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# What Do Newsjunkies Consume and What Do They Know? Two Studies on Intrinsic Need For Orientation, News Diets, and Political Knowledge

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## Abstract

Recent research on the newsjunkie trait—intrinsic need for orientation (INFO)—has not yet examined specific kinds of information newsjunkies consume or whether the newsjunkie characteristic predicts outcomes like political knowledge. **Study 1** surveyed U.S. adults' ( $N = 2,059$ ) INFO, hard news consumption, soft news consumption, use of partisan outlets FOX News, and MSNBC, and use of less-partisan outlets like BBC and NBC. The newsjunkie trait was one of the strongest predictors of hard news consumption (like news about foreign affairs and the economy), after controlling for numerous factors, and it did not predict soft news consumption (news about entertainment, sports, etc.). The newsjunkie trait was positively associated with the use of both partisan and less-partisan outlets. **Study 2** examined U.S. adults' ( $N = 1,054$ ) INFO and political knowledge while holding constant most of the variables controlled for in Study 1. Despite some evidence from Study 1 that newsjunkies are sophisticated news consumers, INFO did not positively predict political knowledge; the strongest positive predictor of political knowledge was consuming political news, and the only other significant news use correlate was the use of FOX News, which was negatively associated with political knowledge. Implications for research on the intrinsic need for orientation, news use, and political outcomes are discussed.

A normative view of the press holds that people should consume news, that they should learn accurate information from that news, and that they should then use that political knowledge to help make electoral decisions (Overholser & Jamieson, 2005). But people who consume news are not necessarily consuming quality, non-partisan information, and, additionally, prior research has not always found that heavy consumers of news possess higher levels of political knowledge. Two studies conducted here examined the newsjunkie characteristic—intrinsic need for orientation (INFO), the motivation to routinely track news and to avoid falling behind in what is happening in the world—as a predictor of both specific news consumption behaviors and levels of political knowledge.

Individuals have an intrinsic motivation to keep up with news about current events, the motivation differs among people, and it is positively correlated with news consumption frequency (Martin, 2020). Additionally, the newsjunkie trait is strongly associated with political participation. A study in *Political Psychology* found that people with a strong intrinsic need for orientation were more likely than less attentive citizens to be registered to vote, to intend to vote in a coming U.S. election, and to feel guilty if an election passed and they did not vote (Martin & Sharma, 2023). We do not yet know certain specifics about newsjunkies' news use, like their hard news consumption, soft news consumption, or reliance on partisan news outlets like FOX News and MSNBC. And,

while INFO positively predicts important outcomes like being registered to vote and intention to vote, relationships between the newsjunkie trait and other sophisticated outcomes like political knowledge have not yet been studied.

In this article, which reports results from two national surveys in the U.S., Study 1's core hypothesis is that INFO will more strongly predict hard news consumption (news of politics, foreign affairs, crime/legal news, etc.) than soft news consumption (fashion, sports, entertainment news, etc.). Study 1 also hypothesized that INFO will be more strongly correlated with the use of less-partisan news providers, like BBC and ABC—which provide a high ratio of news to opinion—than with the use of partisan outlets like MSNBC and FOX News, after controlling for media use, political, and demographic variables. Study 2 hypothesized that INFO would be positively associated with factual political knowledge, after holding constant most of the same control variables in Study 1.

The intrinsic need for orientation concept rests on the uses and gratifications paradigm of mass media and on self-determination theory, and the current studies employ these theoretical frameworks to examine relationships between INFO and specific news use behavior, and between INFO and political knowledge. There are specific international components of the current research. While both surveys were completed in the U.S., more of the political knowledge questions address matters of international affairs than other topical areas (U.S. political processes, U.S. current events), and respondents are

not only asked about their use of U.S. news outlets; use of BBC is one of the dependent variables in Study 1 as well as one of the independent variables predicting political knowledge in Study 2.

### Intrinsic Need For Orientation, Uses and Gratifications, and Self-Determination Theory

The intrinsic need for orientation is “An individual’s motivation to routinely and frequently seek and consume news, for the positive emotions of feeling informed and to avoid negative emotions of feeling behind” (Martin, 2020, p. 7). The four-item INFO measure assesses the extent to which one consumes news first thing each day, checks news in their downtime, feels discomfort when they cannot access news, and believes consuming news connects them to other people. The INFO scale was created to offer a more expansive definition and operationalization of the desire to consume news, which prior need for orientation (NFO) research did not measure. NFO was introduced by McCombs and Weaver in 1973, and was presented as an inherent interest in keeping up with the news. However, this was not how they measured need for orientation, which they said was the combination of an individual’s: (a) interest in an upcoming political election, or the relevance of that election to the individual; and (b) uncertainty about whom to vote for in the coming election, one of the measures of which was having a weak attachment to a political party. It was said that an uncertain voter who also felt the election was relevant to them (they had a high interest in it) had a strong NFO.

In early NFO research, Weaver (1977) noted that relevance was measured with five items: an individual’s interest in politics, level of political discussion and participation, external political efficacy, and their sense of civic duty/obligation. There were four variables assessing uncertainty: weak political party affiliation, congruity of friends’ perceived vote intention, congruity of family members’ perceived vote intention, and degree of certainty of presidential vote choice. None of the nine measures mentions a desire to keep up with news about one’s environment nor do they mention news at all.

In a 1977 book chapter, Weaver quotes Samuel Johnson: “A desire of knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind,” (p. 110), which may be true, but the original NFO measures did not assess a general interest in knowledge or in news (Weaver notes that original NFO research did find that persons with a strong NFO, as measured by McCombs and Weaver (1973), consumed more mass media content than persons with a weak NFO, but this describes an outcome of a strong NFO, while NFO itself was measured strictly in terms of political attitudes and perceptions). As recently as 2010, a study by Weaver et al. operationalized NFO with two questions rather than nine, neither of which, again, assessed the use of mass media: “How interested would you say you are in the November election for president?” and “If the election were held today, would you feel that you know enough about the candidates and issues to make a presidential choice at this time?” (p. 6). That study really assessed interest in a political election and political information efficacy, or one’s confidence that they possess sufficient amounts of political information (see Kaid, McKinney, & Tedesco, 2007).

The disconnect between what the original need for orientation research claimed it measured (interest in keeping up with news about one’s environment), and what it actually

measured (the compulsion to follow an election and make an eventual vote choice) led to some confusion. Matthes (2008), for example, said need for orientation “refers to the tendency of an individual to seek information about an issue in the news media” (p. 441). As noted above, however, none of the nine prior need for orientation measures assessed information seeking.

Matthes (2006, 2008) offered a new NFO scale that assessed interest in news about one specific topic, which need not be a political election. This added flexibility and the Matthes scale represented an improvement by explicitly addressing information consumption in the NFO measure. Still, the scale does not measure a generalized interest in keeping up with news, but rather interest in following one topic, such as, say, immigration. The scale includes items like “I would like to hear something about the issue every day” and “I want to know many different sides about that topic,” (Matthes 2008, p. 444). The measure is useful for assessing interest in learning about one issue, but not for assessing need for orientation toward news generally.

Chernov, Valenzuela, and McCombs (2011) compared the original NFO measure and Matthes’s reformulation, and found that both measures positively predicted first-level agenda-setting effects and that the two measures were positively correlated. That study, which used experimental methods, did not examine levels of news consumption among persons who scored high on either the McCombs and Weaver (1973) or Matthes NFO (2008) measures, but rather the ability of salient coverage of issues (drug abuse, crime, and global warming) to influence participants’ assessments of the importance of those issues. Not only, then, does the INFO scale broaden the concept of need for orientation beyond interest in a single political campaign or interest in one issue, the attitudes and behaviors associated with a strong INFO extend beyond effects of first- and second-level agenda-setting. Some of those prospective correlates, like the kind of news persons with a strong INFO consume (hard news vs. soft news, for example), and from what news companies, and their levels of political knowledge, are assessed in the current research.

“Newsjunkie” has been used in some previous social science research. Prior (2007) described newsjunks as individuals who prefer news to entertainment, for example. But someone who prefers news to entertainment may not necessarily be a heavy consumer of news, and thus that research does not evaluate the newsjunkie characteristic as a sustained, psychological trait, either. Additionally, a newsjunkie could simultaneously be a heavy consumer of both news and entertainment, and not prefer one to the other.

INFO is built upon the uses and gratifications paradigm of mass media and on self-determination theory. Uses and gratifications hold that unique motivations impel people to consume media, that the motivations moderate effects that media have on people, and that media compete for consumers’ limited time and attention (Rubin, 2002). INFO assesses some of the gratifications people may enjoy, when news consumption connects them to others, increases their comfort in knowing what is going on in the world, and so on. The original NFO concept was tied to uses and gratifications, too (see Weaver, 1980), though the measure’s initial focus on political elections led researchers to frequently position the concept within second-level agenda-setting or the attributes that people assign to political candidates and political issues. While the INFO concept likely has applications in agenda-setting—newsjunks

may, for example, list an agenda of public issues that aligns more closely with the news media's agenda than non-news-junkies provide—the current study does not examine the media agenda or attributes assigned to political candidates, and so the work here places NFO within the uses and gratifications perspective.

Self-determination theory holds that there are three components necessary for a behavior to become intrinsically motivated; autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1991). Autonomy is one's sense that they are engaging in a behavior on their own volition, not forced to do so by someone or something (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Competence is the belief that expertise on a performed action increases with practice, and relatedness is one's feeling that performing the action connects them to other people—often people intrinsically motivated to perform the same activity.

The three intrinsic motivation components are represented in the INFO measure. Two of the items ask the extent to which an individual checks news in their free time and checks news among the first things they do each day (autonomy). Another item asks respondents the extent to which they feel discomfort if they cannot access news (competence), while another item assesses the extent to which they believe keeping up with news helps them connect with other people (relatedness). There are ties between uses and gratifications and self-determination theory in the context of news use; competence, autonomy, and relatedness are, themselves, gratifications individuals may feel when they consume news.

Deci and Ryan (1991) note that intrinsic motivation can change over time, which is also relevant to the INFO measure; journalism research has found that adults tend to consume more news as they get older (Fisher, Park, Lee, Holland, & John, 2021). But, presumably, life circumstances could also lead to a lower INFO later in life among some people, just as the intrinsic motivation to play soccer among a 15-year-old may attenuate later in life. How someone feels about news consumption better connecting them to other people, for example, may weaken or strengthen INFO. Indeed, Fisher, Park, Lee, Holland, and John (2021) found that news consumption reduced feelings of isolation among older Australians.

While INFO and measures of news consumption frequency are positively correlated, they are not correlated highly enough to suggest multicollinearity (Martin & Hassan, 2020). INFO is positively associated with being registered to vote, the intention to vote, and voter conscientiousness (Martin & Sharma, 2023), a feeling of guilt if an election passes and one did not vote, after controlling for numerous news consumption frequency variables. At the conceptual level, the INFO index goes beyond news consumption frequency, as newsjunkie behaviors are part of an individual's identity. Like “workaholic” or “gym buff,” “newsjunkie” is often used colloquially to describe who a person is and what their interests are.

### Other Motivational, Behavioral and Attitudinal Correlates of Heavy News Consumption

Prior research has found that people consume news to be informed (Wenner, 1985; Shoemaker, 1996), to be entertained (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973), to be sociable (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979), and to seek validation of their opinions (Stroud, 2008; Garrett, 2009). Research to date on INFO holds that newsjunkies consume news to know what is going on in the world, to feel connected to other people, and because

they enjoy it as leisure. McCombs and Poindexter (1983) found that those who want to keep informed about news and current events tend to read newspapers more than those who do not wish to be informed, which is among the reasons we control for newspaper use and other specific modes of news consumption in the current study. Newspaper use has also been found to be one of the strongest media use predictors of political knowledge (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006), which is the outcome variable in Study 2.

Diddi and Larose (2006) found that people's surveillance needs were positively correlated with news consumption via cable TV, broadcast TV, the internet, and newspapers. We control separately for TV news consumption, newspaper use, and radio news consumption, in part because several of the news outlets included in the surveys, like FOX News and BBC, are outlets with a strong presence in both TV and radio broadcasting. And if newsjunkies are, say, more likely to use BBC but not more likely to consume radio news, we would have evidence that BBC's TV and/or online offerings, not radio, were attracting newsjunkies.

Interest in specific news content—in political coverage, for example—has been found to correlate positively with news consumption. David (2009) found that people who are interested in politics report greater TV news consumption and greater newspaper use than persons with little or no interest in politics. We controlled for political news consumption in the current studies as well. Lee (2013) found that the motivation to be informed—to gain knowledge—about current events was a positive predictor of frequency of news consumption, which is part of the intrinsic motivation the INFO measure captures (“I feel discomfort *when I don't know* what's going on in the world,” italics added). The same research also found that motivation to consume news was positively correlated with accessing a greater variety of news; that is, getting news from a larger number of news outlets, including some of the news organizations examined in Study 2: CNN and FOX News.

Lee and Chyi (2014) found that a positive disposition toward news—deeming news valuable and empowering to citizens—positively predicted the motivation to consume news. They also found favorable attitudes toward news positively correlated with *hard* news use, like news on politics and public affairs. Their findings support Study 1's main hypothesis: newsjunkies will consume more hard news than soft news, particularly as INFO assesses favorable attitudes toward news (Following news makes me feel more connected...). Likewise, believing news is relevant in one's life is positively correlated with news use. Chan-Olmsted, Rim, and Zerba (2013) found that a belief that mobile news content can “help my life/work” was associated with increased mobile news consumption. Similarly, the INFO scale contains items assessing the relevance of news in people's lives, like getting news first thing each day.

Regarding demographics, research has found that age (Lee, 2013; Lee & Chyi, 2014) and education (Lee, 2013) are positively associated with news use. Prior research has also found that news consumption among people in the U.S. differs according to partisan affiliations (Garrett & Stroud, 2014) and among people with different political ideologies (Gil de Zúñiga, Correa, & Valenzuela, 2012), and we hold these variables constant in our models in both studies.

There is research on the power of habit in news use, just as several INFO scale items assess a regular routine of news

consumption. [Diddi and Larose \(2006\)](#) reported that the habit of consuming news was the strongest predictor of news use, and they controlled for a large number of predictors. The INFO measure acknowledges habit in news consumption, particularly in items that assess getting news first thing each day and habitually checking news in one's downtime.

## News Consumption and Political Knowledge

News consumption positively predicts political knowledge ([de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006](#)), and so newsjunkies may report greater political knowledge than persons with a weak INFO. In fact, colloquially, calling someone a newsjunkie is often to say that the person knows a lot about political matters. Considerable prior research has found that hard news use, specifically, predicts political knowledge, though [Baum \(2003\)](#) found soft news consumption positively correlated with political knowledge under some circumstances. [Prior \(2003\)](#), though, found limited evidence of a relationship between soft news viewing on TV and political knowledge. We examine these relationships in Study 2, as we test both hard and soft news consumption variables as predictors of political knowledge.

The ways news users get information matters. [Leshner and McKean \(1997\)](#) found that consuming political information on TV positively predicted political knowledge. [Drew and Weaver \(2006\)](#) found that TV news viewing, televised political debates, and internet use were positively associated with consumers' knowledge of political candidate issue positions in the 2004 U.S. presidential election, just as they had found that TV news use was a positive correlate of knowledge of candidate issue positions in prior elections ([Weaver & Drew, 2001](#)). [Schroeder and Stone \(2015\)](#) found that FOX News viewing was positively associated with viewers' knowledge of conservative-leaning topics—those FOX covered often—and negatively associated with knowledge of topics that FOX covered infrequently or ignored. The use of partisan FOX News, and also partisan MSNBC, are among the predictors of political knowledge examined in Study 2.

Some recent research finds getting news on social platforms negatively predicts political knowledge. [Gil de Zúñiga and Goyanes \(2021\)](#) found that consuming news via WhatsApp is negatively associated with political knowledge, and other work has found that getting news via Facebook negatively predicts political knowledge ([Cacciatore et al., 2018](#)). Partly because of this, in Study 2 we control for Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter use. [Beam, Hutchens, and Hmielowski \(2016\)](#) found that online news consumption positively predicted factual political knowledge, though their measures of online news use—getting news from social networks, online news sites, and search engine results—were not news-topic or news-organization specific. We use getting news on specific topics (politics, entertainment) as well as getting news from specific outlets (FOX, MSNBC, BBC, CNN) to predict political knowledge.

People who consume large amounts of news tend to possess more factual knowledge about politics and current affairs than people who consume little or no news; most studies that examine relationships between news consumption and political knowledge find positive associations between the two ([Liu, Shen, Eveland, & Dylko, 2013](#)). What Study 2 in this article seeks to determine is whether, independent of news consumption frequency, people with a strong INFO possess

greater political knowledge than persons with a weak INFO characteristic.

## Study 1 Hypotheses

This study examined relationships between the intrinsic need for orientation (INFO) and hard news consumption, soft news consumption, use of partisan news outlets, and use of less-partisan news outlets, after controlling for news consumption frequency (specifically use of TV, newspapers, digital news sources, etc.), social media use, political partisanship, and demographics. The first two hypotheses are based on research on intrinsic need for orientation and research on heavy news consumption, including [Diddi and Larose \(2006\)](#), [Lee and Chyi \(2014\)](#), and [Martin and Sharma \(2023\)](#), among other above-cited studies.

We utilize definitions of hard and soft news from [Curran, Salovaara-Moring, Coen, and Iyengar \(2010\)](#), who designated “topics such as politics, public administration, the economy, science and technology as hard, and other topics such as celebrity...sports and entertainment stories as soft,” (p. 4). Research on INFO has found that it correlates moderately with a need for cognition, or a love of thinking and deliberating ([Martin, Hassan, & Sharma, 2020](#); see also [Olson, Camp, & Fuller, 1984](#)), further justification that INFO correlates with consuming sophisticated news.

**H1:** Intrinsic need for orientation (INFO) will be positively associated with hard news consumption, after controlling for other measures of news use, including soft news consumption, social media use, political partisanship, and demographics.

Given INFO assesses a general interest in news, it may predict soft news consumption as well as hard news consumption. This, and given that [Baum \(2003\)](#) found that soft news consumption was positively associated with political knowledge in some circumstances, we posit H2 below. One of the things distinguishing INFO from prior assessors of the need for orientation is that it examines an intrinsic interest in keeping up with news that may be apolitical. Someone who is a sports buff, weather tracker, or fashion enthusiast may, too, possess a strong INFO.

**H2:** INFO will be positively associated with soft news consumption, while holding constant the same control variables from H1, and also hard news consumption, but the association between INFO-soft news consumption will be *weaker* than that between INFO-hard news consumption.

We use the descriptor “less-partisan” rather than “nonpartisan” because news reporting, as a human endeavor, is not purely objective. We refer to CNN in this study as “less-partisan,” for, while we acknowledge that most Americans polled say the network is left-leaning ([Gramlich, 2020](#)), Gramlich quotes Pew’s Amy Mitchell: “[J]ust because we classified a news outlet as having a ‘left-leaning’ or ‘right-leaning’ audience does not mean that a *majority* of its audience identifies as either liberal Democrat or conservative Republican. In fact, relatively few of the outlets we studied have audiences that consist *mostly* of liberal Democrats or conservative Republicans,” (emphasis in original).

While [Hollander \(2008\)](#) found that, over time, Republicans’ likelihood of viewing FOX News increased, and their likelihood of viewing CNN decreased, Democrats

were no more or less likely to consume news from CNN and were much more likely to consume news from MSNBC, and that latter association strengthened over time. In 2022, CNN was identified as not just centrist, but in some ways moving to the right, as it axed journalist Brian Stelter and ended the network's longest-running program *Reliable Sources* (Allsop, 2022).

Lee (2013) found that motivation to consume news was associated with using a larger number of news outlets, including CNN, and we hypothesize that INFO will predict increased use of both less-partisan and partisan outlets. More specifically, though, if INFO is more strongly correlated with consumption of sophisticated news, that is, with hard news over soft news, then the INFO trait should also be associated with using specific outlets that provide more news and information than entertainment and opinion.

FOX News has fewer bureaus around the world gathering information than the other two major U.S. cable news networks or the BBC; as of 2019, FOX had three news bureaus outside the U.S. (FOX, n.d.), while CNN had 27 (CNN, 2019) and MSNBC/NBC had 11 (Harvey, 2016). FOX had only one foreign bureau outside Europe, in Jerusalem, and none in the southern hemisphere. BBC has 48 news bureaus worldwide (Rampal, 2019). We, therefore, hypothesize INFO will more strongly predict use of *less*-partisan outlets like BBC and CNN than use of partisan outlets like FOX and MSNBC. Additionally, we wanted to avoid asking respondents about U.S. news networks alone, which is why use of BBC was measured in both studies.

**H3:** INFO will be positively associated with use of less-partisan news outlets (BBC, CNN, NBC, and others) and use of partisan outlets, but the correlations between INFO and less-partisan outlets will be *stronger* than those between INFO and partisan outlets (MSNBC and FOX News), after controlling for other measures of news consumption, social media use, political partisanship, and demographics.

## Study 1 Method

Study 1 examined the newsjunkie characteristic—intrinsic need for orientation—as a predictor of hard news consumption, soft news consumption, use of partisan news outlets, and use of less-partisan news outlets among a national sample ( $N = 2,059$ ) of U.S. residents ages 18 and older.

## Study 1 Survey and Data Collection

The authors commissioned data collection from The Harris Poll's Harris On Demand survey, an online survey of verified respondents across the U.S., based on demographic characteristics that align with census figures. The survey, though not a true probability sample, was designed to be nationally representative, by inviting respondents that broadly reflect the demographics of the U.S. population. About 51% of respondents were women, the average age of respondents was 47 ( $SD = 18$ ), and 69% of respondents identified as white. These figures are close to the demographics of the adult U.S. population generally. All demographic statistics from the sample are in Appendix A. Data were weighted both for respondents' propensity to be online and for education, age, sex, household income, geographic region, and race/ethnicity, to more closely align with U.S. census figures. Respondents were paid

for their time (<USD\$20), and, as respondents must complete the survey to receive compensation, a response rate is not applicable. The IRB which oversees human subjects' research at the second author's institution inspected and cleared the questionnaire.

Data were collected September 9–10, 2020, eight weeks before the 2020 U.S. election. Martin and Sharma (2023) found no difference in INFO among a U.S. sample collected in 2019 and another U.S. sample collected close to a U.S. election, so we do not suspect the INFO characteristic among our sample differs based on proximity to election day.

## Dependent Variables

### Hard news consumption.

Four-item index: "How frequently do you get the following types of news?" 1 = never, 6 = multiple times/day. Asked for each political, international, business/financial, crime/legal (hard news definition based on Curran, Salovaara-Moring, Coen, & Iyengar, 2010). Cronbach's  $\alpha = .81$ .

### Soft news consumption.

Three-item index: wording/measurement the same as for hard news. Asked for each entertainment, lifestyle/fashion, sports (soft news definition also based on Curran, Salovaara-Moring, Coen, & Iyengar, 2010). Cronbach's  $\alpha = .71$ .

### Use of less-partisan news outlets.

"Which of the following do you get news from more than once in a typical week?" 1 = yes, 0 = no. Asked for each CNN, BBC, ABC, CBS, NBC. These outlets were selected for their penetration among the U.S. population (range of penetration among these outlets in Study 1's sample = 23–49%, for BBC and ABC, respectively (see Appendix A for descriptives). Additionally, we chose BBC to assess the use of an international news outlet among U.S. respondents, and also to ask respondents about a news outlet that is particularly informational; BBC is charged by Ofcom, the U.K.'s communications regulator, with providing fact-based reporting, minimal opinion, and little to no partisan delivery (Ofcom, 2021). While these outlets are TV networks, note the question does not specify TV, as the outlets have apps, websites, and other properties.

### Use of partisan news outlets.

Wording/measurement the same as for less-partisan news outlets. Asked for both MSNBC and FOX News. MSNBC is liberal leaning, and FOX is conservative leaning (Pew Research Center, 2016). Like the less-partisan news outlets, these organizations were selected partly for their penetration levels in the U.S.: 19% for MSNBC and 46% for FOX in the Study 1 sample.

## Independent Variables

### Intrinsic Need For Orientation

(Martin & Sharma, 2023). Four-item index: "When I have down time I check news or news headlines," "One of the first things I do each day is check the news," "I feel discomfort when I don't know what's going on in the world," and "Keeping up with the news makes me feel more connected to other people." Cronbach's  $\alpha = .83$ . 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree.

## News Consumption Frequency.

*Smartphone, computer, tablet, TV, newspaper, and radio use.* Asked separately for each: “How frequently do you get news or news headlines on any of the following?” 1 = never, 6 = several times/day.

## Social Media Use.

Lee (2013) found that information motivation was positively associated with using Twitter and Facebook for news, and so we control for platform-specific use here. *Facebook use.* “How frequently do you use each of the following social media platforms?” 1 = never, 6 = several times/day. *Other social media use.* Use of Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Twitter were highly intercorrelated, so they were combined into one variable to avoid multicollinearity. Wording/measurement same as for Facebook. Cronbach’s alpha = .79. *Time spent online.* There may be a perception that newsjunkies spend a lot of time online, glued to their screens, and, indeed, the INFO measure assesses things like checking news during down time. So it is appropriate to control for time spent online. “Please indicate how much time you spend on the internet in an average week.” 1 = less than an hour; 2 = 1–4 h; 3 = 5–9 h; 4 = 10–19 h; 5 = 20+ h.

## Political Partisanship.

As two outcome variables in Study 1 are the use of partisan and less-partisan news outlets, we controlled for political partisanship. *Party identification.* “Regardless of how you may vote, what do you usually consider yourself?” Dummy variables were created for Republican and Democrat, and independents were the reference group. *Political ideology.* “How would you describe your own political philosophy?” Dummy variables were created for liberal and conservative, and moderates were the reference group.

## Demographics.

*Age.* “What is your age?” Ratio-level measurement. *Gender.* “Are you...” 1 = male, 2 = female. *Education.* “What is the highest level of education you have completed?” 1 = no formal education, 8 = completed graduate school (M.S., M.D., or Ph.D., etc.). *Unemployed.* “What is your employment status?” 1 = Not employed but looking for work, 0 = other. *Urban resident.* “Which of the following best describes the area where you live?” 1 = urban, 0 = non-urban. *Income.* “Which of the following categories best describes your total annual household income before taxes?” 1 = less than \$15,000, 11 = \$250,000+. *Person of color/white.* 1 = respondent identifies as person of color, 0 = identifies as white.

## Study 1 Analyses

Analyses were conducted using SPSS 28. Multiple linear regression models were constructed predicting each hard news consumption and soft news consumption. Multicollinearity tolerance was .20, and none of the independent variables violated that threshold. Pairwise exclusion of cases was used.

Seven binary logistic regressions were run using the same variables to predict use/non-use of FOX News, MSNBC, NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN, BBC. Nagelkerke’s omnibus R-squared assessed each of the models as a whole. Case weights ranged from a minimum of .20 to a maximum of 5.00; IQ range for the weights was 0.77–2.20.

## Study 1 Results

Study 1 examined relationships between the newsjunkie trait—*intrinsic need for orientation (INFO)*—and hard news consumption, soft news consumption, use of partisan news outlets, and use of less-partisan outlets, after controlling for other measures of news consumption, social media use, political partisanship, and demographics. H1 said INFO would be positively correlated with hard news consumption while controlling for the other variables. H1 was supported. Table 1 shows standardized betas for the model predicting hard news consumption. INFO was the second strongest predictor of hard news consumption, after soft news consumption. The model explained substantial variance in hard news consumption: 55.5%. The strongest predictor of hard news consumption was soft news consumption. Consuming news via computer, TV, and newspapers all positively predicted hard news consumption. Facebook use was not correlated with hard news consumption, though “other” social media use (combined Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, computed as one index because the variables

**Table 1.** Predictors of Hard News Consumption (Standardized Betas and PValues)

Predictor variables	Beta	Sig.
Intrinsic need for orientation	.227	.000
<b>News consumption</b>		
Soft news consumption	.317	.000
Smartphone news consumption	.022	.235
Computer news consumption	.087	.000
Tablet news consumption	.017	.367
TV news consumption	.059	.002
Newspaper use	.118	.000
Radio news consumption	.030	.104
<b>Social media use</b>		
Facebook use	-.029	.086
Other social media use	.057	.018
Time spent online	.138	.000
<b>Political partisanship</b>		
Republican	.008	.699
Democrat	-.016	.408
Independents = ref. group		
Liberal	.014	.440
Conservative	-.002	.915
white = ref. Group Moderates = ref. group		
<b>Demographics</b>		
Age	.190	.000
Gender (identifies as female)	-.065	.000
Education	.043	.020
Unemployed	.016	.321
Urban resident	-.007	.686
Income	.053	.004
Identifies as person of color white = ref. group	.012	.488
Minimal N	1,965	
Maximum N	2,059	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	55.5%	

Bold values are the ones that are statistically significant

were strongly inter-correlated) and time spent online were both positive correlates of hard news use.

H2 said INFO would positively predict soft news consumption while controlling for the other variables, but that the association would be weaker than that for INFO-Hard news use. H2 was partially supported. INFO did not predict soft news consumption at all, and, given the results of H1, INFO did positively predict hard news consumption. The strongest predictor of soft news consumption was hard news consumption. The model's standardized betas are in Table 2. TV news use, newspaper use, and radio news consumption all positively predicted soft news use, as did time spent online and other social media use. The model explained substantial variance in soft news consumption: 52.6%.

H3 stated INFO would be positively associated with the use of both partisan and less-partisan news outlets (BBC, ABC, NBC, others) but that the associations between INFO and the use of less-partisan news outlets would be stronger than the relationships between INFO-partisan outlets (MSNBC and

FOX News). H3 was partially supported. INFO was a significant, positive predictor of use of all news outlets except CBS. While odds ratios were greater for the other non-partisan news outlets than they were for FOX News, the odds ratio for MSNBC was the largest of all the news organizations (see Table 3). The Wald-chi square statistic (based on coefficients and standard errors in the logistic regression models), was used to test for statistical differences between the odds ratios, and there were no significant differences between the odds ratios >1; the Wald statistic for comparing the largest and smallest odds ratios, for example, that for FOX News and MSNBC, was 1.964 ( $p > .05$ ). The problem with comparing odds ratios across models is due primarily to omitted variables; however, tests of significance for odds ratios across different models that include the same independent variables, and especially data collected on the same sample (see Mood, 2010), the Wald test is appropriate.

## Study 2

### Hypothesis and Research Question

Study 2 was a second, national survey of U.S. adults ( $N = 1,054$ ), conducted in March 2021, testing the relationship between the newsjunkie trait—intrinsic need for orientation (INFO)—and political knowledge. Study 1 provided some evidence that newsjunkies are sophisticated news consumers, much more likely to consume hard news than are persons with a weak INFO, and they favor hard news over soft news. INFO positively predicted the use of six major news organizations, both partisan and less-partisan. Those findings help drive Study 2's hypothesis: that newsjunkies, given their specific news consumption preferences, will demonstrate greater political knowledge than persons with a weak INFO:

**H:** INFO will positively predict political knowledge, after controlling for other news consumption measures, reliance on specific news outlets, social media use, political party identification, and demographics.

As the dependent variable in Study 2 is political knowledge, we wanted to adequately scrutinize the role of consuming political news specifically. We thus posed an RQ on the following potential interaction:

**RQ:** Do INFO and political news consumption exhibit an interaction effect on political knowledge, whereby the positive effect of INFO on political knowledge is stronger among respondents who consume political news?

## Study 2 Method

Study 2 was a second, national survey of U.S. adults' ( $N = 1,054$ ) newsjunkie characteristic and political knowledge, as well as numerous control variables.

### Study 2 Survey and Data Collection

The authors commissioned the survey from Qualtrics. Respondents were resident U.S. adults ages 18 and up ( $N = 1,054$ ), who completed the survey March 18–22, 2021. While the study is not a true probability survey, respondents were randomly selected based on characteristics reflecting the underlying population of interest, in this case, U.S. census figures. To avoid duplication, Qualtrics checks IP addresses and uses digital fingerprinting technology. IRB coverage was the same as in Study 1.

**Table 2.** Predictors of Soft News Consumption (Standardized Betas and *P*Values)

Predictor variables	Beta	Sig.
Intrinsic need for orientation	.012	.542
<b>News consumption</b>		
Hard news consumption	.338	.000
Smartphone news consumption	.041	.033
Computer news consumption	.018	.349
Tablet news consumption	.036	.068
TV news consumption	.161	.000
Newspaper use	.117	.000
Radio news consumption	.061	.000
<b>Social media use</b>		
Facebook use	.010	.579
Other social media use	.206	.000
Time spent online	-.035	.041
<b>Political partisanship</b>		
Republican	-.036	.077
Democrat	.017	.389
Independents = ref. group		
Liberal	-.011	.544
Conservative	-.003	.885
Moderates = ref. group		
<b>Demographics</b>		
Age	-.172	.000
Gender (identifies as female)	.009	.609
Education	.002	.929
Unemployed	-.045	.007
Urban resident	.081	.000
Income	-.006	.748
Identifies as person of color	.005	.790
white = ref. group		
Minimal <i>N</i>	1,965	
Maximum <i>N</i>	2,059	
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	52.6%	

Bold values are the ones that are statistically significant

**Table 3.** Logistic Regression Predictors of Use of Specific News Outlets (Odds Ratios, *p* Values)

Predictor variables	FOX	MSNBC	NBC	CBS	ABC	CNN	BBC
Intrinsic need for orientation	1.0531.001	1.0901.000	1.0691.000	1.0181.260	1.0751.000	1.0671.000	1.0671.000
<b>News consumption</b>							
Smartphone news consumption	1.0691.05	1.1531.001	1.011.783	1.041.261	1.0741.033	1.1031.006	1.101.055
Computer news consumption	1.0221.5	0.9781.5	72.9881.708	1.021.534	1.0741.024	1.0551.103	1.211.000
Tablet news consumption	1.0211.51	1.0501.189	1.041.269	1.041.206	1.0251.411	1.0681.035	1.061.168
TV news consumption	1.2371.000	1.0671.210	1.3251.000	1.3091.000	1.4671.000	1.1681.000	0.9371.208
Newspaper use	0.9311.040	1.0331.446	1.1471.000	1.1481.001	1.1131.002	9721.432	1.211.000
Radio news consumption	1.1601.000	1.0781.07	1.0641.070	1.0731.033	0.9341.039	1.0061.865	0.9751.562
<b>Social media use</b>							
Facebook use	1.011.655	0.9011.005	9401.053.9	581.170	.9891.723	1.0621.057	.9391.115
Other social media use	1.0181.176	1.0301.059	0.9891.397	1.0061.65	9811.129	1.0391.003	1.061.000
Time spent online	1.1421.006	1.0901.153	1.151.007	0.9941.896	9301.130	1.041.460	9481.366
<b>Political partisanship</b>							
Republican	1.681.000	0.6571.025	9981.989	1.2201.167	1.191.21	0.6151.000	.861.406
Democrat	0.6081.000	1.1631.38	1.471.005	1.1291.369	1.561.000	1.641.000	.881.645
[Independents = ref. group]							
Liberal	0.6511.002		2.7401.032	0.8871.380	0.6701.003	1.0361.79	1.051.749
Conservative	1.7551.000	0.9411.72	0.7501.043	0.6841.004	0.6741.002	0.6211.001	0.8491.319
[Moderates = ref. group]							
<b>Demographics</b>							
Age	.09941.127	1.0171.000	1.0141.000	1.0161.000	0.9951.199	1.0021.69	0.9731.000
Gender (identifies as female)	0.9121.399	0.9201.527	1.4541.000	1.231.060	1.061.827	8451.133	0.6841.005
Education	1.031.363	1.0231.56	1.1121.002	1.0721.034	0.9691.317	1.131.000	1.141.000
Unemployed	1.391.112	0.8461.528	1.5831.033	1.6061.025	1.7661.007	1.031.88	0.7911.379
Urban resident	0.9561.738	1.3221.118	0.7691.159	0.6981.008	0.9201.534	1.331.044	1.331.132
Income	0.9791.373	0.9351.018	0.9581.086	0.9621.112	1.0081.74	1.0331.17	1.021.402
Identifies as person of color (white = reference group)	-0.9301.543	-0.8891.407	-0.8921.354	-0.8611.216	-0.731.008	-0.8691.24	-1.081.560
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.229	.165	.199	.162	.198	.267	.336
N	2,059	2,059	2,059	2,059	2,059	2,059	2,059

Some registered respondents were recruited via email, while others participated after registering as a Qualtrics panelist and seeing available surveys and remuneration offered. Compensation included cash, gift cards, and/or other incentives. Response rates are inapplicable as respondents must complete the survey to receive compensation. To avoid self-selection bias, survey invitations omitted details about the survey content. Study 2 descriptives are in [Appendix B](#).

### Dependent Variable

#### *Political Knowledge.*

Research on political knowledge frequently asks respondents as few as five questions (see [Carpini & Keeter, 1993](#); [Anson, 2018](#)). In Study 2, we asked respondents 10 questions, which, while still a modest number given the vast universe of possible political knowledge, nonetheless represents a robust dependent variable.

A plurality of the 10 questions, 4, focused on knowledge of international affairs, and 3 questions were posed on each U.S. political process and U.S. current political affairs. Full questions and percent of correct responses are in [Appendix C](#). On *political processes*: (a) What body determines U.S. laws constitutional; (b) The year of the next U.S. midterm elections; (c) Who breaks a 50–50 U.S. Senate vote; on *current political affairs*: (d) Which party controls the U.S. House of Representatives; (e) The U.S. Secretary of State's name; (f)

Number of times Donald Trump was impeached; *Foreign affairs*: (g) Pakistan's capital; (h) Whether President Biden, as of the survey date, had said he was willing to negotiate with Iran; (i) Whether the U.K. had left the E.U.; (j) Mexico's president.

### Independent Variables

#### *Intrinsic Need For Orientation.*

Same four items in the scale were used in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha = .824.

#### *News Consumption.*

Wording/measurement same as in Study 1. Getting news from TV, newspaper, smartphone, computer, radio.

We used a proxy for hard news consumption (political news use) and soft news consumption (entertainment news use). "Among the following types of news, which do you follow regularly?", 1 = yes; 0 = no. Asked for both *political* and *entertainment* news use.

#### *News Organization Reliance.*

Use of each FOX News, MSNBC, CNN, and BBC. The first three networks were chosen because they are the main cable news networks in the U.S. BBC was selected because it is popular in the U.S. but originated abroad. Additionally, under the U.K.'s Ofcom mandates, the BBC has a legal

obligation to provide factual political knowledge and is fined for reporting false information. Same wording/measurement as in Study 1.

### Social Media Use.

Separate variables for using *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *TikTok*. Wording/measurement same as in Study 1. Unlike in Study 1, the use of the latter three platforms was not strongly intercorrelated, so the measures were examined as separate predictors.

### Political Party Identification.

“Regardless of how you may vote, what do you usually consider yourself?” Dummy variables were created for each Republican, Democrat, and independent, and “other” = reference group.

### Demographics.

Age, gender, education, income, identifies as a person of color. Wording/measurement same as in Study 1.

## Study 2 Analyses

Analyses were run in SPSS 28. Political knowledge is a count variable, so Poisson loglinear regression was used. Political knowledge was equi-dispersed:  $M = 6.57$ ,  $S^2 = 5.9$ , reflected in a deviance estimate of .71. Descriptives are in [Appendix C](#). There were some missing cases for education ( $n = 26$ ) and income ( $n = 99$ ), which were replaced with the medians from their respective distributions: 4 for education = completed some college; and 5 for income = \$50,000–\$74,999 annual household income. Study 2 data were weighted similarly to those in Study 1—to align more closely with the general U.S. population—for education, age, sex, race/ethnicity, region, and household income. In Study 1, we also weighted the data for size of household, marital status, and employment status, but this was not done in Study 2 as those latter three variables were not included in the questionnaire.

We tested for an interaction effect of INFO and political news consumption on political knowledge using  $2 \times 4$  Factorial ANOVA, comparing means of political knowledge across four categories of INFO and across the two categories of political news consumption. INFO was coded into four groups: lowest ( $4 \leq x \leq 9$ ), low ( $9 < x \leq 13.207$ ), high ( $13.207 < x \leq 17$ ), and highest ( $17 < x \leq 20$ ). INFO was normally distributed, and these categories were based on  $M = 13.21$ , and  $SD = 4.1$ . We followed the practice of prior studies like [Hellmuelle, Lischka, & Humprecht \(2021\)](#) and [Hill, Samuel, and Foti \(2016\)](#) in creating the categories, and also using means and SDs from prior work on INFO specifically. In Study 1, the INFO  $M = 14.38$  and  $SD = 3.95$ , and among  $N = 3,239$  respondents in three Arab countries, the  $M$  was 14.65 and  $SD = 3.31$  (see [Martin, 2020](#)). Descriptives for the INFO groups are in [Appendix C](#). Levene’s test for variance homogeneity was not significant ( $P = .054$ ), indicating similar variance among the groups.

## Study 2 Results

Study 2’s hypothesis said newsjunkies—people with a strong INFO—would demonstrate greater political knowledge than non-newsjunkies, after controlling for news consumption frequency, news organization reliance, social media use, and other variables. That hypothesis was not supported ([Table 4](#)).

Consuming political news, the proxy for hard news consumption, was by far the strongest predictor of political knowledge, and it was positive. The proxy for soft news consumption—entertainment news use—was not associated either positively or negatively with political knowledge. Using FOX News negatively predicted political knowledge. There was no difference in political knowledge between users and nonusers of each MSNBC, CNN, and BBC. None of the social media use variables predicted political knowledge, though TikTok use approached significance ( $p = .071$ ) as a negative correlate. Democrats and Independents did better on the political knowledge quiz than Republicans or those who identified as “other.” The finding for Independents is novel, given that prior research has long reported that Independents consume less news and are less politically engaged than partisans ([Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954](#); [Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960](#)). Age and income positively predicted political knowledge. The omnibus likelihood ratio ( $\chi^2 = 363.21$ ;  $df = 24$ ,  $p < .001$ ) showed marked improvement over the null model.

The RQ in Study 2 asked if INFO and political news consumption exhibit an interaction effect on political knowledge.

**Table 4.** Poisson regression Predictors of Political Knowledge

Predictor variables	B	Wald $\chi^2$	Sig.
<b>1. Intrinsic need for orientation</b>	-.006	2.31	.129
<b>News consumption</b>			
TV news consumption	.013	1.83	.178
Newspaper use	-.017	3.61	.057
Smartphone news consumption	-.003	.125	.724
Computer news consumption	.011	1.75	.185
Radio news consumption	-.003	.151	.698
Political (hard) news consumption	.204	49.08	<.001
Entertainment (soft) news consumption	.012	.16	.689
<b>News organization reliance</b>			
FOX news	-.066	5.29	.021
MSNBC	-.003	.008	.93
CNN	-.011	.115	.734
BBC	.042	.302	.583
<b>Social media use</b>			
Facebook	-.01	2.04	.153
Twitter	.003	.127	.72
Instagram	-.011	1.58	.209
TikTok	-.017	3.26	.071
<b>Political party identification</b>			
Republican	.052	.699	.403
Democrat	.135	4.85	.028
Independent	.169	7.76	.005
(other = reference group)			
<b>Demographics</b>			
Age	.005	18.62	≤.001
Gender (identifies as female)	-.4	1.36	.243
Education	.018	1.43	.232
Income	.028	19.71	≤.001
Identifies as person of color	.012	.156	.692
(white = reference group)			
Minimal N = 999			

They did not. Figure 1 shows means on the political knowledge index among consumers and non-consumers of political news and among four groups of INFO (lowest, low, high, highest). While the data trend toward an interaction, as is visible in Figure 1, the interaction term is nonetheless not significant ( $p = .14$ ). The model shows a main effect of political news use on political knowledge.  $F$ -statistics and other elements of the ANOVA are in Online Appendix C.

## Discussion, Conclusions, and Subsequent Research

Implicit in the colloquial use of “newsjunkie” is that consuming news may be, at least somewhat, harmful; that is, newsjunkies use a lot of something that may have negative effects. At the same time, the “newsjunkie” moniker is often used to describe someone who is informed about current events, and some people proudly use the word to describe themselves. The studies conducted here addressed three general questions about newsjunkies, compared to persons with a weak intrinsic need for orientation: (a) Do newsjunkies consume news about serious (hard news) topics?; (b) Do they rely on serious (less-partisan) news outlets?; and (c) Do newsjunkies possess greater political knowledge than non-newsjunkies do? The answers to these questions were, respectively: yes, mostly, and no.

Martin and Sharma (2023) observed almost uniformly pro-social behaviors and attitudes associated with the newsjunkie trait: being registered to vote, intention to vote, and voter conscientiousness. The studies in the current article, though, show some potential downsides of the newsjunkie trait—or, at least, a lack of certain upsides—and also serve as a reminder that more research is needed on characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes associated with INFO. The current

research found that newsjunkies are more inclined to consume hard news—political, international, and economic news—than soft news (entertainment, sports news, etc.). For observers concerned about the quality of information that heavy news users consume, this is a bit of good news. However, the strongest predictor of consuming hard news was consuming soft news, which may be an example of Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet’s (1944) “more-and-more” phenomenon, whereby people who consume one kind of information are also likely to consume other varieties of information. Also, while newsjunkies are more likely than non-newsjunkies to consume less-partisan news, they are also more likely than their counterparts to consume partisan content from FOX News and MSNBC. And that tendency may be at times harmful; Study 2 found that FOX News users registered lower political knowledge than non-FOX users, *ceteris paribus*. This finding aligns with some prior research finding that FOX News website users were less knowledgeable about current affairs than were non-users of the website (Licari, 2020), suggesting that FOX News may provide less information, or at least less information about major current events and about political topics than other outlets do.

This might help explain why INFO did not positively predict political knowledge, counter to what Study 2 hypothesized. A strong newsjunkie trait may lead to increased partisan news consumption, which adversely affects political knowledge, at least when the partisan news provider is FOX. Either way, the null finding in Study 2—that newsjunkies did not report greater levels of political knowledge than non-newsjunkies—must be highlighted and acknowledged. To date, prior research has found that the INFO trait has pro-social predictors and outcomes; Study 2’s null finding on political knowledge is not a pro-social outcome.

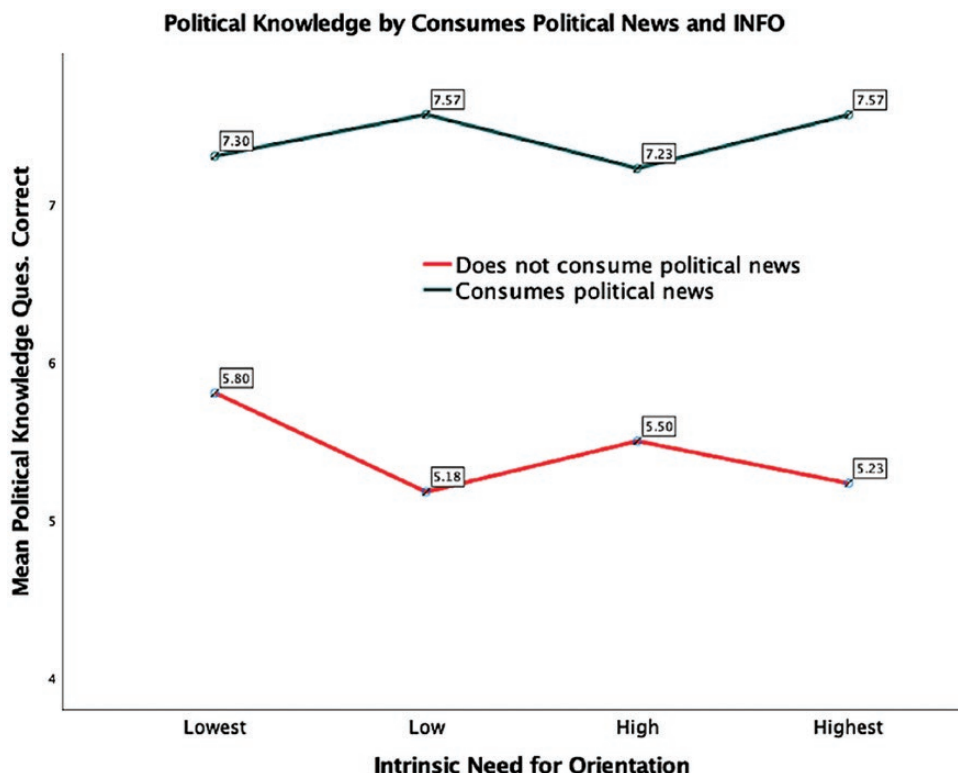


Figure 1. Political knowledge by consumes political news and INFO. Note. Dimensions of figure: 165 × 133mm (300 × 300 DPI).

In another possible connection between the two studies, a strong INFO may predict consumption of hard news and not soft news, but again, perhaps the hard news being consumed is partisan information like that from FOX, which was negatively associated with political knowledge. Future studies can further scrutinize these relationships. In seminal communication parlance, newsjunkies were among the opinion leaders described by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955): individuals who consumed a lot of news and were consulted by other people for information. Still today, so-called news avoiders say they rely on heavy news consumers in their lives to fill gaps in their news knowledge (Palmer & Toff, 2020). However, relying on a general newsjunkie to learn what is going on may not be a wholly beneficial strategy, given that newsjunkies in Study 2 and non-newsjunkies possessed the same level of political knowledge.

While INFO did not positively predict political knowledge, it was not a negative predictor, either. And of course, even though our battery of political knowledge items included 10 questions, this is still a small sample of potential political knowledge, and it remains possible that INFO might predict in different ways performance on some varied or larger combination of political knowledge questions. The questions fielded in Study 2 queried respondents on U.S. political processes, U.S. current affairs, and foreign affairs. While those categories cover a lot of ground, future research can also examine whether newsjunkies know more about local or state-level political and current affairs, or perhaps at the national and international levels but in small countries, like, say, Scotland, Qatar, and Singapore. The INFO measure poses a question asking the extent to which one feels discomfort when they do not know what is going on in the world, but Study 2 found that respondents who strongly agreed with that statement did not necessarily know more about what is going on in the world than non-newsjunkies do. Again, it remains possible that INFO positively predicts knowledge of other kinds of news and political processes.

The finding in Study 2 that newsjunkies did not demonstrate greater political knowledge than non-newsjunkies is relevant in the context of uses and gratifications, upon which, along with self-determination theory, the INFO concept is based. If one of the gratifications that motivate newsjunkies to regularly consume news is mastery of political knowledge—competence, in self-determination theory—being a newsjunkie broadly, consuming all manner of news, may not be the most fruitful approach. Rather, Study 2 demonstrated, consuming political news specifically was a significant positive predictor of increased political knowledge. Study 2 asked about consuming news on politics broadly, not just, say, news about a U.S. presidential election, so the results here should not suggest that the original INFO measure should be re-employed in future research. Indeed, the original INFO measure asked consumers, among other things, how interested they are in a presidential election, not if they consume news about the election or news about politics.

To observers who lament the consumption of celebrity news over public affairs news and partisan news over less-partisan news, this study offers both cause for some optimism as well as some foreboding. Newsjunkies showed little appetite for soft news. Infotainment, then, which can attract large audiences (Anderson, 2004), may nonetheless be less effective at keeping newsjunkies coming back. At the same time, newsjunkies were more likely to get news from

partisan news outlets than persons with a weak INFO trait. And still, newjunkies are also more likely to get news from less-partisan outlets than non-newsjunkies are. However, some partisan news in the U.S. gratifies, or at least attracts, more consumers than less-partisan news does—FOX News attracts more people than PBS does, for example. In Study 1, though, FOX was listed by respondents only slightly more than CNN was (46% vs. 42%, respectively), and in Study 2 the figures were equal (37% and 38%, respectively). Future research can examine additional attitudes, characteristics, and behaviors—such as measures of political sophistication, for example—that may potentially mediate or moderate the relationships between INFO and use of partisan and less-partisan news outlets.

Self-determination theory holds in part that a growing feeling of competence is necessary for a behavior to be intrinsically motivated. Thus, for news consumption to crystallize into an intrinsically motivated behavior, someone who consumes news should feel increasingly competent in their knowledge of news reporting conventions, language, and content. In the current study, the INFO trait was strongly correlated with consuming coverage of hard news, suggesting that non-newsjunkies may not be sufficiently competent, or at least not feel sufficiently competent, in interpreting hard news reportage.

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