Seventy years ago, commercial television did not exist, and print media were the most widely available source for news. Thirty-five years ago, television was universally available, but people had the choice of only a few channels. Today, the average viewer can choose from hundreds of channels, including several twenty-four-hour news channels. News is on cell phones, on iPods, and online; it has become a ubiquitous presence in modern society. The purpose of this book is to examine systematically how these differences in access and form of media affect political behavior. Using experiments and new survey data, it shows how changes in the media environment reverberate through the political system, affecting news exposure, political learning, turnout, and voting behavior. Before television, news could be difficult to understand for people with low reading skills. Only television, by virtue of being both easy to follow and hard to resist, drew the less educated into the news audience. In the 1970s and 1980s, more people watched television news than at any other time, but only because they had little choice. Today, cable television and the Internet offer people much more control and choice. To news junkies, politics has become a candy store. Others avoid news altogether. Political involvement has become more unequal, and elections more polarized as a result.

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POST-BROADCAST DEMOCRACY

How Media Choice Increases Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections

MARKUS PRIOR
Princeton University
Für Mama und Papa
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This project began as a Ph.D. dissertation in the Communication Department at Stanford a long time ago. I had the very good fortune of a stellar dissertation committee. In four remarkably different ways, Shanto Iyengar, Paul Sniderman, David Brady, and Mo Fiorina have challenged me to defend my arguments more convincingly and state them more precisely – and sometimes, to abandon them altogether. I learned something unique from each of the four that I will try to heed when this book is long finished. Shanto Iyengar, my advisor, taught me that establishing causality is the most important and most difficult aspect of social science. There is not enough random assignment in this project for Shanto, and I thank him for letting me pursue it nonetheless and for always being available for advice. Paul Sniderman introduced me to the power of embedding experiments in opinion surveys. Working for him, I observed firsthand how to craft a survey and a story. David Brady’s most important contribution to this project is the first wave of the News & Entertainment Project, which I could not have conducted without him. He worked hard to socialize me properly into the American academic system. “This is not Europe; we share here,” was one of his earliest pieces of advice. Humor is impossible to teach, but Mo Fiorina has impressed on me that social science research can be as smart and witty as a good work of fiction.

In addition to the members of my dissertation committee, others at Stanford provided reactions and advice on various aspects of my projects. For that I would like to thank Don Roberts, the late Steve Chaffee, Christian Sandvig, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, Keith Krehbiel, and Simon Jackman. I am grateful to the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton for providing me with a fellowship just as I was finishing my dissertation. The collegial working environment at Princeton gave me a fantastic opportunity to try out new ideas and polish old ones. I could not have wished for smarter, kinder, and more dedicated colleagues than the ones I have at Princeton.
Acknowledgments

Doug Arnold, Larry Bartels, Marty Gilens, and Tali Mendelberg read entire versions of this manuscript and were always available for a quick piece of advice or a long conversation. Their comments, questions, and suggestions have improved this book a great deal. Chris Achen, Chuck Cameron, Josh Clinton, Paul DiMaggio, Fred Greenstein, Dave Lewis, Nolan McCarty, Paul Starr, and Keith Whittington also shared their thoughts on this project. And I thank Helene Wood for her assistance.

I owe a big debt of gratitude to several other people who read the entire manuscript and provided me with many helpful comments and reactions: Jay Hamilton, Sunshine Hillygus, Gabriel Lenz, Skip Lupia, Diana Mutz, and Michael Schudson. Scott Althaus and Matt Baum, who were among the reviewers of my manuscript, deserve special thanks for each of their fifteen pages of single-spaced reactions, suggestions, and constructive criticism. Jim Kuklinski helped throughout the revisions and the editing. I would also like to thank Lew Bateman, Sara Black, Jessica Cepelak, and Ernie Haim at Cambridge University Press for turning a manuscript into a book, and Ben Niles for the cover design.

Over the years, many other colleagues have offered their comments and suggestions on early conference papers, article drafts, or parts of what I have been calling the “almost final” manuscript for several years now: Steve Ansolabehere, Ted Brader, John Bullock, David Campbell, Dennis Chong, Stefano DellaVigna, Bob Entman, Bob Erikson, John Evans, John Geer, Matt Gentzkow, Vince Hutchings, Gary Jacobson, Elihu Katz, Orit Kedar, Scott Keeter, Don Kinder, Ken Kohlman, Yanna Krupnikov, Russ Neuman, Keiko Ono, Sam Popkin, Vince Price, Bob Putnam, Wendy Rahn, Eric Schickler, Danielle Shani, David Strömberg, Michael Traugott, Yariv Tsfati, Joe Turow, Nick Valentino, Sid Verba, James Webster, Herb Weisberg, Chris Wlezien, and Danna Goldthwaite Young. I am grateful to all of them. A special thank you goes to Michael Delli Carpini who patiently listened to my vague and wooly ideas and encouraged me to pursue this project before it even was a project.

I benefited from the comments of seminar participants after presenting parts of this project at the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, Cornell University, Duke University, Harvard University, the University of Michigan, the Université de Montréal, Princeton University, and Temple University.

My understanding of news audiences would be much hazier without the input of several people who deal with these audiences daily in their professional lives: Horst Stipp at NBC, Michael Steinberg at the Katz Media Group, Jack Wakshlag at Turner Broadcasting, Ted Kneisler and Rob Schlaepfer at CBS, Evan Thomas at Newsweek, and Jay Mattlin at Mediamark Research. Although they can never share everything they know, I am indebted to them for the time they took from their busy.
Acknowledgments

schedules and the patience with which they helped an academic better understand the business of reaching viewers.

Kathy Dykeman, Danielle Murray, and Chris Pippin at Knowledge Networks provided invaluable work on the implementation of the News & Entertainment Survey. The second wave of that survey owes its existence to the Center of the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University and the generosity of Mike Dennis at Knowledge Networks. Princeton provided me with a well-timed leave of absence to finish this manuscript.

Over the course of this project, Purcell Carson learned the hard way that an academic’s work is never done. I thank her for her patience with me and for her support of this project. I happily acknowledge her responsibility for any signs of eloquence, the pruning of academic jargon, and the occasional dramatic overstatement. Remaining jargon, clumsy prose, and other shortcomings are in the book despite her and everyone else’s best efforts and cannot be blamed on anyone but me.