I Learned It From Jay Leno: Entertainment Media in the 2000 Election

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Abstract: Entertainment media are increasingly important in American politics. Many Americans now get their news from Jay Leno, David Letterman, Jon Stewart and a variety of other entertainment oriented media. As a result, politicians of all stripes have begun to court these non-traditional media. Using data from the Pew Center for the People and the Press, we examine the impact of entertainment media consumption on knowledge and participation during the 2000 election. Our findings suggest that entertainment media bring political knowledge to politically uninterested citizens. The news is not all good, however. Entertainment media consumption is associated with decreased political participation.

*Thanks to Jennifer Barnhart, Bruce Carroll, Andrew Dowdle, Lynn Kaufman, Gibbs Knotts, Greg Neddenriep, Anthony Nownes, Mark Peffley, Lilliard Richardson, and Marc Schwerdt for many helpful comments.
When asked about the impact of the entertainment media in shaping America’s perception of the president, Jon Stewart (of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*) seemed skeptical. “In terms of what I do? On a scale of zero to 10, I’d go with a zero, not very important. I don't know how else to put it” (ABC News.com).

Despite Stewart’s assertion to the contrary, most observers of media and politics believe that entertainment programs are increasingly important in shaping citizens’ opinions of politics and political leaders. Whereas citizens previously gained their political information from a few “hard” news channels, entertainment media, like *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, are becoming the preferred news source of many citizens (Baum 2002a). In this paper, we evaluate the political effects of these increasingly important media outlets. Using survey data from the Pew Center for the People and the Press, we find that the rise of entertainment news media as a source of political information is not without benefits. Nonetheless, daily newspaper consumption still appears to be the key to good citizenship.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we review the literature on media consumption and the debate over soft news, concentrating on the expected relationship between soft news and political attention, information, and participation. Next, we review our data, present our analysis, and conclude with a discussion of what the rise in soft news means for American democracy.

**The Changing Nature of Media Consumption in the United States**

For years, the debate in the media consumption literature centered on the relative advantages and disadvantages of television versus print media sources for political learning. One camp suggests that print media are inherently superior to televised media. For instance, Bennett et
al. argue that “The more time Americans spend reading, the more attentive they are to public affairs” (2000: 175). Robert Putnam also sings the praises of newspapers and print media.

…Even holding age, education, and rootedness constant, however, those who read the news are more engaged and knowledgeable about the world than those who only watch the news. Compared to demographically identical nonreaders, regular newspaper readers belong to more organizations, participate more actively in clubs and civic associations, attend local meetings more frequently, vote more regularly, volunteer and work on community projects more often, and even visit with friends more frequently and trust their neighbors more (2000: 218).

Many of the same scholars decry America’s increasing reliance on televised media. For instance, Putnam (1995) argues that television has transformed leisure and has led to a decline in civic engagement and social capital. Television has also been accused of leading to cynicism about politics and telling us “what to feel, when to feel it, and how and why as well” (Hart 1999: vii). Postman has even suggested that television leads us to “amuse ourselves to death” (1986).

This brief review portrays a fairly stark contrast between the generally applauded print media and the often derided televised media. All are not ready to write television off, however. A growing group of scholars suggests that television has some inherent advantages. Chief among these is television’s visual format, which may increase information recall of certain dramatic events (Graber 2001). As Neuman, Just, and Crigler suggest, television “…can lower information costs for stories that seem distant and personally irrelevant” (1992: 108).
Although this debate has produced some important insights, we believe that the television/newspaper dichotomy is losing its relevance for two reasons. First, as Neuman (1991: 99) suggests, “there is no evidence of consistent significant differences in the ability of different media to persuade, inform, or even to instill an emotional response in audience members” (cited in Graber 2002: 197). More importantly, television and newspaper content are increasingly similar. For instance, the USA Today was created with the goal of bringing the news to millions of Americans by mimicking television’s brief, visual format. Even USA Today’s newspaper stands were made to look like television sets. On the other hand, C-SPAN was created with the opposite goal—to make television less dramatic, less visual and more context driven (Frantzich and Sullivan 1996).

As the distinction between print and visual media is becoming less important, we believe that the politically relevant debate is now moving toward the impact of “soft news” and entertainment media that have proliferated in recent years. These media outlets, characterized by shows such as The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, The Oprah Winfrey Show and The Late Show with David Letterman are primarily vessels for entertainment, rather than information. Nonetheless, many Americans now claim that they get much of their political information from these oft-maligned media. As Baum suggests, “Ratings for many daytime talk shows rival, and in some cases exceed, those for the evening newscasts of the major networks” (2002b: 5). Politicians have not ignored the rising market share of entertainment media. Washington Post columnist Howard Kurtz notes,

…the irreverent Daily Show is no joke for politicians trying to connect with a younger crowd that doesn’t watch the Sunday morning gabfests. That’s why North Carolina Sen. John Edwards, a likely presidential candidate, did the show during its stint in
Washington last week, joining such previous guests as John McCain (who recently
hosted *Saturday Night Live*), Joe Lieberman, Michael Bloomberg, Chuck Schumer,
Bob Dole, Bob Kerry and Mary Bono” (2002 C01).

Matthew Baum cites a number of occasions when presidential candidates hit the talk show
circuit to get their message out. “In today’s increasingly personality-driven political
entertainment, appearances on E-Talk shows afford candidates perhaps their best opportunity
to communicate with a substantial niche of the electorate” (2002b: 3).

What does the scholarly literature lead us to believe about the effects of soft news? For
a while, almost all of the scholarly research and commentary criticized the rise of soft news
and entertainment media as sources of political information. For instance, Patterson (2000)
argues that soft news consumption ultimately leads to decreased interest in public affairs as
well as a decline in trust in government.

Other scholars have come to believe that the rise of soft news and entertainment media
as sources of political information may not be all bad. Although people may not tune into
entertainment media to learn about politics, the entertainment programming they watch may
present political information implicitly or explicitly. For instance Lenart and McGraw
(1989), Delli Carpini and Williams (1998), and Feldman and Sigelman (1985) suggest that
citizens learn about politics from a variety of sources—fiction and non-fiction, entertainment
driven and information driven. Doris Graber cites a particularly pertinent example. In 1999,
viewers of the television show Beverly Hills 90210 were presented with an episode in which a
character had a scare with skin cancer due to excessive exposure to the sun. This story line
was suggested by the Centers for Disease Control because they recognized that “television
dramas are a major source of health information for large numbers of Americans...” (2002:
A few people (Graber 1996; Ridout 1993) even posit that some entertainment and soft news media are able to compensate for the shortcomings of typical horse race political coverage by providing relevant information and a dialogue between candidates and voters that traditional news media typically overlook.

In order to develop our hypotheses, we discuss the findings about soft news in four sections—audience characteristics, political attention, impact on political information, and impact on political participation.

**The Soft News Audience**

Citizens who get their information from soft news media differ significantly from those who consume traditional hard news sources. They tend to be less educated (Davis and Owen 1998), less interested in politics (Patterson 2000), and younger than hard news consumers (Baum 2002b). Because of these trends, it is often difficult to determine whether the effects of entertainment media consumption are due to the impact of soft news, or are artifacts of the individuals who are likely be entertainment media consumers. In our analysis, we control for these demographic factors to isolate the impact of entertainment media consumption on political knowledge and participation. Nonetheless, the causal mechanism is difficult to isolate and as a result, our study (like many survey based studies of political behavior) focuses on correlation rather than causation. We return to this issue in the conclusion.

**Soft News and Political Attention**

Soft news consumers are expected to be less interested in politics than those who consume traditional media (Baum 2002a). Indeed, this is the driving force behind this study. Citizens who generally pay a lot of attention to politics are likely to get their news from the
daily newspaper, the nightly news, news magazines and the like. To reach politically active voters, politicians still haunt the Sunday talk show circuit, talk politics with Tim Russert, and court reporters from major papers such as *The New York Times*. Citizens who are not as interested in politics receive their political information as a by-product of being entertained. To reach these citizens, politicians have begun to make appearances on entertainment shows such as *Saturday Night Live*.

**Soft News and Political Information**

Conventional wisdom suggests that soft news consumption is negatively related to political knowledge. After all, if citizens get their information from a source aimed at providing entertainment, rather than information, it stands to reason that the reduced political content would result in lower levels of information. Recently, however, the literature on soft news and political information has begun to suggest that soft news may in some cases increase the political information of certain citizens—namely politically inattentive ones. In the most thorough discussion of this phenomenon, Baum (2002a) argues that soft news provides politically relevant information for individuals not interested in politics.

Although Baum’s work would lead us to expect that soft news consumption is not a hindrance to learning, his study is based only on information levels about foreign policy. Baum is not alone in his focus on foreign policy. The vast majority of the previous research that highlights the positive effects of entertainment and soft news media examines foreign policy attitudes and knowledge (see Lenart and McGraw 1989; Feldman and Sigelman 1985). While foreign policy is no doubt important, it is different than most other political issues. Citizen knowledge of foreign policy is quite low (Holsti 1996; Mueller 2002). Theories of

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1 For example, see Bennett et al. (2000) Baum does, however, include measures of attentiveness to political issues other than foreign policy.
agenda setting (Iyengar and Kinder 1987) suggest that it is easier for the media to set the agenda when knowledge is low, therefore we might expect very different results from other issue areas. Neuman, Just and Crigler (1992) also lead us to question whether this assertion applies to other cases. They suggest that “a great deal more creativity is required in the presentation of less salient news stories” (121). In sum, although we would expect that soft news does not negatively impact learning, we do believe that the question needs to be empirically tested in another context. The 2000 election provides such a test case.

Soft News and Political Participation

While scholars have begun to learn more about the impact of soft news on political interest and political knowledge, we know less about the impact of soft news on political participation. In one of the few extant studies that addresses this relationship, Bennett, Rhine and Flickinger (2000) find that soft news consumption is negatively related to political participation. Unfortunately, Bennett et al.’s study relies on data from 1990. We would expect that their conclusion remains viable, but the media environment has changed considerably since 1990. Indeed, shows such as The Daily Show with Jon Stewart and a variety of other entertainment-oriented programs were not even on the air in 1990. As a result, we believe the question needs to be revisited.

We have established that soft news is important, but what constitutes soft news? Unfortunately, there is no straightforward answer. Baum explains that soft news employs “a set of story characteristics, including the absence of a public policy component, sensationalized presentation, human-interest themes, and emphasis on dramatic subject matter, such as crime and disaster” (2002a: 92). Although this paints a broad picture, it is far from precise. Graber (2002) suggests that U.S. News and World Report, Newsweek, Time,
and other weekly newsmagazines contain many qualities of soft news, but Baum (2002a) includes weekly news magazines in his hard news index. As Thomas Patterson (2000) points out, defining soft news reminds us of Justice Potter Stewart’s famous disclaimer that, “I know it when I see it.”

No matter how one defines soft news, almost all observers agree that comedy shows such as *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* constitute soft news. *Saturday Night Live, MTV, and (the now defunct) Politically Incorrect* are likewise primarily concerned with entertainment, rather than traditional journalistic standards of good reporting. In constructing our soft news index, we include only the unquestionably entertainment oriented sources listed above. As a result, from this point on we opt for the more limited term *entertainment* media, rather than the more controversial term *soft* news³.

To sum up, the literature suggests two testable hypotheses.

H₁: Political knowledge should be greater among citizens who watch entertainment media if they are less interested in politics.

H₂: Entertainment media consumption is associated with lower levels of political participation.

**Data and Methods**

Guided by the literature discussed above, we seek to uncover the political impact of entertainment media. We rely on the media interest survey conducted by the Pew Center for the People and the Press. The data were collected by telephone during January 2000 and consist of a sample of 1,091 adults. In each of our models, we use the weights provided by Pew. Because we use weighted data, our sample size often exceeds the actual sample size for the survey.⁴

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³ For details on this scale, or any other variable used in this paper, see the appendix.
⁴ These weights are based on the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey. For more detail on the survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/reports/methodology.php3>.
We address two research questions, one about political knowledge and one about political participation. First, does entertainment media consumption impact political knowledge? We expect that consuming entertainment media will help bring knowledge to citizens who are not generally interested in politics. To address this question, we employ an ordered logistic regression where the dependent variable (campaign knowledge) ranges from 0 to 3 and measures how many of the following three questions the respondent answered correctly:

1. Do you happen to know which of the presidential candidates is now governor of Texas?
2. Do you happen to know which of the presidential candidates was formerly a senator from New Jersey?
3. Do you happen to know which of the presidential candidates co-sponsored a campaign finance reform bill in Congress?

This was the only measure of political knowledge available on the survey and although it is not a perfect measure, we believe that it does capture an important component of knowledge. After all, representative democracy requires that citizens have knowledge of the candidates running for office. At the time of this survey, George W. Bush, Bill Bradley, and John McCain were all serious candidates for their respective party’s nomination for president. Knowledge of these basic facts was certainly necessary for an informed vote. As a result, we believe that these are important components of political knowledge.

In this model we include independent variables for entertainment media consumption, daily newspaper consumption, and political attention. In order to test whether the effect of entertainment media is different for interested and uninterested publics, we include an interaction term in which we multiply entertainment media consumption by how closely the
individual indicated that they followed the 2000 presidential election. We also include independent variables\textsuperscript{6} for other factors traditionally associated with political knowledge—age, education, income, race (1=white), and sex (1=male). We expect all of these control variables to be positively related to the dependent variable.

Second, we ask whether those who frequently consume soft news are less likely to participate in politics. We employ an ordered logistic regression model where the dependent variable ranges from 0 to 6. The dependent variable measures how many of the following activities the respondent has participated in throughout her life: contacting a public official, contributing money to a candidate running for office, joining an organization in support of a particular cause, attending a city or town council meeting in the community where you live, attending a political party meeting or function, and registering to vote. We expect that those who get most of their news from entertainment media will be less politically active than other citizens.

We also include independent variables for daily newspaper consumption, which we expect to be positively related to political participation, entertainment media, which we expect to be negatively related to participation, and political attention, which should be positively related to participation. Once again we include an interaction term in which we multiply entertainment media consumption by how closely the individual indicated that they followed the 2000 election. We also include control variables traditionally associated with political participation. These are age, education, income, race (1=white), and sex (1=male). We expect all to be positively related to the dependent variable.

\textsuperscript{5} See Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) for a thorough discussion of the limitations of fact based measures of political information.
Results

Does entertainment media consumption have an impact on political knowledge? To answer this question, we ask whether those who get their news from entertainment media are less likely to know basic information about three major presidential candidates (George W. Bush, Bill Bradley, and John McCain). The results are presented in Table 1.

[Table 1 About Here]

Overall, the model performs quite well. The Model Chi Square is highly significant and the Cox and Snell $R^2$ is a respectable .377, indicating that the model explains about 38% of the variation in the dependent variable. Further, each of the control variables (age, education, income, race, sex) are strongly7 and positively related to political knowledge8. Daily newspaper consumption ($p<.05$) and entertainment media consumption ($p<.01$) are both significant, suggesting that both daily newspaper consumption and entertainment media consumption are associated with political knowledge. Our finding regarding daily newspaper consumption is consistent with Bennett et al. (2000) who find that reading of any sort is highly associated with political knowledge. This also supports Putnam’s claim that “newspaper readership remains a mark of substantial civic engagement” (2000: 218). The second of these two variables—entertainment media consumption—is much more intriguing. It appears that entertainment media do not have a negative impact on political knowledge. Our findings actually suggest the reverse—*the more often individuals consume entertainment* ...

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6 Details on question wording and coding can be found in the Appendix.
7 All of the control variables are significant at $p<.01$ except white and male, which are significant at $p<.05$
8 As the reader likely suspects, there is multicollinearity between the education, income, and race variables. For instance, education and income are correlated at .33 (Kendall’s tau-b). We keep all three variables in our model for three reasons, however. First, the presence of multicollinearity results in a larger coefficient, and thus makes it more difficult to obtain significance—in essence providing a more stringent test of the hypothesis. Next, we are treating these as control variables. Although interesting, they are not central to this investigation. Third, despite the collinearity, income, education, and race are theoretically distinct variables and previous research (Bennett et al. 2000) suggests that they should be included in models predicting political knowledge.
media for political coverage, the more they know about politics. Despite frequent critiques from journalists and political pundits, those who gather their news from entertainment media do not appear to be at a knowledge disadvantage. Obviously, citizens are able to learn from entertainment media.

In order to parse out the relationship between entertainment media consumption and political knowledge further, we now examine the interaction term (frequency with which the respondent claims he/she follows the 2000 election x entertainment media consumption). The interaction term is negative and highly significant (p<.01) indicating that entertainment media affect political learning in different ways for those who claim to follow politics frequently, and those who follow politics rarely or never. Specifically, those who rarely follow news about the presidential election are more likely to learn from entertainment media. In sum, we find that entertainment media bring political knowledge to the politically disinterested—a group which is unlikely to consume political information from traditional media sources.

Next, we ask whether entertainment media consumption has an impact on participation. To answer this question, we run an ordered logit model where the dependent variable ranges from 0 to 6 and measures political participation as a scale of how many political activities the respondent had participated in throughout his/her life. Once again, our key independent variables measure daily newspaper consumption, entertainment media consumption, and an interaction term where entertainment media consumption is multiplied by political interest. We also include several other independent variables intended to control for other characteristics traditionally associated with political participation. These include political attention, age, education, income, sex (1=male) and race (1=white). The results of this model can be found in Table 2.
Overall the model performs fairly well. The Model Chi Square is highly significant and the Cox and Snell $R^2$ indicates that the model explains over $1/3$ of the variance in political participation. Three of the control variables (age, education, income) are signed in the expected direction and reach significance at the $p<.01$ level. Male is in the expected direction, but does not reach significance. The white variable is negative and also fails to reach significance. Political attention is in the expected direction, but does not reach significance in this model.

The media consumption variables in this model present a different picture than in the political knowledge model portrayed in Table 1, but one that supports our hypotheses. Daily newspaper consumption is positively ($p<.01$) related to political participation, suggesting that daily newspaper consumption is highly correlated with political participation. This is consistent with Bennett et al.’s (2000) findings about reading and democratic citizenship as well as Putnam’s (2000) suggestion that newspaper readership breeds social capital.

The entertainment media variable is negative and significant ($p<.05$), suggesting that entertainment media consumption is negatively related to political participation. This supports our hypothesis and suggests that although some citizens may learn from entertainment media, this knowledge does not translate into action. Instead, entertainment media consumption seems to have a negative impact on political participation. We once again added an interaction term to test whether the impact of entertainment media varies by political attention, but the term was not significant in this model.

To sum up, these two models paint a picture of entertainment media that is not entirely positive or negative. Although entertainment media do help bring political knowledge to
individuals who are not interested in politics, entertainment media consumption does not have a similar impact on political participation. Instead, entertainment media consumption seems to suppress political participation. In the end, we cannot conclude that entertainment media necessarily help or hurt democratic citizenship. We can say, however, that daily newspaper consumption breeds good citizenship.

**Conclusions and Directions for Future Research**

Citizens are increasingly reliant on entertainment media for political information. Appearances on Jay Leno and David Letterman are now nearly as important to a political campaign as taking on the gauntlet of Sunday morning political talk shows. The increasing importance of entertainment media has been under frequent fire from political commentators from across the political spectrum. Scholars have also cited our increasing reliance on entertainment media as an indication of the declining norms of citizenship in the United States. Unfortunately, few have bothered to empirically evaluate the impact of entertainment media on democratic citizenship.

Our findings suggest that entertainment media are able to inform politically disinterested publics. Although learning about politics is not the primary goal of watching entertainment media, it can be a positive by-product. While Baum (2002a) comes to largely the same conclusion, his work primarily addresses foreign policy, which is by his own admission a different kind of issue. In addition, by examining entertainment media, rather than the broader category of soft news, we are able to provide a more stringent test of the effects of entertainment media. By examining political learning from entertainment media in another context, we are able to conclude that entertainment media bring political information to a group frequently left underserved by the traditional media environment.
Defenders of entertainment media should not get too excited, however. Our findings also suggest that the benefits of political knowledge do not translate into action. Entertainment media consumption does not spawn participation in any group—politically interested or disinterested. Instead, entertainment media consumption seems to have a chilling effect on political participation. The political content of entertainment media may inform a group that would not otherwise be informed, but this additional knowledge is not translated into active participation in the political system.

Every study has limitations and ours is no different. As is the case in much of the literature on political behavior (see for example Bennett et al. 2000), our study speaks more to correlation than causation. Indeed, this is a limitation of almost all cross-sectional survey research. Nonetheless, this does not imply that our findings are not important. This paper adds to a growing literature on the impact of non-traditional media on political knowledge, and participation (Baum 2002; Patterson 2000). Scholars should move from these primarily survey based findings and conduct experiments that are more apt to identify causal mechanisms. Further, our measure of political knowledge (name recognition) is one that is most likely to result from entertainment media consumption. Name recognition is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition of educated vote choice and democratic citizenship. Future studies should examine other “deeper” measures of political knowledge and continue to investigate the degree to which entertainment media can inform.

Together, these findings suggest that political reformers should not make entertainment media the scapegoat for all of the declining norms of citizenship. Entertainment media bring political knowledge to a group that is often disinterested in politics. The challenge for those interested in reversing the recent decline in citizen
participation is to find out how to translate this knowledge into participation. If non-traditional media are able to inform this group, maybe non-traditional appeals to participation can drive them to become more active in the political system.

Despite some good news about entertainment media, our findings still clearly support the notion that reading the daily newspaper is a strong predictor of habits of good citizenship. Those who make a habit of reading the daily newspaper are more likely to be politically knowledgeable and politically active. In sum, we agree with Bennett et al. that “…reading is the core of civic literacy” (2000: 186).
References


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<td>Political Attention</td>
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Model Chi Square 500.374*  
Cox and Snell R² .377  
N 1402  

* indicates significance at the .05 level; one-tailed test  
** indicates significance at the .01 level; one-tailed test

Note: Dependent variable ranges from 0 to 3 and measures how many of the following three questions the respondent answered correctly. “Do you happen to know which of the presidential candidates is now Governor of Texas?” “Do you happen to know which of the presidential candidates was formerly a Senator from New Jersey?” “Do you happen to know which of the presidential candidates co-sponsored a campaign finance reform bill in Congress?”

Note: We do not report the intercepts for the different levels of the ordinal dependent variable.
| Table 2     Ordered Logit Results for Political Participation |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Entertainment Media         | -.134*                     |
|                             | (.077)                     |
| Daily Newspaper             | .378**                     |
|                             | (.052)                     |
| Political Attention         | .198                       |
|                             | (.152)                     |
| Entertainment Media x Political Attention | .038                   |
|                             | (.028)                     |
| Age                         | .026**                     |
|                             | (.004)                     |
| Education                   | .361**                     |
|                             | (.041)                     |
| Income                      | .245**                     |
|                             | (.033)                     |
| Male                        | .115                       |
|                             | (.112)                     |
| White                       | -.115                      |
|                             | (.173)                     |
| Model Chi Square            | 437.995**                  |
| Cox and Snell R²            | .343                       |
| N                           | 1044                       |

* indicates significance at the .05 level; one-tailed test  
** indicates significance at the .01 level; one-tailed test  

Note: The dependent variable ranges from 0 to 6 and measures political participation as a scale of how many political activities the respondent had participated in throughout their life. The activities were: contacting a public official, contributing money to a candidate running for office, joining an organization in support of a particular cause, attending a city or town council meeting in the community where you live, attending a political party meeting or function, registering to vote.

Note: We do not report the intercepts for the different levels of the ordinal dependent variable.
Appendix: List of Variables with Relevant Codes

**Dependent Variables:**

*Political Knowledge Scale* (alpha=.6470; range=0-3; mean=1.161; SD=1.00; N=2472)
An additive scale of responses to the following questions where each correct answer is coded “1” and each incorrect answer and don’t know is coded “0.”
- Do you happen to know which of the presidential candidates is now Governor of Texas?
- Do you happen to know which of the presidential candidates was formerly a senator from New Jersey?
- Do you happen to know which of the presidential candidates co-sponsored a campaign finance reform bill in Congress?

*Political Participation Scale* (alpha=.6833; range=0-6; mean=2.489; SD=1.706; N=2420)
An additive scale of the following questions where each yes answer receives a “1” and each no answer is scored “0.”
People express their opinions about politics and current events in a number of ways. I’m going to read a list of some of these ways.
- Have you ever contacted any elected official?
- Have you ever contributed money to a candidate running for office?
- Have you ever joined an organization in support of a particular cause?
- Have you ever attended a city or town council meeting in the community where you live?
- Have you ever attended a political party meeting or function?
- Are you now registered to vote?

**Independent Variables:**

*Entertainment Media* (alpha=.5940; range=3-12; mean=5.033; SD=2.135; N=1265)
Additive scale of responses to the following questions where each response was coded: 4=regularly; 3=sometimes; 2=hardly ever; 1=never/don’t read/watch/listen to that.
Now I’d like to ask you about some specific ways in which you might be getting news about the presidential campaign. For each item that I read, please tell me how often, if ever, you learn something about the presidential campaign or the candidate from this source.
- MTV
- Comedy Shows such as *Saturday Night Live* and *Politically Incorrect*
- Late night TV shows such as David Letterman and Jay Leno

*Daily Newspaper Consumption* (range=1-4; mean=2.84; SD=1.18; N=1262)
Additive scale of responses to the following questions where each response was coded: 4=regularly; 3=sometimes; 2=hardly ever; 1=never/don’t read/watch/listen to that.
Now I’d like to ask you about some specific ways in which you might be getting news about the presidential campaign. For each item that I read, please tell me how often, if ever, you learn something about the presidential campaign or the candidate from this source. Your daily paper
- 4=regularly; 3=sometimes; 2=hardly ever; 1=never/don’t read/watch/listen to that.
**Political Attention** (range=1-4; mean=2.54; SD=16.39, N=1078)
Now I will read you a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely? News about the candidates for the 2000 election.
   4=very closely; 3=fairly closely; 2= not too closely; 1=not at all closely

**Entertainment Media x Political Attention** (range=3-48; mean=12.94, SD=7.75, N=1255)
Interaction term where the political attention and entertainment media variables were multiplied together

**Age** (range=18-93; mean=44.21; SD=16.891; N=2446)
What is your age?
   18-96= enter age; 97= 97 or older

**Education** (range=1-7; mean=4.19; SD=1.629; N=2466)
What is the last grade or class that you completed in school?
   1=none or grade 1-6; 2=high school incomplete; 3= high school graduate; 4=tech school; 5=some college; 6=college graduate; 7=post graduate.

**Sex** (range=0-1; mean=.48; SD=.500; N=2472)
The interviewer was instructed to enter the respondent’s sex.
   0=female; 1=male

**Income** (range=1-8; mean=4.48; SD=2.024; N=2117)
Last year, that is in 1999, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes? Just stop me when I get to the right category.
   1=less than 10,000; 2= 10,000 to $20,000; 3=$20,000 to $30,000; 4=$30,000 to $40,000; 5=$40,000 to $50,000; 6=$50,000 to $60,000; 7=$75,000 to $100,000; 8=$100,000 or more

**White** (range=0-1; mean=.85; SD=.353; N=2434)
What is your race?
   0=not white; 1=white