

THE POWER OF POLITICAL SATIRE: DOES IT  
INFLUENCE VIEWERS TO PARTICIPATE IN  
POLITICS?

By

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THE POWER OF POLITICAL SATIRE: DOES IT  
INFLUENCE VIEWERS TO PARTICIPATE IN  
POLITICS?

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VIEWERS TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS?

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Abstract: Political satire hosts, such as Stephen Colbert and Trevor Noah, dominate the airwaves and social discussions, yet there is a lack of academic research studying if what they say has an effect on their viewers. This thesis addresses those gaps in literature concerning late-night satire. A quantitative survey analysis was conducted with 103 respondents. Results supported previous findings that viewers watch political satire to “piggy-back” their knowledge. They are watching for the humor, but to also learn more about politics. The data supports the advancement of mass media theories, including Uses and Gratifications and Agenda-Setting Theory. Additionally, a significant relationship was determined between those who watch satire and those who donate to or volunteer for a campaign. This thesis hopes to add value to academic research concerning political satire.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

With the fast-paced changes in cutting edge technology, traditional news media evolved to stay relevant. Younger generations are growing more critical of news media, with only 27 percent of millennials thinking news has a positive impact on society (

After Nast's creation of political cartoons, the development of political satire did not fade; it remains relevant and popular to this day. During the 2016 presidential election, political cartoons circulated the internet in the form of memes. A meme is an image, video or piece of text that comments on something culturally significant and is spread rapidly through social media. These included pictures of the presidential candidates with a funny or sarcastic text overlay.

Along with memes, political talk has expanded into cable networks. NBC's Saturday Night Live is known for its mockery of the presidential election process. Because of the current political climate, SNL's viewership is up 22 percent, the strongest ratings since 1993 (Littleton, 2017). Due to popular demand, Tina Fey even brought back

her 2008 character, Sarah Palin, in the midst of the election hype. Weekend Update is SNL's longest-running sketch. During this segment, a cast member portrays a news anchor and presents fake new stories based on current events. This segment seemed to pave the way for political satire shows such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*.

Late-night talk shows are a contemporary form of journalism, and they have dominated the airwaves since the 1990s. Current shows, such as *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert, *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah and *Last Week Tonight* with John Oliver present news in an entertaining, satirical format. Viewers no longer have to choose between watching news or entertainment. According to a content analysis done by Cao (2010), almost 25 percent of jokes on *The Tonight Show* and *The Late Show* during the 2004 presidential election concerned a political issue.

*The Late Show* is a late-night talk show starring Stephen Colbert that focuses on news satire and politics. Stephen Colbert began his career on *The Daily Show* until he left to star in his own satire show, *The Colbert Report*, which ran from 2005 until 2014. In 2015, Colbert replaced David Letterman as host of *The Late Show*. The show is "self-described as a fake news program" that utilizes recent news to "satirize politicians and traditional news media" (Cao, 2010).

### **Application of Theories**



This study will explore the potential impact of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* on election participation. Applying a uses and gratifications perspective and third-person effects approach to this study will help us to understand why some people prefer to watch political satire instead of traditional news media (Young, 2013).

It is important to continue to study political satire to understand media as any other type of “news.” Polk, Young, and Holbert (2009) explained:

“As mass mediated content continues to shift from ‘hard news to ‘infotainment,’ the study of political messages embedded in a humorous context becomes increasingly important. We are only beginning to understand how differences between TDS and World News Tonight shape our perception of the American political system. These revelations will help us understand how citizens think about and are engaged by political messages as we move deeper into the 21st century.”

With this shift, it is becoming increasingly difficult to narrow down where people get their news, and who is setting the news agenda.

Agenda setting is the process of when mass media determines the issues are newsworthy by portraying them frequently and prominently, leading the general public into thinking those issues are the most important (Wu, 2009). Agenda setting does not tell you what to think about a subject, but it can tell you what to think about.

For example, if traditional media news sources continually report on an issue, such as gun control, the media's audience will think that issue is the most important. This can be measured by what issues people are blogging about or talking about on their personal social media timelines.

Agenda-setting theory exposes how those who control the news media make decisions about what issues are reported to the public. Agenda-setting is the flow of salient issues from the news media to influence the general public's agenda. This basic model connects media issue coverage and public opinions of what issues are important at a single point in time (Neuman, 2014).

Agendas are slowly becoming more complex with the accessibility of news on the rise with technological advancements, such as social media. Shows such as *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah* and *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* actively participate in agenda setting. The hosts discuss a "news" item or hot button topic on their shows then post intriguing snippets on their social media accounts and websites. Then the segments are discussed on *The Today Show*, leading President Trump to tweet about it and traditional news media report on it. This begs us to ask the question, who really sets the agenda?

Another media theory to be discussed is Uses & Gratifications. This theory approaches why and how people seek out specific media to satisfy their needs. Uses & Gratifications focuses on what people do with the media they consume. For the

purposes of this study, Uses & Gratifications will help bring to light what need political satire audiences want to gratify. The researcher will aim to discover why viewers choose to tune into political satire shows and segments. Is it for news, entertainment or a mixture of both?

The final media theory to be discussed is third-person effects. Third-person effect was contrived by Davison in 1983, described as individuals who are members of an audience that is exposed to a persuasive communication [and] expect the communication to have a greater effect on others than themselves” (Davidson, 1983). Previous research indicates “Republicans are more likely than Democrats to believe the media are biased,” and therefore, Republicans may have a higher third-person perception than Democrats (Banning, 2006).

### **News Consumption**

Unlike their parents, millennials rely on Facebook and other social media platforms to get their news more than any other source (Gottfried, 2015). This study will include social media as a point of exposure to political satire. Since the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, The Late Show ratings have skyrocketed. For the first time since 2009, The Late Show beat out Jimmy Fallon in the key demographic of 18-49 year olds (Bradley, 2017).

Colbert utilizes humor to combat politics, which may be why his ratings with this age group have increased. It is important to study this age group to attempt to discover what motivates their participation in elections. Young voters are crucial to elections, because due to social media, it is easier than ever before to be educated voters. This study will contribute to the greater understanding of if exposure to political satire influences a person's choice to participate in a political election.

This thesis includes a comprehensive literature review examining Agenda Setting, Uses & Gratifications and Third-person effects in relation to exposure political satire and political participation. The literature review focuses on previous research pertaining to the effects of political satire. The following chapter describes the quantitative methodology chosen and survey design for this study. The next chapters provide results from the data and a discussion of those results, including limitations and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is an array of opportunities of how one chooses to stay informed. Because of millennials' distrust in traditional news media, it makes sense they receive information on current events from entertainment programs that combine entertainment and news, otherwise known as "info-tainment" or "soft news" (Cao, 2010). *The Daily Show*, *The Late Show* and *Last Week Tonight* blend humor and irony with politics while providing context and perspective on current events.

These late-night talk shows attract younger viewers (who may not follow politics) and encourage them to engage in political issues. This started the trend of presidential candidates appearing on late-night talk shows, hoping to relate to younger viewers by appearing ordinary and personable. Brewer and Cao (2008) found that Democratic candidates who appeared on late-night shows during the 2004 primary election were significantly related to increased knowledge and awareness about the candidates and general information about the race. Appearing on late-night shows is an essential part of

current politicians' campaign strategies.

Many content analyses, experiments and survey-based research of satire programs have been conducted, yet there is some discrepancy among the following research. The content analyses almost exclusively involved studying types of jokes late-night comedians told. Some studies show that people watch political satire for entertainment purposes, while other studies show that people self-report and state they rely on these types of shows for news information.

Braum's (2003) studies indicate that people watch these shows primarily to be entertained, rather than to be informed. They seem to give people confidence in their ability to understand politics. Watching political satire can ease anxiety and give one more confidence to talk with friends and colleagues when they are engaging in a political conversation. Political efficacy is a person's trust or faith in the government and his or her understanding of political affairs. The Daily Show's effect on political efficacy is mixed (Baum, 2003). Exposure to the show lowered trust in the media and the electoral process and increased efficacy by "raising viewers' perception that the complex world of politics was understandable" (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006).

Comedy Central defined itself as a topical satire network in the 1990s with Bill Maher and The Daily Show. HBO quickly followed suit, allowing hosts' even more because of its premium cable status. Jon Stewart did not hold back and was never afraid to tell people (politicians, journalists, etc.) how to do their jobs. The Daily Show has always acted as a gatekeeper.

## **Expansion of Satire**

Entertainment is continuously important to study, because mass media technologies continuously evolve. They have appeared so powerful in the past, they are almost frightening. In the early twentieth century, traditional media were thought to have immediate impact on audiences, much like a hypodermic needle or a magic bullet. During this time, Paul Lazarsfeld made significant strides in developing political communication research. His famous research on the “American Voter Studies” sought to discover media influence during elections (Baran & Davis, 1995).

Harold Lasswell also studied political communication. He “recognized the usefulness of various psychological theories and to demonstrate how they could be applied to understanding and controlling politics” (Baran & Davis, 1995, p. 22). Lasswell studied effects of propaganda dispersed by the media to gain control of the public and their opinions. Although Lazarsfeld’s fellow research partner Bernard Berelson was convinced the field of communication research to be dead, political communication is not going away anytime soon (Baran & Davis, 1995).

Mass media continues to advance alongside technology, and the relationship between consumers and the media constantly needs to be reevaluated. Social media users aid in bringing their thoughts on policy issues and scandals to light. The public is no longer passively consuming media content. They actively see it out, and many times are effective on bringing about change, by browsing the Internet and social media platforms.

Public figures, including politicians, have had to apologize for things they’ve “tweeted” or “liked” on Twitter. For example, Gov. Chris Christie was exposed on

Twitter enjoying a family picnic on a beach that was closed to the public due to a government shutdown. Ted Cruz's campaign team had to explain why he "liked" a tweet from an account that posted solely pornography. With its wide reach, political satire can be shared to thousands of viewers via social media with the simple click of a "share" button.

It is important to study potential effects this type of news has on its audience, especially when it relates to political involvement. It is already known that satire has a large reach. In 2001, *The Colbert Report* sought out to teach viewers about campaign finance, and more importantly, how super PACs are formed and managed. Colbert's goal was to highlight the loopholes in America's campaign finance system (Nir, 2012). Colbert even went to the lengths of creating his own super PAC entitled Americans for a Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow.

Although many jokes surrounded the super PAC, it was very real, garnering approximately \$1,023,121.24 (Nir, 2012). Colbert did not leave his humor behind, stating, "Yeah! How you like me now, F.E.C.? I'm rolling seven digits deep! I got 99 problems but a non-connected independent-expenditure only committee ain't one!" in his cover letter to the Federal Election Commission (Nir, 2012).

Hardy, Gottfried, Winneg and Jamieson (2014) found that Stephen Colbert educated viewers about campaign finance more than news outlets, including CNN, Fox News and MSNBC. A Reuters online poll found Jon Stewart to be one of the most trusted, admired and fearless pundits in news media (Lambert, 2015). Political satire even



encourages journalists to show emotion in their reporting and break from their conventional norms (Borden & Tew, 2007)

### **Theoretical Framework**

Many media theories suggest the media affects viewers' perceptions of issues, especially when it comes to news media. They can frame issues a certain way to seem more important. People specifically tune in to newscasts to know important things and stay informed. Journalists select the topics they deem the most important. Agenda setting theory suggests that "the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but that are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about" (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p.176).

Uses and gratifications is a mass communications theory focusing on the uses to which people put media their gratifications they seek from those uses (Baran & Davis, 1995). Viewers who site The Daily Show or The Late Show as entertainment and a source of information perceive this genre as satisfying multiple needs or gratifications (Young, 2013). Participants may feel validated when they "get" the jokes.

Third-person effects happen when someone thinks "media affect others, but not me" (Baran & Davis, 1995). A third-person effects approach helped Young (2013) find that frequent viewers and viewers who share ideological leanings of the show are least likely to experience a third person effect. Becker, Xenos and Waisanen (2010) found that individuals perceive the effects of The Daily Show greater for others than themselves. Chronic viewers of political comedy are less likely to perceive a third-person effect (Becker, Xenos, & Waisanen 2010).

## **Agenda Setting**

In 1963, Bernard Cohen was credited as the first person who identified the process of the agenda-setting theory (Baran & Davis, 1995). He was the first to notice that “the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion ... [the press] may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.” Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw conducted research that confirmed Cohen’s thoughts in 1972 (Baran & Davis, 1995). McCombs is known as the leading agenda-setting pioneer, for he expanded agenda-setting concepts and linked them theories, such as framing and priming (Baran & Davis, 1995).

As technology develops, agenda-setting theory evolves and expands. Now with politics involved, further research could study if parody has a political agenda of its own. This theory also establishes links between media exposure and the motivation an audience has to seek perception of public issues. Political satire provides a framework to help the public understand those issues, and adds to the political awareness of the viewers.

Satirical messages can be ambiguous and interpreted differently by each viewer. Although it may be intentional, satire can shape political opinions by framing. Framing theory is related to agenda setting. Framing is the idea that the media focuses on certain events or topics to influence how people “make sense of their social world” (Baran & Davis, 1995, p. 266).

## **Uses and Gratifications**

In the 1940s, researcher Herta Herzog conducted a study on why people listen to the radio. Her work titled *Motivations and Gratifications of Daily Serial Listeners* was the beginning of media gratification, later named uses and gratifications. Uses and gratification is the approach to “media study focusing on the uses to which people put media and the gratifications they seek from those uses” (Baran & Davis, 1995). Then, in 1973 Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch coined the phrase “uses and gratification,” which suggests people select what they watch on television based on a need they are attempting to satisfy.

This approach proposes to explain why individuals use different type of communications to stratify their needs and achieve certain goals (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973). Studies show that gratifications “can be derived from at least three distinct sources: media content, exposure to the media and the social context that typifies the situation of exposure to different media” (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973, p. 514). These needs could be, but are not limited to, the audience wanting to kill time, stay informed, laugh or cry.

Previous research suggests that satire viewers of all ages yearn to gain political gratifications (Holbert et al., 2007). They may satisfy these yearnings by viewing political satire. Even if the audience is not aware they are doing so, they seek something out of what they choose to expose them to and gratify it. Whether a drama, comedy, news station or satire, individuals are watching these programs for a reason.

### **Third-person Effect**

The third-person is the idea that people believe media affect others, but does not affect them. Those who experience a third-person effect believe others, not themselves, are much more influenced by the media. Those who identify as consistently liberal are the most likely to trust shows like *The Colbert Report* (Gottfried & Anderson, 2014). According to this logic, Democratic viewers should be less likely to perceive a third-person effect for political comedy because it is consistent with their political views. Republican viewers may see Colbert as biased, because he spent the majority of 2016 criticizing our current president, Donald Trump.

Because Becker, Xenos and Waisanen (2010) found a significant third-person effect for political comedy over hard news, there must be implications of a hostile media environment. Now more than ever, people do not trust the news to be fair, objective and credible. The concept of “fake news” has embedded itself into our everyday lives.

### **Humor**

Blending of political information and entertainment is the main goal of political satire. Politics no longer has to compete with entertainment. Late-night shows now simultaneously offer mediated political conversation with interviews with movie stars and those of high political significance, such as legislatures, senators and presidential candidates (Baym, 2007). This impressive mix results in an “unpredictable, eclectic mixture, one that spans from the familiar to the avant-garde, from the voices heard regularly in a corporatized televisual sphere to those rarely afforded the opportunity to speak, at least on commercial television” (Baym, 2007, p. 97).

Utilizing humor easily showcases inconsistencies and challenges authority. Much of the existing literature focuses on effects of these “info-tainment” television programs and its viewers’ willingness to engage. Political satire’s use of humor “offers pleasurable ports of entry to current political topics, as it contributes to the evolution of mediated political culture” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 139).

Unlike journalists from major news networks, satire hosts relate to their audience by utilizing humor to critique the media and finding common ground with their viewers. First and foremost, it is important to remember that political satire hosts are comedians, not trained journalists, and are not held to the same ethical standards. While journalists have ethical standards to report objectively, satire hosts do not. Their stylized performances “[conflate] with journalism and at other times [are] seen as a detriment to the serious genre of news” (Borden & Tew, 2007, p. 300).

Young (2013) found the majority of people who watch political satire find them appealing because they are funny and entertaining. People who watch for the shows’ humor also watch to learn about the news. Forty-one percent of undergraduate students who preferred to watch The Daily Show watch the show for a source of information and knowledge (Young, 2013). This showcases that laughing and learning can occur simultaneously.

Many respondents of Young’s (2013) survey who reported that The Daily Show makes news fun made no reference to actually learning from the show. Political satire shows seem to be alternative formats where news is presented in a less depressing way. Young’s (2013) undergraduate respondents are obtaining their news elsewhere, while still

enjoying watching satire for the additional comedic commentary. Satire is taking the information a viewer sees daily and adding an additional layer of enjoyment to make the news more fun.

### **Political Engagement**

Young people have the reputation to be politically apathetic. For the first time in decades, millennials actually outvoted Baby Boomers and older generations in the 2016 presidential election (Fry, 2017). The 2016 election showed a rise in 18.4 million millennial votes from the 2008 election (Fry, 2017). It's no secret traditional means of political engagement are declining, with political satire creeping up to replace them. Many young people find traditional news stale and archaic, with technology advances offering them more ways to engage. Watching political satire is a way for young people to engage in politics.

Xenos and Becker (2009) found that less politically interested viewers who were exposed to a political issue through a comedy program had increased attentiveness, unless it was a serious issue, such as Iraq-specific news. One could conclude that people think these issues are fun to joke about until they feel too real or too serious. Political satire programs can increase apolitical viewers' attentiveness to issues that are mentioned frequently (Cao, 2010).

Xenos and Becker (2009) also found participants who were shown light-hearted discussions were three times more likely to access foreign policy information than those who were shown the network news clip. This means people are more likely to do more research on light-hearted topics.

Satire gives the viewer a community to interact with on social media. One can see other people's commentary and engage with hashtags promoted by the host, which makes politics more enjoyable. "Political comedy shows may increase political participation by fostering common experiences and opinions among viewers" and viewers can share these opinions on social media and comment sections across the internet (Cao & Brewer, 2008).

### **Fake News about Real News**

"News" is no longer defined as it once was by the content selected for the daily newspaper and evening broadcasts. From talk radio to cable networks to the internet, news is projected in some way at all hours of the day. According to Borden and Tew (2007), satire hosts are not held to the same journalistic standards as other newscasters, because they are not trying to deceive the audience. They separate themselves from journalists by their comedic motives. The same goes for accountability.

Entertainment-oriented television programs often "piggyback" political information on their content, therefore having the potential to direct politically uninterested viewers' attention back to politics (Cao, 2010). Baum (2003) labels these types of shows as "soft news" and argues they create a "more knowledgeable citizenry by educating an inattentive public" that would not otherwise follow traditional, hard news. Hoffman and Young (2011) contradict Baum, for their study found that late-night programming is more similar to traditional news in its format and effects. Therefore, it should not be categorized solely as "soft news" or "political entertainment."

For viewers who want to engage in deeper levels of intellect in politics, political satire is not only entertainment or a source of news, but also a way to unpack political rhetoric and help them gain insights and make connections (Young, 2013). These shows enhance the news, especially for those who are not as engaged in politics. Baume (2003) states that soft news, such as satire, is not associated with staying informed in the long run when it comes to being knowledgeable about politics.

A Pew study found that 26 percent of liberals say they got their news about politics from The Colbert Report in the previous week, while only 1 percent of Republicans surveyed say they got news from The Colbert Report (Fingerhut, 2016). The Republican respondents may not have watched The Colbert Report because they don't relate to the content or it goes against their political ideology.

LaMarre et al. (2009) found there was not a significant difference between conservatives and liberals regarding the humor presented in Stephen Colbert's past show, The Colbert Report. Both groups recognized the comedy, yet they see a difference in the intended message. Traditional news typically requires the viewer to know more background information of the presented issue, while satire requires the audience to get the jokes (Hoffman & Young, 2011).

Naturally, most people want to understand why a joke is funny, so they will be more inclined to do research on an issue after watching a comedy show clip rather than a hard news story. Hmielowski, Holbert and Lee (2011) measured affinity for political humor to help identify reasons why viewers tune in to political satire. It seems that the



majority of people use a mix of traditional media and political satire to gain a better understanding of politics.

### **Awareness and Participation**

More people have heard of Comedy Central than other news sources such as NPR and The Economist (Gottfried & Anderson, 2014). Young (2013) reported that those who refuse watch The Daily Show find it boring or simply do not understand the humor. These respondents may find it boring because they do not relate to the content or it goes against their political ideology. People with low political knowledge and efficacy avoid political satire not because they are not aware of the shows, but because they do not understand the jokes or punchlines.

Political comedy shows typically utilize satire to make jokes at the expense of political figures. Watching these shows could easily induce cynicism. Exposure to political comedy programs “may dampen participation among an already cynical audience (young adults) by contributing to a sense of political alienation from the political process” (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006).

Cao and Brewer (2008) found that exposure to political comedy shows can stimulate political participation and present politics in an entertaining manner, for those who were exposed to political comedy shows were positively associated with attending a campaign event or joining a political organization. On the other hand, the relationship between exposure and contacting an elected official was not significant. This relates to Baumgartner and Morris’ (2006) statement that political comedy shows can also discourage political participation.

Baum's (2003) findings suggest that exposure to political satire can influence attitudes, including voting behavior (particularly among those not interested in politics), without having a comparable effect on their long-term factual knowledge about specific political issues.

### **Importance of Political Satire**

Parody and satire plays a vital role in provoking debate. Whether it is the intention of the host or not, political satire spurs conversations about current issues and events. With the help of social media, the conversation is prolonged and re-shared. On many occasions, late-night hosts such as Jon Stewart and Jay Leno have claimed that people should not take their shows too seriously; they're meant to be comedic, not informative (Cao, 2010).

These hosts are claiming they do not outright try to sway public opinion. Trevor Noah also made this statement. Political satire, although not completely truthful, can help people understand an issue. People who would not typically follow politics still get exposed to issues and the more one sees an issue being talked about, the more it will resonate.

Cao (2010) searched the database of the Video Monitoring Services of America (VMSA) to find what topics were discussed the most on The Daily Show. News about the presidential candidates was covered most often. This induces greater attentiveness to stories about the candidates among politically inattentive audience members.

Baumgartner and Morris (2006) suggest that exposure to The Daily Show's brand of political humor influenced young Americans by lowering support for both presidential

candidates and increasing cynicism. These effects of exposure to The Daily Show may be unique to young adults (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006). Political satire is about being entertained, but it is much more substantial than once thought. It may not be a primary source in the media landscape, but outlets like The Daily Show and The Late Show are far from monotonous. They inadvertently shift attention back to politics without viewers' knowledge. This study will utilize quantitative data. Online surveys will be distributed via email and social media to determine how people consume satirical content.

It is important to study this topic, because according to a poll conducted by Gallup (2016), Americans' trust in mass media has sunk to a new low. Young people especially tend to flock toward political satire when they do not trust the media (Gallup, 2016). This research addresses a gap in current literature with studies exploring if there is a relationship between political participation and exposure to political satire.

Understanding why people watch (or avoid) satirical politics can help interpret the role that political humor has in the media environment. We can analyze the impact that late-night satire has on college students by studying the following research questions:

RQ 1 – Is there a relationship between exposure to political satire and volunteering for and/or donating to a campaign?

RQ 2 – Is there a relationship between exposure to political satire voting in an election?

RQ 3 – Is there a relationship between exposure to political satire and reaching out to an elected official?

RQ 4 – Why do people seek out or avoid political satire?

RQ 5 – Do viewers trust satire as a source of political information?

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This thesis aims to discover if a significant connection exists between exposure to political satire and participation in political elections. From cartoons to late-night programs, political satire is a large part of popular culture and this study will analyze if satire plays a role in the political landscape. An analysis of if the connection exists was tested by inviting subjects using email and social media to participate in an online survey. Findings from this research will showcase if or how political satire encourages participation.

The following research analysis focuses on how often the survey participant sought out and watched political satire and participated in some sort of civic duty (i.e. voted, donated to a candidate, contacted an elected official). This study gathered quantitative data showcasing how watching political satire on television or online can drive viewers to take action in a political election. This experiment has one independent variable, the amount of political satire consumed. The category names for the independent variable are (1) once a week or more and (2) once a month or less. The dependent variable is political engagement. Its category names are (1) voted in an election, (2) contacted an elected official and/or (3) volunteered for or donated to a campaign.

To analyze the data gathered from the online surveys, the researcher utilized the Chi-Square Test of Independence. This test was chosen to determine if the variables are related, or if the one variable influences or affects the other variable. Data were screened in SPSS and the researcher found no outliers or out-of-range values. This survey was created using Survey Monkey software. Participants were thoroughly instructed on how to use the scales that appeared in the survey.

### **Survey Design and Sampling Method**

The online survey began with a consent form, which outlined that the participant would not be harmed or offended by any of the following questions. The survey began with basic demographic questions, including gender, age and geographic location. These are important questions to help the researcher determine that the sample was representative and diverse.

Next, participants were asked about their media use habits, such as how often they watched television, pursued social media and browsed the internet. Then, they were asked how often they watch political satire programs. Finally, the participants were asked to gauge how often, if ever, they take political action.

A random sample of college students from a large, midwestern university were selected to participate in the survey. Select students received an email from the university with the link to the online questionnaire asking them to participate in the study. The survey was also disseminated on social media platforms to generate additional responses. A similar study was utilized for a student on political engagement (Becker, 2012).

### **Key Concepts**

Political involvement was evaluated by asking respondents the following questions: ‘Have you voted in a political election?’ ‘Have you volunteered for a campaigner reached out to an elected official?’ ‘Have you donated money to a political campaign or candidate?’ Political interest was measured by asking how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: ‘I think I am more informed about politics than most people.’ ‘Politics seems too complicated for me to understand.’ ‘I enjoy keeping up with political news.’ Agreement with items was measured on a Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neither agree or disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Political interest was measured by asking “in general, how interested are you in what is going on in government and public affairs?” Responses ranged from 1 = not at interested to 5 = very interested. Political identification was determined by asking participants to indicate their partisan identification on the following scale: 1 (Democrat), 2 (Republican), 3 (Independent), 4 (Other), 5 (Unsure, None).

Satire and parody consumption were measured by a summative scale of how often participants viewed political satire on TV or online. Items were adapted from Hoffman and Young (2011). Participants also responded to “yes” or “no” questions adapted from Hoffman and Thompson (2009).

Participants were asked to respond to the following questions on a 5-point Likert scale: “I think I am better informed about political than most people,” “I consider myself to be well-qualified to participate in politics,” “I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country,” “Sometimes politics seems so complicated that a person like me cannot understand what is going on” and “People like me have no say over what the government does.” All of these items were adapted from Niemi et al. (1991).

## **Procedures**

The researcher was approved by the Institutional Review Board, guaranteeing the safety of human subjects. The survey was completely on a volunteer basis and any participant could have quit or exited the survey any time. The survey was emailed to 500 current undergraduate and graduate students, with 103 responses. The survey had a response rate of 21%. The survey was created using Survey Monkey software. After agreeing to the consent form, participants were instructed on how to use the Likert-style and drag-and-drop scales. Participants answered a series of related questions about satire and political interest. Finally, they were asked to watch four short clips. One of a Saturday Night Live Weekend Update session, a Jimmy Fallon and a Stephen Colbert monologue and a clip from a local news station. A local news broadcast was chosen so that respondents would be familiar with the newscast. Jimmy Fallon's monologue premiered in 2016 in the midst of the presidential election. Fallon took shots at both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. The segment from Stephen Colbert's show focused solely on Donald Trump's time as president. The SNL Weekend Update segment had actors as news anchors satirically reporting on timely news items.

## **Participants and Data Collection**

Once Institutional Review Board approval was official, the researcher distributed the survey by way of email to ensure a random and representative sample of participants. A total of 103 subjects who were at least 18 years of age volunteered to participate in the online questionnaire. See Table 1 for sample demographics. A sample of college students who attend Oklahoma State University was gathered by emailing them a link to the survey. The survey was open from April 2018 to July 2018.



The data was first collected via a password-protected account on Survey Monkey. The online questionnaire contained a total of 38 questions. The data were downloaded from the Survey Monkey software into SPSS for statistical analysis. Because the data was collected in this manner, the chance of human data entry errors was decreased. The findings of the study along with results will be discussed in the following chapter.

### **Summary of Data Screening**

Prior to the analyses, the variables were screened for accuracy and the assumptions of the chi-square test of independence. The variables were screened in SPSS for missing values. The missing data exceeded 5%, but the data were determined to be missing randomly due to respondents skipping different survey questions.

Next, the data were screened for univariate outliers using frequency distributions. The data were examined to ensure they were within the variable's normal range. In addition, the valid percentages of each category were examined to ensure they did not contain 90% or more of the data (Rummel, 1070, p.216-233). If any category contained 90% or more, the categories were collapsed when possible to meet the assumption. Expected frequencies were also examined to ensure the sample was adequate for the test. For 2 x 2 designs, all cells must have an expected frequency of five or more (Agresti & Finlay, 1986, p. 209) and no original cells were empty.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to discover if exposure to political satire encourages viewers to take political action. As Table 1 indicates, the respondent pool was 67.6% female and 32.4% male. Respondents were 85.9% White, 4.2% Black, 5.6% Native American, 2.8% Asian and 1.4% multiple ethnicities. About 36.11% of respondents identified themselves as Democrat, 30.56% as Republican, 24.81% as independent or moderate and 6.94% unsure.

Table 1.

<i>Sample Demographics (n=103)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Women	48	46.6
Men	23	22.3
Race/Ethnicity		
American India/Native American	4	3.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	1.9
Black/African American	3	2.9
White/Caucasian	61	59.2

Around 37.5% of respondents said they were very likely to get political news from smartphone updates and 17.24% from late-night talk shows and only 20.45% from television news coverage. Of those who do watch television for news, a mere 11.11% watch local and/or national news broadcast daily, with the majority of 27.78% watching monthly. An unsurprising 33.15% of respondents were very likely to receive political information from Facebook and Twitter.

A resounding 70.42% agree and agree strongly that they have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country. Lastly, 37.15% agree and agree strongly that politics seem so complicated and they cannot understand what's going on, while 49.46% disagree with that statement. When it comes to watching political satire, 29.17% respondents primarily watch on YouTube, with 20.83% on social media and 18.06% on television. The survey had a response rate of 21%.

### **Research Question One**

Research question one asked if there is a relationship between exposure to political satire and volunteering for and/or donating to a campaign. The Chi-Square Test of Independence was chosen to determine if the variables are related, or if the one variable influences or affects the other variable. There is a statistically significant difference between those who have volunteered for or donated to a campaign and watched political satire once a week or more and those who watched it once a week or less.

Table 2.

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.391 <sup>a</sup>	1	.011		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	4.838	1	.028		
Likelihood Ratio	5.986	1	.014		
Fisher's Exact Test				.020	.016
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.302	1	.012		
N of Valid Cases	72				

a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.15.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The Pearson chi-square has a significance (Asymp. Sig (2-sided)) of .011. Because .011 is less than .05, the chi-square test is statistically significant, indicating the results did not happen by chance alone.

Table 3.

*Chi-Square Test of Independence for Exposure to Political Satire and Volunteering for or Donating to a Campaign*

Volunteered and/or Donated	<u>Exposure to Satire</u>			
	Once a week or more		Once a month or less	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Yes	8	4.2	5	8.8
No	15	18.8	44	40.2
<u>Total</u>	<u>23</u>		<u>49</u>	

$X^2(4, 103) = 6.39, p = .011, \phi^2 = .089$

The significant chi-square also indicates the variables are related, i.e. statistically dependent. Phi ( $\phi$ ) is .298. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero’s guidelines, a  $\phi$  of .298 represents a weak positive relationship between the variables. Squaring  $\phi$  results in .089. Thus, exposure to political satire explains 8.9% of the variation in volunteering for or donating to a campaign. The answer to research question one is yes.

Table 4.

**Have you volunteered for or donated to a campaign? \* How often do you watch late-night satire? Crosstabulation**

		How often do you watch late-night satire?		Total	
		Once a week or more	Once a month or less		
Have you volunteered for or donated to a campaign?	Yes	Count	8 <sup>a</sup>	5 <sup>b</sup>	13
		% within How often do you watch late-night satire?	34.8%	10.2%	18.1%
	No	Count	15 <sup>a</sup>	44 <sup>b</sup>	59
		% within How often do you watch late-night satire?	65.2%	89.8%	81.9%
Total	Count	23	49	72	
	% within How often do you watch late-night satire?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of How often do you watch late-night satire? categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.

Table 4 suggests that the B’s (those who watch once a month or less) in the first row indicate that a higher percentage of participants are more likely to volunteer for or donate to a campaign that watch once a week or more.

## Research Question Two

The second research question asked if there is a relationship between exposure to political satire and voting in a political campaign. There is no statistically significant difference between those who have voted in a campaign and watched political satire once a week or more and those who watched it once a week or less.

Table 5.

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.516 <sup>a</sup>	1	.473		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	.172	1	.678		
Likelihood Ratio	.533	1	.465		
Fisher's Exact Test				.556	.346
Linear-by-Linear Association	.508	1	.476		
N of Valid Cases	71				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.18.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Pearson chi-square has a significance (Asymp. Sig (2-sided)) of .473. Because .473 is more than .05, the chi-square test is not statistically significant.

Table 6.

*Chi-Square Test of Independence for Exposure to Political Satire and Voting*

Voted in Campaign	<u>Exposure to Satire</u>			
	Once a week or more		Once a month or less	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Yes	19	17.8	36	37.2
No	4	5.2	12	10.8
<u>Total</u>	<u>23</u>		<u>49</u>	

$X^2(4, 103) = .516, p = .473, \phi^2 = .223$

Phi ( $\phi$ ) is .058. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero’s guidelines, a  $\phi$  of .058 represents a moderate positive relationship between the variables. Squaring  $\phi$  results in .223. Thus, exposure to political satire explains 22.4% of the variation in voting in an election. The answer to research question two is no.

**Research Question Three**

Research question three asks if there is a relationship between exposure to political satire and reaching out to an elected official. There is a no significant difference between those who have reached out to or contacted an elected official and watched political satire once a week or more and those who watched it once a week or less.

Table 7.

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.010 <sup>a</sup>	1	.156		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	1.333	1	.248		
Likelihood Ratio	1.978	1	.160		
Fisher's Exact Test				.192	.125
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.982	1	.159		
N of Valid Cases	72				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.31.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The Pearson chi-square has a significance (Asymp. Sig (2-sided)) of .156. Because .156 is more than .05, the chi-square test is not statistically significant.

Table 8.

*Chi-Square Test of Independence for Exposure to Political Satire and Contacted Elected Official*

	<u>Exposure to Satire</u>			
	Once a week or more		Once a month or less	
Contacted elected official	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Yes	11	8.3	15	17.7
No	12	14.7	34	31.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>		<b>49</b>	

$X^2(4, 103) = 2.01, p = .156, \phi^2 = .028$



Phi ( $\phi$ ) is .167. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon- Guerrero's guidelines, a  $\phi$  of .167 represents a very weak positive relationship between the variables. Squaring  $\phi$  results in .028. Thus, exposure to political satire explains 2.8% of the variation in reaching out to or contacting an elected official. The answer to research question three is no.

#### **Research Question Four**

Research question four asks why people seek out or avoid political satire. The data set showed that 69.01% of people who noted they watch political satire, watch it for the humor of the show. Table 6 showcases that about 31% of respondents watch to learn about politics and 29.58% watch to stay informed. On the flip side, Table 7 demonstrates that 21.74% of respondents don't watch political satire because they don't relate to the content, and 15.94% called it fake news. Nine users noted that they avoid satire because it does not align with their political views. One user stated that "anything democratic will be glorified or ignored while anything moderately Republican is demonized and ridiculed."

Table 9.

Why do you watch satire? *N*

Humor	49
Learn more about politics	22
Stay informed	21
To pass the time	19
To talk about it with friends	17

Table 10.

Why do you avoid satire? *N*

I don't care about political satire	16
I don't relate to the content	15
I don't have the time	12
It's fake news	11
The content doesn't align with my political views	9

### **Research Question Five**

The final research question aims to discover if respondents have trust in political satire as a source of political information. The respondents were asked to view four short

video clips. One of a Saturday Night Live Weekend Update session, a Jimmy Fallon and a Stephen Colbert monologue and a clip from a local news station.

Using a sliding scale ranked from 0 (being the lowest) to 10 (being the highest), respondents were asked to rank how much they trust the presented clip as a political news source and how much they enjoyed to segment. The results showed that The less people trusted the segment, the more entertaining they found it. The SNL Weekend Update segment had an average trust score of 3 and an enjoyment score of 6. The Jimmy Fallon monologue had a trust average score of 4 and an enjoyment average score of 7. The Stephen Colbert monologue garnered a trust average score of 4 and an enjoyment average score of 6. The clip of a local news segment had the opposite scores. The trust average was 6, while the average score for enjoyment was a 4.

Following the rankings, the user was then asked an open-ended question about each clip. They were prompted to leave any additional comments they felt regarding the clip's humor and reputation as a valid news source. Regarding Jimmy Fallon's monologue, users stated the following:

“I think it is reliable to some degree since they are still liable for what they put out. It's a good way to put out information that is "dumbed down" to a normal person's level; I find myself more likely to believe information from a bit like that when the entertainer's makes fun of both sides of an issue or crosses political lines.; I trust this more because they poke fun at both sides.”

The Stephen Colbert clip had some similar responses, including, “I think it's a good way to approach the subject, from a place of humor,” and “I didn't enjoy this as much as the first clip because of his approach.” Again, the SNL skit gathered similar

results, such as “it’s very funny. I don't know how much the information is meant to be "trusted" but it is a great way to see the recent news that I likely wouldn't see in any other way,” and “Weekend Update, like Jimmy Fallon, is not meant so much to inform but to simply entertain.”

The news clip from a local television station featured an elected political from the state where the survey was conducted. He talked about a Republican tax bill. While they did not necessarily enjoy the segment, they would trust it more over political satire. Respondents stated that “it is enjoyable in the sense that it is a non-partisan take on the news, but it certainly lacks the humor of the late night shows. However, it comes across as significantly more trustworthy,” and “the information presented was to the point and didn't feel forced. Perhaps I also enjoyed the speaker because she was reporting for a media company at the state level. Sometimes people who go for national jobs are hyper-partisan. So I might be biased in that sense.”

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This thesis used a quantitative analysis of survey data to better understand if exposure to political satire influences viewers to participate in political elections. The purpose of this study was to find if there was a statistically significant relationship between those who view political satire and those who take political action. The data resulted in a number of generalizations.

First, there is a statistically significant difference between those who have volunteered for or donated to a campaign and exposure to political satire. Those who watch political satire once a week or more are more likely to donate or volunteer to a campaign than those who watch once a month or less. It is possible that watching satire hosts, such as Stephen Colbert and Trevor Noah, dissect and discuss issues can inspire viewers to make a difference in both local and nationwide politics by donating their time and/or money. People who watch satire once a month or less are the least likely to volunteer for or donate to a campaign.

Second, there is a no statistically significant difference between those who have voted in a campaign and exposure to political satire. Early numbers suggest that 113 million people participated in the 2018 midterm elections, making it the first in history to exceed 100 million

votes (Segers, 2018). The lack of significance suggests that there are alternate reasons why people register to vote, such as pressure from peers and family or posting a selfie with a voting sticker on social media. A future study could be conducted to see if there is any vote shaming happening with college students.

Third, there is no statistically significant difference between those who have reached out to an elected official and exposure to political satire. Out of those who did contact an elected official, the majority of them watched satire once a month or less. Those who reach out to elected officials may be motivated more by what they see in their communities instead of what they see on television.

Due to the nature of political satire and its broadcasting of national news, it is easier to contact who represents you in Congress than someone on the President's team. Because satire hosts typically make jokes at the expense of others, these findings also suggest that watching political satire may enact some cynicism, and actually cause viewers to not take political action or participate in elections.

As stated in previous literature, exposure to political comedy programs “may dampen participation among an already cynical audience (young adults) by contributing to a sense of political alienation from the political process” (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006).

Next, by applying the Uses & Gratifications Theory, the data shows the majority of respondents watch late-night satire for its humor, to stay informed and to learn about

politics. They are watching both for laughs and to fulfill a need to stay informed.

Lastly, respondents avoid watching late-night satire because they don't relate to or care about the content in the shows. The thesis findings indicate an advancement of agenda-setting theory. Due to the 31% of respondents who watch satire to learn about politics and stay informed, political satire hosts, such as Stephen Colbert, are involved with agenda setting by determining newsworthy issues.

The above data aligns with previous literature, especially with how entertainment-oriented programs "piggyback" political information on their content (Cao, 2010). The majority of respondents to this study are watching satire for the humor aspect and to stay informed. Only around 24% of respondents do not watch political satire. The reasons were evenly distributed across the board, from not relating to or caring about the content to believing it is fake news.

These findings from the video clips suggest that respondents of this study may not use satire as a source of reliable information, but watching can help them become aware of something that has happened in the political landscape. These entertainment-oriented television programs are "piggybacking" political information on their content, and directing politically uninterested viewers' attention back to politics (Cao, 2010). They then seem to find other sources with more "accurate" information to fully form their opinion on a political idea or stance.

The majority of satire hosts are comedians, not journalists. According to Borden and Tew (2007), satire hosts are not held to the same journalistic standards as other newscasters, because they are not trying to deceive the audience. This could be a reason why trust in political satire as a news source is lower than trust in a local news station. Satire hosts also are not held to the same ethical standards as journalists. The low trust and high engagement scores suggest that people watch satire primarily to be entertained, rather than be informed, similarly to Braum's (2003) study that found the same thing.

### **Limitations**

Possible limitations for the student include the small respondent pool. With the majority of respondents identifying as white or Caucasian, the lack of diversity in the respondent pool could have an effect on results. Lastly, most respondents attend a Midwestern university located in a state that is arguably more conservative than other parts of the nation.

### **Strengths**

Although there are limitations to this study, there are a number of strengths. The current study is one of the first to study if exposure to satire can influence viewers to participate in elections. Studies such as this one are important because they prove that political satire can no longer be dismissed as mere entertainment.

This type of programming can have political effects on viewers. Additionally, this study had an almost equal amount of conservative and liberal respondents. The results can add context to future researchers.



## **Future Research**

Future research could be conducted on specific websites and social networking sites, perhaps a content analysis on what late-night satire shows post, and what type of content is the most engaging to followers. A future study could analyze if there is a difference in how satire hosts interview Republicans and Democrats. Another study could focus on what type of messages resonate with satire viewers. A researcher could ask satire viewers to watch a segment and then test them on what they view. For example, if they remember the humor or the news aspect of the segment. Researchers should continue to study the type of content showcased on political satire channels, especially when there is shift, change or addition to a show's host.

In a society ruled by fake news allegations, it is important now more than ever that the public has a need for true information. Asking more questions about media affects can give researchers more knowledge on if people have trust in political satire more than local or national news. It is important to continue to study political satire to understand this type of media and its effects on viewers, similarly to any other type of "news."

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix One

#### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION CONSENT FORM Political Information and Civic Engagement

You are invited to be in a research study of political media and participation conducted by Lauren R. Combs, School of Media & Strategic Communications, Oklahoma State University under the direction of Dr. Lori McKinnon, School of Media & Strategic Communications, Oklahoma State University. Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time.

**If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:** Complete an online survey that will take between 20-30 minutes.

**Confidentiality:** The information you give in the study will be anonymous. This means that your name will not be collected or linked to the data in any way. The researcher will not be able to remove your data from the dataset once your participation is complete. This data will be stored on a password protected computer indefinitely.

The research team will ensure anonymity to the degree permitted by technology. Your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the internet. If you have concerns you should consult Survey Monkey directly. Survey Monkey's privacy statement is provided at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/>.

**Compensation:** You will receive no payment for participating in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:** If you have questions about the research study itself, please contact the Principal Investigator at, [lrcombs@okstate.edu](mailto:lrcombs@okstate.edu) or Advisor: Lori McKinnon at [lori.mckinnon@okstate.edu](mailto:lori.mckinnon@okstate.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, please contact the OSU IRB at (405) 744-3377 or [irb@okstate.edu](mailto:irb@okstate.edu).

**If you agree to participate in this research, please [click here](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/92R3RKF)** or copy and paste this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/92R3RKF> into your browser to complete the survey.

## Appendix Two IRB Approval Form



### Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 04/12/2018  
Application Number: AS-18-34  
Proposal Title: Political Information and Engagement

Principal Investigator: LAUREN COMBS  
Co-Investigator(s):  
Faculty Adviser: LORI MCKINNON  
Project Coordinator:  
Research Assistant(s):

Processed as: Exempt

#### Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

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The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 223 Scott Hall (phone: 405-744-3377, [irb@okstate.edu](mailto:irb@okstate.edu)).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hugh Crethar'.

Hugh Crethar, Chair Institutional  
Review Board

## Appendix Three Survey Instrument

### Political Information

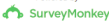
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. Your individual answers and identity will be confidential. This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Please complete all of the questions appearing on each page to the best of your abilities. When you are ready to move on to the next page, click the green "Next" button located at the bottom of the screen.

\* 1. Your responses to the following questions will remain private. You will not be able to be identified by your answers. If you are okay with this, please select "I agree to participate." If not, you can leave the survey now.

I agree to participate

Next

Powered by  
 SurveyMonkey  
See how easy it is to [create a survey](#).

### 2. How often do you watch TV?

Daily       Weekly       Monthly       Less than once a month       Never

### 3. Please rank the following television genres from most watched to least watched.

⋮	⌵	Sitcoms (Modern Family, Young Sheldon, etc.)
⋮	⌵	Reality TV (Big Brother, The Bachelor, etc.)
⋮	⌵	Political Satire (Last Week Tonight, The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, etc.)
⋮	⌵	News (Local or National Broadcasts)
⋮	⌵	Drama Series (This Is Us, Grey's Anatomy, etc.)
⋮	⌵	Game Shows (Wheel of Fortune, Ellen's Game of Games, etc.)
⋮	⌵	Late Night Comedy (Saturday Night Live, The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon, etc.)

### 4. How often do you watch pre-recorded television content?

Daily       Weekly       Monthly       Less than once a month       Never

### 5. Please rank the following services according to likelihood of usage.

⋮	⌵	YouTube
⋮	⌵	Hulu/Netflix
⋮	⌵	Network/Show Website
⋮	⌵	Social Media

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6. Are you registered to vote?

- Yes
- No

7. Have you voted in a political election?

- Yes
- No

8. Have you volunteered for a campaign?

- Yes
- No

9. Have you donated money to a political campaign or candidate?

- Yes
- No

10. Have you ever reached out to or contacted an elected official?

- Yes
- No

11. How likely are you to get political information from the following?

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very Likely
Television News Coverage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Smart Phone News Updates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Late-Night Talk/Satire	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Day-Time Talk Shows	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Candidate Websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interpersonal (friends, family)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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12. Please take a moment to watch the clip below.



On a scale from 0 to 10 (10 being the most), how much do you trust this type of content as a source of political information?

0 10

13. On a scale from 0 to 10 how would you rate the enjoyment of the video segment.

0 10

14. Do you have any other thoughts about this type of content? (i.e. as a source of information, reliability, humor, etc.)

15. Please take a moment to watch the clip below.



On a scale from 0 to 10 (10 being the most), how much do you trust this type of content as a source of political information?

0 10

16. On a scale from 0 to 10 how would you rate the enjoyment of the video segment.

0 10

17. Do you have any other thoughts about this type of content? (i.e. as a source of information, reliability, humor, etc.)

18. Please take a moment to watch the clip below.



On a scale from 0 to 10 (10 being the most), how much do you trust this type of content as a source of political information?

0 10



19. On a scale from 0 to 10 how would you rate the enjoyment of the video segment.

0 10



20. Do you have any other thoughts about this type of content? (i.e. as a source of information, reliability, humor, etc.)

21. Please take a moment to watch the clip below.



On a scale from 0 to 10 (10 being the most), how much do you trust this type of content as a source of political information?

0 10

22. On a scale from 0 to 10 how would you rate the enjoyment of the video segment.

0 10

23. Do you have any other thoughts about this type of content? (i.e. as a source of information, reliability, humor, etc.)

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24. How often do you watch your local news or a national news broadcast to get political information?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less than once a month
- Never

25. How often do you watch late-night satire?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less than once per month
- Never

26. How do you primarily watch political satire?

- Social media
- Television
- YouTube
- Paid Streaming Service (Hulu/Netflix)
- I don't watch political satire.
- Other (please specify)

27. For what reasons do you watch political satire? Check all that apply.

- Humor
- Learn more about politics
- To pass the time
- Stay informed
- To talk about it with friends
- I don't watch political satire
- Other (please specify)

28. For what reasons do you avoid political satire? Check all that apply.

- I don't relate to the content
- I don't care about political satire
- The content does not align with my political views
- It's fake news
- I don't have the time
- I do watch political satire
- Other (please specify)

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29. I think I am better informed about politics than most people.

- Agree Strongly     Agree     Neutral     Disagree     Disagree Strongly

30. I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.

- Agree strongly     Agree     Neutral     Disagree     Disagree strongly

31. I consider myself to be well-qualified to participate in politics.

- Agree strongly     Agree somewhat     Neither agree nor disagree     Disagree somewhat     Disagree strongly

32. Sometimes politics seems so complicated that a person like me cannot understand what is going on.

- Agree strongly     Agree     Neutral     Disagree     Disagree strongly

33. People like me have no say over what the government does.

- Agree strongly     Agree     Neutral     Disagree     Disagree strongly

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34. What is your age?

- 17 or younger
- 18-22
- 23-27
- 28-32
- 33-37
- 38-42
- 43-47
- 48-52
- 53-59
- 60 or older

35. What political party do you identify with the most?

- Democrat
- Republican
- Independent
- Unsure
- Other (please specify)

36. What gender do you identify with?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to answer

37. Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- White / Caucasian
- Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify)

38. In what state or U.S. territory are you from?

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Done



VITA

Lauren Combs

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE POWER OF POLITICAL SATIRE: DOES IT INFLUENCE VIEWERS  
TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS?

Major Field: Mass Communications

Biographical: Research interesting includes political media effects within popular culture.

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Mass Communications  
at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December 2018.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Strategic  
Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May  
2016.

Experience:

Communications Specialist, Oklahoma State University, May 2016 - present