Political Communication: Hard vs Soft News
POLS 418
MWF 10:00-10:50

Drew Seib

March 4, 2011

Before we get started...

- ► For this week
  - ► Today: Baum and Jamison (2006)
  - ► Friday: Kaid Ch 10

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- ► Micro-Paper 2
- ► News

Goals

- Hard vs Soft News
- High vs Low Interest Individuals
- Political Learning

Concepts

- ► Hard News
    - ► "Coverage of breaking events involving top leaders, major issues, or significant disruption in the routines of daily lives" (p. 947)

Concepts

- ▶ Hard News
  - ▶ "Coverage of breaking events involving top leaders, major issues, or significant disruption in the routines of daily lives" (p. 947)
- ▶ Soft News
  - ▶ "Lack a public policy component, featuring instead sensationalized presentations, human interest themes, and dramatic subject matter" (p. 947)

Overview

- In two sentences or less, what's the goal of the article?

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- ▶ In two sentences or less, what's the goal of the article?
- ▶ What is the authors argument for why soft news helps the electorate make better decisions?
- ▶ Can you relate any of Baum and Jamison's arguments to other things we have read this semester?

Variables

- What are the Dependent and Independent variables in this study?
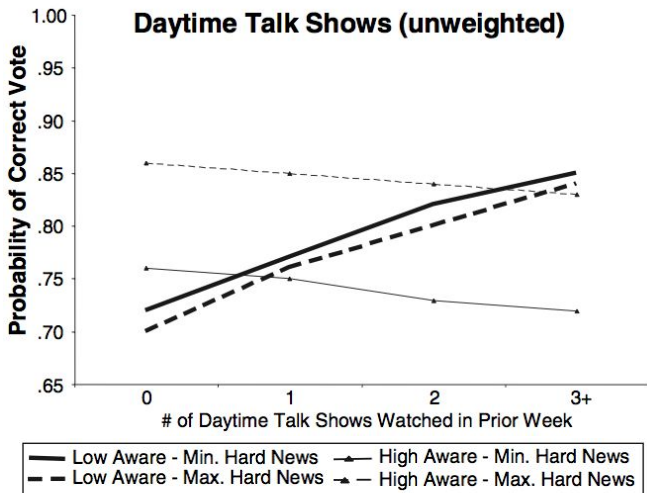
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  - ▶ Dependent: Voting Consistently (congruence of each voters chosen candidate with her own stated issue preferences, weighted by the intensity of those preferences)

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    - Dependent: Voting Consistently (congruence of each voters chosen candidate with her own stated issue preferences, weighted by the intensity of those preferences)
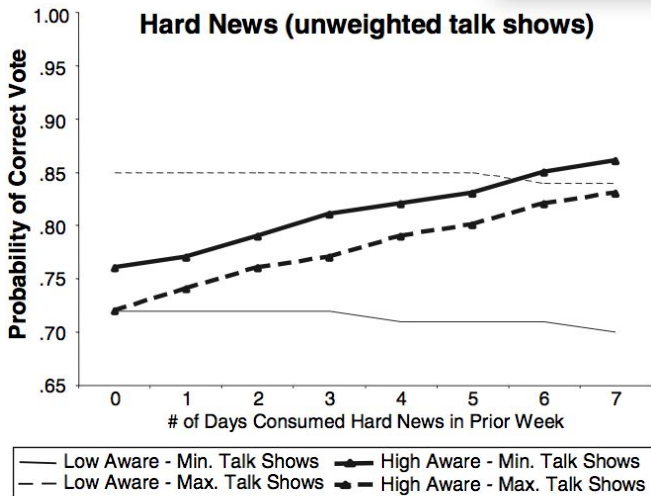   - Independent: Number of days per week a respondent watches soft news (weighted by the number of days since a candidate last appeared on an E-talk show)
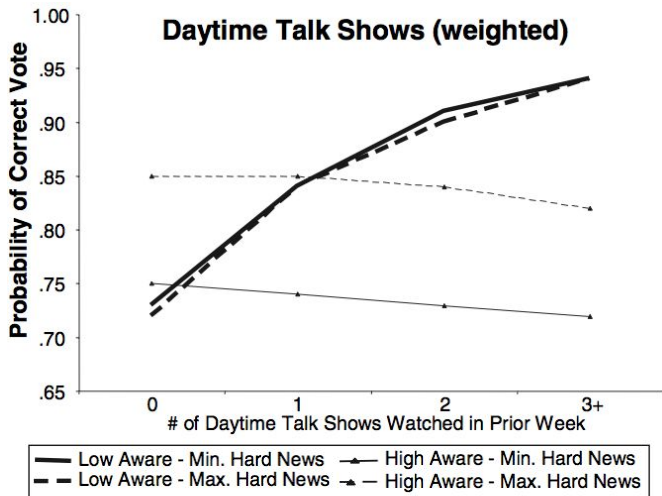
Upper Left

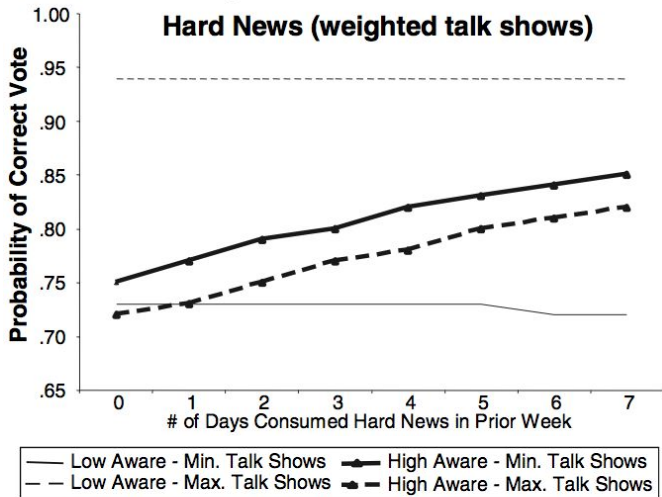**Daytime Talk Shows (unweighted)**

Probability of Correct Vote vs. # of Daytime Talk Shows Watched in Prior Week

Legend:
— Low Aware - Min. Hard News —▲— High Aware - Min. Hard News
– – Low Aware - Max. Hard News ▲ — High Aware - Max. Hard News

Upper Right

Hard News (unweighted talk shows)

x-axis: # of Days Consumed Hard News in Prior Week

y-axis: Probability of Correct Vote

Legend:
Low Aware - Min. Talk Shows   High Aware - Min. Talk Shows
Low Aware - Max. Talk Shows   High Aware - Max. Talk Shows

Lower Left

Lower Right

Reflections

- Do you buy the authors' arguments and evidence?

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- ▶ Do you buy the authors' arguments and evidence?
- ▶ The authors examine people who watch daytime soft news such as Oprah. What are some examples of nighttime soft news and do you think the results would be the same?
- ▶ How do we know that the authors' finding are not an artifact of daytime talk show viewers' internal characteristics but actually due to content?
- ▶ If you had to make a recommendation to the average American on a TV show to watch so that they could vote more consistently with their own preferences and not randomly cast a vote for a candidate, what would you recommend?

Reflections

▶ At the end of Monday's class, I asked you if hard or soft news does a better job of creating a more informed electorate. All but two of you responded that hard news does a better job. So now, thinking about this same questions, does hard or soft news do a better job of creating a more informed electorate and why?

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- Thinking about our discussion Monday about biases in the media, does soft media offer the same types of biases?

- What would Simon say about this article?