

Political Communication: Knowledge  
POLS 418  
MWF 10:00-10:50

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## Before we get started...

- ▶ Jury Duty
- ▶ Kaid Ch 15
- ▶ Make sure you check the course website on a daily basis. I will post reading assignments and keep you updated about class.
- ▶ Office hours are cancelled for the next two weeks.
- ▶ If you have questions or concerns, send me an email.
- ▶ News

# Goals

- ▶ Knowledge and Learning
- ▶ Information Processing

# Learning

- ▶ How do people become educated about politics?
- ▶ Does the type of news source matter for learning (political knowledge)?
- ▶ Is learning equivalent across major forms of stratification (age and education)?
- ▶ In 1999 *The Onion* reported that “the television world will be one where learning is easy, fun and available to all’...The united States will be ‘filled with active and intelligent citizens, rushing about in a whirlwind of discoveries, inventions, innovations and theories’.”
  - ▶ Did this prophecy come true?
  - ▶ What about the internet? Have people made similar claims and has the internet proved to be as informative for citizens?

# Education and Political Knowledge

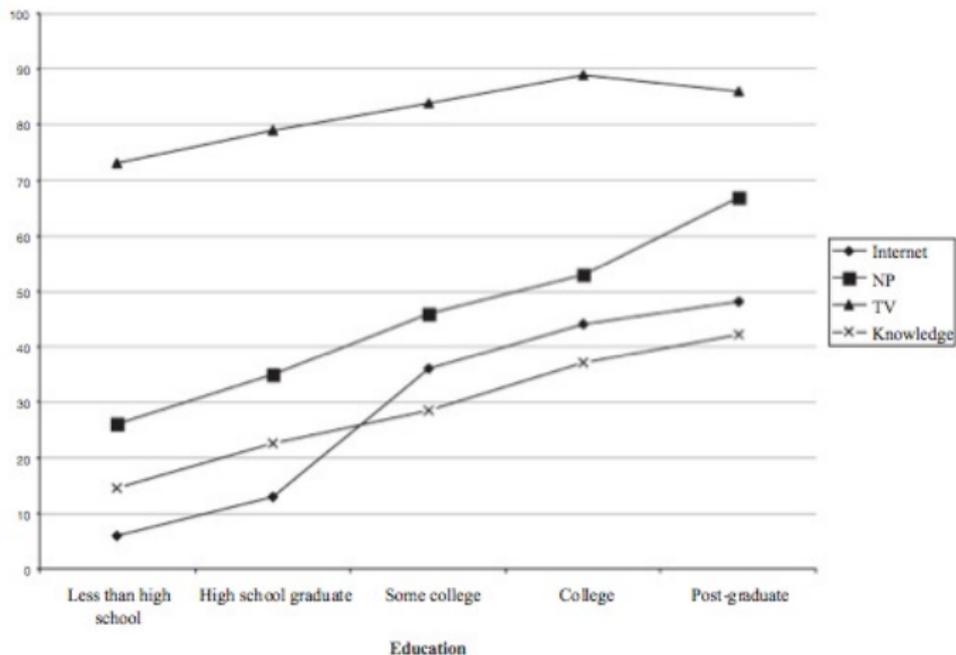


FIG. 14.1. Levels of three forms of campaign media use and political knowledge by education.

# Education and Political Knowledge

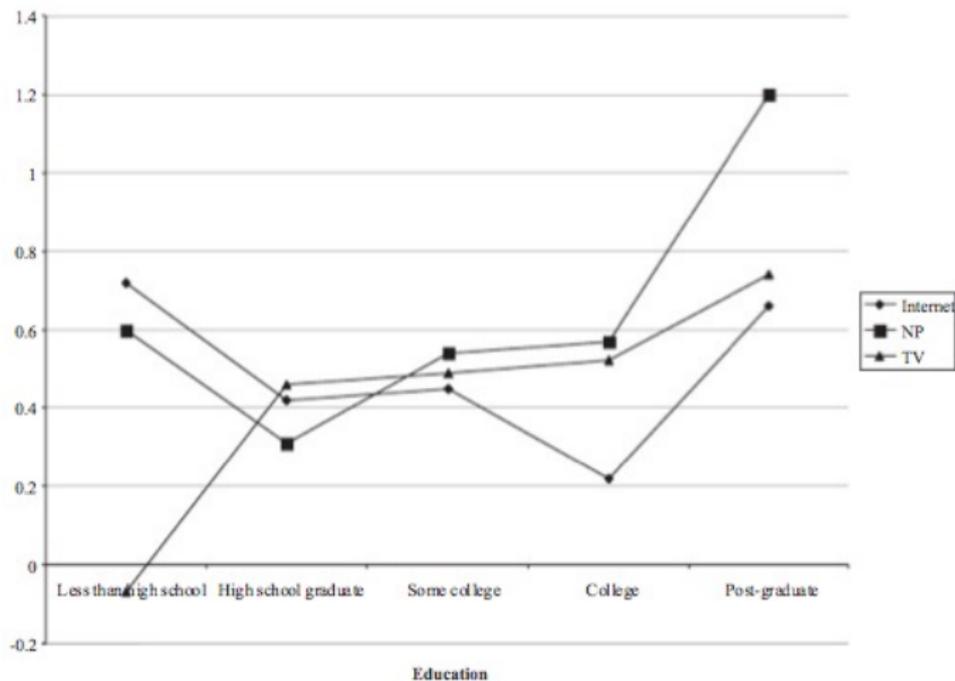


FIG. 14.2. Effects of three forms of campaign media use and political knowledge by education.

# Age and Political Knowledge

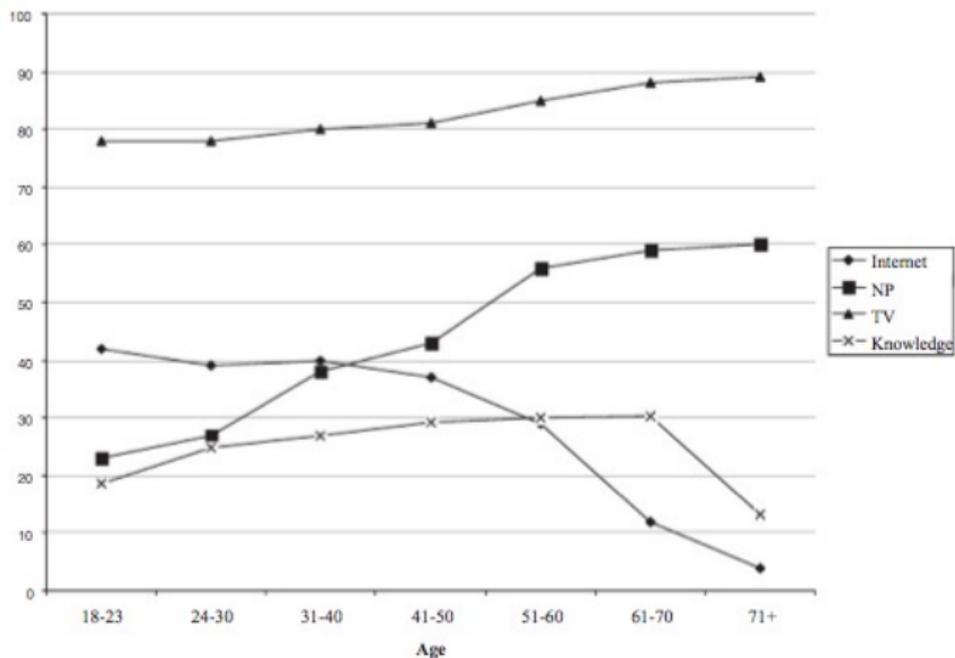


FIG. 14.3. Levels of three forms of media use and political knowledge by age.

# Age and Political Knowledge

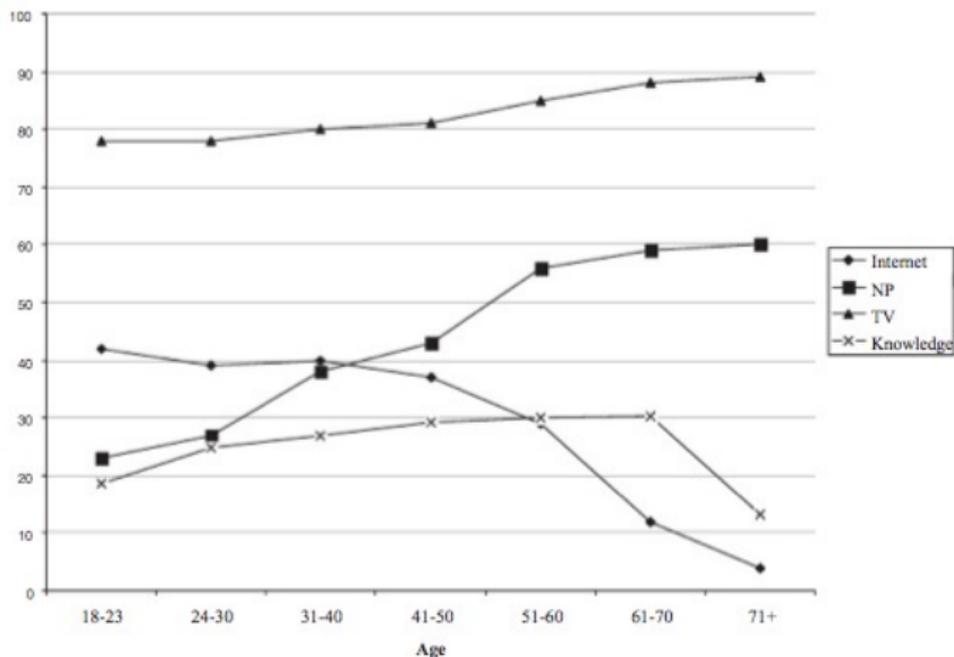


FIG. 14.3. Levels of three forms of media use and political knowledge by age.

# Time and Political Knowledge

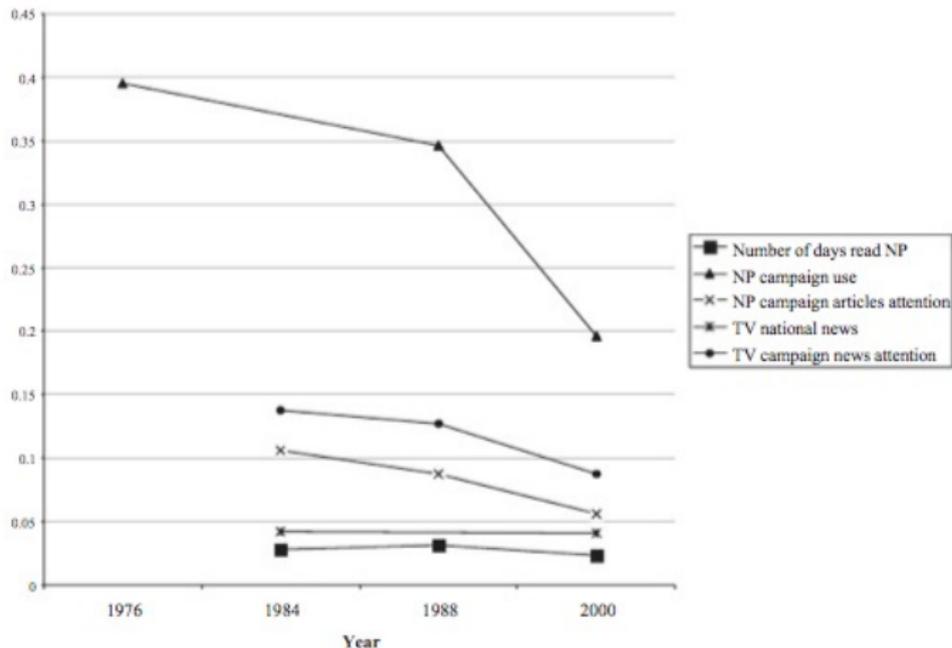


FIG. 14.5. Effects of five forms of media use on political knowledge.

# The Four Principles of Learning

1. The graphs above use data from the 2000 National Election Study (NES) survey. Do you think the results would be different today?
2. What about the graph of political knowledge over time? We have more educational opportunities and more access to media. Why the decline?

# The Four Principles of Learning

1. Involves the intake of information and the formation of mental representations (networks, schemas and exemplars).
2. Individuals goals set the context for formation of new representations and use of existing ones. (ELM)
3. Frequently or more recently used representations are more accessible and have greater influence on processing outcomes.
4. People have limited information processing abilities.

# Representation

- ▶ Journalist perspective (facts and context for the facts).
- ▶ Textual Representations (themes)
- ▶ Audience Representations-People tend to remember summary information and are more likely to connect it to recent info.
- ▶ Frames-general representations of people, situations, and events. When the media highlight a particular property of a story, it is “framed.”
- ▶ Schemas-Schemas are a large scale mental representation.
- ▶ Exemplars-a person in the form of a mental representation

## Audiences' Goals

- ▶ Preexposure-The type of information we seek out and take in is a reflection of who we are and what are goals are.
- ▶ Post-exposure→ ELM
- ▶ Social Networks (Interpersonal Communication)

Variables	Media Reflection	Knowledge
Gender (Male)		+*
Age	+	+
Education	+	+
Income		+
Ideology (liberal)	+	+
Post material Values	+	
News paper public affairs	+	+
News paper issue	+	+
Television public affairs	+	+
Television issue	+	
Internet Search and Exchange	+	+
Reflective processing		

Variables	Complex Thinking	Participation
Gender (Male)		
Age		+
Education	+	+
Income		+*
Ideology (liberal)		+
Post material Values	+	+
News paper public affairs		+
News paper issue		+
Television public affairs	+	+
Television issue	+	+
Internet Search and Exchange	+	+
Reflective processing	+	+
Knowledge		+
Complex Thinking		+

# Information Overload

- ▶ Do we have limits to our working memory?
- ▶ How can we overcome our cognitive limits?

## Moral of the Story...

- ▶ Democratic citizenship requires more than factual knowledge.