Comedy, News, and Voting:
How *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* Influences Young People's Political Participation

Rachel Collman
Political Science
The University of North Carolina Asheville
One University Heights Asheville
North Carolina 28804 USA

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Peter Haschke

Abstract

This paper explores the question, "Does watching *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* make young people more politically active?" Research shows that people who are more informed, efficacious, interested, and participatory are more likely to vote. This paper hypothesizes that young people who watch *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* for entertainment are more likely to vote because they become more informed, feel more efficacious, become more interested, and participate more in politics. Students at the University of North Carolina Asheville were surveyed about their political engagement, media consumption, and voting behavior following the 2014 Midterm elections. The evidence found to supports the hypothesis that those who watch *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* are more likely to vote through the causal mechanisms of knowledge and participation.

1. Introduction

Young people have always been a demographic with low voter turnout. Young people are less likely to turn to traditional media sources like newspapers and the nightly six o'clock news for news. They are getting information from fast-paced news sources online that are often incorporated within social media. *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* airs on cable television four nights a week. Its highest viewership is young people between the ages of 18-29. As young people are *The Daily Show's* highest viewing demographic, but also the lowest in terms of voter turnout, I want to know if there is a relationship between viewing *The Daily Show* and voting. This paper asks, "Does watching *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* make young people more politically active?"

2. Literature Review

Citizen participation is essential to a functioning democracy and involves many different activities at different times. While voting is the least time and effort intensive, compared to lobbying, campaigning, and protesting, it involves the largest amount of people[1]. Although American attitudes toward political participation have declined over the past decades, compared to European attitudes, Americans are still aware and involved in politics at similar rates[2].

In his study Powell examines American political participation in democracies around the world and explores how individual level attitudes and institutional variables affect voter turnout. He explores the paradox of why Americans, who are more politically aware and involved, are less likely to turn out than citizens in other democracies.

Powell examines both individual and institutional factors that influence voter turnout[3]. The first are public attitudes associated with political participation, including knowledge, efficacy, and interest. The second are forms of political participation that might relate to individual's likelihood to vote including discussion, persuasion, and party work. The third compares demographic characteristics expected to relate to voter turnout including education, occupation, and age. The institutional factors he examines are registration regulation, compulsory voting, and electoral systems, but these institutional factors are the same for purposes for the research conducted here.

Research also shows that older citizens vote more than young people, therefore having a larger population of older citizens benefits voter turnout[4]. Powell concludes that while American attitudinal characteristics rank highest against other democracies, voter turnout averages are much lower. Interestingly, Powell found that age is a disadvantage to American voting, as the European electorate is older. Individual attitudes toward political participation are more important in the American context, as the environment is favorable to participation of all kinds. Powell summarizes that the attitudinal characteristics are advantageous in the American system while the institutional context depresses voter turnout.

In "Electoral Participation" Franklin seeks to explain variation in voter turnout by country and social characteristics. His three theories are based on individual resources, political mobilization, and instrumental motivation. Franklin's central argument focuses on instrumental motivation, "the desire to affect the course of public policy,"[5] as being neglected but still very important in driving electoral turnout. Franklin finds that major individual factors, like efficacy and importance of electoral contest, could only influence political participation if people were "motivated to use their votes to achieve a political goal" that would affect the broader population. Voters in America are not political unresponsive, but institutional factors inhibit voting as political participation[6].

There has been extensive research on the different factors that influence voter turnout. With the invention and rise of television, coinciding during the start of a decline in voting, it could be argued that television depressed voter turnout. Political information was disseminated substantially less from radio and newspaper sources. As television became a more popular news source there was a crowding of information which provides a mechanism to link television and voter turnout. Gentzkow's results show that television began to substitute newspaper and radio for Americans' political news consumption[7].

Most research regarding media and voter turnout, specifically about television, has been focused on campaign advertising and some on news source bias. As almost all television reporting has a slant, most research covers how these news sources markets to certain political leanings. Politically biased news coverage brings out those dedicated to political parties, but deters undecided voters as news coverage affects their perception of efficacy[8].

More research is being done about social media influence during its meteoric rise in the past few years. Younger voters are getting less information from conventional television sources, and more from internet-based media, including television programming on internet platforms[9]. Television programs that report news differently than these conventional news sources are keeping young viewers sitting in front of the television but they have also embraced broadening their reach to the Internet.[10]

3. Theory & Argument

Previous research shows that voting behavior and political engagement of young people is a point of interest among political science scholars. Powell examined the institutional and social factors that voters' involvement, and others have explored how media affects voter turnout.

The research question is, "Are young people, who view *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* more often, more likely to vote?" This paper's hypothesis is that people who watch *The Daily Show* more often are more likely to vote. This hypothesis is examined through four causal mechanisms: knowledge, efficacy, interest, and participation. There are a total of nine hypotheses, one for the overall research question, and two per causal mechanism linking *The Daily Show* viewership and voting.

3.1 Hypothesis 1:

People who watch *The Daily Show* more often are more likely to vote.

3.2 Causal Mechanism 1: Knowledge

There are two hypotheses for how knowledge provides a causal link between *The Daily Show* and voting. People who watch *The Daily Show* are more likely to be informed, and are therefore more likely to vote. *The Daily Show* viewers may be more likely to vote because *The Daily Show* informs its viewers. Research shows that more informed people are more likely to vote.

Young people watch *The Daily Show* for entertainment and are simultaneously educated about political issues. They are exposed to news stories and current events through humor, making them become more informed about them. When young people are more informed about issues, they are more likely to vote.

Hypothesis 2: The Daily Show Viewership ➔ Knowledge *Hypothesis 2.1:* Knowledge ➔ Voting

3.3 Causal Mechanism 2: Efficacy

The Daily Show instills the sense that people's actions matter and they have a role to play in politics. Powell's research shows that people who feel more efficacious, like they have a say in politics, are more likely to vote because they feel like they can make a difference. When people feel efficacious and they are more likely to vote.

Hypothesis 3: The Daily Show Viewership ➔ Efficacy *Hypothesis 3.1:* Efficacy ➔ Voting

3.4 Causal Mechanism 3: Interest

People who view *The Daily Show* are more likely to be interested in politics. The show presents political issues in a humorous and entertaining way, which makes people more interested in them. When people are interested are interested in politics they are more likely to vote.

Hypothesis 4: The Daily Show Viewership ➔ Interest *Hypothesis 4.1:* Interest ➔ Voting

3.5 Causal Mechanism 4: Participation

People who view *The Daily Show* are more likely to participate in politics because the show promotes a sense civic duty among its viewers to get involved. Since the show promotes action, those who watch it are more likely to participate in politics through discussion, persuasion, and party work. When people actively participate in politics, they are more likely to vote.

Hypothesis 5: The Daily Show Viewership ➔ Participation *Hypothesis 5.1:* Participation ➔ Voting

4. Methods

To examine these mechanisms, students at UNC Asheville were surveyed to be a sample representing young people. The survey was fielded after polls closed in Buncombe County at 8:00pm on Tuesday November 4, 2014. It circulated among UNC Asheville students ranging in age and major, to obtain the widest possible sample group. I was not permitted to send mass communication to reach the entire student body. The survey was administered via an online questionnaire through Google Forms, and paper surveys were also available. Of the 112 anonymous respondents, two were completed on paper. Surveys completed via the online form were given a randomized question order. Of 112 respondents, one was removed from the sample because I only considered respondents who were eligible to vote.

The survey measured concepts that relate to voter turnout. These concepts were measured with 33 questions that gauged age, sex, gender, employment status, media consumption, viewership of biased media, efficacy, interest, participation, voter turnout, registration status, partisanship and collegiate major.

5. Data & Measures

In this section the measures used are outlined, and the data that the surveyed sample yielded. As the research question is, "Are young people, who view *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* more often, more likely to vote?" the independent variable is *The Daily Show* viewership. The dependent variable is voter turnout. Registration is an important factor to consider, as registration is necessary to vote.

   Research states that there are variables, other than the casual mechanisms of knowledge, efficacy, interest, and participation that affect voter turnout. These other variables are age, sex, gender, employment status, media consumption, and viewership of biased media, registration status, partisanship and collegiate major. Although data was gathered regarding these other variables, this paper examines if viewing *The Daily Show* influenced the four variables outlined as causal mechanisms.

5.1 Voting

To measure voter turnout the following question was posed:

- Did you vote?

   Respondents answered either yes or no.
   In the 2014 midterm election, the national rate for voter turnout was the lowest in nearly 70 years with 36% of the eligible population voting. Turnout in North Carolina was higher than the national average with 41% of state's eligible population voting[11].
   Table 1 shows national, state, and campus statistics of voter turnout. Students at UNC Asheville voted in rates above the national and state average with 57.6% students surveyed reporting that they voted, and 42.3% reporting that they did not. This supports the theory that UNC Asheville has a higher voter turnout among its students because they are more educated.

Table 1. Voter turnout in 2014 Midterm Election

Region	Voter Turnout; of eligible population
United States	36%
North Carolina	41%
UNC Asheville	57.6%

5.2 Registration

To measure registration among students the following questions were posed:

- Are you registered?
- Are you registered in Buncombe County?

   Respondents answered either yes or no for both questions.
   Table 2 shows registration rates of UNC Asheville students and how many were registered in Buncombe County, where UNC Asheville is. According to the 2012 United States Census data, 71% of eligible Americans registered to vote (US Census). 95% of UNC Asheville students surveyed are registered to vote, with 69% registered in the same county as the university.

Table 2 Registration status and registration in Buncombe County

Registered to Vote	Number	Percent
Yes	105	95%
No	6	5%
Total	111	100%
Registered in Buncombe County		
Yes	77	69%
No	34	31%
Total	111	100%

The following additional question was posed to make a distinction between voters and registered voters who did not vote:

In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. Which of the following statements best describes you:

- o Did you vote?
- o If no, why didn't you vote?
  - I did not vote (in the election this November);
  - I thought about voting this time, but didn't;
  - I usually vote, but didn't this time;
  - I am sure I voted.

Table 3 offers a break down of voter turnout by registration status. 60% of respondents who were registered actually voted, and 40% did not vote despite being registered. As being registered is a precursory to voting, I also examined what variables led to respondents being registered.

Table 3. Registration status by voter turnout

Registered	Number	Percent
Vote	63	60%
No Vote	42	40%
Total	105	100%
Not Registered		
Vote	0	0%
No Vote	6	100%
Total	6	100%

5.3 Knowledge

Research has shown that being more informed, leads to a higher likelihood of voting (Powell, 1986). Interest is an independent variable necessary to evaluate Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3. To measure how informed individuals are, the following question was posed:

- ▪ "Who represents your district in the U.S. House of Representatives?"

For those registered in Buncombe County, the correct answers are Patrick McHenry or Mark Meadows, representing NC 10 and 11 respectively, and both winning reelection this November. Those who answered correctly were deemed informed. 81% of students asked this question responded with "I don't know" or the incorrect answer, and therefore were coded as uninformed. 19% of respondents were informed.

For students who were not registered in Buncombe County but answered with a current House of Representatives member, I assumed their answer was correct and they were deemed informed. 81% of respondents were uninformed.

Table 4 shows a break down of voter turnout by knowledge. There is no clear relationship between being informed and voting. Although slight, there is a positive relationship that shows being informed makes you more likely to vote than being uninformed.

Table 4. Knowledge by voter turnout

Informed	Number	Percent
Vote	13	62%
No Vote	8	38%
Total	21	100%
Uninformed		
Vote	50	55.5%
No Vote	40	44.4%
Total	90	100%

5.4 Efficacy

Powell defines efficacy as the rejection of the claim, that "people like me have no say in government." Efficacy is an independent variable necessary to evaluate Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2. Efficacy was measured by posing the following three questions:

- "How do you relate to the following statement? 'I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.'
- How do you relate to the following statement? 'People like me don't have any say about what the government does.'
- How often do politics and government seem so complicated that you can't really understand what's going on?

Respondents rated how they relate to these statements on a scale of 1 to 5, one being "strongly disagree" and five being "strongly agree." To measure efficacy the responses of these three questions were used to find the median from each respondent. The final measure of efficacy is the median score across these three responses.

For example, suppose three respondents answered the questions, as shown in Table 14. The median of each respondent's answers yields their level of efficacy.

Table 14. Example of measure of efficacy

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Measure of Efficacy
Respondent 1	1	3	2	2
Respondent 2	1	1	1	1
Respondent 3	3	4	5	4

On average, students scored a 3 on a 5-point measure of efficacy, meaning the surveyed sample UNC Asheville students rate themselves middle of the road regarding feeling efficacious. Table 17 shows the efficacy scores among students in graph form.

Table 5 shows the break down of registration rate by efficacy. The rate of registration is high among students at UNC Asheville, but registration is spread relatively evenly across all levels of efficacy.

Table 5. Efficacy score by registration status

Efficacy 1	Number	Percent
Registered	6	100%
Not Registered	0	0%
Total	6	100%
Efficacy 2		
Registered	18	95%
Not Registered	1	5%
Total	19	100%
Efficacy 3		
Registered	49	92%
Not Registered	4	8%
Total	53	100%
Efficacy 4		
Registered	29	97%
Not Registered	1	3%
Total	30	100%
Efficacy 5		
Registered	4	100%
Not Registered	0	0%
Total	4	100%

5.5 Interest

Powell defines interest as possessing at least some interest in politics, which was measured with two questions, one focused on general interest in politics, and one focused on interest in the 2014 midterm election. Interest is an independent variable necessary to evaluate Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 4. The following questions were posed:

- "Generally, how interested are you in politics? Select which applies to you."
- "How interested were you in the 2014 Midterm Election?"

Respondents rated how they relate to these statements on a scale of 1 to 5, one being "very disinterested" and five being "very interested." To measure interest the responses to these two questions were used to find the mean from each respondent. The final measure of interest is the mean score of these two responses.

For example, suppose three respondents answered the questions, as shown in Table 6. The mean of each respondent's answers yields their level of interest.

Table 6. Example of measure of interest

	Question 1	Question 2	Measure of Interest
Respondent 1	5	5	5
Respondent 2	1	1	1
Respondent 3	5	2	3.5

The surveyed sample UNC Asheville students rate themselves middle of the road regarding how interested they are in politics in general, and specifically in the 2014 midterm election.

5.6 Participation

According to Powell, participation constitutes three different actions. Discussion is defined as respondents discussed politics with others. Persuasion is defined as respondents tried to convince others during the election. Party Work is defined as respondents worked for a party or candidate during the election.

Participation is an independent variable necessary to evaluate Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 5. Participation was measured with seven questions, covering these three actions. The following questions were posed:

- "Did you put a bumper sticker on your car, sign on display, or wear button or shirt for a party or campaign?"
- "Did you work or volunteer for a party or candidate?"
- "Over the last six months, did you join a protest march or rally?"
- "Over the last six months, did you sign a petition, either online or on paper?"
- "Over the last six months, have you posted about a political issue on social media?"
- "Did you discuss the election with others?"
- "Over the past six months have you contacted or tried to contact an elected official?" respondents answered either yes or no.

The measure of participation is the sum of a respondent's answers. With seven questions, the highest sum implies most participation because respondents would have answered yes to each question.

For example, suppose three respondents answered the questions, as shown in Table 7. The sum of each respondent's answers yields their level of participation.

Table 7. Example of measure of participation

	Ques. 1	Ques. 2	Ques. 3	Ques. 4	Ques. 5	Ques. 6	Ques. 7	Measure of Participation
Respondent 1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
Respondent 2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Respondent 3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The surveyed sample of UNC Asheville students' responses yields a mean 2.75 and a median of 3. One-third of the students surveyed scored above 4 on this measure. The standard deviation is 1.7.

5.7 Media Exposure

General media exposure was measured with four questions, covering four media sources: television, radio, Internet, and newsprint. The following questions were posed, to which respondents answered with one of the following ratings: Often (3), sometimes (2), rarely (1), I did not…(0):

- In the last six months, how often did you watch anything about the election on television?
- In the last six months, how often did you hear anything about the election on radio?
- In the last six months, how often did you read anything about the election on the Internet?
- In the last six months, did you read anything about the election in newsprint?

The measure of media exposure was defined as the sum of the respondent's answers. With four questions, the highest sum indicates the highest exposure to media because respondents would have answered with a high rating, for all four questions.

Table 8 offers an example of how the media exposure measure is constructed. Suppose three respondents responded to the questions with the following answers. The sum of each respondent's answers yields the measure of media exposure.

Table 8. Example measure of media exposure

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Measure of Media Exposure
Respondent 1	3	3	3	3	12
Respondent 2	0	0	0	0	0
Respondent 3	1	2	3	0	6

The surveyed sample of UNC Asheville students' media exposure has a mean 5.82 and a median of 6. The standard deviation is 2.96.

Table 9 gives the number and percent of respondents that lie above and below the average of media exposure. In order to evaluate if media exposure influences voter turnout, respondents were divided into two groups. Those considered above average means they are more exposed to media. Respondents that were in the below average group were less exposed to media.

Table 9. Media exposure score by voter turnout

Media Exposure Score	Voter Turnout	
	Number of Respondents	Percent voted
Above average ($\geq$ 5.82)	58	63.8%
Below Average ($\leq$ 5.82)	52	48%

This paper's hypothesis is that respondents who have a high media exposure scores are more likely to vote because they will be informed about issues. Table 9 shows that 63.8% of those who were more exposed to media did vote. Less than half of those were less exposed to media voted.

Table 10 shows the media exposure scores per individual media source. Exposure to individual media sources yields an average rating of 1, meaning there was low media exposure among the students surveyed. As expected, newsprint was not the most popular news source for young people to gather information, and Internet sources were the most common.

Table 10. Media exposure scores per individual media score

	TV	Radio	Internet	Newsprint
Median	1	1	2	1
Mean	1.13	1.42	2.17	1.01
Mode	0	0	3	0

The data in Table 10 supports findings in the literature review suggesting that young people's sources for news have changed. Young people are using online sources, rather than more traditional means of television, radio, and newsprint to gain information.

5.8 Gender

In existing research, sex, rather than gender, is the variable that is measured in relation to voter turnout. Both sex and gender were measured in this survey, but this paper uses gender in its analysis because this allows the most accurate self-identification by respondents. Allowing respondents to answer with sex and gender is more inclusive for all identities. While there is research to support the idea that biological sex influences people's voting behavior, this paper examines if those who identify with a non-conforming gender (one that is not simply man or woman) are more likely to be politically active to affect change through voting.

Gender was measured by asking respondents to respond with their identified gender, through writing in their own identification, rather than checking off a box with pre-chosen identification. The following question was posed:

- "What is your gender?"

Respondents answered with one of five identifications, including "Male," "Female," "Genderfluid," "Genderqueer/Nonbinary," and "Masculine/Feminine."

Table 11 offers a detailed break down of voter turnout by gender. Females make up 76% of the surveyed sample, while UNC Asheville reported that the student body is 55.3% female at the time of this survey. The university's statistics only measure sex, not gender. The sample taken is not completely representative of the student body, but there are more females than males in the student body.

Table 11. Gender by voter turnout

	Vote		No Vote		Total	
Gender Identification	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Male	11	44%	14	56%	25	100%
Female	50	39 %	32	61%	84	100%
Genderfluid	1	50%	1	50%	2	100%
Genderqueer/Nonbinary	1	100%	0	0%	1	100%
Masculine/Feminine	1	100%	0	0%	1	100%

Female students voted at a higher rate than male students, which differs from existing research that shows males vote at higher rates than females (Powell, 1986). By allowing respondents to write in their self-identified gender, we can see if there is a relationship between gender and voter turnout. There were too few respondents that identified with different responses than male or female; therefore we cannot make claims about Genderfluid, Genderqueer/Nonbinary, and Masculine/Feminine respondents[12].

5.9 Age

For the purposes of this study, the category of young people is defined as ages 18-29. The student sample that was surveyed included ages 18-29. I measured age by allowing respondents to write in their age in years. I posed the following question:

- "What is your age?"

The mean age of respondents is 20.6, and the median age is 21.

5.10 Employment

Employment is defined as receiving regular income through paid employment. Many students are employed, in addition to being full-time and part-time students. To measure employment status I asked the following question, to which respondents answered yes or no:

- Are you currently employed for pay?

Table 12 offers a break down of voter turnout by employment status. Of the 111 respondents surveyed, 30 were not employed and 81 were. Respondents who were employed voted at a higher rate than those who were not employed.

Table 12. Employment status by voter turnout

Employed	Number	Percent
Vote	52	64%
No Vote	29	36%
Total	81	100%
Not Employed		
Vote	12	40%
No Vote	18	60%
Total	30	100%

5.11 Major

Information about respondents' majors was also collected. The following question was posed, to which respondents filled in the blank:

- "What is your major?"

21 of the 111 students surveyed were Political Science majors and double majors with another social science major. Majors in the Social Sciences are Anthropology, Interdisciplinary Studies, International Studies, Political Science, Sociology, and Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies. Majors not in the Social Sciences are either in the Humanities or Natural Sciences.

Table 13 shows the break down of voter turnout by major. As expected, Political Science majors voted at a higher rate than other majors, because their studies may lead them to be more informed about political issues. Those in Social Sciences also voted at a higher rate than those not in the Social Sciences, which is also expected because their studies would expose them to issues that relate more directly to political issues that Humanities and Natural Sciences studies.

Table 13. Major by voter turnout

Major	Number	Percent
Political Science		
Vote	15	79%
No Vote	4	21%
Total	19	100%
Social Sciences (not including Political Science)		
Vote	14	31.8%
No Vote	30	68.2%
Total	44	100%
Not Social Sciences		
Vote	33	49%
No Vote	34	51%
Total	67	100%

6. Analysis

In order to examine theses hypotheses, the data was divided into groups two groups: high and low *The Daily Show* viewership. Using that division, it was determined if watching *The Daily Show* affected voter turnout, knowledge, efficacy, interest, and participation. These groups were further divided into informed and uninformed, low efficacious and high efficacious, low interest and high interest, and low participating and high participating.

6.1 Hypothesis 1: The Daily Show Viewership → Voter Turnout

To examine Hypothesis 1, high *The Daily Show* viewers and voter turnout and low *The Daily Show* viewership and voter turnout were compared. The difference fails to reach statistical yet there still is a difference between 70% and 55% voting.

Table 14 shows voter turnout by *The Daily Show* viewership. Consider the evidence provided in Table 15. Respondents who watched *The Daily Show* sometimes or often voted at higher rates than those who do not watch *The Daily Show* or who watched it rarely. The difference of these proportions across these groups is not statistically significant at the 95 percent level.

Table 14. *The Daily Show* viewership by voter turnout

DSV 0	
Vote	18
No Vote	19
Total	37
DSV 1	
Vote	18
No Vote	10
Total	28
DSV 2	
Vote	17
No Vote	5
Total	22
DSV 3	
Vote	11
No Vote	7
Total	18

Table 15. *The Daily Show* viewership by voting

***The Daily Show* Viewership**	**Voting**
Above Average (≥ 1.2)	70%
Below Average (≤ 1.2)	55%

6.2 Hypothesis 2: The Daily Show Viewership → Knowledge

To examine Hypothesis 2, high *The Daily Show* viewership and high knowledge were compared to low *The Daily Show* viewership and low knowledge. The difference fails to reach statistical significance yet there is a difference between 35% and 10% knowledge.

Table 16 shows the number of informed and uniformed respondents by their *The Daily Show* viewership. As expected watching *The Daily Show* more often increases knowledge, and the difference is statistically significant. This supports Hypothesis 2 that states that people who watch *The Daily Show* more often will be more informed.

Table 16 *The Daily Show* viewership by knowledge score

The Daily Show Viewership	Knowledge
	Average Score
Above Average (≥1.2)	3.60
Below Average (≤ 1.2)	2.25

   Table 17 shows the outcome of testing Hypothesis 2.1, the relationship between knowledge and voting. These differences are statistically significant and support the hypothesis that being more informed makes people more likely to vote.
   People watch *The Daily Show* for entertainment and become educated about political issues. They are exposed to news stories and current events, making them become more informed about them. When young people are more informed about issues, they are more likely to vote. This evidence supports the hypothesis that young people are more likely to vote through the causal mechanism of knowledge.

Table 17. Knowledge by voter turnout

Knowledge	Voter Turnout	
	Number of Respondents	**Percent voted**
Informed	21	90%
Uninformed	90	21%

6.3 Hypothesis 3: The Daily Show Viewership → Efficacy

To examine Hypothesis 3, high *The Daily Show* viewership and high efficacy were compared to low *The Daily Show* viewership and low efficacy. The difference fails to reach statistical significance yet there is a difference between 48% and 30% efficacy.
   Table 18 shows respondents by *The Daily Show* viewership and efficacy score. It was expected that this would result in the opposite average scores, as this paper hypothesized that watching *The Daily Show* more would result in more efficacy. There is no significant difference between these means and it does not support Hypothesis 3.

Table 18. *The Daily Show* viewership by efficacy score

The Daily Show Viewership	Efficacy
	Average Score
Above Average (≥1.2)	3.04
Below Average (≤ 1.2)	3.07

   Table 19 shows the outcome of testing Hypothesis 3.1, the relationship between efficacy and voting. These differences are not statistically significant and do not support the hypothesis that being more efficacious makes people more likely to vote.

Table 19. Efficacy by voter turnout

Efficacy Score	Voter Turnout	
	Number of Respondents	Percent voted
Above average ($\geq$ 3)	86	61.6%
Below Average ($\leq$ 3)	25	56%

6.4 Hypothesis 4: The Daily Show Viewership → Interest

To examine the relationship *The Daily Show* viewership and interest, high *The Daily Show* viewership and high interest were compared to low *The Daily Show* viewership and low interest. Table 20 shows the outcome of testing Hypothesis 4, the relationship between viewing *The Daily Show* and interest. Surprisingly, it was found that people who watch *The Daily Show* more often are not more likely be interested in politics. This difference is statistically significant. This contradicts Hypothesis 4 that states watching *The Daily Show* more would increase more interest in politics.

Table 20. *The Daily Show* viewership by interest score

The Daily Show Viewership	Interest
	Average Score
Above Average ($\geq$1.2)	3.17
Below Average ($\leq$ 1.2)	3.54

Table 21 shows the outcome of testing Hypothesis 4.1, the relationship between interest and voting. These differences are not statistically significant and do not support the hypothesis that being more interested makes people more likely to vote.

Table 21. Interest score by voter turnout

Interest Score	Voter Turnout	
	Number of Respondents	Percent voted
Above average ($\geq$ 3.4)	58	50%
Below Average ($\leq$ 3.4)	53	34%

6.5 Hypothesis 5: The Daily Show Viewership → Participation

To examine the relationship viewing *The Daily Show* participating, high *The Daily Show* viewership and high participation were compared to the means of low *The Daily Show* viewership and low participation. The difference does reach statistical significance, supporting evidence that there is a positive relationship between watching *The Daily Show* more often and participation.

   Table 22 gives the number and percent of respondents that lie above and below the average of participation. In order to evaluate if participation influences voter turnout, respondents were divided into two groups: high-participating and low-participating. This paper hypothesizes that high-participating respondents are more likely to vote because they will be inspired to act politically and vote.

Table 22. *The Daily Show* viewership by participation score

The Daily Show Viewership	Participation
	Average Score
Above Average (≥1.2)	3.60
Below Average (≤ 1.2)	2.25

Table 23 shows the outcome of testing Hypothesis 5.1, the relationship between participation and voting. This relationship is significantly positive. The relationship between viewing *The Daily Show* and participation is significant, and the relationship between participation and voting is significant, which supports the hypothesis that viewing *The Daily Show* does make viewers more likely to vote, through the causal mechanism of participation.

Table 23. Participation score by voter turnout

Participation Score	Voter Turnout	
	Number of Respondents	**Percent voted**
Above average (≥ 2.775)	58	65.5%
Below Average (≤ 2.775)	53	49.1%

The resulting non-significance from some of these causal mechanisms may be due to the size of the sample. Knowledge and participation are the only causal mechanisms that supports the first hypothesis that higher viewership of *The Daily Show* make young people more likely to vote because they participate.

7. Discussion

The Daily Show does affect voter turnout of young people, through the mechanism of participation. Surprisingly, there is no significant relationship directly between viewing *The Daily Show* and voting, but the relationship is positive. Of the four causal mechanisms, the evidence only supports participation as the mechanism to explain viewing *The Daily Show* more often and a higher likelihood of voting.

No significant relationships were found between *The Daily Show* viewership and efficacy or interest. This paper hypothesized that there is a relationship between *The Daily Show* viewership and efficacy because *The Daily Show* presents information in a simplified manner that makes viewers feel like they understand issues and can have a say in the political process. This paper hypothesized that there is a relationship between *The Daily Show* viewership because the show presents political issues in a humorous and entertaining way, which makes people more interested in them, and more likely to vote. Surprisingly, there is a significant negative relationship between *The Daily Show* viewership and interest. This could be because The Daily Show makes viewers more cynical toward politics rather than interested in political issues.

This evidence shows a statistically significant relationship between viewing *The Daily Show* and being informed, and a positive significant relationship between being informed and voting. Those who watch *The Daily Show*, despite their intention are exposed to news stories and current events, making them become more informed. Being informed makes people more likely to vote.

This evidence supports the hypothesis, as there is a statistically significant relationship between *The Daily Show* viewership and participation and a statistically significant relationship between viewing *The Daily Show* and participating in politics. As *The Daily Show* satirizes news events and political happenings, it also promotes a sense civic duty among its viewers to get involved. Because of this, those who view *The Daily Show* more often will feel more inclined to participate in politics.

It can be said that *The Daily Show* informs young people and inspires them to take action through political activities like publicly endorsing a candidate, working for a campaign, joining a protest march or rally, contacting an

elected official or discussing the election. These results are important because it shows that *The Daily Show* is a news source that not only entertains its viewers, but also educates them and motivates them to participate in politics.

This research was expected to find significant relationships between *The Daily Show* viewership and efficacy and interest. This paper expected that viewing *The Daily Show* would increase efficacy because it instills the sense that people's actions matter and they have a role to play in politics. This evidence does not support that, as it was expected that viewing *The Daily Show* would increase interest, as it satirizes politics, making viewers more interested in learning more and ultimately getting involved.

This lack of results to support the original hypothesis could be a result of a small sample size. There is evidence to believe this is so, given that some of these results revealed significance at the 90% level. The entire student body could not be surveyed. Although an attempt to gain a diverse and representative sample, the sample is small and could be biased.

8. Conclusion

Through this study, UNC Asheville students were found to have voted at a higher rate than the rest of the state and country, but this voter turnout was not significantly affected by watching *The Daily Show* through all mechanisms of knowledge, efficacy, interest and participation. The evidence found does support the hypothesis that young people who watch *The Daily Show* more often are more likely to vote, through the mechanisms of knowledge and participation.

While this sample is not big enough to make general claims about T*he Daily Show's* influence on young people's political participation, it is important in understanding how media affects young people and their interaction with politics. This study explores the political engagement of UNC Asheville students, who reside in a city that tends to be more liberal than the rest of North Carolina. Almost all of the students surveyed are registered to vote and more than half voted. On average they fell in the middle of the road regarding efficacy and interest. They were not very informed, but almost all of those who were viewed *The Daily Show* and voted. These students were not very high participating, but those who did participate, also viewed *The Daily Show* more often and did vote.

While this research does not yield the results expected, it does help understand how young people participate in politics with the influence of media sources and biased programming. *The Daily Show* offers a liberal critique of current politics and news events, and it attracts a young audience. Since *The Daily Show* is still viewed by young people despite the rise in using the Internet as a news source, it is relevant when discussing voter turnout and general political engagement of the Millennial Generation.

9. Acknowledgements

10. References

1 Mark Franklin, "Electoral Participation," in *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 216.

2 Richard G. Niemi and Herbert F. Weisberg, *Controversies in Voting Behavior*. (Washington, D.C.: CQ, 2001), 33.

3 G. Bingham Powell, "American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 01 (1986): 17-43.

4 Richard G. Niemi, Harold W. Stanley, and Charles L. Evans, "Age and Turnout among the New Enfranchised: Life Cycle Versus Experience Effects," *European Journal of Political Research* 12, (198): 371-86.

5 Mark Franklin, "Electoral Participation," in *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 231.

6 Mark Franklin, "Electoral Participation," in *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 232.

7 Matthew Gentzkow, "Television and Voter Turnout," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 121.3 (2006): 931-72.

8 Stefano Della Vigna, "The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 122.3 (2007): 1187-234.

9 J. Baumgartner and J. Morris, The *Daily Show* effect: Candidate evaluations, efficacy, and the American youth. *American Politics Research 34*, (2006), 341–367.

10 M. Delli Carpini and B. Williams, Let us entertain you: Politics in the new media environment. In L. Bennett and R. Entman (Eds.), *Mediated politics: Communication in the future of democracy,* (2000): 160–191.

11 U. S. Census Bureau, "Voting and Registration," *Voting HotReport*, Apr. 2014, http://thedataweb.rm.census.gov/TheDataWeb_HotReport2/voting/voting.hrml.

12 UNC Asheville Institutional Effectiveness, Research and Planning, "Fall 2014 Student Profile," Sept. 2014, https://ierp.unca.edu/sites/default/files/reports/enrollment/stuprofile/20146_student_profile_preliminary_090414.pdf .