

Is “Fake News” the New News?

The Effect of “The Daily Show” on
Media and Political Knowledge

Heather Avenson

Reasons to Study

- “Indecision” campaign coverage
- National Annenberg Election Survey
- Presidential Candidates

“It’s [*The Daily Show*] a great way of reaching younger audiences who don’t watch traditional news shows. When you’re meeting with voters, you’ve got to keep them amused as a way of keeping them interested” – John McCain

Some Praise for “The Daily Show”



- Peabody Awards: 2000 and 2004 for “Indecision” Campaign Coverage
- TV Critics Association Award: 2003 for “Outstanding Achievement in News and Information”
- Exposure to *TDS* increases attentiveness of people who normally don’t watch the news

And Some Criticism for “The Daily Show”

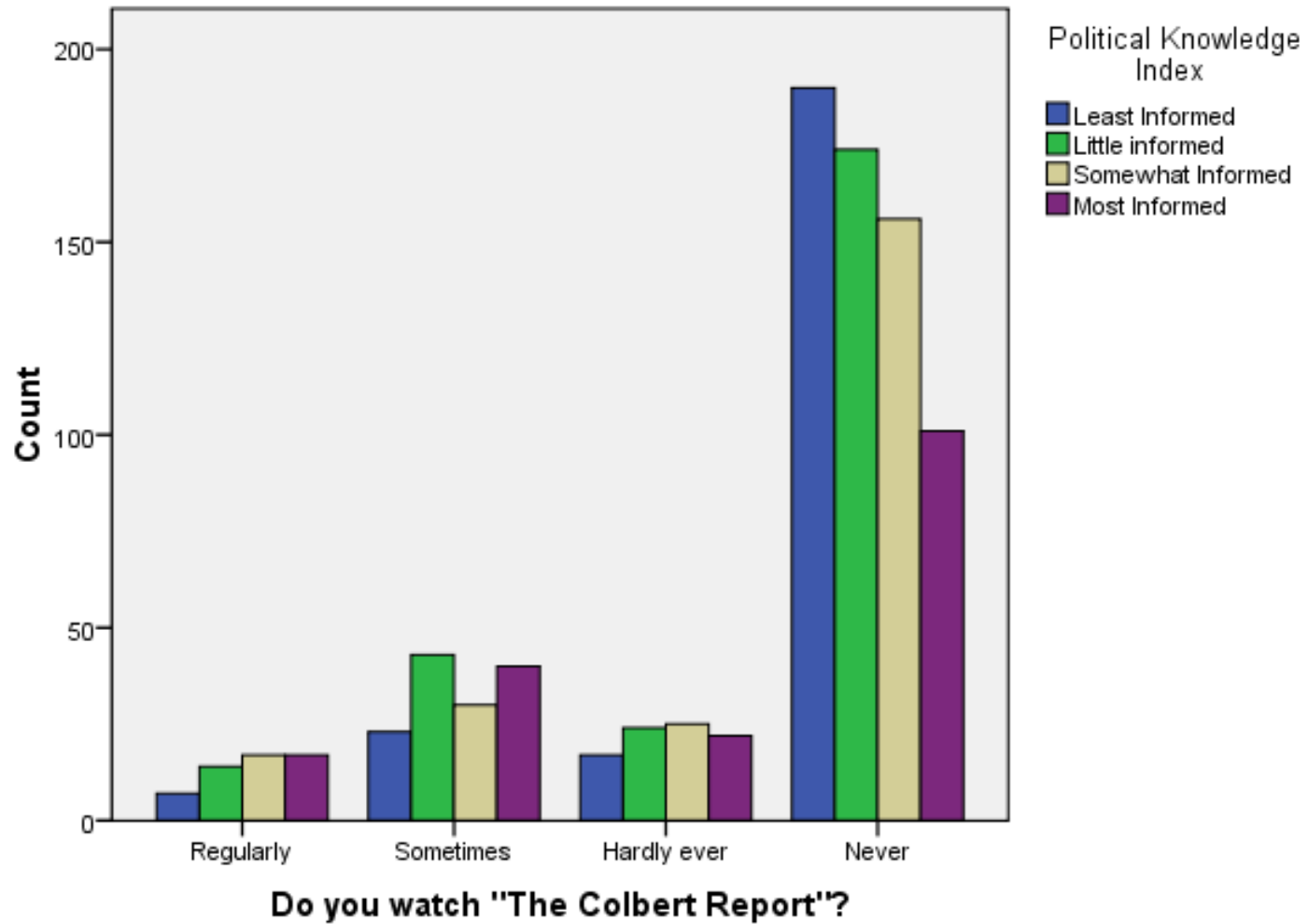


- While Presidential candidates may benefit while appearing on *TDS*, relentless skewering may do more harm than good
- *TDS* breeds cynicism
- Inflated sense of political knowledge

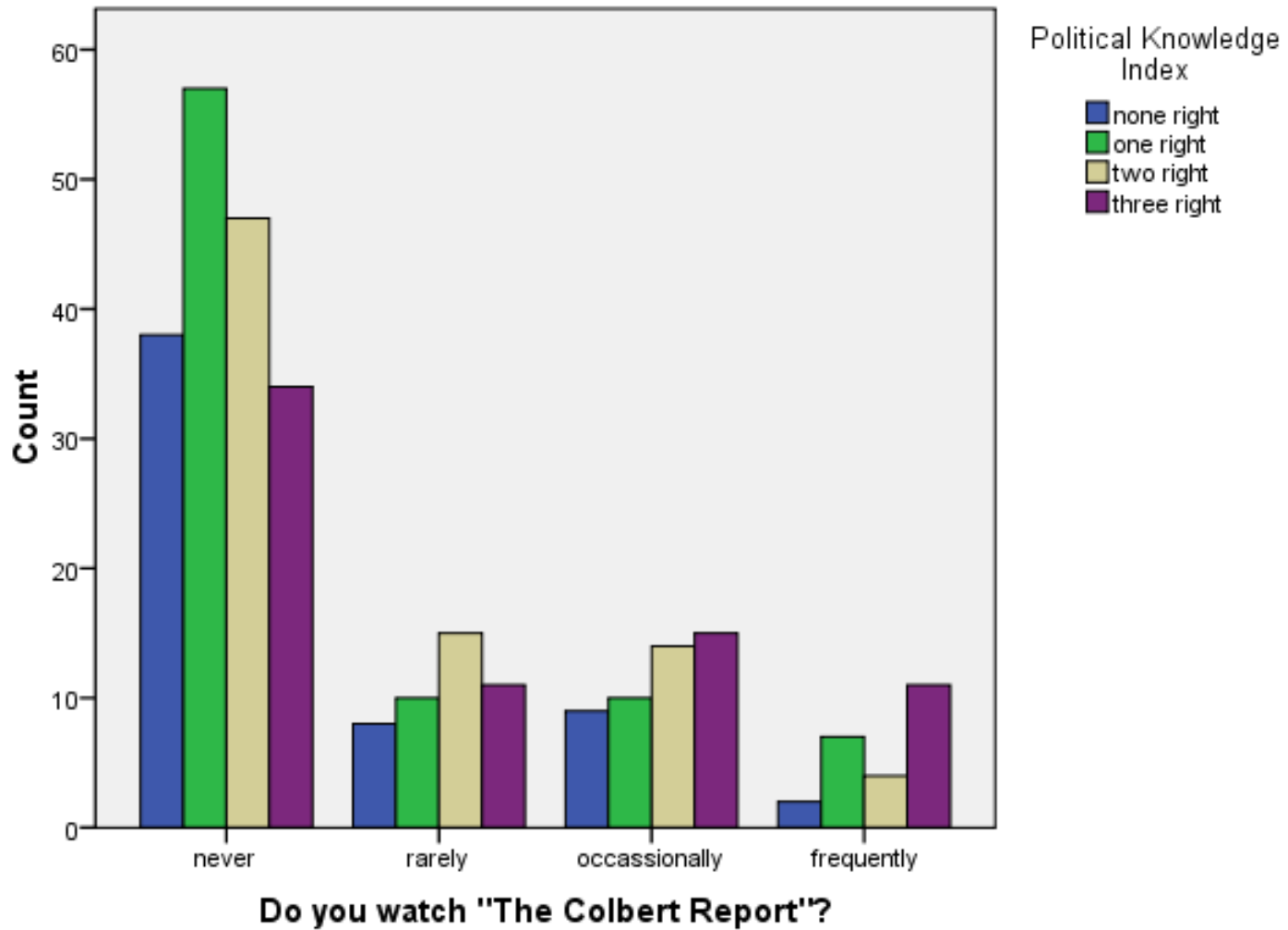
What does it all mean?

- Are people who watch either *The Daily Show* and/or *Colbert Report* more politically knowledgeable than those who do not?
- Do people who watch these programs also get their news from other sources?

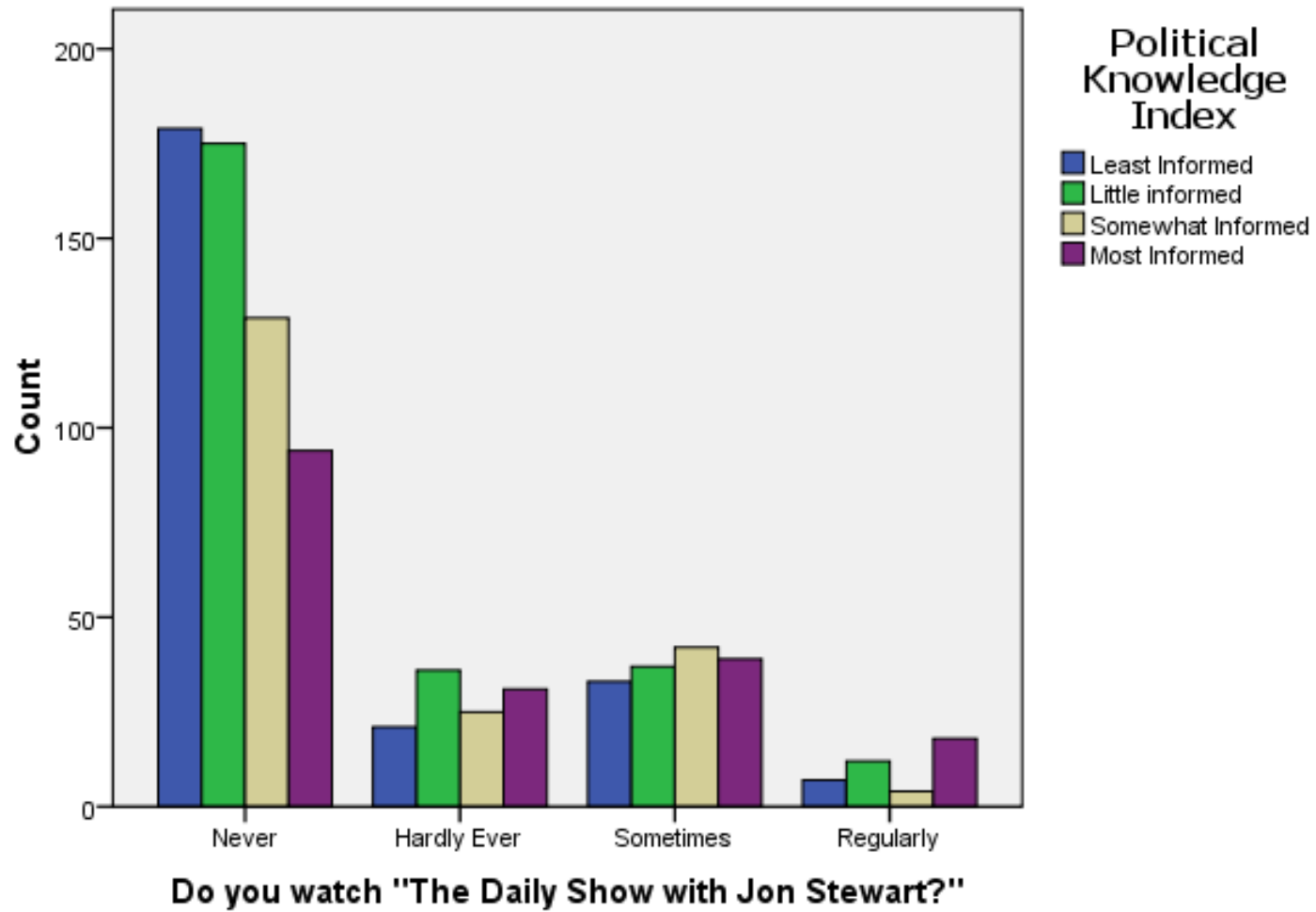
Pew Data



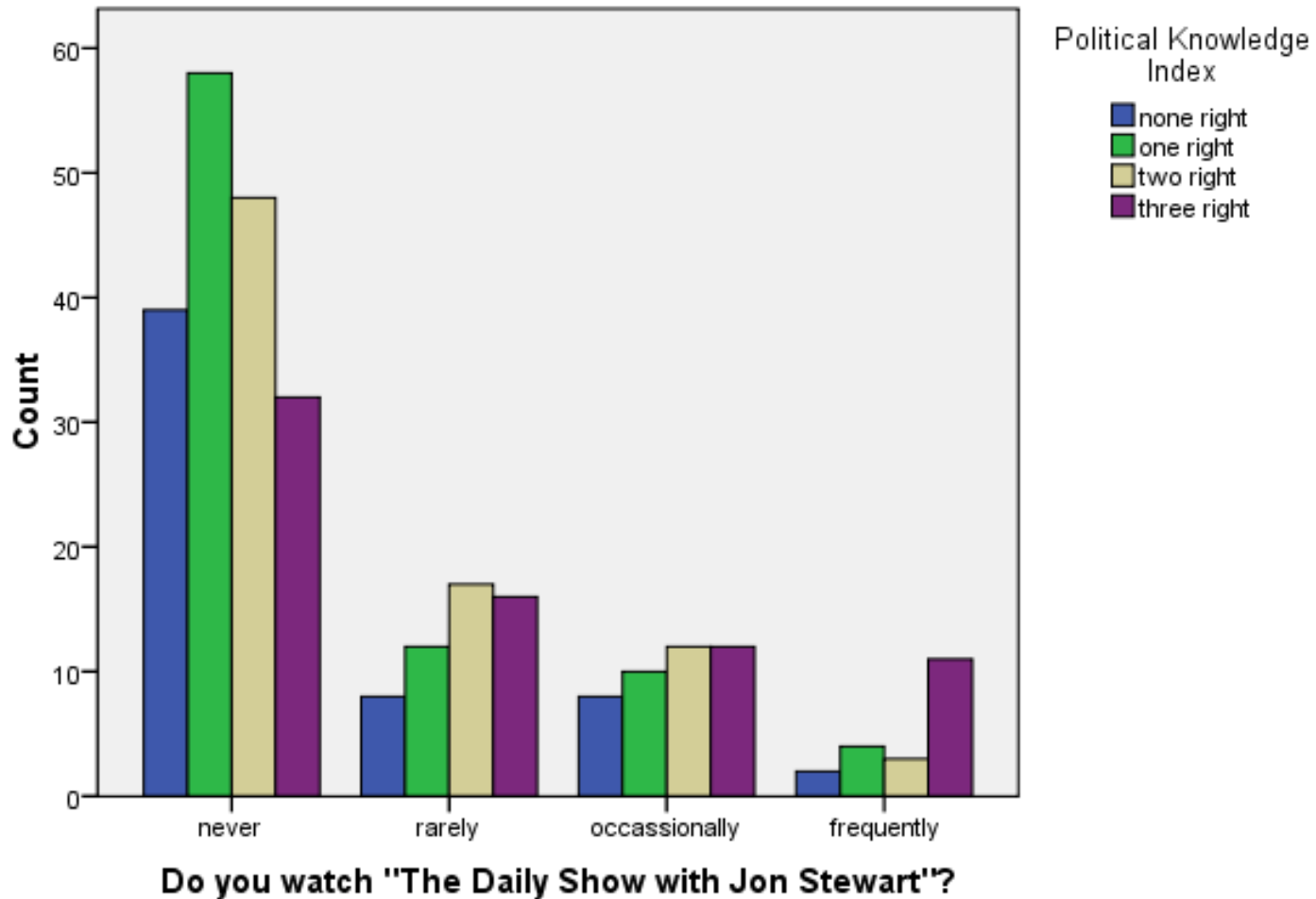
BSU Survey



Pew Data



BSU Survey



Out of 62 students:

- 35 watch CNN
- 29 watch NBC
- 22 watch MSNBC
- 21 watch FOX News
- 20 watch ABC
- 18 watch CBS
- 12 watch CNBC
- 6 watch “other” (most often BBC)

Out of 62 students:

- 19 use social networking sites as a source for news
- 35 read newspapers
- 35 listen to news radio

Out of 72 students:

- 38 watch CNN
- 32 watch FOX News
- 31 watch NBC
- 23 watch MSNBC
- 22 watch ABC
- 20 watch CBS
- 13 watch CNBC
- 5 watch other (most often BBC)

Out of 72 students:

- 26 use social networking sites as a source of news
- 36 read newspapers
- 42 listen to news radio

Focus Group

- Male, liberal, regular voters
- Don't necessarily have prior knowledge
- “The Daily Show” and “Colbert Report” are “good at pointing out flaws”

Periodicals

- *The Economist*
- *Foreign Affairs*
- *Newsweek*
- *Utne Reader*

Other Programs

- “NBC Nightly News”
- “The Rachel Maddow Show”
- “Countdown with Keith Olbermann”
- “The Newshour with Jim Lehrer”

Conclusion

- Results somewhat inconclusive
- Does suggest that “The Daily Show” and “Colbert Report” viewers are more informed