. Newspapers of America might take notice of this phenomenon and use it to their advantage similarly to how television news networks have done. It could be that because of the Internet and the changing news consuming habits of the American people the death of hardcopy newspapers is inevitable.

As stated in Chapter 2, the people of America assume that the information presented to them in the form of news be done so in an objective manner. In addition, Americans expect journalists to be ethical and believe that ethical journalists are journalists who present news in an
objective manner (Merrill, 1985). For the American people the news media is generally considered to be the watch dog of democracy in the United States (Raiz, 2010). In just 37 years, journalism and the news media went from being a respected profession and industry at the height of their popularity in the mid 1970s to one of the most distrustful professions in the U.S. today (Tolson, 2005). This study found that at least 77 percent of Republicans and 40 percent of believe that biases exist in the news they consume. They do not trust the news they are consuming.

This study, along with the prior research, shows that a trusted news media doesn’t exist anymore. It seems that the news media’s function as the watch dog of democracy is no longer true. An organization cannot function as the watch dog for society if that society doesn’t trust it. What is true, in today’s news media, is that the more bias people perceive in the news, the more the news organizations are proving McCombs and Shaw’s agenda-setting theory. The news media today seems to function as a wedge dividing the country into two extreme camps, liberalism versus conservatism. By not acting to stop the perception of bias, they do act in its complicity.

While the news media is successful at telling consumers what to think about, the fact is that news consumers are still in control of how they are thinking about the issues the news media sets forth. One could see the fact that the news media setting the agenda is a bad thing. At least for the sale of hardcopy newspapers, bias in the news is indeed a bad thing. Bias in the news reduces the public trust and damages public opinion of the news business and further deteriorates the sales of newspapers (Gamse, 2011).
Not only is the value of journalism and news deteriorated, but also the value of public opinion about the government to which they belong is deteriorated as well. Because there is such a great division of politics concerning liberalism and conservatism directly attributed to these biases in the news, American citizens are being fed information the news media knows that will inflame passions and ultimately control what topics get discussed and which ones do not.

If the public is being manipulated with information pertaining to the direction of their government, can the American government be described as a government designed for the people and by the people?
CNN News Stories

Sequestration

(CNN Web site March 4, 2013) - As Washington moved on to the next fiscal battle, House Speaker John Boehner sounded optimistic about the prospect of passing a measure by March 27 that would continue funding the government and avoid a shutdown. "The president this morning agreed that we should not have any talk of a government shutdown," Boehner said in an interview that was taped Friday and aired Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." "So I'm hopeful that the House and Senate will be able to work through this." Boehner announced Friday that the House will take up a measure next week that will support the government financially through the end of the fiscal year, September 30. The exact provisions in the bill have not been released.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell also predicted the bill could pass in the Senate with bipartisan support. "Senate Democrats have indicated they are not interested in (a government shutdown), either," he said on CNN's "State of the Union." "I believe we're going to be able to work out passing the continuing resolution later in March on a bipartisan basis through both the House and the Senate." Republicans, however, may use the opportunity to try to amend the $85 billion in spending cuts that went into effect Friday. Adding such provisions could stall the funding bill, also known as a continuing resolution, as Republicans and Democrats may disagree over the proposed amendments. In reaction to Boehner's comments that aired Sunday morning, the White House issued a statement emphasizing its support for a "truly clean" continuing resolution - meaning legislation that doesn't come with items unrelated to the March 27 deadline. "We would be happy to see Congress act on a truly clean CR that extends the funding levels at
the BCA levels. And separately, Congress needs to act to replace the sequester," an administration official said, meaning the temporary spending bill should continue funding the government at levels established by the Budget Control Act.

Jeb Bush White House Run

(CNN Web site March 4, 2013) – In what appears to be his most in depth public comments regarding 2016, Jeb Bush says he's not ruling out a run for president. The comments come as the former two-term Florida governor releases a new book on the issue of illegal immigration. He heads to two events over the next two weeks considered early cattle calls for Republican White House hopefuls. Asked Monday morning on NBC's "The Today Show" if he was going to run in 2016, Bush said "that's way off in the future. I have a voice. I want to share my beliefs about how the conservative moment and the Republican Party can regain its footing, because we've lost our way." Pressed by host Matt Lauer on whether he would not rule out a run for president in 2016, Bush answered "I won't. But I won't declare it today either." Bush is doing television interviews this week to promote his new book "Immigration Wars: Forging an American Solution." At the end of this week Bush heads to Coral Gables, Florida, to meet with GOP officials and top donors at the Republican National Committee's quarterly finance meetings. Bush will join other possible 2016 GOP contenders such as Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. Next week Bush speaks at the 2013 Conservative Political Action Conference, a popular cattle call for Republicans considering bids for the White House. CPAC, which turns 40 this year, is the largest annual gathering of conservative leaders and activists, and it's boosted the presidential campaigns, or ambitions, of many Republican candidates. The annual CPAC GOP presidential
nomination straw poll is considered a key gauge of conservative sentiment, and garners much media attention. While most other Republicans considering 2016 runs are speaking at the conference, Christie was not invited. But Bush said it wasn't a big deal and said he's a big fan of the tough talking GOP governor of New Jersey. "I love Christie. I think Gov. Christie is a part of the future of the Republican Party for sure, and whether he's going to CPAC or not is not really changing that." Tuesday Bush speaks with CNN's Jake Tapper. That interview will run on CNN, including on "The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer." Bush, the younger brother of former President George W. Bush and son of former President George H.W. Bush, served two terms as governor of Florida, winning election in 1998 and re-election in 2002. He ruled out a run for the White House in 2012.

**Fox News Stories**

**Sequestration**

*(Fox News Web site March 4, 2013)* The boiling hysteria of the last few weeks over automatic spending cuts has reduced to a simmer now that they've technically taken effect, and one thing is clear -- the cuts, in some form or another, are likely here to stay. The White House has eased off its dire predictions, with economic adviser Gene Sperling on Sunday calling the impact more of a "slow grind" than an economic doomsday. And Republican leaders sounded mildly satisfied that, while the nature of the cuts is not ideal, they were able to ensure Washington did not pass another stopgap -- which President Obama called for in the weeks leading up to last Friday's deadline. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., suggested the cuts would be manageable. "This modest reduction of 2.4 percent in spending over the next six months is a little more than the average American experienced just two months ago, when their own pay
went down when the payroll tax holiday expired," McConnell said. House Speaker John Boehner, on NBC's "Meet the Press," conceded he simply couldn't predict the impact. "I don't know whether it's going to hurt the economy or not," Boehner said. "I don't think anyone quite understands how the sequester is really going to work." While the cuts represent just more than 2 percent of the federal budget, they only target a relatively narrow portion of that budget. When that is taken into account, the administration says the cuts really represent 9 percent of the non-defense budget and 13 percent of defense spending. Some top Republicans, including Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., continue to press for changes to shield the military from drastic cutbacks. The Pentagon for months has warned that the sequester will damage military readiness. Lawmakers on both sides can still come together on an agreement to target the cuts more carefully. Republicans, though, have insisted throughout that they will not allow for any revenue increases, something Democrats demand -- and it's unclear whether the two sides will bridge that gap, as Congress moves next into negotiations over a budget measure that expires at the end of the month. But the prospect of deactivating the cuts altogether, an option some Democrats called for in the final throes of sequester panic, appears to be fading. The $85 billion in cuts apply to the remainder of the 2013 fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30. But without a deal they will continue slashing government spending by about $1 trillion more over a 10-year period. Sperling, on NBC's "Meet the Press," declined at least twice to directly answer questions about whether the worst-case-scenario rhetoric has hurt the president's credibility on the issue. He instead stuck to his argument that independent economists forecast the cuts will result in 750,000 fewer jobs and that corporate executives now anticipate slower economic growth. Congress agreed to the cuts, known as sequester, in 2011 after failing to agree on more measured reductions -- to defense and some domestic spending. However, the cuts were intended to be so drastic that Democrats and
Republicans would be forced to compromise before they started. They didn't. Sperling on
Sunday rejected several Republican-backed plans and said no compromise would be reached
unless the party agrees to tax increases. Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., responded by saying
Congress agreed to such increases in January "at the president's request" and questioned why
Obama and other Democrats will not agree to additional spending cuts. She argued for potential
pay freezes for federal employees and reforms to the federal food stamps program. "There's a
whole host of ideas to cut spending" without jeopardizing security, Ayotte said on ABC's "This
Week." Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., told CBS' "Face the Nation" that any tax increases were
unacceptable. "I'm not going to do any more small deals," he said. "I'm not going to raise taxes to
fix sequestration. We don't need to raise taxes to fund the government.
All of this comes ahead of a new, March 27 deadline that could spell a government shutdown and a debt-ceiling clash
coming in May. Officials on Sunday expressed optimism that they would pass a budget measure
and avoid shutdown.

Iran

(Fox News Web site March 4, 2013) Vice President Biden said Monday that President Obama
is not "bluffing" about his willingness to use military force to prevent Iran from acquiring a
nuclear weapon -- as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed Iran is inching closer
to what he calls the "red line." Both leaders spoke at the annual conference for the American
Israel Public Affairs Committee, the powerful pro-Israel lobby. Netanyahu made clear he does
not think Iran has yet crossed the "red line" -- which he defines as making 90 percent of the
progress toward bomb-ready uranium. But he warned that Iran is getting closer and beseeched
the international community to prevent that outcome. "We shall always defend the one and only Jewish state," Netanyahu said. Biden told AIPAC that protecting Israel is in the United States' interest -- he said the U.S. still prefers a diplomatic option on Iran but that the window for that is closing. Biden said efforts to delegitimize Israel as a Jewish state are the most dangerous change he's seen as it relates to Israel's security. He said Israel's legitimacy is non-negotiable for the U.S. "It is not a matter of debate. Don't raise it with us. Do not raise it with us," Biden said. "It is not negotiable." Arguing the U.S. and Israel have a shared interest in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, which Israel views as an existential threat, Biden said the Obama administration would not back down from its pledge to intervene militarily, should all other options fail. "President Barack Obama is not bluffing," Biden said. Biden also sought to clarify the Obama administration's policy toward its nuclear program -- which is to "prevent" a nuclear weapon, not "contain" it. This comes after Obama's newly confirmed Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, during his confirmation hearing, flubbed the issue and initially described a policy of containment. He later corrected himself, but throughout the process faced criticism from Republicans that he was not sufficiently tough on Iran or supportive of Israel.
News Media Recall Survey

1. What is your political affiliation?

- Democrat
- Republican
- Libertarian
- Green
- Independent
- Constitution
- None

Please read the following news article from CNN and then proceed to the next page

Sequestration
(CNN Web site March 4, 2013) - As Washington moved on to the next fiscal battle, House Speaker John Boehner sounded optimistic about the prospect of passing a measure by March 27 that would continue funding the government and avoid a shutdown. "The president this morning agreed that we should not have any talk of a government shutdown," Boehner said in an interview that was taped Friday and aired Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." "So I'm hopeful that the House and Senate will be able to work through this." Boehner announced Friday that the House will take up a measure next week that will support the government financially through the end of the fiscal year, September 30. The exact provisions in the bill have not been released. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell also predicted the bill could pass in the Senate with bipartisan support. "Senate Democrats have indicated they are not interested in (a government shutdown), either," he said on CNN's "State of the Union." "I believe we're going to be able to work out passing the continuing resolution later in March on a bipartisan basis through both the House and the Senate." Republicans, however, may use the opportunity to try to amend the $85 billion in spending cuts that went into effect Friday. Adding such provisions could stall the funding bill, also known as a continuing resolution, as Republicans and Democrats may disagree over the proposed amendments. In reaction to Boehner's comments that aired Sunday morning, the White House issued a statement emphasizing its support for a "truly clean" continuing resolution - meaning legislation that doesn't come with items unrelated to the March 27 deadline. "We would be happy to see Congress act on a truly clean CR that extends the funding levels at the BCA levels. And separately, Congress needs to act to replace the sequester," an administration official said, meaning the temporary spending bill should continue funding the government at levels established by the Budget Control Act.

Please answer the following questions recalling the CNN Sequestration story. Hitting the back button to review the article will nullify your survey responses.
2. What did the president refuse to talk about?

- The $85 million in spending cuts
- A government shutdown
- The State of the Union address
- Repealing The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
- I do not remember

3. What did Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell predict?

- The government will run out of money as early as May and be forced to shut down.
- The House will be able to pass a continuing resolution regardless of the opposition.
- The Senate could pass a continuing resolution with bipartisan support.
- The exact provisions in the bill will never be released.
- I do not remember

4. What was House Speaker John Boehner optimistic about?

- Passing a measure by March 27.
- Passing a measure by September 30.
- Republicans will use the opportunity to amend the $85 million in spending cuts.
- The House and Senate will be able to work through this crisis.
- I do not remember
Please read the following news article from CNN and then proceed to the next set of questions

Jeb Bush White House Run
(CNN Web site March 4, 2013) – In what appears to be his most in depth public comments regarding 2016, Jeb Bush says he's not ruling out a run for president. The comments come as the former two-term Florida governor releases a new book on the issue of illegal immigration. He heads to two events over the next two weeks considered early cattle calls for Republican White House hopefuls. Asked Monday morning on NBC's "The Today Show" if he was going to run in 2016, Bush said "that's way off in the future. I have a voice. I want to share my beliefs about how the conservative moment and the Republican Party can regain its footing, because we've lost our way." Pressed by host Matt Lauer on whether he would not rule out a run for president in 2016, Bush answered "I won't. But I won't declare it today either." Bush is doing television interviews this week to promote his new book "Immigration Wars: Forging an American Solution." At the end of this week Bush heads to Coral Gables, Florida, to meet with GOP officials and top donors at the Republican National Committee's quarterly finance meetings. Bush will join other possible 2016 GOP contenders such as Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. Next week Bush speaks at the 2013 Conservative Political Action Conference, a popular cattle call for Republicans considering bids for the White House. CPAC, which turns 40 this year, is the largest annual gathering of conservative leaders and activists, and it's boosted the presidential campaigns, or ambitions, of many Republican candidates. The annual CPAC GOP presidential nomination straw poll is considered a key gauge of conservative sentiment, and garners much media attention. While most other Republicans considering 2016 runs are speaking at the conference, Christie was not invited. But Bush said it wasn't a big deal and said he's a big fan of the tough talking GOP governor of New Jersey. "I love Christie. I think Gov. Christie is a part of the future of the Republican Party for sure, and whether he's going to CPAC or not is not really changing that." Tuesday Bush speaks with CNN's Jake Tapper. That interview will run on CNN, including on "The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer." Bush, the younger brother of former President George W. Bush and son of former President George H.W. Bush, served two terms as governor of Florida, winning election in 1998 and re-election in 2002. He ruled out a run for the White House in 2012.

Please answer the following recalling the CNN news story about Jeb Bush. Hitting the back button to review the article will nullify your survey responses.

5. What does Jeb Bush want to share?
- Money collected on the campaign trail with Governor Christie.
- Beliefs about how the conservative movement can regain its footing.
- His ideas about the economy.
- Straw poll results about illegal immigration.
- I do not remember.

6. What is the name of Jeb Bush’s book?
- Being a Bush: A Political Family
- Conservative Cattle Call: The Republican Party
- The Benefits of Being a Bush
- Immigration Wars: Forging an American Solution
- I do not remember
7. Who will Jeb Bush join in Coral Gables, Florida?

- Marco Rubio and Chris Christie
- Barrack and Michelle Obama
- Barbara Bush
- I do not remember

Please read the following news article from Fox News and then proceed to the next set of questions.

Iran

(Fox News March 4, 2013) Vice President Biden said Monday that President Obama is not "bluffing" about his willingness to use military force to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon -- as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed Iran is inching closer to what he calls the "red line." Both leaders spoke at the annual conference for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the powerful pro-Israel lobby. Netanyahu made clear he does not think Iran has yet crossed the "red line" -- which he defines as making 90 percent of the progress toward bomb-ready uranium. But he warned that Iran is getting closer and beseeched the international community to prevent that outcome. "We shall always defend the one and only Jewish state," Netanyahu said. Biden told AIPAC that protecting Israel is in the United States' interest -- he said the U.S. still prefers a diplomatic option on Iran but that the window for that is closing. Biden said efforts to delegitimize Israel as a Jewish state are the most dangerous change he's seen as it relates to Israel's security. He said Israel's legitimacy is non-negotiable for the U.S. "It is not a matter of debate. Don't raise it with us. Do not raise it with us," Biden said. "It is not negotiable." Arguing the U.S. and Israel have a shared interest in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, which Israel views as an existential threat, Biden said the Obama administration would not back down from its pledge to intervene militarily, should all other options fail. "President Barack Obama is not bluffing," Biden said. Biden also sought to clarify the Obama administration's policy toward its nuclear program -- which is to "prevent" a nuclear weapon, not "contain" it. This comes after Obama's newly confirmed Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, during his confirmation hearing, flubbed the issue and initially described a policy of containment. He later corrected himself, but throughout the process faced criticism from Republicans that he was not sufficiently tough on Iran or supportive of Israel.

Please answer the following questions recalling the Fox News story regarding Iran. Hitting the back button to review the article will nullify your survey responses.

8. What percentage of progress toward bomb-ready uranium does Netanyahu call the red line?

- 75%
- 50%
- 80%
- 90%
- I do not remember
9. What does Vice President Joe Biden say not to raise with us?

- Conspiracies regarding President Obama’s birth certificate?
- Concerns that Iran will make a nuclear bomb
- Concerns over Israel’s legitimacy
- Concerns that Obama is bluffing
- I do not remember

10. What did Vice President Joe Biden tell the AIPAC?

- Protecting Israel is in the interest of the U.S.
- Not to debate Israel’s legitimacy
- Change in the Jewish state is very dangerous
- Secretary Chuck Hagel will never allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon.
- I do not remember

Please read the following news article from Fox News and then proceed to the next set of questions

Sequestration
(Fox News March 4, 2013) The boiling hysteria of the last few weeks over automatic spending cuts has reduced to a simmer now that they’ve technically taken effect, and one thing is clear -- the cuts, in some form or another, are likely here to stay. The White House has eased off its dire predictions, with economic adviser Gene Sperling on Sunday calling the impact more of a “slow grind” than an economic doomsday. And Republican leaders sounded mildly satisfied that, while the nature of the cuts is not ideal, they were able to ensure Washington did not pass another stopgap -- which President Obama called for in the weeks leading up to last Friday’s deadline. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., suggested the cuts would be manageable. “This modest reduction of 2.4 percent in spending over the next six months is a little more than the average American experienced just two months ago, when their own pay went down when the payroll tax holiday expired.”

Secretary Chuck Hagel will never allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon. He said, “House Speaker John Boehner, on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” conceded he simply couldn’t predict the impact. “I don’t know whether it’s going to hurt the economy or not,” Boehner said. “I don’t think anyone quite understands how the sequester is really going to work.” While the cuts represent just more than 2 percent of the federal budget, they only target a relatively narrow portion of that budget. When that is taken into account, the administration says the cuts really represent 9 percent of the non-defense budget and 13 percent of defense spending. Some top Republicans, including Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., continue to press for changes to shield the military from drastic cutbacks. The Pentagon for months has warned that the sequester will damage military readiness. Lawmakers on both sides can still come together on an agreement to target the cuts more carefully. Republicans, though, have insisted throughout that they will not allow for any revenue increases, something Democrats demand -- and it’s unclear whether the two sides will bridge that gap, as Congress moves next into negotiations over a budget measure that expires at the end of the month. But the prospect of deactivating the cuts altogether, an option some Democrats called for in the final throes of sequester panic, appears to be fading. The $85 billion in cuts apply to the remainder of the 2013 fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30. But without a deal they will continue slashing government spending by about $1 trillion more over a 10-year period. Sperling, on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” declined at least twice to directly answer questions about whether the worst-case-scenario rhetoric has hurt the president’s credibility on the issue. He instead stuck to his argument that independent economists forecast the cuts will result in 750,000 fewer jobs and that corporate executives now anticipate slower economic growth. Congress agreed to the cuts, known as sequester, in 2011 after failing to agree on more measured reductions -- to defense and some domestic spending. However, the cuts were intended to be so drastic that Democrats and Republicans would be forced to compromise before they started. They didn’t. Sperling on Sunday rejected several Republican-backed plans and said no compromise would be reached unless the party agrees to tax increases. Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., responded by saying Congress agreed to such increases in January “at the presidency's request” and questioned why Obama and other Democrats will not agree to additional spending cuts. She argued for potential pay freezes for federal employees and reforms to the federal food stamps program.
Please answer the following questions recalling the Fox News story regarding sequestration. Hitting the back button to review the article will nullify your survey responses.

11. What did Gene Sperling call the impact of the sequestration?
   - A slow grind
   - Doomsday
   - The end of the world as we know it
   - A nice change of pace
   - I do not remember

12. The cuts represent how much of the federal budget?
   - 10%
   - 15%
   - 2%
   - 3%
   - I do not remember

13. How many fewer jobs did Gene Sperling and independent economists forecast the cuts would result in?
   - 200,000
   - 750,000
   - Several thousand
   - 550,000
   - I do not remember
14. Where do you currently get your news about national politics? (Check all that apply)

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15. Do you feel the news is biased in favor of ...?

- Liberals
- Conservatives
- I don't feel the news is biased

16. What is your approximate average household income?

- Under $10,000
- $10,000-$19,999
- $20,000-$34,999
- $35,000-$49,999
- $50,000-$74,999
- $75,000-$99,999
- $100,000 and up

17. Which category below includes your age?

- 17 or younger
- 18-20
- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or older
18. What is the highest level of education attained?
- High School or less
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree or other professional degrees or certificates
- Doctorate

19. What is your gender?
- Female
- Male

20. Where did you hear about this survey?
- Gonzaga University
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Email
References


