The analogical and digital divide: media access and attention to news in Argentina before and during a presidential election campaign

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Abstract

This chapter aims to elucidate which social and political factors influence citizens’ information environment and access to news. It finds that there are significant differences in level of access to media from one location to the other and, within locations, across socio-economic strata, men and women, and young and old, and it proposes that attention to news is influenced both by the opportunities offered by the media environment, and personal characteristics such as interest and motivation. In doing so, this chapter weighs in on two concurrent discussions in the field of media and communications: the examination on whether new media complement or displace traditional sources of news, and the debate between the “full information” and the “burglar alarm” model of citizenship.
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“I wake up and the newspaper has already been delivered (...) I read it and once I arrive at my job, I read Clarín, La Nación, Página, Perfil, some other news site (...) in the evening I watch television, particularly political shows, some in Channel 26, some shows from TN (...) I watch a little of each newscast, an hour give or take, to see what happened during the day (...) I like to be up to date with news, particularly about politics, which I am very interested in (...) it is a way of participating, getting informed might be the most passive way to participate, but I am interested in being informed, talking to people, discussing ideas.” Thus, Federico, a 30-year old-employee in the public sector in the city of Buenos Aires, explained his daily information diet (a print newspaper, several news sites online, at least two hours of newscasts and political television shows each evening)¹. This was in late November 2010, almost a year before the presidential election of 2011, but he was already paying attention to the campaign “I am following (the elections), and I am interested, of course (...) maybe it is a little early, I suppose that staring in December, when some candidates start to run officially there will be more information, but I believe it is a subject that is on the mind of any Argentinean”. Federico was a college graduate and lived with his brother During the following year, he was interviewed again in April and October, just before the election. He remained an avid political junkie, watching political shows, reading news online, and although his print newspaper reading habits faded, he kept the subscription due to benefits for subscribers. Less than a week before the presidential election, he explained that although it was “very clear that (incumbent president) Cristina (Fernandez de Kirchner) would win (...) “who comes second is important, because it will be the one who leads as the opposition.”² All the interviews were held in a stylish café around the
corner from his office, in the well-to-do neighborhood of Recoleta, just before or after his workday

Ten days after the first interview with Federico, I interviewed Maru, a 30-year-old single mother of two, who was unemployed at the time. Less than 45 kilometers away, in the district of José C. Paz, in a dirt yard with two dogs and a bunny, she described a very different approach to acquiring information “(In the morning) I listen to CDs, then (...) at noon, when I return from leaving the girls at school I turn on the television news. (In the evening) I don’t watch a lot, it is the same things I’ve seen at noon (...) sometimes we buy Clarín to look for a job (in the classified ads). (...) We don’t have internet yet (...) it would cost 100 pesos (...) I’d love to have internet access, I go to the internet to look for a job, I created my own page on...what do you call it...the facebook. I went to a cybercafé, I go once a week, it costs one peso (...) I don’t (get news) online, that is why I tell you, I’d like to see more, because I go an hour, a little while, to look for a job mostly (...) this is new to me, I had computer studies at school, but a long time ago, all this stuff wasn’t here, my daughter uses the computer better than me, I spend an hour just to strike a key.”

Maru said she was not paying attention to the presidential campaign but that she would “like to know more about the candidates.” In May of the following year she had acquired home access to the internet but she was still using it for facebook and job seeking “I am still not used to going online (for news), but I think it is more advanced than television”. By October she had found a job at a plastics factory, and the interview was held on a Saturday morning, the only free time she had between her work and caring for her children. Regarding her access to media, she explained that she had problems with her ISP “the service was shut down and we were paying (...) and it is slow...but I didn’t go (online), because, you see, I do thing around the house, I clean, it takes time, if I am there (she points to the PC) I am not
doing anything.” When asked about the campaign, she answered that she was not following elections closely because she “knew Cristina (Fernández de Kirchner) would win, because the people who already follow her will keep on voting for her.”

These two narratives show how access to and interest in media and communication technologies in general and interest in news and politics in particular cannot be examined separately from the social context in which media use and information acquisition takes place. As media have become increasingly integrated into everyday life, scholarship has examined how access to media and information technologies is distributed across geographic locations and individuals with different levels of education and socioeconomic status. Moreover, research has looked into how different people appropriate and make use of technologies, and the impact both access and use have on different aspects of social life, such as knowledge acquisition and civic and political participation. This chapter aims to elucidate which social and political factors influence citizens’ information environment and access to news. It finds that there are significant differences in level of access to media from one location to the other and, within locations, across socio-economic strata, men and women, and young and old, and it proposes that that attention to news is influenced both by the opportunities offered by the media environment, and personal characteristics such as interest and motivation. In doing so, this chapter weighs in on two concurrent discussions in the field of media and communications: the examination on whether new media complement or displace traditional sources of news, and the debate between the “full information” and the “burglar alarm” model of citizenship.

**Media Access and Inequality in Latin America**

In modern democracies, media play a fundamental role in relying information to individuals. Thus, the media environment with which people interact is a crucial
component of the opportunity individuals have to become informed. Prior defines the media environment as “the different media sources routinely available to people at any point in time”, which comprises the properties of the media to which people have access and the media markets in which they live. Media and information technologies are the “sociotechnical systems that support and facilitate mediated cultural expression, interpersonal interaction, and the production and circulation of information goods and services”. However, the media environment is neither stable nor a product of conditions completely external to the individuals. People create and manipulate their media environments, within structural conditions that, in turn, respond to changes in agents’ practices by adapting to them, supporting and promoting new patterns of behavior. Moreover, both the media environment and the way audiences choose to interact with it may change during times of heightened political activity, such as elections or government crises, due to increased interest in news in general and certain kinds of news in particular.

Several studies have shown that there are steep differences in access to media and information technologies across countries and, within countries, among different population segments. However, comparatively less research has focused on regional differences across geographical subunits of the same country. Some scholars propose that promoting higher and more equitable levels of connectivity would alleviate social inequalities, lead to higher levels of social capital and democratization.

A different stream of research focuses on the social factors that shape the use of technology and argues that social and political inequalities predate and constrain diffusion of media and information technologies and will not be solved by simply providing online access. Other researchers propose that access to the internet does not necessarily entail effective use of technology. DiMaggio and colleagues indicate that
the question “is less `who can find a network connection from which to log on?’ than `what are people doing, and what are they able to do, when they go online’”. They suggest that differences across the technical means such as the speed of the connection, the autonomy in using the web, the skills people bring to their use of the medium, and the social support upon which internet users are able to draw, can lead to digital inequality among online users.

Research on access to the internet in Latin America indicates that use of media and information technologies varies greatly according to socioeconomic and geographic factors: wealthier, educated and urban individuals are more likely to go online than poor citizens in rural areas. Although lack of access could be partly explained by infrastructure deficits, Jordán and colleagues find that there is a “demand gap”, by which although broadband internet is accessible to the majority of the population, large percentages of individuals choose not to subscribe due to the cost of the service or lack of interest. These inequalities in access to media are predated by steep inequalities across socioeconomic status groups and geographical regions.

Scholars have proposed several approaches to solving digital inequality in Latin America. Some authors recommend that, in order to bridge this gap, telecommunications policy should strive to offer universal access, characterized as access to media technology “in every community, neighborhood, village, or vicinity” rather than universal service (service to every home), because “given the budget constraints faced by Latin American governments, it is not realistic to provide telephone lines, computers, or internet access to all households.” However, research on uses of media and information technologies indicate that autonomy of use, or “the freedom to use the technology when and where one wants to” predicts effective use and beneficial outcomes.
Information acquisition practices

Another aspect of the media environment has captured the attention of scholars who study information acquisition: the relationship between news consumption in online and traditional media. Two positions have organized the debate: one argues that internet news use complements traditional media consumption, and the other that it displaces it.

The first group of scholar argues that the use of online media complements access to traditional media. A related perspective draws on uses and gratification theory, which argues that audiences’ needs and goals shape media consumption, to propose that people’s interests and motivations shape both their media environment and their information acquisition practices more than media attributes. The opposite perspective, based on the principle of relative constancy, contends that there is a displacement effect, by which use of newer media displace traditional media such as print newspapers and television. Research suggests that displacement is partly dependent upon demographic factors such as age and socioeconomic status, with effects appearing to be greater among younger and more educated users.

News consumption processes have also been the focus of the debate between the “full information” and the “burglar alarm” models for information acquisition. The full information model proposes that citizens want a fully-fledged provision of news, and that less that complete and constant coverage of the most important issues facing society drives audiences’ attention away from news media. The opposing view draws on the concept of rational ignorance to suggest that the news media should call citizens’ attention to urgent matters rather than suppose that citizens follow all public affairs news closely.

Methods
The two narratives that open this chapter represent larger trends in access to media and information technologies across different locations in Argentina. To measure level of access to various media and information technologies, and the relationship between social factors, access and attention to news in varying socio-political contexts, this chapter relies on a mixed-methods approach, combining in-depth interviews, and a panel survey.

Data were gathered in four different locations before and during the 2011 presidential campaign in Argentina. The rationale and methodological design draw on previous work on regional differences within countries, such as Putnam’s, which examined institutional performance in Italian regions with vast inequalities in social capital, and Cleary and Stoke’s, which explored the relationship between social trust and democratic quality across different regions of Mexico and Argentina. Studying lower-level units, such as regions, provinces or towns, is an effective strategy to examine multiple variables and simultaneously manage the uneven nature of major processes of social transformation.

Argentina is a fruitful setting to conduct this analysis due to two factors. First, the high degree of intra-country variability in two key independent variables: socioeconomic indicators and online connectivity. Second, it is similar to other countries in that it is a competitive democracy, with a well-developed media system. The selection of locations which will be studied aims at creating a 2-by-2-by-2 comparison framework, including one district with high socio-economic indicators and high levels of access to media and information technologies, another district with high socioeconomic indicators but low levels of access to technology, a third district with low socioeconomic indicators and high levels of access, and a fourth district with low socioeconomic indicators and low levels of access to media technologies (Table 1).
Information and participation processes will be examined in these those locations at two times: before and during the campaign, to measure longitudinal as well as cross-sectional variations.

The first district is the capital city, Buenos Aires, which has the lowest percentage of population below poverty level, and whose population has reached the highest level of education. According to the latest UNDP reports, Buenos Aires has a high human development index and has a service-based economic organization. It also has high degrees of connectivity, with 44.68 broadband connections and 36 residential internet connections of any kind per 100 inhabitants, high levels of newspaper circulation, access to cable television and mobile and traditional telephone service. The second district is the capital of the province of Santa Fe. It also has comparatively high income and education levels, and a large diversified economic structure, but lower degrees of online connectivity, with only 3.4 broadband and 8.79 residential internet connections of any kind per 100 inhabitants. The third locality for fieldwork was José C. Paz, a district in the greater Buenos Aires. The whole greater Buenos Aires, an industrial district in which deindustrialization has caused chronic unemployment and structural poverty, has more than a third of the population living under the poverty line. In José C. Paz, more than 25% of the population have unmet basic needs. Although there are no municipal-level data on connectivity, the whole province of Buenos Aires has 8.42 broadband connections per hundred inhabitants, and anecdotal evidence suggests that Greater Buenos Aires has higher connectivity and media circulation levels due to its geographic proximity to the city of Buenos Aires. The fourth district to be examined is the capital of the province of Chaco, Resistencia, which has the second lowest human development index in Argentina and whose economy
has a backward productive and economic environment. It is also the province with the lowest level of connectivity, with 0.25 broadband connections per 100 inhabitants.

In the first wave of the survey, 1600 subjects were interviewed across the four locations in April 2011 (399 in Buenos Aires, 400 in Santa Fe, 400 in Jose C Paz and 401 in Resistencia). Interviews were conducted face-to-face in Jose C Paz and in Resistencia, and by telephone in Buenos Aires and Santa Fe. The AAPOR1 average response rate was 58%. For the second wave, the same 1600 subjects were re-contacted, and 1023 answered the instrument (177 in Buenos Aires, 228 in Santa Fe, 229 in José C. Paz and 389 in Resistencia), thus obtaining an AAPOR1 response rate of 64.2%. To understand the motivations and interpretations that drive access to media and attention to news, this study includes in-depth interviews with citizens from the four locations at three points in time: October-November 2010, April-May 2011, and September-October 2011, just before Election Day. The two final waves overlapped with the first and second waves of the survey. Interviews allow exploring respondents’ social and informational setting, as well as their motives and interpretations.

Recruitment of citizens was undertaken through a mix of strategies: a referral network of contacts, notices in churches, schools universities and social network sites, and snowballing. This procedure yielded a convenience sample of 46 respondents (12 from Buenos Aires, 11 from José C. Paz, 11 from Resistencia and 12 from Santa Fe) of various ages and education levels. There were 24 women and 22 men, 19 were between 18 and 34 years old, 16 were between 35 and 49 years old, and 11 were 50 or older. 9 of the respondents had less than a high school education, 26 had completed high school or some half post-secondary education, and 15 had completed college. Due to sample attrition, 45 respondents participated in the second wave and 41 in the third wave interviews. The conversations were conducted in a place selected by the respondents.
and lasted an average of 40 minutes in the first wave, 25 during in the second, and 34 in the third wave of the survey.

**Unequal access to media**

The first wave of the survey established that there were significant differences in level of access to media from one location to the other and, within locations, across socio-economic strata. For instance, while in the city of Buenos Aires more than three quarters, and in Santa Fe more than two thirds of the population had home access to the Internet, the percentage drops to 37% in Resistencia and 25% in Jose C Paz. Moreover, across all locations, people in the lower socio-economic stratum had on average 30 percentage points fewer of internet connectivity than those in the middle and higher classes (Figure 2.1). The differences across geographic locations suggests that connectivity data given for countries as a whole mask important differences within countries: while Buenos Aires has first-word levels of connectivity, José C. Paz lags behind some African countries.

Cable and satellite television was much more widely and evenly distributed across the four locations, although there were still differences across districts and socioeconomic strata\(^{58}\) (Figure 2.2). In Buenos Aires, Santa Fe and Resistencia, more than two thirds of respondents across socioeconomic strata have pay television at home, and only in José C Paz did access fall below the 50% mark for those with low socioeconomic status, while more than 7 out of 10 in the middle and higher classes had access to cable or satellite television. These percentages suggest that home access to the internet was not restricted due to infrastructural issues such as availability of cable and antennas, but rather restricted due to the costs of the hardware and the connection. These findings support the existence of a demand gap in Argentina.\(^{59}\)
The first wave of the survey also shows that access to media is related to demographic characteristics such as age, gender, level of education, and socioeconomic status. Access to broadcast television was not significantly associated to these factors, whereas access to cable or satellite television was reduced among those with lower SES and education level (Table 2.3), and all types of internet access were significantly related to age, level of education and geographic location. Younger respondents, men, those with more years of education and those of middle and high socioeconomic status were significantly more likely to have access to the internet.

The strongest association was evident in home online access: extra year in age was associated with a decline of 2.1% in the odds of having internet access at home, while for men the increase in the odds of having internet at home was of 45.1%. Those in the middle class had a decrease of 58%, and those of lower socioeconomic status had a decrease of 90% in the odds of having home access, compared to their more privileged peers, while those who had completed college had a significant increase on the odd when compared to respondents who had not finished high school. Likewise, those in Jose C Paz and Resistencia were significantly less likely to have internet access at home than those in Buenos Aires and Santa Fe. These associations explained around a third of the variation in internet access.

Access to the internet at work followed similar patterns (Table 2.1), except for the lack of a significant difference between those of high and middle socioeconomic status. Institutional online access, such as from a school local government office or library, was not significantly related to gender or socioeconomic status, but was more available to young people and those of higher educational level, and less to inhabitants of José C Paz. Cybercafe access, in contrast, which some had presented as a viable option to home access, was significantly more likely for the young, those with higher
socioeconomic status and level of education, and citizens of Buenos Aires. While cell phone access was not significantly related to gender or education level, older respondents, those with lower socioeconomic status, and those in Jose C. Paz and Santa Fe were significantly less likely to have an internet-enabled phone.

From the first to the second wave of the survey, in October 2011, home online access increased significantly in Resistencia and Santa Fe (from 37% of households to 43% in Resistencia, and from 67% to 73% in Santa Fe), mostly due to increases in middle-class respondents acquiring access, but not in José C. Paz or Buenos Aires (Figure 2.3), and pay television access did not exhibit significant changes in any of the districts, which suggests it is a much more settled technology (figure 2.4).

**Unequal access to news**

Access to news sources varied according to geographic location and wave of the survey (Figure 2.5). Television was the most popular news sources both before and during the campaign, with 70% of respondents in April, and 74% in October reported watching TV news during the previous week (the difference is statistically significant). However, the pattern differed from district to district: television news viewership increased significantly in José C. Paz and Resistencia, decreased significantly in Santa Fe, and did not change significantly in Buenos Aires. In spite of the increase, attention to television news was significantly lower in Resistencia during the two waves of the survey, which may be explained by the fact that Resistencia was the only district with significantly lower access to broadcast television compared to the other three. In contrast, reported print newspaper readership did not change significantly: 52% of the respondents in April and 49% in October said they had read a print newspaper during the previous week. The pattern also differed by district: newspaper readership increased in Resistencia, and did not change significantly in any of the three other locations.
Newspaper reading was significantly lower in José C Paz than in the other three districts, which could be explained by the fact that José C Paz was the only town that did not have a local daily newspaper. Regarding online news, 27% and 30% reported having consumed news on the internet in April and October, and again, only Resistencia showed a significant increase in online news consumption. These findings suggest that during the 2011 election, Argentinian citizens were not behaving as monitorial citizens. The in-depth interviews suggest that the predictability of the election outcome may have forestalled an increase in attention to news.

Those who gained access to pay television (N=63) between the two waves of the survey did not change substantially their news consumption habits, which contradicts Prior's suggestion that people will switch from news viewing to entertainment viewing when given increased choice. In contrast, among the 70 respondents who acquired internet access, the percentage that had gone online for news during the previous week increased doubled from 15% to 32%, while the percentage among the general population remained unchanged. Thus, increasing choice in the case of people who acquired internet access led to increased news, rather than entertainment, consumption.

Moreover, the factors associated with each type of news consumption also varied according to district and closeness to the election. Before the campaign, men and older people were more likely to have read a print newspaper during the previous week: being a man increased the odds of having accessed news in print by 60%, and each extra year of age was related to 2 percent increase in the odds in the same direction (Table 2.2). Age was also positively related to watching news on television. Respondents who had fewer years of education were also significantly less likely to have read a newspaper, but the coefficients for socioeconomic status, although in the expected direction, did not reach statistical significance. Regarding districts, both respondents in
Resistencia and José C. Paz were significantly less likely to have read a print newspaper during the previous week than respondents in Buenos Aires. Access to other media (pay television, internet at home, at work or at an institution) and attention to television news were positively related to print news reading, even when controlling for age, socioeconomic status or level of education, which casts doubt on the possibility that having access to other media could lead to a decay in newspaper readership. In the October wave of the survey, being from José C. Paz, age, gender, education level, cell phone internet access and attention to television news remained as significant predictors of newspaper readership.

Age was also a significant predictor of having watched a news program during the previous week: in the first wave of the survey, each extra year of age increased the odds of having done do by 1.5 percent. None of the other factors, except cell phone online access and newspaper readership had any significant relationship. However, respondents in Santa Fe were significantly more likely to watch television news, and respondents in Resistencia significantly less so. This could be explained by Santa Fe having a province-wide primary for Governor on 22 May, which could plausibly increase interest in news across the citizenry. In the second wave of the survey, age, cell phone online access and readership f print newspapers continued to be significant and positive factors, and respondents in Resistencia were still less likely to have accessed television news, but being in José C Paz and being middle class appeared as positively and significantly related to attention to television news. Citizens from José C Paz might have modified their behavior, and turned to news given the closeness of the election.

Access to online news, in contrast, was negatively associated with age: each extra year of age decreased the odds of having gone online for news by nearly two percentage points. Even when controlling for access factors, socioeconomic status and
level of education were positively associated with going online for news. However, the largest coefficients were for the type of internet access available: having online access at home was related to a six-fold increase in the odds of having accessed internet news during the past week, and work, institutional and cell phone access were significant predictors too, albeit with somewhat smaller coefficients. Cybercafe access was not a significant predictor of going online for news. Six months later, in the second wave of the survey, only types of access remained as significant predictors of attention to online news, and cybercafé access and attention to news on television became positive and significant predictors of going online for news. Thus, while cybercafe access might not facilitate access to news at all times, it may provide an outlet for interested citizens, particularly at times of heightened political activity. The relationship between television and online news challenge the idea that new media displace older media and suggest that the two media may complement each other.

**Media environment: constraints and choices**

Interviews with citizens reveal that access to media was shaped by social and economic factors, as well as by personal interest and motivation, although the weight of each consideration differed by media. Moreover, for the majority of respondents, rates of access to media and information technologies did not vary significantly from the first wave of the survey, in November-December 2010, to the third, in September-October 2011.

Broadcast television was the more widely distributed medium. All the interviewees except two young women had access to broadcast television at home, and the two young women, both students living with roommates, chose not to have television. Mariana, a 25 year old assistant from Buenos Aires, said that she used to have a television set, with a cable connection, but then she realized she didn´t watch at
all and she sold it, because “we have a computer, we have internet access, we watch movies there”. Tania, a 20 year old college student from Santa Fe, decided not to bring a television set when she left her hometown to attend college because when she was lived with her parents she “didn’t watch at all”. However, access to pay television was more linked to economic considerations: most middle class respondents across the four locations had access to cable television, while those of lower socioeconomic status, who usually lived in the periphery, evoked cost as the main reason why they did not have cable, which is consistent with the findings from the survey. Yesica, a 26-year-old unemployed mother of four from José C Paz, said she did not have cable because it was “too expensive”. Debi, a make-up artist from the suburbs of Santa Fe, explained that there was no cable access in her neighborhood, and that satellite television was too costly. However, by the time of the third interview, she had decided to acquire satellite television for the sake of her two year old son, Nahuel “we were tired of watching the same cartoons over and over (...) I am happy now, when (Disney Junior show) Art Attack starts I know he will stay quiet for half an hour.”

Newspaper access varied across locations: respondents in José C Paz were less likely to buy newspapers than in the other three locations, which might be explained by José C. Paz not having a local newspaper. Christian was 37 years old, worked in his family’s grocery shop, and was easily one of the most politically active respondents. At the time of the first interview, he has just graduated from college and was interested in participating in politics. When I saw him again, in May 2011, he was quite certain he would participate in the primaries as candidate to mayor of José C Paz, in August. At the time of the third interview, Christian had already run (and lost) in the primaries, and although he was no longer competing, he followed politics avidly. However, he never read the newspaper:
Because I don´t buy it, and I do not socialize with people who read it

(…) people might work in an office, and the newspapers is already there, but we don´t get (the newspaper) easily, and I could buy it but it is not a tool I would be interested in having.66

Although there was a free weekly newspaper, which was distributed in downtown José C Paz, respondents said it was too supportive of the local government. Silvia, a school counselor, only bought a newspaper from Buenos Aires on Sundays, and said “I´ve read the free newspapers, but they only publish information that makes the mayor look good”67. Maru concurred “They only show (mayor Mario) Ishii´s accomplishments: the house, the school, the pavement”.68

In contrast, people who lived in Resistencia and Santa Fe reported buying their local daily newspapers, regardless of their political leanings. Graciana, a 31 –year old lawyer said she preferred Clarín (the newspaper from Buenos Aires), which had “more news” but she bought Norte (the local daily) because “the newspaper everybody reads here is Norte.”69 Omar, 48-year-old hotel employee also from Resistencia said “I read norte (…) I don´t read the politics section. I have no idea of what the editor thinks.”70 Virginia, a 38-year old assistant from Santa Fe said she read El Litoral (the local daily) and she realized that it was “on the side of every administration (…) if peronists are ruling it is peronist, if the Frente Cívico is ruling it is with them.”71

Moreover, older respondents in the other three locations were more likely to have acquired a newspaper reading habit and to have kept it. Estela, a 58 year-old seamstress in Buenos Aires, said she subscribed to the newspaper because she had done so “for ages”.72 Olga, a 55-year old librarian in José C Paz said she “had bought Clarín during all her life” and continued to so.73 The relationship between age and newspaper readership was also evident in respondents who said they read the newspapers at their
parents’ house. Daniel, a 38 year old psychologist from Buenos Aires, explained he had never subscribed to a newspaper and said the “last memory of receiving the newspaper every morning” was when he was a teenager, lived with his parents, and the newspaper “arrived every morning under the door.”

Maximo, a 30 year old PR agent from Santa Fe, said he “read the newspapers on Sundays” when he went to his “inlaws’ for barbecue”.

Online access varied according to age and socioeconomic status, which confirms findings from the survey. Younger and middle and high socioeconomic status respondents were more likely to have online access at home. Cost was mentioned as a reason not to have online access at home by the less educated respondents. Lorena, a 31 year old social assistant from Resistencia said it was “too expensive” for her because “first she had to buy a computer,” and Debi, the make-up artist from Santa Fe said “with a child tha has to eat every day” she’d rather “pay for day care than buy a computer.”

Some older respondents had a connected computer at home but did not know how to use it. Carlos, a 58–year-old public employee from Resistencia said the computer “was for the rest of the family (...) at my age I am not in speaking terms with technology, I use the most basic, television”. And Eduardo, a 60 year old plumber from Santa Fe, bought a used computer and connected it to the internet with the help of his son, but did not use it: “it is a thing I have there, my fingers, my head are not good enough to use it, I turn it off”. Younger people in Santa Fe, Resistencia and José C Paz that did not have online access at home usually had at school. Ricardo, a 21-year-old engineering student in Resistencia, said he used the computers at college mostly “too look for material for one of his classes”. And Yamila, a 20 year-old who was studying to
become a teacher in José C Paz, went online at school “to do work for the (teaching) institute.”

**Access to media and information-seeking practices**

However, access to media and information technologies, be them newspapers, television or internet, does not necessarily mean attention to news. Some young respondents who lived with their parents said they had a newspaper at home but chose not to read it. Cecilia, a 21-year-old student whose parents received the newspaper every day, “never” read it. Likewise, some older respondents who chose to have the newspaper delivered at home also did not read it. Pablo, a 39-year-old small business owner from Buenos Aires, said he subscribed to La Nación for the benefits of “club la Nación” but “many weeks, the newspaper goes to the trashcan just like the delivery man left it on my doorstep (…) folded, new, smelling news, it goes out with the trash.” Moreover, other respondents also buy the newspapers for other purposes: six reported reading the classified (either to look for a job, buy a car or rent a house), and Maite, a 56-year-old lawyer from Buenos Aires, said she subscribed to the newspapers for the benefits for subscribers, but also looked at the ads which detailed promotions in supermarkets.

Most of the respondents who had access to television said they watched news, at one point or another of the day, which supports the findings from the survey. The very few who did not watch television said the main reason was lack of time “I do not have time”, said Ana, a 46-year-old who worked cleaning houses in Santa Fe “When I get to bed, I turn on the television and I fall asleep immediately.” Gonzalo, a 27-year-old travelling salesman, said he “did not have time” because he was “driving the whole day.” However, some chose not to watch television news because they did not find them believable. Cynthia, a 50-year-old architect from Buenos Aires, reflected that her
work in designing and building a news station had left her “profoundly disappointed”
when she got to know “the kitchen of television news” and thus “television was not her
source of information.”

For those who watched television news, early morning seemed to be a favorite
moment. “I wake up and I turn on the television news” said Agustín, a 24-year-old
employee in the private sector from Buenos Aires. Silvia, the school counselor from
José C. Paz, echoed his works, “Well, what I do is, I wake up and I turn on the news on
television”, as did Maximiliano, a 30-year old small business owner from Resistencia “I
turn on TN (a cable news network) early in the morning.” Thus, television news
consumption appears to be for many respondents something they do while they go on
about their daily routine (getting dressed, preparing breakfast) rather than something
they devote their whole attention to. Daniel, the psychologist from Buenos Aires, said
he watched just the “five or six items cables news shows every half hour” (when he
woke up), but not more than that. However, a few of the interviewees watched news or
political television news during prime time. One of them was Federico, the news junkie
whose news routine opens this chapter. Ignacio, a 41-year old PR consultant from
Buenos Aires, said “I watch a lot (of TV news) I love it; my wife makes me watch less
than I would want to because she hates that I watch TN (a cable news station) all day.”

In contrast, regular access to the internet appeared to be a necessary but not a
sufficient condition for getting news online. Respondents who accessed news online had
what Hargittai calls “autonomous use of internet”, either at home, at work or on their
cell phones. For instance, Rodolfo, a 40-year old public sector employee said “every
day I read the newspapers online (at work)...Página/12, Infobae, a little Perfil.”
Mariana, the assistant from Buenos Aires, in the final weeks before the election, said
she read the news online “On the internet, I looked at Clarín, and Página 12. What they
had, where (the candidate) held a rally, how many people attended and the highlights of each speech.”93 But not all interviewees with autonomous access used it to get news. Marta, a 46-year old teacher from José C Paz said she used her internet connection “for the emails, the google, that kind of thing,”94 and Cecilia, a college student from Buenos Aires said “I go online almost everyday...not to get news, but mails... look at facebook.”95

Lack of interest in getting news in any format was explained by two main reasons: the first was negative feelings, which led respondents to either avoid news altogether or to avoid certain topics. Norma, a 51-year-old artist from Buenos Aires, explained in the first wave of interviews “news get to me too much...I’d rather watch cultural programming or a sitcom.”96 Maru, from José C. Paz, said “News makes you tired: always the same thing: robbery, car crash, death,”97 while other interviewees sought only sports or entertainment news: Lorena, from Resistencia, said “I cannot stand politics, I change channel because I cannot tolerate it, when they talk about this or that person and nobody does anything.”98 The negative feelings intensified as the campaign progressed for certain respondents, which may explain why news consumption did not vary greatly across the three waves. Norma declined to be interviewed for the third wave over email “I am sorry but I cannot help you, politics is not my forte. Besides, it anguishes me.”99 Some respondents explained that the predictability of the election results made it less likely for them to be interested in news. Silvia, the School counselor from José C. Paz, said she had not read the newspaper because she “did not feel like it (...); she had “little” interest in the campaign, because she did not “like the president nor the policies (the president) was implementing.”100 Daniel, the psychologist from Buenos Aires, said that “since the primaries the election was a foregone conclusion.”101 Other respondents, particularly women and the young,
tended to link their lack of attention to news to the cognitive effort needed. Estela, a 53-year-old housewife from Santa Fe, said “politics, I follow very little because I do not understand many things.” Camila, a 22 year old student from Resistencia, said “there are things it is very difficult for me to understand...I don’t understand anything about politics.”

Those who followed politics, in turn, were motivated either by their personal interest or by the feeling of civic duty. Maximiliano, from Resistencia, said “we have to know because we vote... and bad things happen to us because we vote the wrong way for not knowing,” and Marta, the teacher said “I don’t like people who claim ‘I don’t like news’. You have to know on what ground you are standing” Even people who did not follow the news felt they should be more informed. Marcela, a 29 year old small business owner in Santa Fe said “you have to know what is going on. You cannot live in a bubble. I live in a bubble, but I acknowledge it is wrong.” Even people who did not follow news on any medium, such as Tania, said of her (lack of) news consumption habits “I know it is wrong because you need to be a little more up to date. Sometimes I am ashamed to say I am much uninformed.”

Concluding remarks

This chapter has shown that access to media reproduces social and educational inequalities that predate diffusion of information and communication technologies. Citizens of higher socioeconomic status, with higher levels of education, and who live in the capital of the country tend to have higher access to both traditional media and news media. The digital divide mirrors the analogical divide across most categories except age: younger respondents are more likely to have internet access at home, at work and on their cellphones, and to get their news online too. Public and cybercafe
access, which some authors present as a viable option to home access, was significantly more likely for the young and those with higher socioeconomic status.

Television was the most popular source of news across locations before and during the campaign, followed by print newspapers and the internet, in that order. While access to pay television did not have a consistent relationship with news watching, and the existence of a local newspaper was positively related to newspaper readership, home access to the internet was positively related to going online for news across the four locations, which suggests that the relationship between access to a media and information technologies and their use may vary according to which media and communication technology is being studied. Moreover, access to print newspapers and television in the first wave of the survey, and print newspapers, television and online news in the second wave of the survey give support to the complementarity thesis: consumers who choose to attend to news do so across platforms, and thus, attention to online news does not displace traditional sources of information such as print newspapers and television. The correlation between different media platforms, as well as similarity in the factors influencing news consumption suggest that the artificial differentiation between print, broadcast and online ignores “manifold interpenetration of news consumption across media.”

Interviews with citizens in the four locations show that interest in news is directly related to interest in public affairs and to the belief that there is a civic duty to be informed, while avoidance of news is linked to the expectation of cognitive effort and negative feelings towards news in general and politics in particular. The constant level of news consumption 6 months before the election and just before Election Day challenge the assumption that normally inattentive audiences behave as monitorial citizens during times of heightened political activity. However, interviews indicate that
one plausible reason why attention to news did not increase significantly was the non-competitive nature of the election. The incumbent president was certain to win, which made information-based self-preservation strategies\textsuperscript{109} unnecessary both for her supporters and detractors.

Access to media and attention to news is but one component of democratic participation. While most research on disparities in access and uses of various media and information technologies, some authors have called for research that examines what outcomes are linked with differentiated access, skills and uses.\textsuperscript{110} The next chapter will explore the relationship between various types of access and attention to media and levels of political information.
Figure 2.1 Home Access to the internet by district and socioeconomic status (April 2011)

Figure 2.2 Access to pay television by district and socioeconomic status (April 2011)
Figure 2.3 Home Access to the internet by district and socioeconomic status (October 2011)

Figure 2.2 Access to pay television by district and socioeconomic status (October 2011)
Figure 2.5: Access to news by district and geographic location
Table 2.1: Logistical regressions of access to media, on age, sex (Base case =female), socioeconomic status (base case =high SES), education level (base case =less than high school) and location (base case =City of Buenos Aires) (reporting percentage change in odds) (* denotes statistical significance at the <0.05 level) (robust)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>television</th>
<th>Satellite/cable</th>
<th>Home Internet</th>
<th>Cybercafe internet</th>
<th>Institutional Internet</th>
<th>Work internet</th>
<th>cellphone internet</th>
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<tr>
<td>N=1600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>2.7*</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-2.1*</td>
<td>-1.0*</td>
<td>-3.1*</td>
<td>-1.7*</td>
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<td>male</td>
<td>-31.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
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<td>41.9*</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low SES</td>
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<td>-48.2</td>
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<td>-58.5*</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>-24.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<td>-70.8*</td>
<td>-90.2*</td>
<td>-62.0*</td>
<td>-37.4</td>
<td>-66.2*</td>
<td>-44.3*</td>
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<td>-37.2*</td>
<td>-85.1*</td>
<td>-89.6*</td>
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<td>-27.2</td>
<td>-26.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santa Fe</td>
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<td>103.3*</td>
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<td>-43.5*</td>
<td>-32.3*</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School, some college</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed College or more</td>
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<td>0.1152</td>
<td>0.1046</td>
<td>0.1479</td>
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Table 2.2 Logistical regressions of having read a print newspaper, watched news on television or accessed news online during the previous week, on age, sex (Base case =female), socioeconomic status (base case =low SES), education level (base case =less than high school), and access to media (reporting percentage change in odds) (* indicates statistical significance at the <0.05 level) in April 2011 (robust)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Print newspaper</th>
<th>Television news</th>
<th>Online News</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.7 *</td>
<td>1.4 *</td>
<td>-1.6 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>59.6*</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>21.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium SES</td>
<td>-13.7</td>
<td>-8.3</td>
<td>-33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>-34.3</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>-65.9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than highschool</td>
<td>-54.5 *</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-51.2*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school &amp; some post secondary education</td>
<td>-24.1</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>-21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay television</td>
<td>34.9*</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>-33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home internet</td>
<td>31.2*</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>590.9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work internet</td>
<td>40.8*</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>83.8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional internet</td>
<td>40.8*</td>
<td>-13.9</td>
<td>85.3*</td>
</tr>
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<td>Cybercafe</td>
<td>-11</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell phone internet</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>49.2 *</td>
<td>42.5 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>13.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television News</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Online News</td>
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<td>-5.7</td>
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<td>-11.3</td>
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<td>Resistencia</td>
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<td>-13.5</td>
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<td>Jose C Paz</td>
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<td>-1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-square</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.2906</td>
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</table>
Table 2.3  Logistical regressions of having read a print newspaper, watched news on television or accessed news online during the previous week, on age, sex (Base case =female), socioeconomic status (base case =low SES), education level (base case =less than high school) (reporting percentage change in odds) (* denotes statistical significance at the <0.05 level) in October 2011

<table>
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</thead>
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<td>Less than highschool</td>
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<td>High school &amp; post secondary education</td>
<td>-5.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>-35.6</td>
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<td>Pay television</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home internet</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>24.2</td>
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<td>Work internet</td>
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<td>Cybercafe</td>
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<td>-2.5</td>
<td>69*</td>
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<td>Cell phone internet</td>
<td>36.7*</td>
<td>61.5*</td>
<td>77.7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television news</td>
<td>104.6*</td>
<td></td>
<td>70.6*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online news</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>68.6*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print newspaper</td>
<td></td>
<td>101.7*</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Fe</td>
<td>-10.7</td>
<td>-15.9</td>
<td>-5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistencia</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-68.3*</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jose C Paz</td>
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<td>205*</td>
<td>-40.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-square</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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References


Chan, J. K. C., & Leung, L. (2005). Lifestyles, reliance on traditional news media and
online news adoption. *New Media & Society*, 7(3), 357-382.


UNDP. (2002). *EN BÚSQUEDA DE LA IGUALDAD DE OPORTUNIDADES.*


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1 Personal interview, November 25 2010
2 Personal interview, October 21 2011
3 Personal interview, December 4 2010
4 Personal interview, May 23 2011
5 Personal interview, October 20 2011
7 Bennett & Entman, 2001; Downs, 1957; Druckman, 2005; Graber, 2006; Habermas, 1996; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987
8 Prior, 2007, pp. 28-29
9 Boczkowski & Lievrouw, 208, p. 949
10 Schement & Curtis, 1997, Katz & Rice, 2002; Silverstone & Hirsh, 1992
11 Jenkins, 2007; Webster, 1998
12 Berkowitz, 2992, 2000; Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2013
13 Guilleen and Suarez 2005, Andres et al. 2007

14 Horrigan 2009, Mesch & Talmud 2011

15 Das, 2010

16 Haythornthwaite & Rice, 2006

17 Horrigan, Rainie, & Fox, 2001; Mariscal, 2005; Oxendine, Borgida, Sullivan, & Jackson, 2003


19 Guillen & Suarez, 2005; Servon, 2002; Warschauer, 2002


21 DiMaggio, Hargittai, Celeste, & Shafer, 2004, p. 374

22 Cecchini, 2005; Galperin, 2004; Mariscal, 2005

23 Jordán, Galperin & Peres, 2013


26 Cecchini, 2005, p. 10

27 Hargittai & Hsieh, 2013, p. 133

28 Chan and Leung, 2005; Hujanen and Pietikainen, 2004; Kayany and Yelsma, 2000; Livingstone and Markham, 2008; Nguyen and Western, 2007

29 Katz et al, 1974

30 Dutta-Bergman 2004; Lin et al., 2005; Livingstone, 2004; Sheehan, 2002

31 McCombs, 1972

32 Gentzkow, 2007; Gunter et al., 2003; Kaye and Johnson, 2003; Lin et al., 2005

33 Ahlers, 2006; Coleman and McCombs, 2007; Lee, 2006; Ogan et al., 2008

34 Bennett, 2003; Patterson, 2000

35 Downs, 1957
In the first wave of the survey, 1600 subjects were interviewed across the four locations in April 2011 (399 in Buenos Aires, 400 in Santa Fe, 400 in Jose C Paz and 401 in Resistencia). Interviews were conducted face-to-face in Jose C Paz and in Resistencia, and by telephone in Buenos Aires and Santa Fe. A local survey firm, MFG, was hired to conduct the surveys, due to its experience working in the four districts. Different methods of interviewing were chosen because, on the one hand, the higher proportion of apartment buildings in Santa fe and Buenos Aires restricted access to housing units to conduct face-to-face interviews. On the other, telephone penetration is relatively low in the Resistencia and Jose C Paz districts and conducting telephone surveys would have introduced high levels of bias in the sample. In the telephone interviews, units were selected by RDD (Random Digit Dialing) and by questions to fill population quotas by sex and age. The interviews were conducted by live interviewers using CATI (Computer assisted telephone interviewing). In the face-to-face interviews, units were selected by polietapic random sampling to select units and then questions about sex and age to fill population quotas. The AAPOR1 average response rate was 58%. For the second wave, the same 1600 subjects were re-contacted during the second and third week of October in 2011, and 1023 answered the instrument (177 in Buenos Aires, 228 in Santa Fe, 229 in José C. Paz and 389 in Resistencia), thus obtaining an AAPOR1 response rate of 64.2%.

According to the Polity IV Project, Argentina has averaged +8 from 1983 until 2009 in a 21-point scale ranging from -10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy).

UNDP 2009
UNDP 2002
IDC, 2009; INDEC, 2009
Bril Mascarenhas, 2007
When compared to the general population of the four locations, those who had not finished high school or had fewer years of education were under-represented (18% vs. 33%) and those who had completed college were over-represented (30% vs. 11%). The sample did not aim at being representative, but at including respondents with varying ages, educational levels and socioeconomic strata.

It should be noted that not necessarily all the respondents paid for the connection. The Argentina Association of Cable Television (ATCV by its initials in Spanish) estimates that many cable and satellite connections are illegal (ATCV, 2011 http://www.atvc.org.ar/?pagina=detalleNoticia&nId=107).

Galperin et al 2012.

Cecchini, 2005; Navas Savater et al, 2002

Prior, 2005, 2007

Personal Interview, November 17 2010
Personal Interview, December 20 2010
Personal Interview, November 30 2010
Personal interview, September 29 2011
Personal Interview, October 2011