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****CORRECTION APPENDED

Daily Show Viewers Knowledgeable About Presidential Campaign, National Annenberg Election Survey Shows

Viewers of late-night comedy programs, especially The Daily Show with Jon Stewart on Comedy Central, are more likely to know the issue positions and backgrounds of presidential candidates than people who do not watch late-night comedy, the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey shows.

Polling conducted between July 15 and September 19 among 19,013 adults showed that on a six-item political knowledge test people who did not watch any late-night comedy programs in the past week answered 2.62 items correctly, while viewers of Letterman answered 2.91, viewers of Leno answered 2.95, and viewers of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart answered 3.59 items correctly. That meant there was a difference of 16 percentage points between Daily Show viewers and people who did not watch any late-night programming.

The campaign knowledge test covered such topics as which candidate favors allowing workers to invest some of their Social Security contributions in the stock market, the income range at which John Kerry would eliminate the Bush tax cut, and which candidate is a former prosecutor.

"People who watch The Daily Show are more interested in the presidential campaign, more educated, younger, and more liberal than the average American or than Leno or Letterman viewers," said Dannagal Goldthwaite Young, a senior analyst at the Annenberg Public Policy Center, who conducted the research for this report. "However, these factors do not explain the difference in levels of campaign knowledge between people who watch The Daily Show and people who do not. In fact, Daily Show viewers have higher campaign knowledge than national news viewers and newspaper readers - even when education, party identification, following politics, watching cable news, receiving campaign information online, age, and gender are taken into consideration."

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“These findings do not show that The Daily Show is itself responsible for the higher knowledge among its viewers,” said Young. “The Daily Show assumes a fairly high level of political knowledge on the part of its audience – more so than Leno or Letterman. At the same time, because The Daily Show does deal with campaign events and issues, viewers might certainly pick up information while watching. It is probably a bit of both.”

“In recent years,” Young said, “traditional journalists have been voicing increasing concern that if young people are receiving political information from late-night comedy shows like The Daily Show, they may not be adequately informed on the issues of the day. This data suggests that these fears may be unsubstantiated. We find no differences in campaign knowledge between young people who watch Leno and Letterman – programs with a lot of political humor in their opening monologues -- and those who do not watch late-night. But when looking at young people who watch The Daily Show, we find they score higher on campaign knowledge than young people who do not watch the show, even when education, following politics, party identification, gender, viewing network news, reading the newspaper, watching cable news and getting campaign information on-line are taken into account.”

During the mid-July to mid-September time period included in these analyses, Daily Show host Jon Stewart interviewed such political figures as Senator John Kerry, Senator John McCain, Former President Bill Clinton, Republican National Committee chairman Ed Gillespie, and White House Communications Director Dan Bartlett. In addition to the interviews, The Daily Show’s programs dealt with political news and issues of the day, from “Mess O’Potamia” (ongoing coverage of the Iraq War), to the controversial anti-Kerry swift boat advertisements, to the value of “objectivity” in news reporting.

Young people who watched The Daily Show scored 48 percent correct on the campaign knowledge test while young people who did not watch any late-night comedy scored 39 percent correct. Meanwhile, young people who watched four or more days of network news scored 40 percent correct, equally frequent cable news viewers 48 percent correct and newspaper readers 46 percent correct.

The interviewing period used in these analyses included The Daily Show’s coverage of both party conventions. On six of the eight nights of the conventions, Nielsen ratings indicate, The Daily Show drew more 18-34 year olds (during its 11:00 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. time slot) than the cable news channels such as Fox, MSNBC, CNBC and CNN.

The Annenberg data indicate that of those people who watched late-night comedy programming at least once in the previous week, 37 percent report watching Leno most often, 34 percent report Letterman, and 15 percent report The Daily Show with Jon Stewart. When looking just at people 18-29 years old, we find 30 percent report watching Leno most often, 25 percent Letterman, and 22 percent Stewart.

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A content analysis of late-night comedy content conducted on Leno, Letterman, and Stewart monologues and headlines from July 15 through September 16, 2004 indicates that 33 percent of jokes made by Stewart during the show's "Headlines" mentioned at least one policy issue, compared to 24 percent of Leno's monologue jokes and 21 percent of Letterman's. Other topics covered in late-night monologues included candidates' personalities, their chances of winning as well as events and blunders that occurred on the campaign trail.

Of the 83 political jokes made by Stewart, only 9 specifically targeted Bush. That was 11 percent of his political jokes. The same number targeted Kerry.

"The Daily Show segments are less likely than a Leno or Letterman joke to use a quick punch-line to make fun of a candidate," said Young. "Instead, Stewart's lengthier segments employ irony to explore policy issues, news events, and even the media's coverage of the campaign."

Leno and Letterman's monologue jokes were more likely than the Daily Show's "Headlines" to take aim specifically at Bush or Kerry. Of Leno's 315 political jokes, 97 (31 percent) targeted Bush and 76 (24 percent) targeted Kerry. Of Letterman's 136 political jokes, 20 (15 percent) targeted Bush and 21 (15 percent) targeted Kerry.

Of Leno's 97 Bush jokes, 38 percent focused on the idea that he lacked intelligence. About 10 percent of Leno's jokes about Bush fell into each of the following categories: he is not technically president (lost in 2000), he shirked responsibility with the National Guard, and he is responsible for the poor state of the economy. Letterman's 20 Bush jokes followed a similar pattern with 45 percent focusing on Bush's intelligence and 10 percent falling into each of the following categories: he is not technically president (lost in 2000), the charge that he shirked his duties with the Texas Air National Guard, and his alleged dishonesty.

Leno and Letterman's jokes about Kerry fell into various categories. While Letterman's jokes were more likely to portray Kerry as losing the election (24 percent of Letterman's 21 Kerry jokes), Leno was more likely to mock Kerry's wealth and rich wife (20 percent of Leno's 76 Kerry jokes). Letterman was also likely to tell jokes about Kerry in relation to his service in Vietnam (19 percent), his physical appearance (14 percent), and his alleged flip-flopping on the issues (10 percent). Leno's jokes about Kerry also focused on his alleged flip-flopping (18 percent), his losing the election (12 percent) and his service in Vietnam (11 percent).

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Dannagal Goldthwaite Young, a senior research analyst at The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, developed the research for this report. The National Annenberg Election Survey, the largest academic election poll, is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center (www.AnnenbergPublicPolicyCenter.org). It has been tracking the presidential campaign since October 7, and interviewing will continue until after Election Day. Dr. Kathleen Hall Jamieson is the director of the survey. Ken Winneg is the managing director of the survey. Adam Clymer is the political director of the survey.

*****CORRECTION: The original tables (on-line until 9:00 am 9/28) included a column heading that was not clear and led some to conclude that 60% of Daily Show viewers obtained a perfect score on the 6-item knowledge test. The accurate statement is that Daily Show viewers scored 60% correct on average. Please note the change and the updated column headings in Tables A and B ("% Correct of six knowledge questions").

Tables

A. Political knowledge, interest and vote intention by age and late-night comedy preference

%	% Correct of six knowledge questions	Follow politics "Most of the time"	Intend to vote
Entire sample	45%	33%	86%
Of those watching any late-night:			
Prefer Letterman	49%	38%	91%
Prefer Leno	49%	39%	90%
Prefer Stewart	60%	46%	90%
18-29 years old	40%	18%	78%
30-44	46%	28%	84%
45-64	48%	40%	91%
65 and over	45%	47%	93%

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B. Young people's (18-29 year olds) political knowledge, interest and vote intention by media use

%	% Correct of six knowledge questions	Follow politics "Most of the time"	Intend to vote
Among all 18-29 year olds	40%	18%	78%
No network news	38%	15%	71%
1-3 Days network news	44%	19%	87%
4 or more days network news	40%	28%	87%
No cable news	36%	12%	69%
1-3 Days cable news	40%	14%	83%
4 or more days cable news	48%	32%	87%
No newspaper	36%	11%	66%
1-3 days newspaper	39%	14%	82%
4 or more days newspaper	46%	30%	87%
No late-night comedy	39%	16%	74%
1-3 days late-night comedy	43%	20%	85%
4 or more days late-night	42%	24%	85%
Of those watching any late-night:			
Prefer Letterman	39%	17%	82%
Prefer Leno	41%	21%	82%
Prefer Stewart	48%	31%	88%

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C. Characteristics of the Late-night audiences

%	Total	No late-night	Watched 1 or more days of late-night and prefer:		
			Letterman	Leno	Stewart
Men	48%	46%	49%	50%	60%
Women	52%	54%	51%	50%	40%
Whites	80%	80%	78%	78%	85%
African Americans	11%	11%	14%	12%	8%
Latinos	12%	13%	5%	10%	9%
High school or less	48%	50%	44%	45%	32%
Some college	26%	25%	27%	28%	29%
College degree or more	26%	24%	29%	27%	39%
18-29 years old	21%	18%	20%	22%	40%
30-44	31%	31%	32%	29%	34%
45-64	32%	33%	33%	32%	21%
65 and over	16%	17%	15%	16%	6%
Household income below \$35,000	35%	36%	31%	33%	31%
\$35,000 to less than \$75,000	33%	33%	36%	34%	32%
\$75,000 and over	23%	22%	25%	25%	30%
Northeast	21%	21%	21%	19%	23%
Midwest	23%	22%	28%	25%	21%
South	34%	34%	36%	33%	32%
West	22%	22%	15%	23%	25%
Republican	30%	31%	27%	33%	15%
Democrat	33%	32%	38%	33%	40%
Independent	26%	26%	27%	27%	33%
Conservative	38%	40%	34%	39%	18%
Moderate	37%	37%	41%	39%	38%
Liberal	21%	19%	23%	19%	43%
Hardly follow politics at all	8%	10%	6%	5%	3%
Now and then, some of the time	58%	59%	55%	55%	51%
Follow politics most of the time	33%	31%	38%	39%	46%
Zero knowledge questions correct	10%	12%	7%	7%	5%
1 or 2 correct	36%	36%	37%	33%	20%
3 or 4 correct	38%	37%	36%	41%	41%
5 or 6 correct	16%	15%	20%	19%	34%

	Total	No late-night	Watched 1 or more days of late-night and prefer:		
			Letterman	Leno	Stewart
No network news	40%	45%	23%	25%	43%
1-3 Days network news	27%	25%	30%	31%	29%
4 or more days network news	32%	30%	46%	43%	27%
No cable news	35%	39%	28%	27%	15%
1-3 Days cable news	26%	25%	27%	29%	33%
4 or more days cable news	38%	36%	45%	44%	51%
No newspaper	26%	29%	21%	18%	18%
1-3 days newspaper	28%	27%	27%	29%	29%
4 or more days newspaper	46%	44%	52%	53%	53%
No online campaign news	72%	76%	67%	65%	45%
1-3 days online campaign news	15%	13%	19%	22%	24%
4 or more days online news	12%	11%	14%	13%	30%

Respondents were asked: How many days in the past week did you watch late-night comedy programs like “the Late Show” with David Letterman, the “Tonight Show” with Jay Leno or “The Daily Show” with Jon Stewart? **Respondents who said 1 or more days were asked:** Which of the following late-night comedy programs do you watch most often? “The Late Show” with David Letterman, “The Tonight Show” with Jay Leno, or “The Daily Show” with Jon Stewart. Respondents could also volunteer other programs like “Conan O’Brien”.

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D. Themes and Issues in Late-night Monologues from July 15 through September 16, 2004

	Total	Letterman	Leno	Stewart
Issues mentioned in jokes				
National Security	11%	12%	11%	13%
War in Iraq	6%	4%	5%	13%
Economy	4%	1%	6%	2%
Other issue	3%	3%	2%	5%
911 Commission	2%	2%	1%	1%
Energy and Environment	1%	-	1%	2%
Gay Marriage	1%	2%	2%	-
WMD	1%	-	1%	1%
% of jokes mentioning at least one issue	25%	21%	24%	33%
Total # Political Jokes	534	136	315	83
Bush Joke Themes				
Intelligence/Competence	38%	45%	38%	22%
Is not technically president (lost in 2000)	10%	10%	11%	0%
National Guard (Did he serve?)	10%	10%	10%	11%
Economy	8%	5%	9%	0%
Integrity/Honesty	3%	10%	2%	0%
Drug and Alcohol Use	3%	5%	2%	11%
Dirty Politics	2%	0%	2%	11%
War in Iraq	2%	0%	3%	0%
Domestic policy (Other than economy)	2%	0%	3%	0%
Losing	2%	5%	1%	0%
Full of Hot air	2%	0%	1%	11%
Arrogance	2%	0%	2%	0%
Total # Jokes about Bush	126	20	97	9
Kerry Joke Themes				
Rich Family and Wife	15%	5%	20%	0%
Vietnam	15%	19%	11%	44%
Flip-Flop	15%	10%	18%	0%
Losing	13%	24%	12%	0%
Appearance	8%	14%	9%	22%
Charisma	5%	5%	9%	0%
Dirty Politics	5%	5%	5%	0%
Full of Hot air	4%	5%	4%	11%
Affection for Edwards	4%	0%	3%	22%
Integrity/Honesty	3%	5%	4%	0%
Domestic Policy	3%	5%	3%	0%
Total # Jokes about Kerry	106	21	76	9

Survey Methodology

The National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) is a survey conducted each presidential election by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

The 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey is based on telephone interviews which began October 7, 2003 and will continue past Election Day.

The sample of telephone exchanges called was randomly selected by a computer from a complete list of thousands of active residential exchanges across the country. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. Within each household, one adult was designated by a random procedure to be the respondent for the survey. The interviewing is conducted by Schulman, Ronca, Bucuvalas, Inc.

The results have been weighted to take account of household size and number of telephone lines into the residence and to adjust for variation in the sample relating to geographic region, sex, race, age and education.

This report deals with the interviewing period from July 15 through September 19, 2004 during which time 19,013 adults were interviewed. In theory, in 19 out of 20 cases, results for all registered voters will differ by no more than 1 percentage point, up or down, from what would have been obtained by interviewing all American adults.

For smaller subgroups, the margin of sampling error would be higher. For 18-29 year olds, for example, it would be plus or minus 2 percentage points. For viewers of the Daily Show, it would be plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Moreover, some questions were not asked of all respondents, which would lead to higher potential error. In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce other sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.

Jokes for the content analysis were obtained from transcriptions of Leno, Letterman, and O'Brien monologues and Daily Show "headlines" included in *National Journal's* Hotline dated July 15-September 16. Hotline publishes all politically relevant content of the previous night's late-night programs in the next day's edition. Coders were trained in a coding scheme and high inter-coder reliability estimates were obtained.

Campaign knowledge items included in these analyses: Who favors allowing workers to invest some of their Social Security contributions in the stock market? [Correct=Bush] Who urges Congress to extend the federal law banning assault weapons? [Correct=Kerry] John Kerry says that he would eliminate the Bush tax cuts on those making how much money: Over 50 thousand a year, Over 100 thousand a year, Over 200 thousand a year, Over 500,000 a year? [Correct= Over 200,000 thousand a year]. Who is a former prosecutor [Correct=Kerry]? Who favors making the recent tax cuts permanent? [Correct=Bush] Who wants to make it easier for labor unions to organize? [Correct=Kerry] Respondents received a "1" for each correct answer and a "0" for each incorrect answer or "don't know."

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