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By

Joshua A. Compton

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LATE NIGHT POLITICAL COMEDY, CANDIDATE IMAGE, AND INOCULATION:

A UNIQUE TEST OF INOCULATION THEORY

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

BY

_____

Dr. Michael Pfau, Chair

_____

Dr. Jill Edy

_____

Dr. Amy Johnson

_____

Dr. Glenn Hansen

_____

Dr. Kelly Damphousse

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ABSTRACT

Campaign managers and political consultants speculate that late night political comedy affects candidate image and the citizenry's political behavioral intentions, and recent political science and communication scholarship supports these assumptions. The results of this study confirm that late night comedy does influence candidate image and behavioral intentions, but in ways that often refute conventional wisdom. While candidate appearances on late night talk shows enhance candidate image and monologue jokes derogate feelings toward candidates, late night political parodies actually enhance rather than worsen candidate image.

Additionally, this study assessed the viability of using inoculation treatments to protect against late night political ridicule (monologues and parodies). Previous research beginning in the late 1980s has revealed inoculation to be a successful strategy to combat political attack messages, and in many ways, superior to conventional strategies of bolstering and refuting. Results of the current investigation indicated that inoculation failed to confer resistance to late night political content, and in some respects, backfired by derogating as opposed to enhancing candidate image and political behavioral intentions. Results also revealed that candidate appearances boosted inoculative effects against conventional attacks, and inoculation messages designed to refute the channel of late night comedy failed to confer resistance to late night comedy, but were minimally successful in conferring resistance to conventional political attack messages. Results also examined the potential role of irritation in the inoculation process. There was no evidence that inoculation treatments elicited more irritation, but results did indicate that sources

using humor decrease expectations of experiencing irritation upon encountering counterattitudinal messages.

Finally, the research reconfirmed inoculation's efficacy against conventional political attacks. Results revealed that inoculation treatments enhance candidate image and behavioral intentions, including voting for candidates and contributing time or money to campaigns. The study also examined effects of forewarning on elicited threat. Results revealed that adding an additional forewarning to inoculation treatment messages, after counterarguments have been raised and refuted, elicits more threat throughout the process of inoculation, but there was no evidence that additional threat enhanced resistance. The current study also assessed effects of inoculation on perceived generalized self-efficacy. Contrary to prediction, inoculation treatments did not enhance perceived generalized self-efficacy. Instead, those inoculated indicated lower levels of perceived generalized self-efficacy after encountering conventional attack messages, possibly due to elicited threat.

In summary, results offer a more nuanced understanding of late night political comedy's effects on candidate image and political behavioral intentions; indicate that inoculation is ineffective against late night political content and may instead backfire; and enhances our understanding of forewarnings, elicited threat, and perceived generalized self-efficacy.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Pfau and Burgoon's (1988) finding that inoculation was not only a viable, but in many cases, superior strategy in political campaigning laid the theoretical groundwork for more extensions of inoculation in the context of politics. Inoculation has proved a workable strategy in both state (An & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b; Pfau & Burgoon, 1988) and national campaigns (Pfau, Kenski, Nitz, & Sorenson, 1990; Pfau, Park, Holbert, & Cho, 2001b), protecting against attacks concerning character and issues (An & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b; Pfau & Burgoon, 1988; Pfau et al., 1990, 2001b). Yet, to date, political inoculation research has looked extensively at protection against explicit and direct conventional attacks, like those launched in televised political advertising (An & Pfau, 2004a; Pfau et al., 2001b), direct mail campaigns (Pfau et al., 1990), print messages (Pfau & Burgoon, 1988), and televised debates (An & Pfau, 2004b), using word-based printed inoculation treatment messages (An & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b; Pfau & Burgoon, 1988; Pfau et al., 1990) or emails (Pfau et al., 2001b).

One goal of this study is to explore inoculation's efficacy in conferring resistance to a political attack that is less direct and explicit, and instead, cloaked in humor. Specifically, this study takes inoculation into the context of late night television talk and variety shows, like *The Tonight Show* and *Saturday Night Live*. Matthew Felling, media director for the Center for Media and Public Affairs, argued, "These types of programs are becoming the most important leg of the campaign triathlon—there's campaign stops, debates and these TV appearances" (cited in Kloer, 2002, p. 1C). Moy, Xenos, and Hess (2004) remarked, "In preparing ourselves to research and understand the…2004

campaign, we would do well to attend to the growing presence of political messages in entertainment-based media" (p. 12).

But this study looks beyond inoculation's efficacy in the face of political attacks that use humor and also assesses whether candidates can use these same channels of political ridicule for a boost to the inoculative effect of conventional inoculation messages. Levin (2000) articulates the contrast in two types of late-night humor: "While late-night comedians mercilessly mock the candidates in nightly monologues, [candidates and politicians] get the kid-gloves treatment once they arrive in the studio" (p. 4D). Candidates are appearing on these late night comedy shows at unprecedented levels, but what are the effects to the candidates' images? Could a candidate appearance, in conjunction with a conventional inoculation treatment, boost the efficiency of the conferred resistance? In reviewing investigations using various pretreatment strategies, Miller and Burgoon (1979) conclude, "*any* message may affect the persuasive efficacy of a subsequent persuasive attack" (p. 312, italics added). This study assesses whether an appearance on a late night comedy show has such effects.

Beyond looking at whether inoculation pretreatments can protect against political humor attacks (e.g., monologues) and benefit from humor boosts (e.g., candidate appearances), the study also explores whether encountering a counterattitudinal attack in the form of late night comedy enhances resistance to conventional political attacks. Additionally, the study investigates the broad blanket of protection afforded by inoculation in two ways. First, the study explores whether the same inoculation treatment message that protects against late night comedy ridicule can also protect against conventional political attack advertising. Second, the study assesses whether an

inoculation treatment message can be constructed to protect against an entire channel of counterattitudinal messages—in this case, late night comedy shows *in general*—by refuting the *channel*'s legitimacy instead of the conventional approach of raising and refuting specific counterarguments.

This study also takes a closer look at both the process and the effects of inoculation treatment messages. In terms of process, the study explores the potential role of irritation in the process of resistance, particularly when the argumentation is mixed with the positive affect generated by humor. The study also explores ways of eliciting greater threat by incorporating a double forewarning instead of the conventional single forewarning. In terms of effects, this study considers further inoculation pretreatment effects on perceived generalized self-efficacy.

In summary, this research explores three broad areas: expanding our understanding of late night comedy television's effects on political attitudes and behavioral intentions; extending inoculation to a new context in the political domain; and adding nuance to our understanding of how inoculation confers resistance and effects of inoculation pretreatments. There have been many calls for more research in each of these areas.

First, Lumsdaine and Janis' (1953) study, often referenced in inoculation research as the precursor to McGuire's work, long ago called for more resistance research in different contexts, and McGuire (1961b) noted that resistance research would benefit from looking at situations where the exposure to the attack messages was voluntary, not forced. Additionally, McGuire and Papageorgis (1962) called for further exploration of potential effects on the inoculation process when the messages come from different

sources than the “authoritative-sounding sources” (p. 34) used in most inoculation research. More recently, Pfau, Holbert, et al. (2000) have called for more research on video-based inoculation messages.

In terms of late night comedy research, research into the blend of entertainment and politics has taken on new legitimacy and urgency in recent years, as political scientists and communication scholars have placed these entertainment programs under academic scrutiny. As Delli Carpini and Williams (2001) argue, “to the extent that researchers have ignored or downplayed entertainment media, popular culture, art, and so forth, in the construction of both news and public opinion, we have missed a critical component of this process” (p. 161), an argument echoed by Mutz (2001) who observed, “the traditional distinctions between news and entertainment content are no longer very helpful” (p. 231). Cooper and Bates (2003) call for research that more accurately assesses the causal impacts of political content on entertainment television programs like late night comedy, while Niven, Lichter, and Amundson (2003) “suggest the great potential value of future research into the effects of late night comedy on perceptions of presidential candidates” (p. 131).

Finally, this research also fills a significant void in attention to attack messages in inoculation research, something previously acknowledge by Lee and Pfau (1997). While research has explored inoculation’s efficacy in terms of same- versus novel-counterarguments in the attack message, attack messages have received scant attention in inoculation research (for exceptions, see Lee & Pfau, 1997; Pfau, 1992; Pfau et al., 2001a), and all political inoculation studies have looked at inoculation’s efficacy in the face of traditional attacks—like television advertising and debates.

This study is a response to these calls for further insight and clarification into new media influences on politics and the inoculation process of resistance to influence. Former President Gerald Ford, when asked about the ridicule he received on late night comedy, responded, “There’s really nothing you can do in that situation” (cited in Sella, 2000, p. 72). Similarly, David Ginsberg, research director for Al Gore’s 2000 bid for the presidency, lamented:

> Once something makes the leap from news to the late night shows, it’s completely out of your hands, and no amount of argumentation, of documentation, of proof, of pleading with reporters to write the real story behind the Internet matters, because it’s already in the public psyche. (as cited in Jamieson & Waldman, 2003, p. 48)

This study takes a different stance on these two positions and offers inoculation as a defense to this prevalent type of political attack.

Chapter 2

Humor in Politics

Humor is, after all, a basic form of communication through which the press, entertainers, and the candidates themselves convey their skepticism, anger, and arguments.

-Gerald Gardner, *The Mocking of the President* (1988, p. 14)

Even at banquets held in his honor—surrounded by revelers, entertainers, and jesters—Emperor Louis the Pious, heir to Charlemagne in 814, "never … allowed his white teeth to be bared in laughter" (as cited in Innes, 2002, p. 133). This observation, noted in Thegan's account of the Carolingian king, reflects a careful management of public image, a conscious effort of the ruler "to behave in a distinctly imperial manner" (Innes, 2002, p. 142). Much later, in the nineteenth century, Senator Thomas Corwin of Ohio advised President Garfield to emulate a similar strategy: "Never make people laugh. If you would succeed in life, you must be solemn, solemn as an ass" (as cited in Schutz, 1977, p. 24).

Management of political image remains a requisite for twenty-first century politics as well, yet *how* image is negotiated—and specifically, how political image is managed in the potentially volatile intersection of humor and politics—offers a stark contrast to Louis the Pious' tactic of masking his merriment or Corwin's advise of solemnity. Expectations of the ideal modern political leader, affected by a media- and entertainment-dominated political landscape, have necessitated that politicians not only reveal a sense of humor, but also master its dual defensive and offensive functions, to promote an admirable political image. Events like the annual White House Correspondents' Dinner—where politicians are not only expected to be funny, but also to

respond graciously and publicly to the ridicule of others—preclude a stoic approach to political endeavors. Contemporary politics demand both appreciation for and mastery of political humor.

In his seminal essay on wit and politics, Speier (1998) describes how political humor can be used both to attack and defend, to derogate or bolster a politician's image. As an offensive measure, political humor is a weapon that makes one's attacks against others harder to resist, an observed power of political humor tracing back to Cicero (Speier, 1998). Because politicians are limited in the severity of their personal attacks against others by expectations of "fair play" (Bennett, 1977, p. 227), politicians couch their attacks in humor (Whaley & Holloway, 1997). What might "cross the line" if stated directly is often considered acceptable when under the veneer of the joke (Combs & Nimmo, 1996). In this way, political humor contains sharp attacks against other politicians' images, while remaining "protected" against the backlash often prompted by political attack messages. Sella (2000) refers to this as political humor's "hidden power" (p. 72).

This "hidden power" of political humor has not been lost on contemporary political players. "If your speeches have a humorous slant," observed former state senator Morris Udall, "it is less likely that their substance will be rejected out of hand" (Udall, Neuman, & Udall, 1988, p. xvi). Similarly, Don Sipple, former senior strategist for Dole's 1996 presidential campaign, observed, "Humor is a very effective way of delivering a message. With deep-throated, snarly narratives of negative ads, people have their defenses up" (cited in Kurtz, 1996, p. D1). More palatable to a public growing increasingly frustrated by political attack messages, political humor can be a powerful

and effective vehicle for delivering political punches. “The political joke as a weapon is pragmatic: it inflicts wounds” (Speier, 1998, p. 1358).

While political humor can be used to attack, political humor can also be used to defend. Politicians who use humor are often viewed as more personable (Nilsen, 1990), and thus, bolstered against political attacks launched against them. A politician can connect with an audience by employing humor, as “political witticisms can…serve as a symbolic means of the candidates’ socializing with them” (Schutz, 1977, p. 7). Additionally, politicians use humorous remarks to “disarm” (Nilsen, 1990) an opponent. Then-presidential candidate Ronald Reagan effectively demonstrated this power of political humor during a nationally televised debate with challenger Walter Mondale. Aware that his age was a potential liability, Reagan remarked, “I want you to know that I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent’s youth and inexperience” (as cited in Schroeder, 2000, p. 41). The audience erupted in laughter, as did his opponent.

While much evidence for humor’s protective function is anecdotal or affirmed by experiences of politicians, staffers and others, empirical research also supports humor’s ability to defend. Powell (1975) found political satire is not very effective in changing attitudes of highly involved subjects, but is effective in bolstering attitudes against counter-persuasion. In a follow-up study, using videotaped speeches by humorist Art Buchwald, Powell (1977) once again found satirical messages effectively “inoculated” subjects against serious attack messages. Powell reasoned that non-humorous attack messages were viewed as inappropriate, treating the issue too seriously, when they followed humorous political messages. While this research did not operationalize or

measure threat, a requisite for attitudinal inoculation (Pfau, 1997), results support political satire's defensive function.

Political humor has a number of other attributes that magnify its power to both attack and defend. First, political humor is attention getting (Young, 2003b), a "cognitive 'bucket-of-water-in-the-face" (Stark, 2003, p. 306). Centuries ago, Quintilian noted the attention-getting power of political humor (Speier, 1998), and the arresting nature of humor is confirmed in contemporary empirical research (e.g., Duncan & Nelson, 1985; Powell, 1977). Duncan and Nelson found humorous advertisements commanded more attention than serious, no or low-humor advertisements. Powell's research ascertained that low-salience recipients of political satire (recipients who considered the issue discussed as being of low importance) were more influenced by satirical messages than high-salience listeners. He posited that low-salience recipients, who would otherwise ignore messages about an issue they consider unimportant, would find political satire entertaining and meriting their attention. Humorous political messages "boost public interest in a subject about which many Americans are not deeply absorbed" (West & Orman, 2003, p. 98). Additionally, political humor may be more memorable. Empirical evidence suggests that humor can increase association memory. For example, humor can connect a name of a product to the product itself in potential consumers' minds (Berg & Lippman, 2001). Political humor, then, may not only function in the moment, but also manifest future effects by enhancing associative connections. Finally, political humor is often more persuasive than non-humorous messages. Lyttle's (2001) research sheds light on how humor functions in persuasive appeals. Lyttle grounded his research and analysis in persuasion theory, including source credibility and Elaboration Likelihood Model

(ELM), and found that humor enhances persuasiveness, primarily by enhancing perceptions of the source's credibility. Those who use humor are often perceived as more competent and trustworthy. Finally, "[h]umor weakens an audience's defenses and makes it more amenable to persuasion" (Speier, 1998, p. 1356).

Theory and empirical research support political humor's persuasive efficacy—as both a means of attack and a means of defense. When used as a means of attack, political humor targets another's image; when used as a means of defense, political humor shields politicians from potentially damaging image attacks. In both cases, the politician's image is the focus—either degraded or enhanced by the "hidden power" of political humor. The next section examines this common thread.

Humor and Political Image

Image has always played a pivotal role in political success, including perceptions of politicians' competence, character, and sociability. Kendall and Paine (1995) argue, "Image is a shorthand criterion for evaluating, compiling, storing, and retrieving information" (p. 31), and Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) ELM posits that heuristic cues (such as image) are most impacting under conditions of low-involvement with the issue. Voters use perceptions of candidate image as bases for political behaviors, including voting (Popkin, 1991). Funk (1997) found perceived competence to be paramount in influencing voters' perceptions of politicians. Furthermore, for participants of more political knowledge, competence was considered more important than candidates' perceived warmth, while for people of lower political knowledge, competence and warmth were considered equally important. Hellweg, Pfau, and Brydon (1992) offer, "Character is important because it is often the first judgment that voters make about

candidates. We tend to judge candidates as people before we turn our attention to their specific stands on issues" (p. 109). Additionally, Pfau, Diedrich, Larson and Van Winkle (1993) provide a more nuanced analysis of candidate image by looking at candidate perceived traits at specific periods of time in a campaign. The researchers found that during the New Hampshire primary in 1992, relational perceptions had the greatest impact on a candidate's image, but closer to the election, perceptions of competence were more important in terms of how the perception manifested in global attitudes toward the candidate. Pfau and colleagues attribute the importance of relational cues to the power of television to suggest intimacy during the early phase of the campaign, when voters are first forming their impressions.

Image plays a vital role in Popkin's theorizing about voter decision-making. Popkin (1991) reasons, "Voters care about the competence of the character…because they do not follow most government activity…And they worry about the character of the candidate…because they cannot easily read 'true' preferences" (p. 61). Consequently, voters use perceptions of candidates' competence and character as shortcuts in political decision-making.

The media have played a significant role in the focus on candidate images, particularly since the well-publicized character flaws of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. Then, the media "willingly adopted the role of scrutinizer of candidates" (Davis & Owen, 1998, p. 213). This trend of focusing on politicians' image has not only continued but also magnified in recent years. Davis and Owen (1998) observe:

> [P]ersonality always has constituted a portion of reporting about politicians. The difference is that by the 1980s, personality, as defined by journalists and not by

the politicians themselves, had become a central component of political news. (p. 33)

Clearly, image is an important commodity in politics. Consequently, as Meyrowitz (1985) offers, "*All* politicians must be concerned with style and image" (p. 279).

Additionally, image can be both threatened and enhanced by political humor. When political humor is used to attack, politician's images are sullied; when politicians use humor as defense, image is bolstered. A candidate's competence, character and sociability can be both threatened and enhanced by political humor.

One contemporary and increasingly prevalent forum for political humor is the late night comedy television program. The next section draws the preceding overview of political humor together, including its dual attack and defense functions regarding candidate image, in the context of late night television comedy. In these forums, political attacks are launched and candidates take proactive measures to protect against potentially damaging barbs—all with jokes, parodies, satire, and ridicule.

Late Night Political Comedy

Late night television shows are popular, with about 7-million people watching *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and about 4.5-million viewers of *The Late Show with David Letterman* each night (Baum, 2003a). The ratings increase when well-known political candidates appear on the programs. For example, when Hillary Clinton appeared on *The Late Show* in January of 2000, Letterman pulled in 11.2 million viewers—almost three times the season average (Sella, 2000). When comparing viewers of conventional news programs, viewers of late night comedy programs are less educated (Davis & Owen, 1998), less politically attentive (Baum, 2003b; Davis & Owen, 1998) and younger

(Hamilton, 2003). While young adults are for the most part disinterested in conventional news (Patterson, 2000), they are interested in late night comedy. For some viewers, these shows substitute for conventional news (Baum, 2002a; Davis & Owen, 1998; Smith & Voth, 2002).

Until recently, most of the academic community ignored late night comedy television shows and other forms classified as "soft news" (Baum, 2002a; Simons, 2001). But late night talk shows have received renewed attention from political scientists (e.g., Baum, 2002b; Cooper & Bates, 2003; Davis & Owen, 1998; Niven et al., 2003) and communication scholars (e.g., Fernando, 2003; Jamieson & Waldman, 2003; Moy et al., 2004; Pfau, 2002; Pfau, Cho, & Chong, 2001; Pfau & Eveland, 1996; Smith & Voth, 2002; Young, 2003a, 2003b). Gardner (1986) once observed, "Humor is an unexamined form of debate. One does not dig too deeply into the logic of a Johnny Carson monologue" (p. 46). However, recent scholarship suggests that this dearth in late night comedy research is ending.

Two factors have played a role in the increased scholarly attention paid to late night comedy. First, late night comedy has become increasingly political (Davis, 1997, Davis & Owen, 1998; Kerbel, 1998; Pfau, 2002), raising questions about its potential impact on public policy and elections. According to the Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA), in the month following the presidential election of 2000, 88 percent of all jokes told on *The Tonight Show*, *The Late Show with David Letterman*, and *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* were about the election aftermath ("Media Feeding Frenzy in Florida," 2000). The CMPA also reported that Jay Leno and David Letterman told 31,543 political jokes between May 25, 1992, and April 15, 2002 ("Jay Leno's Greatest Hits,"

2002). Though the terrorist attacks of 9/11 prompted a pause in late night political joking (Nacos, 2003), by February 2002, the CMPA reported that Jay Leno, David Letterman, and Conan O'Brien were telling an average of nine political jokes during per show ("Late Night Humor Bounces Back," 2002). Pfau (2002) notes the increasing prevalence of presidential debate content appearing on late night comedy—a phenomenon that mushroomed during the 2000 presidential campaign.

Additionally, during the 2000 campaign, candidates themselves used late night comedy programs as outlets for their messages at unprecedented levels. The campaign "obliterated…the line that once separated pure campaign discourse and parody" (Pfau, 2002, p. 256). During this campaign

> [p]oliticking in the entertainment media moved from occasional oddity to political center stage, as the major party candidates competed aggressively for the millions of voters…who depend on Jay Leno's late-night monologues for their daily update on national affairs. (Baum, 2002b, p. 1)

While the 1992 presidential election campaign saw candidates employing non-traditional news strategies "as a prevalent form of campaign communication by the candidates" (Pfau & Eveland, 1996, p. 214), the use of non-traditional news in the 2000 campaign was even greater in terms of number of appearances and scope, including *Oprah, Late Night with David Letterman, The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, Late Night with Conan O'Brien, Larry King Live, Live with Regis and Kathy Lee*, among others. "The 2000 presidential campaign may be remembered not just for producing one of the closest outcomes in history, but for once and for all trampling the boundaries that once separated serious campaign discourse and parody" (Pfau et al., 2001, p. 89).

Late night political humor is also making its way into conventional news programs. Whaley and Holloway's (1997) analysis of the political rebuttal analogy—a stylistic device that often uses humor to ridicule another—argues that media are drawn to quote short, witty sayings as sound bites. Late night talk shows are fertile ground for such content, and the political barbs are often picked up and rebroadcast during conventional news programming. Davis and Owen (1998) argue that more people saw Bill Clinton's famous saxophone-playing appearance on *Arsenio Hall* when the clip was featured on conventional news programs than those who saw the performance as part of the talk show. The blurring distinction and "channel-hopping" works both ways. For example, Pfau (2002) notes that televised presidential debates are parodied on popular late night comedy shows, like *Saturday Night Live*. Political late night humor is not confined to the programs themselves, and conventional political rhetoric, like presidential debates, is fair game for political late night humor.

The second reason scholars and practitioners call for more research in the context of late night comedy is that some viewers seem to be giving considerable weight to what they are viewing. The Pew Research Center for People and the Press found 47% of viewers aged 18 to 29 reported gaining political information from late-night entertainment television shows, like *The Tonight Show* and *Saturday Night Live* (Kloer & Jubera, 2000). In early 2004, The Pew Research Center for People and the Press released its finding that one out of two people aged 18-29 reported learning political information from late night comedy shows, like *Saturday Night Live* and *The Daily Show*, and 61% reported learning political information from late night talk shows, like *Late Night with*

David Letterman and Jay Leno's *The Tonight Show* ("Cable and Internet Loom Large," 2004).

While evidence supports the claim that many people watch and glean political information from non-traditional news outlets, less is known as to what effects this type of political information have on viewers' political attitudes and behaviors. Some analysts and scholars argue that viewers make conscience efforts to learn political information from late night comedy programs. For example, Robert Thompson of the Center for the Study of Popular TV at the University of Syracuse, argues, "Deep down, people feel they're getting something closer to the truth from the comedians…It's like a *Reader's Digest* version of the news. You listen to the five-minute monologue and you get what you need" (as cited in Goodale, 1998, p. 1). CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer offers, "There's no doubt that all this comedy has an impact. Elections are won and lost on public perceptions…" (cited in Sella, 2000, p. 72).

Though some journalists dismiss the idea that late night comedians' monologues can influence political attitudes and voting decisions—Boehlert (2000) calls the idea "silly and misleading" (p. E4)—other journalists, and more convincingly, systematic study by the academic community, paints a decisively different picture. The prevailing argument from the academic community is that political effects of watching late night comedy are largely incidental (Baum, 2000, 2002a, 2003a; Cooper & Bates, 2003; Prior, 2003). Most viewers tune into soft news programs, like late night talk shows, to be entertained. Considering Patterson's (2000) findings that 84% of television viewers find the news "depressing," and over half consider the news "not enjoyable," the fact that viewers go to late night comedy shows to be entertained, and not informed, is not

surprising. “In the long run, entertainment programming is more entertaining than news for those who desire to be entertained” (Patterson, 2000, p. 15).

Baum (2003a) argues that the most significant impacts of these programs are on attitudes and in providing heuristic cues, which in turn, may affect voting behavior. Additionally, Baum’s (2003a) study indicates that some viewers *do* gain factual political knowledge from soft news, particularly those who are less educated. Cooper and Bates (2003) report similar conclusions from their analysis of political knowledge, soft news consumers, and the 2000 presidential election, as did Young (2003a, in press) in her studies of effects of late night comedy on politicians’ images. Pfau, Cho and Chong (2001) found evidence that less traditional media, like entertainment talk shows, may have substantial effects on the way people view candidates—more so than traditional media, including television news and newspapers. Their research indicates positive association between watching entertainment talk shows and perceptions of then-candidate Al Gore.

Simply, late night comedians are now “unconventional political commentators” (West, 2001, p. 99) in “the strangely intertwined world of politics and comedy” (Kloer, 2002, p. 1C). Scholars call for more scrutiny of these channels of political information (Baum, 2003a; Cooper & Bates, 2003; Davis & Owen, 1998; Smith & Voth, 2002; Zaller, 2003), as this “blend of politics and entertainment is likely to continue in the foreseeable future” (Baum, 2002b, p. 27). Both conventional wisdom and insight from the scholarly community suggest late night entertainment shows—a unique and popular form of non-traditional news, or “new media”—likely play significant roles in political perceptions, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

The next section offers a closer look at the late night talk show, returning to the "double-edged sword" (Davis & Owen, 1998, p. 43) of political humor, and specifically, of late-night comedy programs. These programs provide forums where the functions of political humor as a weapon and as a defense are manifested nightly.

Humor as Attack: The Monologue and Parody

Late night comedy programs often feature political humor as a weapon, commonly found in comedians' monologues that begin each show (Berke, 2000; Davis & Owen, 1998). Davis and Owen (1998) point out that, particularly beginning in 1996, late night comedians' monologues took on a "nasty tone" (p. 5). The researchers observe:

> Traditional media, governed by standards of ethics including a credo of objectivity, generally eschew [inflammatory rhetoric] as nonprofessional. The new media, however, are not so restricted. Sitting politicians, especially incumbent presidents, are the most common victims. (Davis & Owen, 1998, p. 19)

This type of political humor is classified as *invective* by Schutz (1977), or

> the abuse, ridiculing, or insulting of someone or something. In its comic or humorous guise, the aggressiveness of invective is cushioned by wordplay, metaphor, and analogical narrative. Yet, the direct insult is always close to the surface, and comic invective is the most aggressive of all humor. (p. 45)

The most common target of political invective is a candidate's image (Schutz, 1977), questioning a candidate's competence, character, and sociability. Late-night political humor is pointed, condensing candidates into caricatures and highlighting their weaknesses. "A comic's take on politics is nimble, bite-size and utterly clear" (Sella,

2000, p. 72). One writer for *The Late Show* stated, “We’re not trying to catch complexities” (cited in Sella, 2000, p. 72). Instead, the late night jokesters “turn the candidates into walking punchlines” (Vejnoska, 2004, p. 1A).

The prevalence and potential impacts of character-driven invective have the attention of political scientists (e.g., Baum, 2002b; Cooper & Bates, 2003; Davis & Owen, 1998; Niven et al., 2003) and communication scholars (e.g., Fernando, 2003; Jamieson & Waldman, 2003; Pfau, 2002; Pfau & Eveland, 1996; Pfau et al., 2001; Smith & Voth, 2002; Young, 2003a, 2003b), but also the attention of campaign managers and politicians. Dan Schur, John McCain’s director of communications during his Presidential campaign, commented, “During the campaign season, you’re often cowering at 11:30—what are these guys going to say?” (cited in Weintraub, 2000). As Mandy Grunwald, former Clinton media adviser in the 1992 campaign, acknowledged, when the late night comics are making fun of a candidate, “you have a serious political problem. Whatever take they have on you is likely to stick much more solidly than what is in political ads or in papers like the *Washington Post*” (cited in Kurtz, 1999, p. B1). Additionally, candidates and their staffers use late night comedy monologues as litmus tests of public opinion, discerning what weaknesses are more prevalent and obvious. According to Chris Lehane, Gore’s former campaign’s press secretary, “The monologues are evidence of when a certain story really breaks through. If it makes it onto Leno or Letterman, it means something” (cited in Sella, 2000, p. 72).

Research confirms many of the political players’ concerns. Pfau and Eveland’s (1996) analysis of traditional and non-traditional news media during the 1992 election campaign found considerable influence of non-traditional news media, like entertainment

talk shows, on perceptions of candidates, particularly in terms of relational cues and competence. These effects were found to be remarkably persistent, enduring from early September right up until the election.

Pfau, Moy, Radler and Bridgeman (1998) conducted an extensive content analysis of content and tone of individual communication modalities in conjunction with a systematic survey of the public's use and motivation. Their investigation looked at television programs, radio, and print, and they included entertainment talk shows. The researchers sampled 177 segments of *Oprah Winfrey*, *Donahue*, *Late Night with David Letterman* and *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. Entertainment talk shows revealed negative coverage of the Presidency, Congress, and public schools. The researchers were the first to document the negative tone of entertainment talk shows toward government and confirmed "a communication modality's coverage of an institution parallels the relationship of people's use of the modality and their perceptions of the institution" (Pfau et al., 1998, p. 108).

Niven and colleagues (2003) conducted an analysis of 13,301 late night comedy jokes told by Jay Leno, David Letterman, Bill Maher, and Conan O'Brien about U.S. political figures from 1996 to 2000. They found the most common targets of political jokes are the president, the president's circle, and candidates for the presidency, with the president and presidential candidates at the top of the list. Primary topics were candidate images, with similar attributes singled out for ridicule among the four shows. As the authors surmise, "On the whole, there is little room for issue positions in late night comedy" (Niven, et al., 2003, p. 126). As evidence, in the year 2000, only 9.3 percent of the political jokes referenced public policy—318 jokes out of 3,437. Their research

supports previous findings by Dye, Zeigler and Lichter (1992) and Amundson and Lichter (1988) who found emphases on image over issues in late night comedy. Niven and colleagues (2003) conclude:

> The nature of late night humor is determinedly non-issue oriented. In most years, nine out of ten political jokes are not directed toward a political issue but more likely to a personal foible of a political leader. According to late night shows, presidents and presidential candidates are incredibly old, fat, dumb, lecherous, or prone to lie. (p. 130)

In their review of late night comedy during the 2000 presidential campaign, Jamieson and Waldman (2003) suggest that the effects of such political invective may be significant:

> In 2000, late-night comedy telegraphed substantive information as it reinforced a limited range of candidate traits, introduced into public discussion some assumptions unwarranted by existing evidence, and invited cynicism about the quality of those who seek public office. (p. 68)

Late night comedians are telling a lot of political jokes, and most of the jokes present politicians and candidates in a negative light.

Another place that we find political satire ridiculing politicians is the late night comedy variety show. This type of late night programming often has elements of satire, parody, and mimicry. "The word *satire* is of Latin origin and meant a mélange or [hodgepodge], something like a variety show" (Schutz, 1977, p. 49), and satire often employs parody (Highet, 1962), or "the imitation [mimicry] and transformation of another's words" (Dentith, 2000, p. 3). The most popular of this type of television program is *Saturday Night Live*. When *SNL* featured a politically themed special program

days before the 2000 presidential election, over 16 million viewers watched (De Moraes, 2001). *Saturday Night Live* may offer more memorable lines and images than other forms of television entertainment (Strope, 2001). In 2000, Pew Research Center for People and the Press found 37 percent of people aged 18-29 got most of their political information from *Saturday Night Live* (Holloway, 2001), and in 2004, one out of two people aged 18-29 reported learning political information from late night comedy shows, like *Saturday Night Live* ("Cable and Internet loom large," 2004). One high school student stated, "My best resource has been *Saturday Night Live*. Sometimes, the show gets ridiculous, but it goes further than the news shows in showing the faults of Al Gore and George Bush" (as cited in Downey & Earle, 2000, p. 1F).

Saturday Night Live does not often have the blistering attacks found in comedian monologues, but does ridicule and poke fun at political leaders (Smith & Voth, 2002). Smith and Voth (2002) analyzed *SNL*'s political content, focusing not only on how portrayals of George Bush and Al Gore by *SNL* actors Will Ferrell and Darrell Hammond affected perceptions of the candidates by magnifying their traits, but also on how the candidates were able to deflect the criticism of their faults by accepting their roles as "comic clowns" by appearing on these same shows. Ultimately, Smith and Voth (2002) conclude, Bush accepted the role as "comic clown" more readily, whereas Gore resisted, giving Bush the edge in the political satire realm.

More common than actual appearances, though, are satiric parodies, or mimicries, of the candidates. "No one has provided more dead-on, devastating satire than *SNL*" (Peyser, 2000, p. 38). James Downey, the *SNL* writer who wrote the sketches of the now famous political debate parody (featuring Gore trying to take all the air-time and Bush

pronouncing foreign names just to prove that he could), offered, “I don’t enjoy fake comedy, which just basically restates the audience’s own political prejudices” (cited in Peyser, 2000, p. 38). Lorne Michaels, *SNL*’s executive producer, stated, “Jim’s pieces are gentle, not vicious. They are the silly take, which in my opinion is also the smart take” (cited in Peyser, 2000, p. 38).

In summary, late night comedy offers a forum for political humor. With comedian’s monologues and parodies, attacks are made against politicians’ images. Based on the prevalence and negative tone of late night comedian’s jokes about candidates and politicians and the ridiculing nature of political parody, this study posits:

> *H1*: Participants who view late night comedic content targeting a politician (monologues and parodies) manifest more negative perceptions of that politician in terms of (a) feelings toward the candidate, (b) attitude toward the candidate, (c) perceptions of competence, (d) perceptions of character, and (e) perceptions of sociability.

Humor as Defense: Candidate Appearances

Much has changed with candidate appearances in political campaigns since the days William Jennings Bryan traveled 18,000 miles, personally appearing before 5-million people (as cited in Althaus, Nardulli, & Shaw, 2002). Althaus and his colleagues (2002) analysis of personal appearances by candidates—like the traditional whistle-stop campaign tours—have increased since 1972, and we find a similar trend in the venue of mediated candidate appearances on late night comedy programming. Yet the impacts of personal appearances on political image, until this study, are supported only anecdotally.

Politicians increasingly understand that while humor can undermine image, humor can also bolster image. One way that a candidate can use humor-as-defense is to make personal appearances on the very shows that often ridicule them. Instead of avoiding the appearance of merriment—the protocol of Emperor Louis the Pious and Senator Corwin—successful contemporary rulers join in the ridicule. As former producer and political consultant Raymond Strother asserted, “It takes somebody brave now to say 'no' to one of those shows. Taking a chance now is *not* being on [late-night] television” (Vejnoska, 2004, p. 1A, emphasis added). Politicians increasingly acknowledge the potential benefits of joining in the fun; “comic self-deprecation counters potential hostility at apparent superiority by humorous exposure of one’s common human plight” (Schutz, 1977, p. 267).

Candidate appearances on late night comedy talk shows are becoming more and more common, as “candidates are seeking out late-night comedy shows…even after enduring unwanted ridicule on them” (Levin, 2000, p. 4D). “Appearances on Jay Leno and David Letterman are now nearly as important to a political campaign as taking on the gauntlet of Sunday morning political talk shows” (Cooper & Bates, 2003, p. 14). Matthew Felling, media director for the Center for Media and Public Affairs, argued, “These types of programs are becoming the most important leg of the campaign triathlon—there’s campaign stops, debates and these TV appearances” (cited in Kloer, 2002, p. 1C).

Candidate appearances on such shows are not unique to the 1990s and 2000s. Richard Nixon played piano on *The Tonight Show* during the 1960 presidential campaign (Rosenberg, 2000). Jeff Greenfield, CNN’s senior political analyst, traces the practice of

candidates appearing on television late night talk shows to Senator John Kennedy's appearance on *The Tonight Show* with Jack Parr in 1960 ("Candid Candidates," 2003). As Greenfield points out, then President Richard Nixon appeared on the popular comedy show *Laugh-In* in 1968, the same year that Hubert Humphrey appeared on *Dinah Shore's Kitchen* ("Candid Candidates," 2003).

But the 1990s and 2000s featured an unprecedented number of candidate appearances. Sella (2000) posits, "The Late-Night Candidate Visit has never been more crucial to politics" (p. 72). Smith and Voth (2002) observe:

> Rather than the traditional one-sided relationship of late night comedians using political officials as a comedic tool, the relationship between comedians and entertainers is increasingly more reciprocal where politics now strategically uses humor for maneuvering as much as humor uses politics for comic antics. (p. 110)

Candidates are not only ridiculed in late night comedy, but are also personally appearing on these programs.

But are these appearances affecting candidate images? Research suggests that they are. Baum's (2002b) study suggests that late night television programs provide forums where candidates are presented to large viewing audiences in a positive, humorous context. Baum found that when candidates appear on soft news talk shows, including daytime talk shows like *Oprah Winfrey* and late night shows like *Leno* and *Letterman*, the questions asked by the interviewer are seldom critical or partisan and instead, promote more positive images of the candidate when compared to conventional political interview programs. Additionally, Baum's content analysis of entertainment talk show interviews of Al Gore and George W. Bush during the 2000 campaign indicated

100% of the valence cues (explicit positive and negative references to the candidate) toward Gore were positive, as were 95% of the valence cues toward Bush. These interviews were so positive, in fact, that Baum posits an image boost for candidates appearing on these shows, even with viewers who are apolitical. Though there is a danger of coming across as lacking appropriate decorum (Davis & Owen, 1998), for most candidates, these potential costs are outweighed by the potential benefits.

Additionally, Moy and colleagues (2004) investigated effects of candidate appearances on late night comedy shows. Their results suggest that appearances on late night talk shows impact character traits of politicians, possibly due to a priming effect.

Practitioners recognize and capitalize on this positive tone as well. “It’s political cotton candy,” offers Matthew Felling, media director for the Center for Media and Public Affairs. “They get the exposure without being grilled” (cited in Kloer, 2002, p. 1C). CNN analyst Wolf Blitzer observes, “Letterman and Leno talk a big game, but when the candidate actually makes an appearance, it’s a big wet kiss. After all the grief they give for months on end, the hosts become puppy dogs” (cited in Sella, 2000, p. 72). Jay Leno readily acknowledges this treatment: “I admit to being easy on them” (Levin, 2000, p. 4D).

Consequently, Baum (2002b) found that politically inattentive soft news viewers were the most likely to switch parties during the campaign after viewing candidate appearances on talk shows. Baum posits that by presenting the candidates in a positive way, talk shows “sell” the candidate to viewers, and viewers, lacking political knowledge to the contrary, are less likely to counterargue against the image-promoting messages. Instead, consistent with Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock’s (1991) findings, viewers use the

"likeability heuristic," voting for a candidate they feel they can relate to after seeing the appearance on an entertainment talk show. Patterson's (2000) analysis revealed that politicians receive more negative coverage than positive coverage in the news, rising from about 25% in 1960 to over 60% in 2000, suggesting that these soft news forums provide a decidedly unique outlet for communicating campaign messages—and an attractive option for candidates (Baum, 2002b).

Ridout's (1993) analysis of Bill Clinton's use of talk show appearances, including *Arsenio Hall* and *Good Morning America*, during the 1992 presidential campaign offers a slightly different perspective, yet reaches the same conclusion that candidate appearances on talk shows boost images. Appearances on call-in talk shows, like CNN's *Larry King Live*, gave Clinton the opportunity to speak on policy issues, including health care and education. In contrast, conventional news outlets were primarily focused on "the horse race." Ridout concludes, "The emergence of talk shows means that candidates can deliver their messages and *voters* can decide their fates" (p. 715).

These forums also provide the opportunity for candidates to connect with viewers, fostering "an impression of personal intimacy" (Davis & Owen, 1998, p. 230). Entertainment talk show appearances give candidate an opportunity to show they can laugh at themselves, suggesting their good-natured and "human" qualities, as "[l]aughter forges ties between people, binding those who laugh together with one another" (Speier, 1998, p. 1357).

Research exploring source considerations in the inoculation process of resistance has also yielded insight into how television can promote politicians' images. Pfau and colleagues (2000) found that video-based inoculation messages work predominantly

through source considerations, immediately generating positive perceptions of sources and bolstering attitudes in support of the source. Consequently, when someone attacks this source, further derogating the source of the attack message enhances resistance. This finding is consistent with Pfau's (1990) previous conclusion that television emphasizes source cues more so than print, providing evidence for Davis and Owen's (1998) assertion that "television talk provides a visual advantage" (p. 12) for the candidate. Because of the nature and tone of the candidate appearance and the implications of the visual medium, "candidates [appearing on these talk shows] speak to the mass public on a more personal, 'intimate,' informal, and direct level" (Davis & Owen, 1998, p. 211).

In summary, candidate appearances afford a positive environment for reaching viewers in the context of good-natured fun. This positive atmosphere, coupled with the warmth of the visual medium, bolsters relational perceptions, with humor strengthening the perceived bond between politician and citizen. This rationale leads to the following predictions:

> *H2*: Candidate appearances on late night talk shows enhance perceptions of candidates in terms of (a) feelings toward the candidate, (b) attitude toward the candidate, (c) perceptions of candidate competence, (d) perceptions of candidate character, and (e) perceptions of candidate sociability.
>
> *H3*: Candidate appearances on late night talk shows strengthen attitude confidence.

Some viewers are likely affected more than others by late night comedy political content. Viewers with lower interest and knowledge will be more impacted by late night political humor (Baum, 2003a; Cooper & Bates, 2003; Young, 2003a, in press), as

viewers with lower political interest find the context of late night comedy entertaining, and consequently, warranting of their attention (West & Orman, 2003), and viewers with lower political knowledge will be less likely to have the content to counterargue against messages that are incongruent with their attitudes or with their best interests (Zaller, 1992).

These resources, or considerations, are fundamental to Zaller's (1992) theory about responding to political messages. Zaller argues that mass mediated messages are profoundly influential, as media determine the extent of political information the citizenry possesses. When viewers are lacking in knowledge, they rely solely on whatever position is touted by mass media, as they lack "the resources to resist" (Zaller, 1992, p. 19). Simply, without political knowledge, viewers are not motivated, or even cognizant of the need, to resist influence.

Popkin (1991) posits that, because most citizens lack the interest or ability to follow politics closely, they instead rely on heuristic cues in political behaviors and decision-making. Without a solid basis of political knowledge, the citizen uses peripheral cues as the basis of decision-making, and is more influenced by heuristic cues, including image.

In a more general sense, early inoculation research was based on a purported role of knowledge as well. McGuire (1964) posited that counterarguing was dependent on knowledge, and those without the knowledge to refute claims would be influenced by persuasive messages. Contemporary research tested this fundamental proposition and found empirical support for the role of counterarguing in resisting the influence of counterattitudinal messages (e.g., Pfau et al., 1997a, 2004a; but see Pfau et al., 2001a).

Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) ELM also addresses the role of knowledge in resisting persuasive messages. Existing theory and existing empirical evidence suggests that those with lower political knowledge are more likely to be influenced by persuasive messages.

Additionally, relational cues can function as heuristics, with research suggesting that female viewers are more impacted by relational variables, such as image, when compared to male viewers, a finding further supported by two meta-analyses (Cooper, 1979; Eagly & Carli, 1981). Additionally, three resistance studies found women to be more influenced by source considerations during the persuasive process when compared to males (Pfau & Burgoon, 1988; Pfau & Kenski, 1990; Stone, 1969). Notable for this current investigation, Pfau and Burgoon (1988) and Pfau and Kenski's (1990) study involved political contexts.

Existing empirical evidence, coupled with evidence that television highlights source cues more than other mediums (Pfau, 1990) and that late night comedy shows highlight relational cues, is the basis of the next hypothesis:

> *H4*: Political late night comedic content exerts the greatest influence on a) viewers with lower political knowledge and b) viewers who have lower political interest, and c) female viewers.

Schutz (1977) argues that political humor is Janus-headed; it is both negative and positive toward promoting democracy and political involvement, ridiculing leaders but also allowing a safe release for frustration and aggression of the citizenry. But political humor is also Janus-headed in more pragmatic terms, as it can function both to attack (through invective, as in monologue jokes) and to defend (through bolstering, as in candidate appearances), functioning as a "double-edged sword" (Davis & Owen, 1998, p.

43). The next chapter introduces a potential theoretical bridge between the two functions: inoculation theory. Can inoculation both protect against political humor when it is used to attack (e.g., monologues and parodies) *and* boost the defensive effects of political humor when it is used to defend (e.g., candidate appearances)?

Chapter 3

Inoculation, Politics, and Humor

Do politicians have any options in protecting themselves against political humor when it attacks their image? When asked about ridicule on television comedy programs, former president Gerald Ford lamented, “There’s really nothing you can do in that situation” (cited in Sella, 2000, p. 72), a surrender echoed by David Ginsberg, research director for Al Gore’s 2000 campaign: “Once something makes the leap from news to the late night shows, it’s completely out of your hands” (as cited in Jamieson & Waldman, 2003, p. 48). In reference to humorous political attacks, Gardner (1986) warns, “It is not easy to fight ridicule with reality,” (p. 126). But maybe it is possible to fight ridicule preemptively, with inoculation. Furthermore, politicians may be able to use the same channel that ridicules them to their own benefit, when used in conjunction with inoculation strategy.

Late night comedy television programs are forums for both kinds of political humor: humor-as-attack and humor-as-defense. This section proposes how both kinds of humor in late night comedy can be either thwarted by (in the case of humor-as-attack), or utilized (in the case of humor-as-defense) with the inoculation process of resistance.

Inoculation Process of Resistance to Influence

Inoculation theory offers a notable contrast to conventional theories of persuasion and influence. Most persuasion research from the early 1920s to the late 1950s focused on ways of honing persuasion tactics (Miller & Burgoon, 1973; Pfau, 1997), with scholars focusing their efforts on developing more efficient and powerful ways of influencing attitudes and beliefs. Recognizing this void, specifically alarmed by “the

disconcerting vulnerability of people's convictions in forced exposure situations" (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961, p. 327). This vulnerability was dramatically illustrated by the decisions of some American POWs to remain with their captors at the conclusion of the Korean War. Thus, McGuire turned his attention to resistance to the very strategies he had previously worked to refine.

But McGuire was not the first to discover some persuasive messages protected beliefs from counterattitudinal argumentation. Lumsdaine and Janis' (1953) comparative investigation of one- and two-sided persuasive messages found that while both messages were similarly effective in influencing attitudes, the two-sided message had the unexpected benefit of conferring resistance to a subsequent counterattitudinal message. Somehow, the authors concluded, the two-sided message approach rendered the recipients "inoculated" (Lumsdaine & Janis, 1953, p. 318), with their beliefs shielded from a subsequent persuasive attempt.

Two-sided messages worked to confer resistance, but how? Lumsdaine and Janis (1953) surmised recipients of two-sided messages were given "an advance basis for ignoring or discounting the opposing communication" (p. 318), but until McGuire turned his attention to understanding this effect, no research either confirmed or discounted their explanation. McGuire's research program, in a series of studies spanning several years, shed more light on this "advance basis."

McGuire (1964) used a medical analogy as the basis for explaining inoculation theory. A medical vaccination confers resistance by injecting a weakened form of a virus or other offending agent into an otherwise healthy body. The offending agent is strong enough to stimulate the immunity defenses of the body (e.g., the production of

antibodies), but not so strong as to overwhelm the body's defenses and initiate a full-blown case of the disease. McGuire posited attitudinal inoculation works in a similar manner: Subjecting people to weakened counterattitudinal argumentation motivates them to bolster their attitude toward a specific issue or object, conferring resistance to persuasive attempts of subsequent, stronger persuasive attempts.

This analogic explanation would be offered in a series of studies that further refined the theory (e.g., Anderson & McGuire, 1965; McGuire, 1961a, 1961b, 1964; McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961; McGuire & Papageorgis, 1962), and McGuire and his colleagues would recommend returning to the medical analogy to guide inoculation research (Anderson & McGuire, 1965; McGuire & Papageorgis, 1962). The biological analogy serves as both an explanatory and as a guide. It is, in the words of Eagly and Chaiken (1993), both "clever and valid."

From the first inoculation studies, McGuire surmised that elicited threat, or recognition of attitude vulnerability, played a pivotal role in how inoculation treatments conferred resistance (McGuire, 1962; McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961). McGuire posited that the realization that there were counterarguments to one's position would initiate the process of bolstering the attitude (McGuire, 1961a; McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961; Papageorgis & McGuire, 1961), or be "defense-stimulating" (McGuire, 1964, p. 202). Later inoculation research also incorporated an explicit forewarning of an impending attitude challenge to further enhance threat, and subsequently, the efficacy of inoculation (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1962). Forewarnings warned that an existing attitude would be challenged by potentially persuasive messages.

This conventional explanation for how inoculation confers resistance to influence was only an assumption until threat was operationalized and directly measured in more recent inoculation research, beginning with Pfau and Burgoon in the late 1980s (Pfau & Burgoon, 1988). Subsequent studies confirmed what McGuire assumed: Threat is a prerequisite for inoculation (Pfau et al., 1997a, 2000b, 2003).

Yet threat alone cannot inoculate as effectively as threat with refutational preemption (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1962). While threat mirrors the body's recognition of a foreign agent in the medical analogy, the refutational preemption component is the equivalent of the body's antibodies. By providing both the counterattitudinal arguments and responses to these arguments in the inoculation treatment message, refutational preemption "provides specific content that receivers can employ to strengthen attitudes against subsequent change" (Pfau, et al., 1997a, p. 188). McGuire saw this part of the inoculation equation as the active cognitive process that ultimately conferred resistance (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). In one way, it affects utility, acting as the content people can use to refute counterattitudinal argumentation. In another, this content serves as training in counterarguing, guiding the recipient of the message through the act of bringing up and then refuting counterattitudinal arguments (Godbold, 1998; Godbold & Pfau, 2000; Wyer, 1974).

The conventional explanation for how inoculation works—threat motivates a process of counterarguing that strengthens attitudes against influence—has received considerable empirical support since the processes were operationalized and directly assessed (An & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b; Compton & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b; Godbold, 1998; Godbold & Pfau, 2000; Pfau, 1992; Pfau & Burgoon, 1988; Pfau et al., 1990, 1994,

1997a, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Pfau & Van Bockern, 1994; Pfau, Van Bockern, & Kang, 1992; Szabo & Pfau, 2001; Wan & Pfau, 2004). Inoculation proved useful outside the laboratory as well, with established efficacy in the contexts of comparative advertising campaigns (Pfau, 1992), targeted marketing campaigns (Compton & Pfau, 2004a), issue advocacy public relations (Burgoon, Pfau, & Birk, 1995), crisis communication (Wan & Pfau, 2004), adolescent health campaigns (Godbold, 1998; Godbold & Pfau, 2000; Pfau & Van Bockern, 1993; Pfau et al., 1992; Szabo & Pfau, 2001), education (Compton & Pfau, 2004b), and politics (An & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b; Pfau & Burgoon, 1988; Pfau et al., 1990, 2001b). Inoculation's application in this latter context is explained more thoroughly in the next section.

Inoculation and Politics

Burgoon and Pfau (1988) were the first to extend inoculation theory into the domain of politics. They assessed inoculation's viability in the context of the 1986 Senatorial campaign in South Dakota between Republican incumbent James Abdnor and Democrat Representative Tom Daschle. The researchers found inoculation to be a viable strategy in political campaigning. To this point, the three primary campaign strategies were attack, refutation, and bolstering (Kaid & Davidson, 1986; Trent & Friendenberg, 1983), but inoculation's success in the political domain offered a strategy that could be used at any time during the campaign, even against 11th hour attacks, and could preempt political attack advertisements. Warning voters of potential challenges to their support for a candidate, followed by the presentation of counterattitudinal arguments and refutations, conferred resistance to subsequent attempts to influence their support.

The next inoculation study in the political domain explored the feasibility of using inoculation via direct mail campaigns. Pfau, Kenski, and colleagues (1990) found that inoculation could be used in the direct mail campaign channel in the context of the 1988 presidential campaign. Once again, Pfau and colleagues (1990) found inoculation to be a viable strategy, successfully protecting candidates against character and issue attacks, and that inoculation worked better than refutation, or post-hoc, strategies. It was more effective to preempt the persuasive attempts with inoculation treatments than to restore candidate support after attacks had already been launched.

Pfau, Park, and colleagues (2001b) once again confirmed the efficacy of inoculation in politics, this time in the context of the 2000 presidential elections. More specifically, the researchers assessed inoculation in the face of party- and PAC-sponsored issue advertising, a growing source of political advertising. Not only did inoculation protect against attitude slippage, but inoculation also protected against the draconian effects of political advertising, such as disinterest and apathy. In the face of attacks, inoculated participants manifested greater interest in the campaign and greater likelihood of voting, in comparison to those not inoculated. Inoculation may offer "an antidote to the system-based consequences of issue advertising" (Pfau, et al., 2001b, p. 2395). For the first time, the benefits of inoculation in political campaigns were extended beyond personal benefits to candidates to also include system-based benefits.

The most recent investigations of inoculation and politics focused on the 2002 mid-term election (An & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b). In one study, An and Pfau (2004a) found inoculation protects against attitude slippage, especially when the source of the inoculation treatment message is perceived as having high credibility. Additionally, An

and Pfau found inoculation messages bolstered behavioral intentions, such as contributing to campaigns, volunteering, proselytizing on behalf of candidates, and voting. In another study, An and Pfau (2004b) found inoculation is also a viable strategy to use before televised political debates. Attacks are launched against candidates by opponents in debates, and An and Pfau found inoculation can shield candidates against these arguments, protecting their perceived character and competence.

Inoculation's efficacy in the context of politics introduces another option to the conventional campaign strategies of bolstering, attacking, and refuting (Pfau & Burgoon, 1988). With inoculation, candidates have the ability to preempt attacks against their perceived credibility and policy positions, protecting attitudes of supporters against slippage. In a broader scope, inoculation also enhances political participatory behaviors—like volunteering for candidate campaigns, seeking additional information, and going to the polls to vote—extending benefits to democratic participation as well as advantages for individual candidates. Additionally, researchers have found inoculation to be superior to a post hoc response to arguments (An & Pfau, 2004a; Pfau et al., 1990). As Tannenbaum, Macaulay, and Norris (1966) surmise, "An attempt to restore the belief after the attack is akin to 'locking the barn door after the horse has been stolen'" (p. 237).

But to date, inoculation research in the context of politics has been limited to direct, conventional attacks, like those found in television advertisements and direct mail campaigns. While establishing inoculation's efficacy in the context of such attacks is important and beneficial to candidates and democratic participation, some forms of political attack are less obvious and less direct, though nonetheless powerful. To date,

inoculation's efficacy in the face of these unconventional attacks has not been assessed, including attacks that use political humor.

Inoculating Against Political Humor as Attack

McGuire's original conception of the inoculation process was that it would be effective in the face of "any persuasive message…with or without its conclusions explicitly drawn" (1964, p. 192), although McGuire's early studies looked at situations where the counterattitudinal arguments were direct and explicit (e.g., McGuire & Papageorgis, 1962). Indeed, although the rationale provided above suggests that inoculation's efficacy in the face of humorous political attacks is consistent with extant research and theoretically sound, its effectiveness cannot be assumed. Because many variables, like threat, were treated as primitive terms in the earliest inoculation research, "it is difficult to specify the precise circumstances (e.g., contexts, topics, message approaches, and receivers) in which inoculation is an appropriate approach" (Pfau et al., 1997a, pp. 190-191). Additionally, very little attention has been paid to the attack message in inoculation research, (Lee & Pfau, 1997) as only a few studies have explored differences in attack message type (e.g., Pfau, 1992; Pfau et al., 2001a). Researchers recognize this void and call for more research into types of attack messages (Compton & Pfau, 2004c).

Thus, while inoculation's efficacy in the face of political humor attacks is not certain, its utility is consistent with theory and has conceptual consistency. For the reasons outlined above, this study posits:

H5: For those who receive an inoculation pretreatment, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to the negative influence induced

by exposure to comic content ridiculing a candidate (monologues and parodies), manifested in (a) feelings toward the candidate, (b) attitude toward the candidate, (c) perceptions of competence, (d) perceptions of character, (e) perceptions of sociability, and (f) attitude confidence.

H6: For people who receive an inoculation pretreatment, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages enhance the likelihood of reporting intentions to a) seek political information, b) contribute time or money to the campaign, and c) vote for the candidate, after encountering comic content ridiculing a candidate (monologues and parodies).

Recent research has also indicated that those inoculated not only bolster their own attitudes and behavioral intentions, but also intend to share the content they learn in the inoculation message with their friends and family, potentially spreading the inoculation through a social network via word-of-mouth (WOM) (e.g., Compton & Pfau, 2004b, 2004c). WOM is a powerful communicative phenomenon (Burke, 1996; Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991; Smith & Vogt, 1995), and information transmitted via WOM initiates higher order cognitive processing, resulting in stronger attitudes and beliefs (Lau & Ng, 2001). Compton and Pfau's (2004b) study of inoculation in the context of credit card marketing targeting college students found that those inoculated were more likely to express intention to talk about the negative aspects of credit cards, and less likely to discuss positive aspects of credit cards, than those who did not receive inoculation treatments. Inoculation treatments not only initiate a process of attitude bolstering and protection, but also motivate discussions with others about the issue, sharing the information contained in the inoculation treatment messages.

Thus, in the context of inoculating against attacks in late night comedy, there should be similar effects:

H7: For people who receive an inoculation pretreatment, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages increases the likelihood that people will proselytize in support of the candidate after encountering late night comedic content (monologues and parodies).

However, it is possible that the word-of-mouth effects are not limited to the content of the inoculation message, but also include the content of the attack messages. Schaefer and Avery's (1993) analysis of late night talk show viewers, and specifically, *The Late Show with David Letterman*, found that 74.2% reported that the show was the frequent topic of conversations with their friends, and 48.4% reported talking about issues from the show with their family members. This would be a significant finding, as research suggests that interpersonal political discussions can have significant impact on peoples' perceptions of candidates (Chaffee & Choe, 1980; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1991; Pfau, et al., 1995; Popkin, 1991; but see Pfau et al., 1997b). Thus, the study predicts that viewers who do not receive inoculation treatment messages will not only be influenced by the counterattitudinal messages, but also report greater intent to share the political jokes about candidates that they hear from the late night talk shows:

H8: Compared to people who receive an inoculation pretreatment, those not inoculated are more likely to tell others the jokes about candidates they hear from the late night talk shows.

As previously addressed, most late night viewers claim a lower interest in politics and are less politically knowledgeable. Zaller (1992) found "the moderately aware [are]

the most susceptible to influence: They pay enough attention to be exposed to the blandishments of the incumbent but lack the resources to resist" (p. 19). Zaller's research and theoretical model demonstrates that if one does not have arguments, or considerations, that can counter discrepant argumentation, the individual will be influenced in the direction of the argumentation. Additionally, Young (in press) found that late night comedy viewing impacted viewers' perceptions of Gore, but only for those of low-political knowledge. Those inoculated will have the "resources to resist," but those who do not receive an inoculation treatment will not.

Some inoculation research suggests gender differences when source appeals are used in inoculation messages (Burgoon et al., 1995; Pfau & Burgoon, 1988; Stone, 1969), with females more persuadable (McGuire, 1964) and usually affected more by source cues in persuasive messages (Eagly, 1987; Pfau & Burgoon, 1988). In contrast, Pfau and colleagues (1992) did not find significant differences between males and females. However, these researchers were studying young children, and as the authors propose, the socialization effects may not have occurred by the time the researchers assessed gender differences.

For the reasons outlined above, late night comedy attacks should be more influential with viewers of lower political interest and lower political knowledge. Additionally, the late night comedy attacks, focusing on image, should also be more influential with female viewers, leading to the following hypotheses:

H9: Inoculation's effects against late night comedy attacks are more pronounced for (a) those higher in political interest when compared to those lower in political

interest, (b) those higher in political knowledge when compared to those lower in political knowledge, and (c) males when compared to females.

Finally, although counterarguing plays a pivotal role in conventional explanations for how inoculation confers resistance, humor may affect this process. The distraction-humor hypothesis, described by Duncan and Nelson (1985), suggests that humor acts to circumvent the process of counterarguing. However, in their test of the distraction-humor hypothesis, Duncan and Nelson found no difference in counterargument output between the humorous and serious persuasion messages. Additionally, Lyttle (2001) found humor to undermine counterarguing only when the humor relied on irony, or promoted central over peripheral processing. Humor's distracting effects also form the theoretical foundation for Young's (2004a) Counter-argument Disruption Model of Political Humor (CADIMO), which builds on discrepancy models and ELM.

This extant theory forms the basis for the following hypothesis regarding counterarguing and humor:

H10: Counterattitudinal messages that use humor elicit less counterargument output than counterattitudinal messages that do not use humor.

In summary, political humor is a common feature of late night entertainment talk shows, with comedians' jokes ridiculing politicians' and candidates' images. Research has found associations between negative views of politicians and viewership of these programs, and this study will assess potential effects of such humor, the viability of inoculation strategies to confer resistance to these attacks, and potential differences in how inoculation confers resistance and effects on intent to share the information with others. The next section looks at the other side of this "double-edged sword," examining

how political humor on late night entertainment talk shows may also be used as a defense, with candidate appearances on late night comedy programs serving as boosters in the inoculation process.

Inoculating With Humor: Candidate Appearances on Late Night Comedy Shows

Powell was the first to assess humor's efficacy in conferring resistance to political attack messages. As previously discussed, Powell (1975, 1977) conducted two studies that found political satire does not affect attitude change, but does confer resistance to conventional, serious attack messages. While this research did not assess threat, a requisite for inoculation (Pfau, 1997), the results offer support for humor to confer inoculation.

Based on the extant empirical research on humor's inoculative effect, and the bolstering effects of candidate appears previously described, this study posits:

> *H11:* Candidate appearances confer resistance to conventional political attack messages, manifested in (a) feelings toward the candidate, (b) attitudes toward the candidate, (c) candidate competence, (d) candidate character, (e) candidate sociability, (f) attitude confidence, and (g) counterattitudinal message source derogation.

While existing empirical evidence and theory suggest candidate appearances should confer resistance to political counterattitudinal messages, candidate appearances may have greater efficacy in conferring resistance when used in conjunction with conventional inoculation treatments. In this way, candidate appearances would function as boosters to the inoculative effect.

Exploring the use of booster sessions is more than clever wordplay in its correspondence to the medical analogy of inoculation. Indeed, McGuire invited a close scrutiny of the analogy (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1962), noting that research findings should be expected to parallel how medical inoculations confer resistance (McGuire, 1964). Medical inoculation will decay with time, especially with killed virus vaccines, and as a result, booster sessions are often needed (Stahl & Liljeqvist, 2000). Thus, "[i]f the medical analogy holds, booster messages should enhance attitude resistance just as they enhance biological inoculation" (Compton & Pfau, 2004c).

Booster session's efficacy is logical under the conventional explanation for how inoculation works. If one treatment message that systematically brings up and then refutes counterattitudinal arguments can confer resistance, then additional treatments should enhance, or boost, the conferred resistance. Thus, "it makes intuitive sense that reinforcement messages should strengthen resistance" (Pfau et al., 1990, p. 216).

But despite the medical analogy rational and the theoretical consistency, results of research exploring the efficacy of booster sessions is mixed, with more inoculation studies failing to find reinforcement effects than those that do find support for booster session efficacy. Booster sessions can enhance resistance, but only when the same counterattitudinal arguments are raised and refuted in the original treatment message and the booster session as are found in the attack message (McGuire, 1961b). Other studies have found limited impacts, if any, of booster sessions (Pfau et al., 1990, 1992, 1997a, 2004b; Pfau & Van Bockern, 1994; Tannenbaum et al., 1966). However, these research findings should not be interpreted as establishing that booster sessions do not work in inoculation treatments. Considering the theoretical consistency of booster sessions yet

failure to consistently confirm their effectiveness, one thing is clear: The efficacy of using booster sessions in inoculation needs much more attention (Pfau, 1995).

While using candidate appearances on late night comedy shows may at first seem to be a radical conceptual leap from conventional inoculation research, closer analysis of these appearances suggests the requisite elements are in place. Typical candidate appearances on late night talk shows are isomorphic to conventional inoculation pretreatments. The interview format is usually a process of the host raising questions and the candidate responding, mirroring the process of refutational preemption present in a conventional inoculation treatment message. As Sella (2000) points out, when making appearances on late night talk shows, candidates not only talk about their strengths, but also address their weaknesses "in jovial tones" (p. 72).

While the presence of explicit threat in these situations, acknowledged as a prerequisite for inoculation (Pfau, 1997), is not as obvious as found in a forewarning, it is logical that there is inherent threat in the entertainment talk show interview, elicited by the host's questions. This analysis mirrors that provided by Burgoon, Pfau and Birk (1995) in their argument that issue advocacy campaigns function as inoculation messages by raising criticism and responding to the criticism. Furthermore, threat is a requisite for unleashing the process of resistance. With candidate appearances functioning as booster sessions, the threat in the conventional treatment message has presumably already done its work.

The innocuous nature of these appearances may be a "safer" method of inoculating against future attacks. Wan and Pfau's (2004) study of preemptive crisis communication in the organizational context raises the question that, by raising

arguments against a target, an inoculation treatment runs the risk of harming, instead of boosting, the target's image. Szabo and Pfau (2001) found similar risks when inoculating against the pressure to initiate smoking during adolescence. However, in the friendly and humorous context of a candidate appearance on a talk show, these "boomerangs" seem less likely. Any counterattitudinal arguments will likely be "soft ball" questions posed in positive contexts.

It is also feasible that these appearances work as a boost to inoculation apart from the conventional elements inherent in refutational preemption, and instead, work by further enhancing the source credibility of the candidate. Though source credibility has been considered a pivotal determinant of persuasion since the days of Aristotle (Solmsen, 1954) and has received continuing attention in persuasion scholarship (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), very little attention has been paid to how credibility impacts the process of inoculation (Burgoon et al., 1995; Compton & Pfau, 2004c), with the exception of the early congruity research of Tannenbaum and his colleagues in the 1960s (Tannenbaum, 1967; Tannenbaum et al., 1966; Tannenbaum & Norris, 1965). Yet this research and other studies (e.g., Pfau & Kenski, 1990; Stone, 1969) were primarily concerned with derogating the source of the attack message and not the credibility of the inoculation treatment's source.

Burgoon and colleagues' (1995) and An and Pfau's (2004a) more recent investigations are notable exceptions. Burgoon and colleagues found that inoculation messages (in this case, issue advocacy advertisements) protected against credibility rating slippage in the face of an attack message. An and Pfau focused their attention on the perceived credibility of the source of the inoculation treatment message and this

perception's effect on inoculation efficacy. As predicted, when the source of the inoculation treatment was perceived as having high expertise and trustworthiness, inoculation was enhanced. When the source was perceived as having less expertise and trustworthiness, inoculation was undermined.

It is reasonable to assume, then, that enhancing source's credibility would also strengthen the favorable attitude toward that source, enhancing inoculation efficacy. This, in conjunction with the raised counterarguments and refutations of the interview format, suggest that late night talk show appearances provide unique, and potentially beneficial, forums for boosting candidates' images (Davis & Owen, 1998), and these appearances should enhance the inoculation process of resistance to influence. The talk show format offers exchanges of counterarguments and refutations, but with the added benefit of couching the exchanges in humor and good-natured fun. The interview format seems isomorphic to the inoculation process of raising and refuting counterarguments, and the appearances should boost candidate image.

Existing scholarship and theory suggests candidate appearances and conventional inoculation treatments enhance one another. Inoculation treatments should amplify the benefits incurred by a candidate appearing on a talk show, and conversely, candidate appearances should enhance the effects of conventional inoculation treatments, as posited in the following hypotheses:

> *H12*: Inoculation treatments boost the inoculative effect of candidate appearances, with those participants who receive an inoculation treatment message and subsequently viewing a candidate appearance demonstrating the most resistance to a political attack message, manifested in a) feelings toward the candidate, (b)

attitudes toward the candidate, (c) candidate competence, (d) candidate character, (e) candidate sociability, (f) attitude confidence, and (g) counterattitudinal message source derogation, when compared to those only viewing candidate appearances.

H13: Candidate appearances boost the inoculative effect of an inoculation treatment, with those participants who receive an inoculation treatment message and subsequently viewing a candidate appearance demonstrating the most resistance to a political attack message, manifested in a) feelings toward the candidate, (b) attitudes toward the candidate, (c) candidate competence, (d) candidate character, (e) candidate sociability, (f) attitude confidence, and (g) counterattitudinal message source derogation, when compared to those only inoculated.

For the same rationale offered for late night comedy's enhanced effects on those with lower political interest, lower political knowledge, and females, this study also posits:

H14: Candidate appearances produce the largest boost to the inoculation effect with a) less politically interested viewers, b) less politically knowledgeable viewers, and (c) female viewers.

Humor as Attack and Defense: Repeated Attacks as Boosters

In a previous essay (Compton & Pfau, 2004c), we speculated that one reason inoculation booster sessions fail to find consistent enhanced resistance with boosters is that the wrong stimulus is being employed. Instead of subjecting individuals to another inoculation treatment message, as is the conventional approach, it may be more effective

to subject them to another attack. This would be consistent with medical inoculation; the second exposure to the antigen often results in a stronger immune response to the offending antigen (Nossal, 1999).

Exposure to comedic political arguments ridiculing candidates, like the content found in comedian monologues and parodies, may actually defuse subsequent conventional political attacks, when such exposure to political ridicule follows inoculation treatments. Hence, when conventional inoculation is followed by an attack message of political ridicule, there will be a "double inoculation." Thus, the final prediction related to booster sessions in the context of late night comedy is:

> *H15*: Those inoculated and subjected to comedic content targeting a politician (monologues and parodies) are more resistant to subsequent conventional political attack messages when compared to those experiencing a counterattitudinal message for the first time, manifested in (a) feelings toward the candidate, (b) attitude toward the candidate, (c) perceptions of candidate competence, (d) perceptions of candidate character, (e) perceptions of candidate sociability, and (f) attitude confidence.
>
> *H16:* Late night comedic ridicule creates a greater boost of inoculation for (a) those with less political interest when compared to those with higher political interest, (b) those with less political knowledge when compared to those with higher political knowledge, and (c) females when compared to males.

Blanket Resistance

That inoculation can confer resistance to arguments not explicitly refuted in the treatment message is not in question. Inoculation's efficacy in conferring resistance to

novel counterattitudinal arguments goes back to McGuire's earliest studies (McGuire, 1961a, 1961b, 1962, 1964; McGuire & Papageorgis, 1962; Papageorgis & McGuire, 1961) and continues to be supported in contemporary inoculation scholarship (Pfau, 1992; Pfau & Burgoon, 1988; Pfau et al., 1990, 1997a, 2001a, 2004b; Pfau, Roskos-Ewoldsen, et al., 2003). Inoculation spreads a "broad blanket of protection against specific counterarguments raised in refutational preemption and against those counterarguments not raised" (Pfau, 1997, pp. 137-138). Indeed, extant literature suggests not only that inoculation confers resistance to novel counterarguments in a subsequent attack message, but also that the conferred resistance is as strong, or almost as strong, as the resistance conferred when the counterarguments are the same (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961; Pfau, 1992). This is an important characteristic of inoculation. Otherwise, an inoculation treatment would have to be prepared for every possible counterattitudinal argument (Pfau & Kenski, 1990), rendering the method of resistance impractical for most persuasive situations. Papageorgis and McGuire (1961) observe:

> In view of the triviality of this difference between resistance to same and to alternative counterarguments, there would seem to be little necessity…to guess beforehand what counterargument might be used at a future time against a belief we wish to immunize: the prior refutation of some counterarguments develops almost as much resistance to subsequent strong forms of alternative counterarguments as to the same counterarguments. (p. 479)

This power of inoculation to confer protection against novel counterargumentation is particularly important in applied contexts like commercial advertising (Pfau, 1992) and politics (Pfau & Kenski, 1990), when arguments cannot always be anticipated or are

launched so late in a campaign that it is not feasible to respond. It is a feature of inoculation that is also consistent with the medical analogy (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961). There are medical vaccinations that inject one weakened strain of a virus to confer resistance to that strain *and* other similar strains.

While the research that inoculation confers a broad "blanket of protection" (Pfau et al., 1990) extending beyond the specific counterarguments raised and refuted in the treatment message is convincing, the size of this blanket is unknown. For example, can an inoculation message confer resistance to an entire channel, such as late night comedy television in general?

Existing empirical evidence to affirm this question is scant, but encouraging. Wan and Pfau (2004) recently explored the potential of inoculation to confer resistance in preemptive crisis communication. Their focus was not specifically focused on this "blanket of protection" issue, but instead, on whether inoculation was a superior strategy compared to the more conventional bolstering strategy used in crisis management. They found comparable effectiveness of both strategies, giving a slight edge to bolstering when no crisis actually occurs.

However, more pertinent to this current investigation, their threat manipulation differed from conventional inoculation research. Instead of specifically forewarning about a counterattitudinal influence attempt, the researchers warned, "the media always tend to exaggerate the negative aspects of a corporation under siege and seldom mention the good efforts of the company because they are not considered as 'newsworthy'" (Wan & Pfau, 2004, p. 16). The difference in this type of forewarning compared to others is subtle, yet important. In essence, the researchers were warning against a *style* of

coverage, not against specific argumentation or attitude attacks—specifically, the often-criticized tendency of the media to dramatize stories and accentuate the negative. That Wan and Pfau (2004) found inoculation to be a viable strategy suggests that the threat manipulation worked (as threat is a prerequisite for inoculation) and that people can be inoculated against a *style*—one of accentuating the negative over the positive in mass media coverage.

In summary, inoculation has proven viability in conferring resistance to arguments that are not explicitly refuted in the treatment message, and at least one study has found that inoculation messages can warn about a style of reporting and not specific persuasive attempts. Building on the conceptual logic of inoculation as well as existing empirical evidence, the study posits an inoculation message can protect against an entire channel of argumentation by explicitly forewarning about the channel and providing refutations of its legitimacy to influence attitudes. Instead of warning against a specific attempt of influence, as with conventional inoculation treatments, this type of inoculation message would warn against an entire channel (generating threat) and providing refutations of the channel's legitimacy (providing preemption refutation). This rationale provides the basis for the next hypothesis:

> *H17*: For those who receive an inoculation pretreatment that warns of a specific channel's influence (late night comedy), as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to the negative influence induced by exposure to comic content ridiculing a candidate (monologues and parodies), manifested in (a) feelings toward the candidate, (b) attitude toward the candidate,

(c) perceptions of competence, (d) perceptions of character, (e) perceptions of sociability, and (f) attitude confidence.

Just as conventional inoculation treatment messages should protect against both comedic and conventional attack messages, channel inoculation should also protect against both types of messages. Thus, the next hypothesis predicts:

H18: Channel inoculation also protects against conventional political attacks.

Finally, as previously argued, those with lower political interest, lower political knowledge, and females should be influenced more by late night comedic content. This rationale provides the basis for the next hypothesis:

H19: Channel inoculation will be most effective with (a) those of lower political interest, (b) those of lower political knowledge, and (c) female viewers.

As previously addressed, candidate appearances should work in conjunction with conventional inoculation treatments. The same rationale suggests that candidate appearances should also work with channel inoculation treatments, as predicted in the next hypothesis:

H20: For those who receive an inoculation pretreatment that warns of a specific channel's influence (late night comedy), as compared to those who do not, candidate appearances confer resistance to conventional attack messages, manifested in (a) feelings toward the candidate at Phase 3, (b) attitude toward the candidate at Phase 3, (c) perceptions of competence at Phase 3, (d) perceptions of character at Phase 3, (e) perceptions of sociability at Phase 3, and (f) attitude confidence at Phase 3.

Irritation

Affect was virtually ignored in the first decades of inoculation research (Compton & Pfau, 2004c; Pfau, 1997), echoing a general trend in social influence research to focus almost exclusively on cognitive processes (Dillard & Wilson, 1993). Similarly, with the exception of the motivational role of threat, the process unleashed by inoculation was assumed to be cognitive. It wasn't until the late 1990s that researchers began specifically focusing on the potential impact of affect in the inoculation process, offering a more nuanced view of how inoculation confers resistance. As Zuwerink and Devine (1996) noted, "A complete theoretical account of persuasion dynamics will need to incorporate both affective and cognitive processes" (p. 941).

The first study to directly assess the impact of affect in inoculation was conducted by Lee and Pfau (1997). The researchers looked at two types of inoculation treatment messages: those that relied on rational arguments and those that used anecdotes and affect-laden language. One affect treatment was designed to elicit a positive emotional response, while another was designed to elicit a negative emotional response. Consistent with the conventional, cognitive-based explanation for how inoculation confers resistance, the researchers predicted that the rational treatment message would be more effective in conferring resistance and that between the two affect based messages, the negative would be more effective. The rational for predicting that the negative affect would confer more resistance was based on findings that negative affect causes more systematic information processing (Bless, Bohner, Schwarz, & Strack, 1990; Schwarz, Bless, & Bohner, 1991), but that positive affect triggers more heuristic processing (Bohner, Crow, Erb, & Schwarz, 1992; Schwarz et al., 1991). Results supported the

prediction that cognitive messages would be the most effective strategy, but both positive and negative affect-based messages conferred resistance to attack messages as well.

It is important to note that this research, though focusing on affect, still adopts a cognitive perspective. The goal was not to assess affect responses unleashed by inoculation treatments as much as it was to examine affect's impact on information processing. Indeed, manipulation checks confirmed that none of the affect manipulations reached statistical significance. Results, then, are more appropriately interpreted in terms of the insight they provide into message strategy and not elicited affect.

The next study to consider affect in the process of inoculation looked at more specific emotions, designing inoculation treatment messages to be cognitive, affective-happiness, and affective-anger (Pfau et al., 2001a). This time, the researchers designed their messages based on Lazarus' (1991) appraisal theory, an approach that considers goal-attainment to be a determinant of affect responses. In brief, an environment that facilitates goal-attainment leads to positive affect responses, whereas an environment that hinders goal-attainment leads to negative affect responses. The researchers designed the treatment messages to either suggest an existing attitude would facilitate the individuals' goals (affective-happiness) or that the potential attack messages would hinder their goals (affective-anger). Results indicated that all inoculation treatments conferred resistance, with cognitive treatments working via threat and counterarguing and the affect-based messages working primarily through elicited emotion. However, the affect-happiness message did not actually elicit happiness. Other variables, however, did elicit happiness, and happiness undermined resistance. Anger, on the other hand, was elicited by the affect-anger message and the cognitive message, and elicited anger enhanced resistance.

Though the affect-anger manipulation was successful, elicited affect levels were very low.

Stronger affect manipulations may shed more light on the role of affect, as suggested by Nabi's (2003) research. Nabi (2003) looked at treatment messages and attack messages that were on videotape and accompanied by evocative emotional content. This manipulation resulted in relatively strong affect manipulations. However, her materials were designed to elicit negative emotions only.

In their research on forewarning, Zuwerink and Devine (1996) and Jacks and Devine (2000) found that irritation could play a significant role in conferring resistance. Zuwerink and Devine (1996) found that counterattitudinal messages caused the recipient to feel irritated, and that this affect response enhanced resistance. While these researchers were not the first to propose irritation as a factor of resistance (see Abelson & Miller, 1967), their operationalizations of the affect responses provides a useful tool for discerning the affect responses that may play roles in resistance. Zuwerink and Devine (1996) call for research that explores forewarnings impact on irritation and irritation's subsequent impact on resistance to counterattitudinal messages.

Similarly, Jacks and Devine (2000) found that irritation, coupled with negative thought generation, plays a prominent role in resistance. As in the previous study, Jacks and Devine were not assessing the efficacy of inoculation; instead, their focus was on forewarning of persuasive intent. Important to the context of this study, Jacks and Devine suggest that one implication of their research is that "if it is unavoidable that the audience is aware of the content and position of one's message, the persuasion practitioner may be well advised to distract the audience (perhaps with a few good jokes that might also

diffuse potential feelings of irritation) prior to delivering the message" (p. 29). Reducing the elicited irritation, they argue, may also undermine resistance.

Duncan and Nelson's (1985) research on humor and advertising found that irritation was negatively correlated with attention paid to the advertisement, recalled information from the advertisement, and liking of both the advertisement and the product being advertised.

While elicited irritation may be the same as elicited anger (Compton & Pfau, 2004c), this has not yet been tested, and previous affect research also made a distinction between the two affective responses (Zuwerink & Devine, 1996). Clearly, there is still much to learn about the potential role of irritation in the inoculation process. Jacks and Devine's (2000) findings suggest that irritation is a potentially revealing emotion to explore in inoculation research. Based on previous findings of irritation's role in resistance to counterattitudinal argumentation conferred by forewarning, this study posits:

> *H21*: For people who receive an inoculation pretreatment, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages elicit greater irritation upon encountering a counterattitudinal message.

Irritation should not play as great a role, however, when the attacks come in the form of political humor. Duncan and Nelson (1985) found that the use of humor alleviates feelings of irritation in humorous advertisements. Their research assessed participants' reactions to fictional radio advertisements for a men's hair care product and found that those who found the ad most humorous also experienced the least amount of irritation. The next hypothesis predicts that the same will occur in the context of late night talk shows:

H22: For those inoculated, counterattitudinal messages with humor elicit less irritation than counterattitudinal messages without humor.

While inoculation prepares people for counterattitudinal attacks, those who use humor often have a more positive image (Nilsen, 1990; Schutz, 1977). Thus, the final hypothesis of this chapter predicts:

H23: For those inoculated, sources of counterattitudinal messages who use humor are perceived more positively than sources who do not use humor.

While inoculation has already been established as a viable, and in many cases, superior campaign strategy when compared to bolstering, attacks, and refutations, much less is known about whether and how inoculation strategies function in the context of more indirect political attacks, like those found in political humor and specifically in late night comedy shows. Additionally, although political humor can function as an attack, political humor may also complement a conventional inoculation message, functioning as a booster to the conferred resistance.

Chapter 4

Inoculating against Conventional Attacks:

Adding More Nuance to the Inoculation Process

Up to this point, this study has focused on effects of late night comedic content on political attitudes and inoculation's efficacy in protecting against, or with, this humorous content. This next chapter focuses on inoculating against conventional political attacks in the context of the primary campaigns, and also assesses the impacts of forewarning on threat and influences of inoculation on perceived self-efficacy.

Inoculating against Conventional Attacks

Several studies have confirmed inoculation's efficacy in political campaigns, beginning with the first political campaign study conducted in October 1986 during a U. S. Senatorial campaign. Pfau and Burgoon (1988) confirmed inoculation's efficacy in political campaigning, adding a strategic option for candidates to the conventional strategies of bolstering, attacking, and refuting. Two years later, Pfau and his colleagues turned their attention to the efficacy of inoculation in the context of direct mail political messages during the later phase of the 1988 presidential campaign. Results indicated that inoculation was effective in deflecting the influence of candidate attacks (Pfau et al., 1990). Additionally, the researchers compared the inoculation strategy with a post-hoc refutational strategy and found inoculation to be more effective. Thus, inoculation's efficacy was not only re-confirmed, but its superiority over post-hoc refutation was also supported.

The next study of inoculation in political campaigns was conducted during the last week of the 2000 election cycle and included campaigns for President, House of

Representatives, and the Wisconsin State Senate. Pfau and colleagues (2001a) assessed whether inoculation could reduce system-based consequences of party- and PAC-sponsored issue advertising, focusing on such political behaviors as voting and maintaining interest in politics. Results indicated that inoculation is not only effective in bolstering attitudes, but also promotes political behavioral intentions against the potentially draconian effects of party-sponsored advertisements, and for Republicans, against both party-sponsored and the PAC-sponsored advertisements.

The most recent political inoculation studies took place during the 2002 mid-term election. An and Pfau (2004a) examined inoculation's efficacy and also explored the impact of perceived source credibility. An and Pfau found that when the source of the inoculation message is perceived as highly credible, inoculation confers more resistance to attack messages, manifested in both attitudes and participatory behaviors. In another study, An and Pfau (2004b) assessed inoculation's efficacy in the face of attacks launched in televised debates. The researchers found inoculation to be a viable strategy in this context as well.

Inoculation has been confirmed as a viable strategy in U. S. Senatorial campaigns, House of Representative campaigns, gubernatorial campaigns, and presidential campaigns. As Szabo and Pfau (2002) observed, the results of these political inoculation studies are particularly remarkable, in that a single inoculation message, in the midst of communication-intense campaigns, protected attitudes. However, inoculation's efficacy has not yet been assessed in the context of the presidential primary season. Based on the existing empirical evidence and theory outlined above, this study posits that, in the context of presidential primaries:

H24: For those who receive an inoculation pretreatment, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to political attack messages, manifested in (a) feelings toward the candidate, (b) attitude toward the candidate, (c) perceptions of candidate competence, (d) perceptions of candidate character, (e) perceptions of candidate sociability, and (f) attitude confidence toward the candidate.

H25: Inoculation treatments enhance the likelihood of political participatory behaviors, including a) seeking political information, b) contributing time or money to the campaign, and c) voting for the candidate, after encountering political attack messages, when compared to controls.

Impacts of Forewarning on Threat

The construct of threat has played a pivotal role in inoculation research since the first inoculation studies conducted by McGuire and his colleagues. McGuire (1964) deduced that something must motivate the process that instills resistance to a subsequent persuasive attempt, and that this motivator was the realization that an attitude may be vulnerable. He also reasoned "any extrinsic threat…presented to the believer before the defense material…should increase his motivation to assimilate the material and hence enhance its immunizing effectiveness" (p. 210). Empirical evidence confirms this idea, with McGuire and Papageorgis (1962) finding that the addition of an explicit forewarning, prior to encountering the counterattitudinal arguments and refutations of the counterarguments contained in the inoculation treatment message, enhances inoculation's effectiveness. McGuire (1964) posited this explicit forewarning works by strengthening the individual's motivation to "assimilate the material" that follows the explicit

forewarning in the treatment message (p. 210). In other words, the forewarning signals to the individual that an existing attitude is vulnerable, and the following material may prove useful in protecting against the upcoming attitudinal assault.

However, the motivational element of threat is posited to also be influential *during the interim* between the treatment and subsequent attack (Pfau, 1997), when those inoculated "continue to accumulate additional material for a considerable time after being exposed to the threatening defense" (McGuire, 1964, p. 222). The importance of this continued motivation to generate internal thinking about the topic is consistent with cognitive processing research (Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), as well as early (Papageorgis & McGuire, 1961) and more recent (Burgoon, Burgoon, et al., 1976; Pfau et al., 1997a) inoculation research. Threat persists in motivating those who are inoculated beyond attending to the content in the treatment message, continuing to motivate counterarguing during the interim between the pretreatment and the attack (McGuire, 1961b, 1962, 1964; Pfau et al., 1997a).

It stands to reason, then, that the use of an explicit forewarning *prior* to encountering the defense-stimulating material in an inoculation message should increase the motivation to attend to this material, but after attending to refutations, this elicited threat would likely diminish. Indeed, research has found an immediate increase in attitude confidence (e.g., Compton & Pfau, 2004a; but see Pfau et al., 1997a) and belief strength (Papageorgis & McGuire, 1962) immediately after inoculation, with the refutations alleviating some of the negative affect generated by threat (Pfau et al., 2001a). While threat motivates close attention to the content of inoculation messages, it is alleviated by the refutational content of inoculation treatment messages.

This alleviation of threat may actually come too soon for optimum resistance. Though participants need attitude confidence to resist the persuasive attempt, confidence should continue to grow as refutational preemption builds during the interim between the treatment and the attack. As Pfau and his colleagues (2004a) offered, "refutational preemption should reestablish confidence *over time*" (p. 26, italics added). Sustaining the elicited threat would motivate individuals even more to continue the counterarguing process in the time following the treatment, as "the more vulnerable the subject perceives [himself or herself]…the more likely [he or she] may be to perform cognitive work necessary to counterargue the subsequent attack effectively, and thus the more resistant to persuasion [he or she] may become" (Wyer, 1974, p. 206). Pfau and colleagues (1997a) found a positive correlation between elicited threat and conferred resistance, whereas greater threat elicited stronger resistance. Anderson and McGuire's (1965) finding that reassurance hinders conferred resistance also suggests that threat plays a powerful role in the inoculation process.

In summary, inoculation treatment messages elicit threat, a consistent finding in inoculation research since the construct of threat was directly measured. Yet the elicited threat levels are almost always low or moderate. The analysis presented here argues that the low and moderate levels of threat may be the result of the timing of the explicit forewarning. The conventional placement of forewarning is prior to the refutational preemption material (the raised and refuted counterarguments), and we can assume that seeing the counterarguments refuted will alleviate much of the generated threat at the time it is measured. Consequently, adding an explicit forewarning to an inoculation

message *after* counterarguments have been raised and refuted should enhance inoculation's effectiveness, as posited in the next hypothesis:

H26: Inoculation pretreatment messages that contain another forewarning after the refutations of counterarguments (double forewarning) elicit and maintain greater threat levels than inoculation pretreatment messages that contain only one forewarning prior to the refutations (single forewarning).

Consequently, consistent with previous research dating back to original studies where the role of threat was assumed and the later studies where threat was directly measured, this study predicts that there will be a direct correlation between elicited threat and conferred resistance.

H27: There is a positive correlation between elicited threat and conferred resistance, such that double-forewarning messages confer more resistance than single-forewarning inoculation treatment messages.

Influences of Inoculation on Perceived Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy also warrants further investigation as it relates to the inoculation process. McGuire's (1964) review of resistance literature found ample evidence that an increase in self-esteem enhances resistance to influence attempts. Subsequently, several inoculation studies have explored the mediating role of self-esteem in the inoculation process. Pfau and colleagues (1992) assessed the effectiveness of inoculation strategies to confer resistance to smoking initiation of children in the transitory phase from elementary to junior high school. The researchers found that inoculation was only effective with those of low self-esteem. This was an important finding, as smoking prevention literature suggests that children of low self-esteem are at the greatest risk of smoking initiation.

Self-esteem is a complex construct, involving whether one feels "capable, significant, successful and worthy" (Coopersmith, 1967, p. 5). It is a concept that is related to self-efficacy, or feeling like one has control in a situation. Schwarzer (1992) describes generalized perceived self-efficacy as the belief that one can overcome obstacles and respond to problems. He notes that the construct of generalized perceived self-efficacy relates to how one feels he or she can relate to challenges.

Self-efficacy has received some attention in inoculation scholarship, which is appropriate considering Bandura's (1983) finding that perceived self-efficacy affects how one responds to threats. Pfau and his colleagues (2001a) found that self-efficacy did play a role in resistance, but not as they had predicted. Efficacy had no impact on elicited threat, and higher self-efficacy resulted in a stronger emotional response to the inoculation treatment messages.

The way self-efficacy has been treated in previous inoculation research is similar to the way involvement has been assessed. Evidence suggests that involvement is a prerequisite for optimal resistance via inoculation (Pfau, 1992; Pfau & Burgoon, 1988; Pfau et al., 1990). Pfau and his colleagues (1997a) confirmed that involvement serves as a prerequisite for inoculation, and that inoculation was particularly effective when involvement levels were moderate. With very low involvement, it is difficult to get people to care enough to initiate the active process of counterarguing and subsequent resistance. But with very high levels of involvement, participants do not feel threatened, and thus, are not motivated to strengthen the attitude. These findings tell us much more about the boundaries of inoculation; however, Pfau and his colleagues (1997a) treated

involvement as a covariate and did not examine whether inoculation treatments have direct effects on involvement.

Indeed, recent research has uncovered a more dynamic role of involvement levels in the process of inoculation. Pfau, and his colleagues (2004a) found that inoculation treatment messages actually enhance involvement levels, working through threat, which in turn elicits counterarguing. Thus, involvement is not only a requisite for inoculation, but also plays an active role, interacting with the other elements in the inoculation process. In this research, a single inoculation treatment messaged was enough to boost involvement levels.

Similarly, the inoculation process should enhance self-efficacy, as inoculation equips the individual with a storehouse of reasons for holding an attitude, even in the face of attack. Based on the rationale provided above, this study will assess whether the role of perceived self-efficacy is also enhanced by the inoculation treatment message and plays a more active role in the inoculation process. In operational terms, this study treats self-efficacy as a dependent variable, or product, of the inoculation pretreatment message.

H28: Inoculation enhances participants' perceptions of generalized perceived self-efficacy.

Chapter 5

Methods

Participants

Participants were undergraduate students at the University of Oklahoma, and all were of legal voting age. A total of 458 participants completed Phase 1, 390 completed Phase 2, and 367 completed Phase 3. There were no evident differences in those who completed all three phases and those who did not in reference to attitudes toward candidates, political interest or political knowledge. Participants were told they were taking part in a study of political information processing.

Materials

Late Night Comedy

Three types of late night political content were used in this investigation: late night comedian monologues, late night political parodies, and candidate appearances on late night talk shows. All of the late night segments were edited to 30 minute segments and referenced or featured at least one of the following Democratic presidential candidates: John Kerry, John Edwards, or Howard Dean. *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* was used for the monologue and candidate appearances condition, and *Saturday Night Live* was used for the political parody condition.

The late night television shows *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *Saturday Night Live* were selected as the two late night comedy programs because, of the late night comedy shows on network television, Jay Leno and *Saturday Night Live* are among the most political in their content. Niven and colleagues (2003) found that Leno told an average of 1,275 political jokes per year. Additionally, Niven and colleagues found,

"rather than being idiosyncratic, the major late night shows exhibit quite similar patterns in choice of targets, the partisan ratio of targets, and the subject matter of their jokes" (p. 130). Also, *Saturday Night Live* was used as the late night variety show because of its popularity and reputation for featuring influential political humor (Downey & Earle, 2000; Holloway, 2001; Pfau, 2002; Strope, 2001).

Inoculation Messages

To elicit threat (a prerequisite for the inoculation process), the first paragraph of inoculation messages was designed to warn participants that their existing attitudes toward a candidate would be under attack. Inoculation messages raised and then refuted arguments against the candidate. Inoculation messages were written to have similar style to one another and checked for equivalence using Becker, Bavelas, and Braden's (1961) Index of Contingency (See Table 1).

There were two main types of inoculation messages used in this study. Conventional inoculation treatment messages brought up counterattitudinal arguments and then offered refutations. Two sub-types of conventional inoculation treatments were used: *single forewarning* and *double forewarning*. *Single forewarning* messages included a forewarning at the beginning of the message that an attitude toward a candidate would be attacked, while *double forewarning* messages included the initial forewarning and another forewarning at the end of the message. (See Appendix A for messages.)

The other main type of inoculation message was a *channel* inoculation message. The *channel* inoculation message warned of the influence of a particular channel—late night comedy—in influencing political attitudes. (See Appendix B for message text.)

Attack Messages

Attack messages were prepared against each of the candidates. These messages contained arguments that attacked candidate image, and were labeled as coming from the fictional "Citizens for an Informed Electorate." (See Appendix C for message text.) As with inoculation messages, attack messages were written to have similar style to one another and checked for equivalence using Becker, Bavelas, and Braden's (1961) Index of Contingency. (See Table 1.)

Manipulation Check

Threat was assessed as a manipulation check. As in previous political inoculation research, threat was operationalized as "a warning of impending, and potentially persuasive, attacks against the candidate supported by the receiver" (Pfau et al., 1990, p. 31). Threat was assessed using five bipolar adjective pairs (e.g., Pfau et al., 1990) of: nonthreatening/threatening, not harmful/harmful, unintimidating/intimidating, not risky/risky, and safe/dangerous. Reliability for threat was .95 at Phases 1, 2, and 3.

Design and Independent Variables

The primary independent variables in this study were *treatment condition* (inoculation and control/no inoculation), *gender* (male or female), and *type of late night comedy content* (monologue, parody, candidate appearance, or control/no late night comedy). Initial attitude toward candidates, as well as political interest and political knowledge (Fiske et al., 1990), functioned as covariates.

There were two primary covariates in this investigation: *political interest* and *political knowledge*. *Political interest* was assessed using a scale composed of two questions. Participants indicated how much they followed politics (0 = hardly at all, 1 =

only now and then, 2 = some of the time, 3 = most of the time) and their interest in the campaign (0 = not much interested, 1 = somewhat interested, 2 = very much interested), and answers were added to form a 6-point scale, where 0 indicates minimum and 5 indicates maximum interest in politics (Baum, 2003b, 2002c). *Political knowledge* was assessed using a 7-question multiple-choice test assessing knowledge of basic information about the presidential candidates. (See Appendix D for items.)

Because attitudinal and behavioral reactions to the attack message are the ultimate means of assessing the efficacy of inoculation treatments and boosters (Pfau et al., 1990), *attack type* plays a pivotal role in this study. Three types of attack messages were employed: *monologue-attack, parody-attack,* and *conventional-attack*. Participants in the *monologue-attack* condition viewed a 30-minute segment of a late night talk show that included the host's monologue containing comedic material about a candidate. Participants in the *parody-attack* condition watched a 30-minute segment of a late night variety show that included comedic material parodying the candidate. Participants in the *conventional-attack* condition read a conventional attack message containing counterattitudinal content against a candidate—attacking their preferred candidate. All participants read a conventional-attack message during the final phase of the study.

Procedures

As consistent with past inoculation studies, this study took place in three phases. The study spanned five weeks, beginning the second week of February 2004.

In Phase 1, all participants first completed a questionnaire collecting basic demographic information and assessing their attitudes toward three Democrat presidential primary candidates. Also, this questionnaire assessed political interest and political

knowledge. Participants returned completed questionnaires, and then, based on their attitudes toward the candidates, were randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions.

Participants received a questionnaire that assessed their attitude toward the candidate they indicated they perceived as most favorable. Participants in the inoculation conditions also received an inoculation message. After completing this second questionnaire, all participants were dismissed until Phase 2.

Phase 2 occurred one week after Phase 1. During Phase 2, participants either viewed comedic monologue content, parody content, or a candidate appearance at an individual viewing station, or they received a written conventional attack message. All participants completed another questionnaire assessing attitudes and political behavioral intentions, as well as efficacy scales. Those in the control condition received only this questionnaire.

During Phase 3, occurring approximately one week after Phase 2, all participants in all conditions read a conventional political attack message. Those participants who had read a conventional attack message at Phase 2 read a different attack message against that candidate at Phase 3. After reading the message, all participants completed a final questionnaire that assessed attitudes and other attitudinal measures, as well as political behavioral intentions and efficacy levels.

Dependent Measures

Feeling toward the candidate was assessed using a feeling thermometer ranging from 0 to 100, with 100 indicating strongest favorable feelings toward the candidate. This measure is commonly used in inoculation research (e.g., An & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b).

General attitude toward the candidate was assessed using bipolar adjective pairs first developed by Burgoon and colleagues (1978) and commonly used in inoculation research (e.g., An & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b; Pfau & Burgoon, 1988; Burgoon, Cohen, Miller, & Montgomery, 1978; Miller & Burgoon, 1979). General attitude was assessed using two bipolar adjective pairs of negative/positive and unfavorable/favorable. Reliability was .95 at Phase 2 and .97 at Phase 3.

Perceptions of competence, character and *sociability* of the candidates and sources of attack messages were assessed using adjective pairs. The measure was developed by McCroskey, Holdridge, and Toomb (1974) and McCroskey and Jenson (1973) and has previously been used in political inoculation research (e.g., An & Pfau, 2003a, 2004b; Pfau et al., 1990). Pairs used to assess competence were: unintelligent/intelligent, incompetent/competent, and unqualified/qualified. Pairs used to assess character were: dishonest/honest, bad/good, and untrustworthy/trustworthy. Pairs used to assess sociability were: unsociable/sociable, gloomy/cheerful, and irritable/good-natured. Reliabilities for perceived competence of the candidate were .92 at Phases 2 and 3, and reliabilities for perceived competence of the source of the attack message were .87 at Phase 2 and .90 at Phase 3. Reliabilities for perceived character of the candidate were .94 at Phase 2 and .95 at Phase 3, and reliabilities for perceived character of the source of the attack message were .86 at Phase 2 and .88 at Phase 3. Reliabilities for perceived sociability of the candidate were .91 at Phase 2 and .94 at Phase 3, and reliabilities for perceived sociability of the source of the attack message were .85 at Phase 2 and .83 at Phase 3.

Attitude confidence toward the candidate was assessed using a 0-100 point probability continuum. Participants were asked to estimate their attitude confidence toward the candidate, where 0 indicates "no confidence" and 100 indicates "complete confidence." This measure has been employed in recent inoculation research to assess how confident individuals feel about their attitudes toward issues or candidates (e.g., An & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b; Compton & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b; Pfau et al., 2004a, 2004b).

Likelihood of a series of behaviors was assessed using single-item, 0 to 100 point scales answering the following question: On a scale from 0 (no probability) to 100 (certain probability), what is the likelihood you will:

Actively seek additional information about (candidates' names) and/or their positions?

Engage in conversations with other people about the candidates or their positions?

Contribute time or money on behalf of candidates in the campaign?

Go to the polls and vote for the candidate?

This measure has been employed in recent inoculation research to assess behavioral intentions (e.g., An & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b; Compton & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b; Pfau et al., 1990, 2001a).

Generalized perceived self-efficacy was assessed using a 10-point scale developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). Participants indicated their responses to a series of statements, where 1 = not at all true, 2 = hardly true, 3 = moderately true, and 4 = exactly true. Sample items include, "If someone opposes me, I can find the means to get what I want" and "When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find solutions."

Reliability for generalized perceived self-efficacy was .86 at Phase 2 and .88 at Phase 3. (See Appendix E for items.)

Elicited irritation was assessed using a 7-point differential scale, asking respondents to indicate how they felt after reading the message or watching the video, with 0 = does not apply at all and 6 = applies very much on a series of positive and negative affect items, including *happy*, *agitated*, *optimistic*, *angry*, *uncertain*, *annoyed*, *sad*, *bothered*, *confused*, *disgusted*, *uncomfortable*, *irritated*, and *good*. An Irritation Index was formed from the average of the six items *agitated*, *angry*, *annoyed*, *bothered*, *disgusted*, and *irritated* (Zuwerink & Devine, 1996; Jacks & Devine, 2000). Reliability was .93 at Phase 2 and .93 at Phase 3.

The number of *counterarguments* and *responses* to counterarguments was assessed using a checklist procedure, similar to that used by Pfau et al. (2004a, 2004b). Participants read 20 statements reflecting major arguments for and against the candidate (See Appendix F for items). Participants were asked to focus on arguments contrary to their initial attitudes and instructed to check any "arguments other people might have for opposing your position . . . that had entered your mind." Next, participants were asked to reexamine the list, this time checking any arguments that entered their mind that were "reasons that you thought of as to why opposing arguments were wrong." The total number of counterarguments the participants checked was counted, as were the total number of responses.

Intent to proselytize positive and information about candidates to others and share jokes about candidates were measured using a 0-100 likelihood of acting scale, as utilized

by Pfau (1990) and Pfau et al. (2001). The following questions were posed: On a scale from 0 (no probability) to 100 (certain probability), what is the likelihood you will:

Tell someone positive things about (candidate's name)?

Tell someone the jokes you heard on the late night talk show?

Chapter 6

Results

Manipulation Check

Because threat is a prerequisite for inoculation, a one-way ANOVA was computed to assess elicited threat for those inoculated and those not inoculated (control). Omnibus results revealed that those inoculated indicated significantly higher threat levels than those in the control condition, F (1, 455) = 17.96, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .04$. The manipulation check confirmed significantly more elicited threat for those receiving an inoculation treatment message (M = 2.95, SD = 1.29) than those who did not receive an inoculation treatment message (M = 2.44, SD = 1.24).

Assumptions

Random assignment to experimental conditions assured independence. With the exception of intentions to contribute time or money at Phase 2 and Phase 3, normality was achieved for dependent variables. Intentions to contribute time or money were slightly past the range suggested by Hoyle (1995); however, the F-test is robust to this assumption (Cohen, 1988). To assess homogeneity of error variance, error variances across cells were compared, and the resulting ratio of high to low error was within the acceptable 4:1 range, with the exceptions of intentions to seek more information at Phase 3 (4.55:1) and intentions to vote at Phase 2 (5.02:1).

Omnibus and Univariate Analyses for Hypotheses 1-4

To assess effects of viewing late night comedic content, a 4 (viewing condition: candidate appearance, monologue, parody, or no late night comedy) X 2 (gender: female and male) MANCOVA was computed on 6 dependent variables: feelings toward

candidates, attitudes toward candidates, perceived competence, perceived character, perceived sociability, and attitude confidence. Initial attitudes toward candidates, political interest, and political knowledge were treated as covariates. Results indicated a significant effect for the covariate of initial attitudes toward candidates, F (6,95) = 16.96, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .52$, and a nearly significant effect for the covariate of political interest, F (6,95) = 2.07, $p < .07$, $R^2 = .12$. There were also significant omnibus effects for viewing condition, F (18,269) = 1.97, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .11$, and gender, F (6,95) = 2.26, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .12$.

Subsequent analyses revealed significant univariate results for the covariate of initial attitude on the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates, F (1,100) = 63.51, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .34$, attitudes toward candidates, F (1,100) = 53.58, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .31$, perceived competence, F (1,100) = 29.30, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .20$, perceived character, F (1, 111) = 41.97, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .25$, perceived sociability, F (1,100) = 8.37, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .06$, and attitude confidence, F (1,100) = 34.58, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .20$; for the covariate of political interest on the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates, F (1,100) = 5.07, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .03$, perceived character, F (1,100) = 63.51, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .02$, perceived sociability, F (1,100) = 63.51, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .04$, and attitude confidence, F (1,100) = 63.51, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .04$; for experimental condition on the dependent variables of attitude toward candidate, F (3,100) = 3.12, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .05$, perceived competence, F (3,100) = 6.32, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .13$, perceived character, F (3,100) = 5.55, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .10$, perceived sociability, F (3,100) = 5.03, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .11$, and attitude confidence, F (3,100) = 8.07, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .14$; and for gender on the dependent variable of perceived sociability, F (1,100) = 4.37, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .03$. There was a nearly

significant effect for viewing condition on the dependent variable of feelings toward candidates, F (3,100) = 2.36, $p < .08$, $eta^2 = .04$. Next, planned comparisons were conducted on significant omnibus results, or Scheffe's post hoc tests depending on whether results were theoretically based or not.

Hypotheses 1-4: Effects of Late Night Political Comedy

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 posited that participants who view late night comedic content targeting a politician (monologues and parodies) manifest more negative perceptions of that politician.

Hypothesis 1(a) posited that participants who view late night comedic content targeting a politician (monologues and parodies) manifest more negative perceptions of politicians in terms of feelings toward candidates. Planned comparisons comparing monologue and parody conditions versus controls failed to support this hypothesis, F (1,100) = 0.24. However, post hoc tests revealed a significant effect of the monologue condition on candidate feelings, with the pattern of means revealing that those viewing a monologue with jokes ridiculing candidates expressed more negative feelings toward candidates, t (59) = 2.31, $p < .05$, (monologue condition: M = 58.17, SD = 16.72; control condition: M = 62.37, SD = 18.09). Hypothesis 1(a) was supported, but only for monologues.

Hypotheses 1(b), 1(c), 1(d), and 1(e) posited that participants who view late night comedic content targeting politicians (monologues and parodies) manifest more negative: attitudes toward candidates, perceived candidate competence, perceived candidate character, and perceived candidate sociability. Planned comparisons examining

monologue and parody conditions against controls failed to support predicted effects on attitudes toward candidates, F (1,100) = 0.69, $p > .10$, perceived candidate competence, F (1,100) = 0.41, $p > .10$, perceived candidate character, F (1,100) = 1.86, $p > .10$, and perceived candidate sociability, F (1,100) = 0.16, $p > .10$. However, post hoc tests revealed significant effects on these dependent variables, but contrary to prediction, those viewing political parodies indicated more positive attitudes toward candidates, t (61) = 2.54, $p < .05$, (parody: M = 5.07, SD = 0.75; control: M = 4.74, SD = 1.53), more positive perceptions of candidate competence, t (60) = 2.77, $p < .01$, (parody: M = 5.54, SD = 0.84; control: M = 5.18, SD = 1.39), more positive perceptions of candidate character, t (61) = 3.92, $p < .01$, (parody: M = 5.40, SD = 0.74; control: M = 4.93, SD = 1.34), and more positive perceptions of sociability, t (61) = 2.00, $p < .05$, (parody: M = 5.25, SD = 0.93; control: M = 4.97, SD = 1.36). Hypotheses 1(b), 1(c), 1(d), and 1(e) were not supported.

Overall, monologues functioned as predicted in terms of derogating feelings toward candidates. However, monologue content failed to have significant impacts on other perceptions, including general attitudes and perceptions of competence, character, and sociability. Parodies functioned in the opposite direction than predicted. Instead of derogating perceptions of candidates, parodies enhanced global attitudes and perceptions of candidate competence, character, and sociability. (See Table 2).

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 predicted that candidate appearances on late night talk shows enhance perceptions of candidates. Hypothesis 2(a) posited that candidate appearances on late night talk shows enhance perceptions of candidates in terms of feelings toward

candidates. Planned comparisons failed to support this prediction, F (1,100) = 0.02, p > .10. Hypothesis 2(a) was not supported.

Hypothesis 2(b) predicted that candidate appearances on late night talk shows enhance perceptions of candidates in terms of general attitudes toward candidates. While planned comparisons failed to reveal significance, F (1,100) = 1.13, p > .10, a subsequent post hoc test indicated a significant effect, t (55) = 2.15, p < .05, with those viewing a candidate appearance also indicating more positive general attitudes toward candidates (appearance: M = 5.02, SD = 1.41; control: M = 4.74, SD = 1.53).

Hypotheses 2(c), 2(d), and 2(e) predicted that candidate appearances on late night talk shows enhance perceptions of candidates in terms of general attitudes toward candidates and their perceived competence, character, and sociability. Results of planned comparisons indicated support for these predictions: candidate competence, F (1,100) = 7.22, p < .01, eta^2 = .06, with those viewing candidate appearances on late night comedy talk shows indicating more positive perceptions of candidate competence, (appearance: M = 5.88, SD = 0.90; control: M = 5.18, SD = 1.39); candidate character, F (1,100) = 4.25, p < .01, eta^2 = .02, with those viewing candidate appearances on late night comedy talk shows indicating more positive perceptions of candidate character, (appearance: M = 5.43, SD = 1.27; control: M = 4.93, SD = 1.34); and candidate sociability, F (1,100) = 6.78, p < .01, eta^2 = .05, with those viewing candidate appearances on late night comedy talk shows indicating more positive perceptions of candidate sociability, (appearance: M = 5.74, SD = 1.29; control: M = 4.97, SD = 1.36). Hypothesis 2(c), 2(d), and 2(e) were supported.

For the most part, candidate appearances functioned as predicted, generating more positive general attitudes toward candidates and enhancing perceptions of candidate competence, character and sociability. (See Table 2).

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 predicted candidate appearances on late night talk shows strengthen attitude confidence. Planned comparisons revealed support for this hypothesis, F (1,100) = 6.35, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .04$, with those viewing candidate appearances on late night comedy talk shows indicating stronger attitude confidence, (appearance: $M = 69.50$, $SD = 17.65$; control: $M = 56.00$, $SD = 25.13$). Hypothesis 3 was supported. Viewing candidate appearances bolster the strength of attitude confidence toward candidates. (See Table 2).

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 posited that political late night comedic content exerts the greatest influence on (a) viewers with lower political knowledge, (b) viewers who have lower political interest, and (c) female viewers.

Hypothesis 4(a) was not supported, as there was no significant omnibus result for the covariate of political knowledge, F (6, 95) = 0.84, $p > .10$.

Hypothesis 4(b) posited that political late night comedic content exerts the greatest influence on viewers with lower political interest. As previously reported, there was a nearly significant omnibus effect on the covariate of political interest, F (6,95) = 2.07, $p < .07$, $R^2 = .12$, and significant univariate effects on the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates, F (1,100) = 5.07, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .05$, perceived character, F (1,100) = 63.51, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .04$, perceived sociability, F (1,100) = 63.51, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .05$, and attitude confidence, F (1,100) = 63.51, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .06$. There were positive

valences for each of these effects, indicating that, contrary to prediction, those with higher political interest were more influenced by late night political comedy. Hypothesis 4(b) was not supported.

Hypothesis 4(c) predicted that political late night comedic content exerts the greatest influence on female viewers. As previously reported, there was evidence of significant omnibus effects of gender, F (6,95) = 2.26, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .12$, and significant univariate effects on the dependent variable of perceived sociability, F (1,100) = 4.37, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .04$. However, there was no significant interaction between gender and late night comedy condition. While females perceived candidates with higher sociability, there was no evidence that late night comedy was responsible for the effect.

In sum, political knowledge does not significantly influence the effects of late night political comedy. There were significant effects of political interest, but in the opposite direction than predicted, with those of higher political interest more influenced by the late night content. Gender affects perceived candidate sociability, with female viewers having higher perceptions of candidate sociability, but there was no evidence for late night comedy condition effects.

Omnibus and Univariate Analysis for Hypotheses 5-9

To assess effects of inoculation on late night comedic content that ridicules candidates, a 2 (experimental condition: inoculated or not inoculated) X 2 (comedic form: monologue or parody) X 2 (gender: female and male) MANCOVA was computed on 11 dependent variables: feelings toward candidates, attitudes toward candidates, perceived candidate competence, perceived candidate character, perceived candidate sociability, attitude confidence, intentions to seek more information about candidates, intentions to

contribute time or money to candidates' campaigns, intentions to vote for candidates, intentions to tell people positive things about candidates, and intentions to tell people televised content about candidates. Initial attitudes toward candidates, political interest, and political knowledge were treated as covariates. Results indicated a significant effect for the covariate of initial attitude toward candidates, F (11,92) = 8.84, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .51$, the covariate of political interest, F (11,92) = 3.99, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .32$, and type of late night comedic content, F (11,92) = 2.47, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .23$.

Subsequent univariate tests revealed significant effects for the covariate of initial attitude toward candidates on the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates, F (1,102) = 55.97, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .30$, attitudes toward candidates, F (1,102) = 66.05, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .34$, perceived candidate competence, F (1,102) = 32.69, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .22$, perceived candidate character, F (1,102) = 80.03, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .39$, perceived candidate sociability, F (1,102) = 23.21, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .17$, attitude confidence, F (1,102) = 24.90, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .17$, intentions to seek more information about candidates, F (1,102) = 23.84, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .18$, intentions to vote for candidates, F (1,102) = 43.72, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .27$, and intentions to tell positive things about candidates, F (1,102) = 30.73, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .20$; for the covariate of political interest on the dependent variables of attitude confidence, F (1,102) = 4.15, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .03$, intentions to tell positive things about candidates, F (1,102) = 10.38, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .07$, and intentions to tell others televised content, F (1,102) = 16.62, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .12$, and nearly significant effects on intentions to vote for candidates, F (1,102) = 2.99, $p < .09$, $eta^2 = .02$; and nearly significant effects for gender on the dependent measures of feelings toward candidates, F (1,102) = 2.77, $p < .10$, $eta^2 = .01$, general attitudes toward candidates, F (1,102) = 3.34, $p < .08$, $eta^2 =$

.02, and perceived candidate sociability, F (1,102) = 3.48, $p < .07$, $eta^2 = .02$. Univariate tests also indicated significant effects for late night comedic content on the dependent measures of feelings toward candidates, F (1,102) = 7.98, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .04$, general attitudes toward candidates, F (1,102) = 4.89, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .02$, perceived candidate competence, F (1,102) = 7.26, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .05$, perceived candidate character, F (1,102) = 10.90, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .05$, and intentions to tell other televised content, F (1,102) = 8.06, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .06$, and nearly significant effects on perceived candidate sociability, F (1,102) = 3.64, $p < .06$, $eta^2 = .03$, and attitude confidence, F (1,102) = 3.33, $p < .08$, $eta^2 = .02$. There was a nearly significant univariate effect for experimental condition on intentions to tell others televised content, F (1,102) = 3.53, $p < .07$, $eta^2 = .06$.

Not all predicted omnibus results supported the proposed hypotheses. However, because extant theory warranted further examination of the means, planned comparisons were conducted to assess the predictions offered in the hypotheses. This procedure is advocated when theory supports predictions, regardless of significant omnibus results (Huberty & Morris, 1989).

Hypotheses 5-9: Inoculating Against Late Night Comedy

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 posited that, for people who receive an inoculation pretreatment, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to the negative influence induced by exposure to comic content ridiculing a candidate (monologues and parodies).

Hypotheses 5(a) and 5(b) predicted that, for people who receive an inoculation pretreatment, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to the negative influence induced by exposure to comic content ridiculing a candidate (monologues and parodies), manifested in feelings toward candidates and general attitudes toward candidates. Planned comparisons revealed significant effects for both dependent variables: feelings toward candidates, F (1,102) = 3.66, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .02$, and general attitudes toward candidates, F (1,102) = 4.58, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .02$. However, contrary to prediction, those inoculated against monologue and parodies indicated more negative feelings toward candidates after exposure to late night comedic content when compared to controls, (treatment: M = 55.45, SD = 19.53; control: M = 60.91, SD = 16.52), and more negative general attitudes toward candidates after exposure to late night comedic content when compared to controls, (treatment: M = 4.52, SD = 1.35; control: M = 4.91, SD = 1.00). (See Table 3). Subsequent post hoc tests revealed no significance for monologues, but did reveal significance for parodies on the dependent measure of feelings toward candidates, with those inoculated indicating more negative feelings than those in the control condition after exposure to late night political parody, t (59) = 4.02, $p < .01$, (treatment: M = 56.17, SD = 22.94; parody control:M = 63.65, SD = 16.14), and on the dependent measure of attitudes toward candidates, with those inoculated indicating more negative attitudes than those in the control condition after exposure to late night political parody, t (59) = 4.92, $p < .01$, (treatment: M = 4.48, SD = 1.51; parody control: M = 5.07, SD = 0.75). (See Table 4). Results of Hypotheses 5(a) and 5(b) indicated that inoculation not only failed to confer resistance to comic content, but instead, actually

backfired in the parody condition, in terms of feelings and general attitudes toward candidates.

Hypotheses 5(c) posited that, for people who receive an inoculation pretreatment, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to the negative influence induced by exposure to comic content ridiculing a candidate (monologues and parodies), manifested in perceptions of candidate competence. Planned comparisons revealed a nearly significant effect, F (1,102) = 2.16, $p < .10$, $eta^2 = .01$, but contrary to prediction, those inoculated against monologue and parodies expressed more negative perceptions of candidate competence after exposure to the late night comedic content when compared to controls (treatment: $M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.32$; control: $M = 5.32$, $SD = 1.04$). (See Table 3). Post hoc tests revealed no significance for monologues, but did reveal significance for parodies on perceived candidate competence, with those inoculated indicating more negative perceptions of candidate competence than those in the control condition after exposure to late night political parody, t (59) = 3.07, $p < .01$, (treatment: $M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.49$; parody control: $M = 5.54$, $SD = 0.84$). (See Table 4). Results of Hypothesis 5(c) indicated that inoculation failed to confer resistance in terms of perceptions of candidate competence, and instead, backfired with parody content.

Hypothesis 5(d) posited, for people who receive an inoculation pretreatment, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to the negative influence induced by exposure to comic content ridiculing a candidate (monologues and parodies), manifested in perceived candidate character. Planned comparisons revealed significance, F (1,102) = 4.69, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .02$, but those inoculated against monologue and parodies indicated more negative perceptions of candidate character after exposure to

the late night comedic content when compared to controls (treatment: $M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.12$; control: $M = 5.20$, $SD = 0.92$). (See Table 3). Post hoc tests revealed no significance for monologues, but did reveal significance for parodies on attitudes toward candidates, with those inoculated indicating more negative perceptions of candidate character than those in the control condition after exposure to late night political parody, $t\ (59) = 4.92$, $p < .01$, (treatment: $M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.29$; parody control: $M = 5.40$, $SD = 0.74$). (See Table 4). Results for Hypothesis 5(d) indicated that inoculation failed to confer resistance to comedic content in terms of perceived candidate character, and with the parody condition, inoculation treatments backfired.

Hypothesis 5(e) predicted that, for people who receive an inoculation pretreatment, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to the negative influence induced by exposure to comic content ridiculing a candidate (monologues and parodies), manifested in perceived candidate character. Planned comparisons revealed no evidence for significance, $F\ (1,102) = 0.20$, $p > .10$. Post hoc tests revealed no significance for monologues, but did reveal significance for parodies on attitudes toward candidates, with those inoculated indicating more negative perceptions of candidate sociability than those in the control condition after exposure to late night political parody, $t\ (59) = 4.92$, $p < .05$, (treatment: $M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.10$; control: $M = 5.25$, $SD = 0.93$). (See Table 4). Results of Hypothesis 5(e) indicated that inoculation failed to confer resistance to neither monologues nor parodies, and with parodies, the treatments backfired.

Hypothesis 5(f) posited that, for people who receive an inoculation pretreatment, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to the negative

influence induced by exposure to comic content ridiculing a candidate (monologues and parodies), manifested in attitude confidence. Planned comparisons revealed no evidence for significance, F (1,102) = 0.37, $p > .10$. Post hoc tests revealed no significance for monologues, but did reveal significance for parodies on attitude confidence, with those inoculated indicating weaker attitudes than those in the control condition after exposure to late night political parody, t (59) = 2.23, $p < .05$, (treatment: M = 52.33, SD = 28.24; parody control: M = 59.20, SD = 24.62). (See Table 4). Results for Hypothesis 5(f) indicated that inoculation failed to confer resistance to comic content, and with parodies, the treatments backfired.

In sum, results for Hypothesis 5 indicated that inoculation failed to confer resistance to both parody and monologue content. While planned comparisons revealed significant effects, the directions were opposite than predicted. Subsequent post hoc tests indicated that inoculation treatments not only failed to confer resistance to parody content, but actually backfired, with the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates, general attitudes toward candidates, perceived candidate competence, perceived candidate character, perceived candidate character, and attitude confidence.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 predicted that inoculation treatments enhance the likelihood of participatory behaviors after exposure to comedic attacks, when compared to controls.

Specifically, Hypothesis 6(a) posited that inoculation treatments enhance the likelihood of seeking political information, and Hypothesis 6(b) predicted that inoculation enhances the likelihood of contributing time or money to campaigns, after exposure to comedic content. Planned comparisons failed to support either prediction: no

greater likelihood of seeking political information, F (1,102) = 0.37, $p > .10$, and no more likelihood of contributing time or money to campaigns, F (1,102) = 0.81, $p > .10$. Hypothesis 6(c) posited that inoculation treatments enhance the likelihood of voting for candidates. Planned comparisons failed to support this hypothesis, F (1,102) = 0.80, $p > .10$. Post hoc tests revealed a significant effect on intentions to vote with political parodies, with those inoculated and subjected to parody content expressing lower intentions to vote for candidates, t (59) = 2.44, $p < .05$, (treatment: M = 26.67, SD = 35.09; parody control: M = 36.00, SD = 32.70). (See Table 4).

Results for Hypothesis 6 failed to reveal effects on behavioral intentions to seek more political information or contribute time or money after exposure to comedic attacks. Resulted indicated significant effects on intentions to vote for candidates in the parody condition, but the direction of effects was opposite than predicted. Instead of increasing intentions to vote for candidates, those inoculated indicated lower intentions to vote for candidates after exposure to parody content.

Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 predicted that those inoculated are more likely to proselytize in support of candidates after encountering late night comedic content (monologues and parodies). Planned comparisons indicated significance, F (1,102) = 2.38, $p < .05$, eta^2 = .01, however, the direction of effects was opposite than predicted, with those inoculated expressing less intention to share positive things about candidates after exposure to comic material, (treatment: M = 29.28, SD = 30.45; control: M = 37.78, SD = 33.16). (See Table 3). Post hoc tests revealed significant effects of both monologue content, with those inoculated and subjected to monologue content expressing lower intentions to share

positive things about candidates, t (55) = 2.31, $p < .05$, (treatment: M = 30.27, SD = 30.70; monologue control: M = 38.83, SD = 35.26), and with parody content, with those inoculated and subjected to monologue content expressing lower intentions to share positive things about candidates, t (59) = 2.32, $p < .05$, (treatment: M = 28.43, SD = 30.74; parody control: M = 36.77, SD = 31.58). (See Table 4).

Hypothesis 7 was not supported. Though results indicated significant effects, those inoculated and then experiencing comic content ridiculing candidates were less likely to share positive things about candidates.

Hypothesis 8

Hypothesis 8 predicted that those inoculated are less likely to tell others jokes they hear from late night shows when compared to those inoculated. Planned comparisons failed to reveal significance for the conditions of parodies and monologues when compared to controls, F (1,102) = 1.28, $p > .10$. Post hoc tests revealed no significant effect of parodies, but revealed significance for monologues, with those inoculated and subjected to monologue content expressing lower intentions to share jokes about candidates, t (55) = 4.59, $p < .01$, (treatment: M = 18.54, SD = 23.30; monologue control: M = 36.90, SD = 32.83). (See Table 4). Hypothesis 8 was partially supported. Inoculation treatments decrease the likelihood that late night jokes about candidates from monologues will be shared with others.

Hypothesis 9

Hypothesis 9 posited that inoculation's effects against late night comedic content (monologues and parodies) are more pronounced for (a) those higher in political interest when compared to those lower in political interest, (b) those higher in political

knowledge when compared to those lower in political knowledge, and (c) males when compared to females.

As previously reported, there was a significant omnibus effect for political interest, F (11, 92) = 3.99, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .32$, and significant univariate effects on the dependent variables of attitude confidence, F (1,102) = 4.15, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .04$, intentions to tell positive things about candidates, F (1,102) = 10.38, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .09$, and intentions to tell others televised content, F (1,102) = 16.62, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .14$, and nearly significant effects on intentions to vote for candidates, F (1,102) = 2.99, $p < .09$, $eta^2 = .03$. The valences on each of these variables were positive, supporting Hypothesis 9(a). Those with higher political interest were more affected by the inoculation treatments.

Hypothesis 9(b) was not supported, as there was no evidence for significant omnibus results for political knowledge, F (11,92) = 0.57, $p = 0.85$. Hypothesis 9(c) was not supported, with no evidence for significance omnibus effects of gender, F (11,92) = 1.30, $p = 0.24$.

Hypothesis 9 was only partially supported, with those of higher political interest more influenced by inoculation treatments, but no significant effects for political knowledge or gender.

Omnibus and Univariate Analysis for Hypothesis 10

To assess comedic content and counterarguing, a MANCOVA with a fixed factor of type of attack (comedic or conventional) was computed on two dependent variables: generated counterarguments and generated refutations, for all inoculated participants. There was no evidence for significant omnibus effects, F (2,63) = 0.61, $p = .55$. Because

theory warranted the prediction, planned comparisons were computed to further assess the means (Huberty & Morris, 1989).

Hypothesis 10: Counterarguments and Refutations

Hypothesis 10

Hypothesis 10 predicted that counterattitudinal messages with humor elicit less counterarguing output than counterattitudinal messages without humor. Results of planned comparisons did not support Hypothesis 10 for counterarguments, F (1,64) = 0.01, $p > .10$, or refutations, F (1,64) = 1.04, $p > .10$. (See Table 5).

Omnibus and Univariate Analyses for Hypothesis 11-14

To assess effects of viewing candidate appearances on conventional political attacks, a 2 (experimental condition at Phase 1: inoculation or no inoculation) X 2 (comedic content condition at Phase 2: candidate appearance or no comedic content) X 2 (gender: female and male) MANCOVA was computed on 15 dependent variables: feelings toward candidates at Phase 2 and Phase 3; attitudes toward candidates at Phase 2 and Phase 3; perceived candidate competence, character, and sociability at Phase 2 and Phase 3; attitude confidence at Phase 2 and Phase 3, and perceived competence, character, and sociability of sources of counterattitudinal messages at Phase 3. Initial attitudes toward candidates, political interest, and political knowledge were treated as covariates. Results indicated a significant omnibus effect for the covariate of initial attitudes toward candidates, F (15,75) = 5.89, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .54$, and for exposure to candidate appearances at Phase 2, F (15,75) = 2.67, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .35$.

Subsequent univariate tests revealed significant effects for the covariate of initial attitudes toward candidates on the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates at

Phase 2, F (1,89) = 70.90, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .40$, attitudes toward candidates at Phase 2, F (1,89) = 55.37, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .35$, perceived candidate competence at Phase 2, F (1,89) = 37.09, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .26$, perceived candidate sociability at Phase 2, F (1,89) = 21.92, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .16$, attitude confidence at Phase 2, F (1,89) = 15.90, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .12$, feelings toward candidates at Phase 3, F (1,89) = 46.16, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .31$, attitudes toward candidates at Phase 3, F (1,89) = 49.23, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .32$, perceived candidate competence at Phase 3, F (1,89) = 39.34, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .28$, perceived candidate sociability at Phase 3, F (1,89) = 24.01, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .19$, attitude confidence at Phase 3, F (1,89) = 15.84, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .13$, perceived counterattitudinal source competence at Phase 3, F (1,89) = 19.08, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .15$, perceived counterattitudinal source character at Phase 3, F (1,89) = 17.29, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .15$, and perceived counterattitudinal source sociability at Phase 3, F (1,89) = 11.10, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .10$. There were also significant univariate effects for the covariate of candidate appearances at Phase 2 on the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates at Phase 2, F (1,89) = 5.62, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .03$, attitudes toward candidates at Phase 2, F (1,89) = 5.86, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .04$, perceived candidate competence at Phase 2, F (1,89) = 11.95, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .08$, perceived candidate character at Phase 2, F (1,89) = 11.92, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .07$, perceived candidate sociability at Phase 2, F (1,89) = 22.34, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .16$, attitude confidence, F (1,89) = 19.40, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .15$, perceived candidate character at Phase 3, F (1,89) = 5.24, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .03$, perceived candidate sociability at Phase 3, F (1,89) = 5.13, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .04$, and attitude confidence at Phase 3, F (1,89) = 4.32, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .03$. Next, planned comparisons were conducted on significant omnibus results, or Scheffe's post hoc tests depending on whether results were theoretically based or not.

Hypotheses 11-14: Inoculating With Candidate Appearances

Hypothesis 11

Hypothesis 11 posited that candidate appearances confer resistance to conventional political attack messages, manifested in (a) feelings toward candidates, (b) general attitudes toward candidates, (c) candidate competence, (d) candidate character, (e) candidate sociability, (f) attitude confidence, and (g) counterattitudinal message source derogation.

Hypothesis 11(a) was not supported. While a planned comparison failed to reveal significance, F (1,89) = 1.67, $p > .10$, a post hoc test revealed significance, but in the opposite direction than predicted. Those who viewed candidate appearances and then encountered conventional attack messages indicated lower feelings toward candidates, t (55) = 2.53, $p < .05$, (appearance: M = 48.28, SD = 25.97; control: M = 54.04, SD = 19.95). (See Table 6).

Planned comparisons failed to reveal significance for (b) attitudes toward candidates, F (1,89) = 0.32, $p > .10$, (c) perceived candidate competence, F (1,89) = 0.78, $p > .10$, (d) perceived candidate character, F (1,89) = 0.24, $p > .10$, (e) perceived candidate sociability, F (1,89) = 0.07, $p > .10$, and (f) attitude confidence, F (1,89) = 0.00, $p > .10$. There was evidence for significance on counterattitudinal message source derogation in terms of competence, F (1,89) = 2.46, $p < .05$, eta^2 = .02, with those viewing a candidate appearance indicating more negative perceptions of counterattitudinal message source competence, (appearances: M = 4.69, SD = 1.43; control: M = 4.94, SD = 1.35). (See Table 6). There was no evidence for significance on counterattitudinal message source character, F (1,89) = 0.43, $p > .10$. Planned

comparisons failed to indicate significance for counterattitudinal message source sociability, F (1,89) = 1.27, $p > .10$, but a post hoc test revealed significance, with those viewing candidate appearances before encountering conventional attack messages indicating lower perceptions of the sociability of sources of counterattitudinal messages, t (56) = 2.25, $p < .05$, (appearance: $M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.89$; control: $M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.39$). (See Table 6).

In sum, Hypotheses 11(g) was the only prediction supported of Hypotheses 11(a) – (g), with candidate appearances leading to more negative perceptions of counterattitudinal message sources' competence and sociability. Otherwise, there was no evidence that candidate appearances conferred resistance to conventional attack messages, and in the case of feelings toward candidates, the effect of viewing candidate appearances prior to conventional attack messages resulted in lower feelings toward candidates.

Hypothesis 12

Hypothesis 12 predicted that inoculation treatments boost inoculative effects of candidate appearances, with those participants who receive inoculation treatment messages and subsequently view candidate appearances demonstrating the most resistance to political attack messages.

Hypothesis 12(a) predicted that inoculation treatments boost the inoculative effect of candidate appearances, with those participants who receive inoculation treatment messages and subsequently view candidate appearances demonstrating the most resistance to subsequent political attack messages, manifested in feelings toward candidates. While planned comparisons failed to indicate significance, F (1,89) = 1.69, p

> .10, a post hoc test revealed a significant effect on candidate feelings, with those inoculated and then viewing candidate appearances indicating more favorable feelings toward candidates when compared to those who only view candidate appearances, *t* (52) = 2.49, p < .05, (appearance plus inoculation: *M* = 54.08, *SD* = 18.24; appearance only: *M* = 48.28, *SD* = 25.97). (See Table 7). Hypothesis 12(a) was supported, with candidate appearances boosting the efficacy of inoculation treatments against conventional attacks measured by feelings toward candidates.

Hypotheses 12(b) and 12(c) posited that inoculation treatments boost the inoculative effect of candidate appearances, with those participants who receive inoculation treatment messages and subsequently view candidate appearances demonstrating the most resistance to political attack messages, manifested in general attitudes toward candidates and perceived candidate competence, when compared to those viewing only candidate appearances. Planned comparisons failed to support any of these predictions: attitudes toward candidates, *F* (1,89) = 0.32, *p* > .10, and perceived candidate competence, *F* (1,89) = 0.80, *p* > .10. Hypotheses 12(b) and 12(c) were not supported, as there was no evidence of a boost to inoculation in terms of general attitudes toward candidates or perceived candidate competence.

Hypothesis 12(d) posited that inoculation treatments boost the inoculative effect of candidate appearances, with those participants who receive inoculation treatment messages and subsequently view candidate appearances demonstrating the most resistance to political attack messages, manifested in perceived candidate character. While planned comparisons failed to reveal significance, *F* (1,89) = 1.19, *p* > .10, a post hoc test indicated a significant difference, with those inoculated and then viewing

candidate appearances indicating more favorable perceptions of candidate character than those only viewing candidate appearances, t (52) = 2.07, p < .05, (appearance plus inoculation: M = 4.75, SD = 1.08; appearance only: M = 4.46, SD = 1.38). (See Table 7). Hypothesis 12(d) was supported, with evidence of a boost to inoculation in terms of perceived candidate character.

Hypothesis 12(e) predicted that inoculation treatments boost inoculative effects of candidate appearances, with those participants who receive inoculation treatment messages and subsequently view candidate appearances demonstrating the most resistance to political attack messages, manifested in perceptions of candidate sociability, when compared to those viewing only candidate appearances. Planned comparisons indicated a nearly significant effect, F (1,89) = 2.13, p < .10, eta^2 = .02, with those viewing candidate appearances after inoculation perceiving candidates with more positive sociability, (appearance plus inoculation: M = 5.28, SD = 0.92; appearance only: M = 4.81, SD = 1.52). (See Table 7). Results for Hypothesis 12(e) approached significance, with a boost to inoculation in terms of perceived candidate sociability.

Hypothesis 12(f) posited that inoculation treatments boost inoculative effects of candidate appearances, with those participants who receive inoculation treatment messages and subsequently view candidate appearances demonstrating the most resistance to political attack messages, manifested in attitude confidence, when compared to those only viewing candidate appearances. Planned comparisons failed to indicate support for this prediction, F (1,89) = 0.55, p > .10.

Hypothesis 12(g) predicted that inoculation treatments boost inoculative effects of candidate appearances, with those participants who receive inoculation treatment

messages and subsequently view candidate appearances demonstrating the most resistance to political attack messages, manifested in counterattitudinal message source derogation, when compared to those viewing only candidate appearances. Planned comparisons failed to support this hypothesis in terms of competence, F (1,89) = 0.55, p > .10, character, F (1,89) = 0.55, p > .10, or sociability, F (1,89) = 0.63, p > .10.

Overall, Hypothesis 12 was supported on the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates and perceptions of candidate competence. There was a nearly significant effect in terms of perceived sociability of candidates, but no other evidence for significant effects on the other dependent variables.

Hypothesis 13

Hypothesis 13 predicted that candidate appearances boost inoculative effects of inoculation treatments, with those participants who receive inoculation treatment messages and subsequently view candidate appearances demonstrating the most resistance to political attack messages, manifested in a) feelings toward candidates, (b) attitudes toward candidates, (c) candidate competence, (d) candidate character, (e) candidate sociability, (f) attitude confidence, and (g) counterattitudinal message source derogation, when compared to those only inoculated.

Hypotheses 13(a), 13(b), and 13(c), were not supported. Candidate appearances failed to boost inoculation treatment efficacy in terms of feelings toward candidates, F (1,89) = 0.00, p > .10, attitudes toward candidates, F (1,89) = 0.00, p > .10, or perceived candidate competence, F (1,89) = 0.00, p > .10.

Hypothesis 13(d) predicted that candidate appearances boost the efficacy of inoculation treatments in terms of perceived candidate character. While planned

comparisons failed to reveal significance, F (1,89) = 1.26, $p > .10$, a post hoc test indicated a significant effect on perceived candidate character, with those inoculated and viewing candidate appearances indicating more positive perceptions of candidate character than those only inoculated, t (55) = 2.23, $p < .05$, (appearance plus inoculation: M = 4.75, SD = 1.08; appearance only: M = 4.46, SD = 1.14). (See Table 8). Hypothesis 13(d) was supported. There was evidence of a booster to inoculation in terms of perceived candidate character.

Hypothesis 13(e) predicted that candidate appearances boost the efficacy of inoculation treatments in terms of perceived candidate sociability. Hypothesis 13(e) was supported, F (1,89) = 2.92, $p < .05$, eta^2 = .02, with those inoculated and then viewing candidate appearances demonstrating more positive perceived candidate sociability than those only inoculated (appearance plus inoculation: M = 5.28, SD = 0.92; appearance only: M = 4.79, SD = 1.18). (See Table 8). There was evidence of a booster to inoculation in terms of perceived candidate sociability.

Hypothesis 13(f) predicted that candidate appearances boost the efficacy of inoculation treatments in terms of attitude confidence. Results indicated a nearly significant effect, F (1,89) = 2.07, $p < .10$, eta^2 = .02, with those inoculated and then viewing candidate appearances demonstrating stronger attitude confidence than those only inoculated (appearance plus inoculation: M = 57.79, SD = 21.76; appearance only: M = 49.26, SD = 25.85). (See Table 8). Results for Hypothesis 13(f) approached significance of a booster effect in terms of attitude confidence.

Hypothesis 13(g) predicted that candidate appearances boost the efficacy of inoculation treatments in terms of counterattitudinal message source derogation. Results

indicated support for this hypothesis in terms of source competence, F (1,89) = 3.28, p < .01, eta^2 = .03, with those inoculated and then viewing candidate appearances viewing sources of counterattitudinal messages as less competent, (appearance plus inoculation: M = 3.74, SD = 0.73; appearance only: M = 4.19, SD = 0.82), and a nearly significant effect in terms of source character, F (1,89) = 2.05, p < .10, eta^2 = .02, with those inoculated and then viewing candidate appearances viewing sources of counterattitudinal messages as having less character, (appearance plus inoculation: M = 3.75, SD = 0.53; appearance only: M = 4.07, SD = 0.69). (See Table 8). There was no evidence for effects on perceived source sociability, F (1,89) = 0.26, p > .10. Hypothesis 13(g) was supported, with increased derogation of the sources of counterattitudinal messages in terms of perceived source competence and character.

In sum, Hypothesis 13 was partly supported. While there were no significant effects of candidate appearances on inoculation treatments in terms of feelings toward candidates, general attitudes toward candidates, or perceptions of candidate competence, candidate appearances did offer boosts to perceptions of candidate character and sociability, attitude confidence, and enhanced derogation of the sources of counterattitudinal messages.

Hypothesis 14

Hypothesis 14 predicted candidate appearances produce the largest boost to the inoculation effect with (a) less politically interested viewers, (b) less politically knowledgeable viewers, and (c) female viewers. Hypothesis 14 was not supported, with no significant omnibus effects for (a) political interest, F (15,75) = 0.33, p > .10; (b) political knowledge, F (15,75) = .92, p > .10; or (c) gender, F (15,75) = .94, p > .10.

Omnibus and Univariate Analyses for Hypotheses 15 and 16

To assess viewing late night comedic content on effects of conventional political attacks on those inoculated, a 2 (late night comedy condition: exposure to late night comedic content or no exposure to late night comedic content at Phase 2) X 2 (gender: female and male) MANCOVA was computed on 6 dependent variables: feelings toward candidates at Phase 3; attitudes toward candidates at Phase 3; perceived candidate competence, character, and sociability at Phase 3; and attitude confidence at Phase 3. Initial attitudes toward candidates, political interest, and political knowledge were treated as covariates. Results indicated a significant omnibus effect for the covariate of initial attitudes toward candidates, F (6, 68) = 9.63, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .46$, and for the covariate of political interest, F (6, 68) = 2.31, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .17$. There was a nearly significant effect for late night comedy condition, F (6, 68) = 1.89, $p < .10$, $R^2 = .09$.

Subsequent univariate tests revealed significant effects for the covariate of initial attitudes toward candidates on the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates at Phase 3, F (1,73) = 41.49, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .30$, general attitudes toward candidates at Phase 3, F (1,73) = 44.80, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .31$, perceived candidate competence at Phase 3, F (1,73) = 46.88, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .34$, perceived candidate character at Phase 3, F (1,73) = 51.79, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .35$, perceived candidate sociability at Phase 3, F (1,73) = 26.76, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .24$, and attitude confidence, F (1,73) = 13.38, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .14$; and for late night comedy condition on the dependent variable of feelings toward candidates, F (1,73) = 4.37, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .03$.

Though omnibus results fell just short of significance for late night comedy condition, because theory warrants the predictions, planned comparisons were computed to further assess the means (Huberty & Morris, 1989).

Hypotheses 15-16: Repeated Attacks

Hypothesis 15

Hypothesis 15 predicted that those inoculated and subjected to comedic content targeting a politician (monologues and parodies) are more resistant to subsequent conventional political attack messages when compared to those experiencing counterattitudinal messages for the first time.

Hypothesis 15(a) predicted that those inoculated and subjected to comedic content targeting a politician (monologues and parodies) are more resistant to subsequent conventional political attack messages when compared to those encountering counterattitudinal messages for the first time, manifested in terms of feelings toward candidates. Results of planned comparisons indicated significant effects, F (1,73) = 6.26, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .04$, but the direction was opposite than predicted. Those encountering comedic content and then encountering a conventional attack message had more negative feelings towards candidates than those experiencing the conventional attacks for the first time, (comedic attack: $M = 45.40$, $SD = 22.50$; no attack: $M = 54.43$, $SD = 17.95$).

Hypotheses 15(b) and 15(c) were not supported by planned comparisons: on general attitudes toward candidates, F (1,73) = 0.75, $p > .10$, or perceived candidate competence, F (1,73) = 0.90, $p > .10$. Post hoc tests revealed no significance for monologues, but did reveal significance for parodies on the dependent variables of attitudes toward candidates and perceived candidate competence, with those viewing a

parody and later encountering conventional attacks indicating less positive general attitudes toward candidates, t (56) = 5.75, $p < .01$, (parody attack: $M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.63$; no attack: $M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.03$), and lower perceptions of candidate competence, t (57) = 2.77, $p < .01$, (parody attack: $M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.64$; no attack: $M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.19$). (See Table 9). These effects were opposite than predicted. Instead of enhancing resistance, encountering the comedic content prior to encountering conventional attacks derogated perceptions of candidate image.

Hypotheses 15(d) and 15(e) predicted that those inoculated and subjected to comedic content targeting a politician (monologues and parodies) are more resistant to subsequent conventional political attack messages when compared to those encountering counterattitudinal messages for the first time, manifested in terms of: perceived candidate character and perceived candidate sociability. Results of planned comparisons did not support these predictions: candidate character, F (1,73) = 0.02, $p > .10$, or candidate sociability, F (1,73) = 0.18, $p > .10$. Post hoc tests revealed no significance for parodies, but did indicate significance for monologues on perceived candidate character, with those encountering a monologue attack before encountering a conventional attack indicating more favorable perceptions of candidate character, t (55) = 2.23, $p < .05$, (monologue attack: $M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.13$; no attack: $M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.14$), and more favorable perceptions of candidate sociability, t (55) = 2.08, $p < .05$, (monologue attack: $M = 5.06$, $SD = 1.00$; no attack: $M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.18$). (See Table 9). Hypotheses 15(d) and 15(e) were partially supported, with the monologue condition functioning as predicted.

Hypothesis 15(f) predicted that those inoculated and subjected to comedic content targeting a politician (monologues and parodies) are more resistant to subsequent

conventional political attack messages when compared to those experiencing counterattitudinal messages for the first time, manifested in terms of attitude confidence. Results of planned comparisons did not support this prediction, F (1,73) = 0.10, $p > .10$.

Overall, Hypothesis 15 was supported on the dependent variables of perceived candidate character and perceived candidate sociability, but only with monologues. Otherwise, exposure to comic content ridiculing candidates failed to enhance resistance to conventional attack messages for those inoculated, and in some cases, particularly with parodies, the comedic content further derogated candidates' images.

Hypothesis 16

Hypothesis 16 posited that late night comedic ridicule creates a greater boost of inoculation for (a) those with lower political interest when compared to those with higher political interest, (b) those with lower political knowledge when compared to those with higher political knowledge, and (c) females when compared to males.

Hypothesis 16(a) was not supported. Results indicated significant omnibus results for political interest, F (6,68) = 2.31, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .17$, but no significant univariate effects (though effects on attitude confidence approached significance, $p = .11$.) Hypotheses 16(b) and 16(c) were not supported, as there was no evidence for significant omnibus results for political knowledge, F (6,68) = 1.14, $p = .35$, or for gender, F (6,68) = 0.82, $p = .56$. Hypothesis 16 was not supported for any of its predictions.

Omnibus Results for Hypotheses 17-19

To assess the extent of blanket inoculation conferred by inoculation treatments, a 3 (experimental treatment condition: inoculation, channel inoculation, and no inoculation) X 2 (type of attack: comedic and conventional) X 2 (gender: male and

female) MANCOVA was computed on 6 dependent variables: feelings toward candidates; attitudes toward candidates; perceived competence, character, and sociability; and attitude confidence. Initial attitudes toward candidates, political interest, and political knowledge were treated as covariates. Results indicated a significant omnibus effect for the covariate of initial attitudes toward candidates, F (6,208) = 28.01, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .45$; for the covariate of political interest, F (6,208) = 6.47, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .16$; and for type of attack, F (6,208) = 5.32, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .13$.

Subsequent univariate tests revealed significant effects for the covariate of initial attitudes toward candidates on the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates, F (1,207) = 98.20, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .28$, general attitudes toward candidates, F (1,207) = 137.86, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .35$, perceived candidate competence, F (1,207) = 63.04, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .21$, perceived candidate character, F (1,207) = 139.57, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .35$, perceived candidate sociability, F (1,207) = 48.93, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .17$, and attitude confidence, F (1,207) = 16.46, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .06$; for the covariate of political interest on the dependent variables of perceived candidate sociability, F (1,207) = 5.22, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .02$, and attitude confidence, F (1,207) = 18.56, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .07$; and for type of attack on the dependent variables of general attitudes toward candidates, F (1,207) = 5.83, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .01$, perceived candidate competence, F (1,207) = 5.40, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .02$, and perceived candidate character, F (1,207) = 13.96, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .03$.

Not all predicted omnibus results supported the proposed hypotheses. However, extant theory warranted further assessment of the pattern of means (Huberty & Morris, 1989). Planned comparisons were conducted to assess the following hypotheses, with post hoc tests to examine means for results that are not theoretically based.

Hypotheses 17-19: Blanket Resistance

Hypothesis 17

Hypothesis 17 posited that, for those who receive inoculation pretreatments that warn of a specific channel's influence (late night comedy), as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to the negative influence induced by exposure to comic content ridiculing a candidate (monologues and parodies), manifested in terms of (a) feelings toward candidates, (b) general attitudes toward candidates, (c) perceived candidate competence, (d) perceived candidate character, (e) perceived candidate sociability, and (f) attitude confidence.

Results of planned comparisons indicated significance for Hypotheses 17(a), 17(b), 17(c), 17(d), and 17(e): feelings toward candidates, F (1,207) = 2.68,$p < .05$, eta^2 = .01; attitudes toward candidates, F (1,207) = 4.36, $p < .01$, eta^2 = .01; perceived candidate competence, F (1,207) = 3.00, $p < .05$, eta^2 = .01; perceived candidate character, F (1,207) = 3.97, $p < .01$, eta^2 = .01; and perceived candidate sociability, F (1,207) = 2.66, $p < .05$, eta^2 = .01. However, the directions were opposite than predicted, with those receiving channel inoculation treatments indicating more negative feelings toward candidates (channel inoculation: M = 55.10, SD = 20.02; control: M = 60.91, SD = 16.52), more negative attitudes toward candidates (channel inoculation: M = 4.45, SD = 1.16; control: M = 4.91, SD = 1.00), more negative perceptions of candidate competence (channel inoculation: M = 4.91, SD = 1.36; control: M = 5.32, SD = 1.04), more negative perceptions of candidate character (channel inoculation: M = 4.83, SD = 1.08; control: M = 5.20, SD = 0.92), and more negative perceptions of candidate sociability (channel

inoculation: M = 4.70, SD = 1.30; control: M = 5.07, SD = 1.09). (See Table 10). There was no evidence for significance on attitude confidence, F (1,207) = 0.29, $p > .10$.

Post hoc tests revealed that channel inoculations were successful in the face of monologue attacks in terms of attitude confidence, t (43) = 2.35, $p < .05$, (channel inoculation: M = 59.25, SD = 25.35; control: M = 50.79, SD = 28.63), but did not indicate significance on any other dependent variable. (See Table 11). Post hoc tests indicated significance for all dependent variables in the face of parody attacks, but in opposite directions than predicted: feelings toward candidates, t (42) = 6.18, $p < .01$, (channel inoculation: M = 48.93, SD = 19.53; control: M = 58.17, SD = 16.72); attitudes toward candidates, t (43) = 6.47, $p < .01$, (channel inoculation: M = 4.10, SD = 1.12; control: M = 5.07, SD = 0.75); perceived candidate competence, t (43) = 6.44, $p < .01$, (channel inoculation: M = 4.51, SD = 1.51; control: M = 5.54, SD = 0.84); perceived candidate character, t (43) = 7.08, $p < .01$, (channel inoculation: M = 4.55, SD = 1.17; control: M = 5.40, SD = 0.74); perceived candidate sociability, t (43) = 6.13, $p < .01$, (channel inoculation: M = 4.33, SD = 1.41; control: M = 5.25, SD = 0.93); and attitude confidence, t (43) = 4.05, $p < .01$, (channel inoculation: M = 44.67, SD = 23.94; control: M = 59.20, SD = 24.62).

Hypothesis 17 was supported for only one dependent variable, attitude confidence, and only for the monologue condition. Not only did channel inoculation treatments fail to confer resistance to comedic attacks on other variables, but also there is evidence that channel inoculation treatments backfired in the face of parody attacks.

Hypothesis 18

Hypothesis 18 predicted that channel inoculation treatments would also protect against conventional political attacks. Results of planned comparisons failed to support this hypothesis, in terms of: feelings toward candidates, F (1,207) = 0.38, $p > .10$; perceived candidate competence, F (1,207) = 0.05, $p > .10$; perceived candidate character, F (1,207) = 1.42, $p > .10$; and perceived candidate sociability, F (1,207) = 0.76, $p > .10$. However, there were two nearly significant results for channel inoculation against conventional attacks: on general attitudes toward candidates, F (1,207) = 2.06, $p < .10$, $eta^2 = .01$, and on attitude confidence, F (1,207) = 2.10, $p < .10$, $eta^2 = .01$. Direction of effects on general attitudes toward candidates was as predicted, with channel inoculation resulting in more positive general attitudes toward candidates after attack, (channel inoculation: $M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.32$; control: $M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.56$). But the effect on attitude confidence was in the opposite direction than predicted, with channel inoculation resulting in less attitude confidence after attack, (channel inoculation: $M = 46.86$, $SD = 22.66$; control: $M = 56.68$, $SD = 30.86$). (See Table 12).

Hypothesis 18 was supported only in terms of general attitudes toward candidates, with channel inoculation treatments protecting against conventional attacks. However, channel inoculation treatments failed to confer resistance in terms of feelings toward candidates, perceptions of candidate competence, character or sociability, or attitude confidence. With attitude confidence, channel inoculation treatments backfired, resulting in weaker confidence than controls.

Hypothesis 19

Hypothesis 19 posited that channel inoculation would be most effective with (a) those of lower political interest, (b) those of lower political knowledge, and (c) female viewers.

As previously reported, there was a significant omnibus effect for political interest, F (6,208) = 6.47, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .16$, and subsequent significant univariate results on the dependent variables of perceived candidate sociability, F (1,207) = 5.22, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .02$, and attitude confidence, F (1,207) = 18.56, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .07$. However, valences of these two effects were positive, indicating those with higher political interest were more influenced. Hypothesis 19(a) was not supported.

Hypotheses 19(b) and 19(c) were not supported, with no significant omnibus effects of political knowledge, F (6,208) = 0.47, $p = .83$, $p > .10$, or gender, F (6,208) = 1.19, $p = .31$, $p > .10$.

Overall, Hypothesis 19 was not supported. Channel inoculation was most effective for those with *higher*, instead of lower, political interest. Political knowledge and gender did not affect channel inoculation effects.

Omnibus and Univariate Analysis for Hypothesis 20

To assess booster effects of candidate appearances on channel inoculation treatments, a 2 (experimental treatment condition: channel inoculation and no inoculation) X 2 (gender: male and female) MANCOVA was computed on 6 dependent variables: feelings toward candidates at Phase 3, general attitudes toward candidates at Phase 3, perceived candidate competence, character and sociability at Phase 3, and attitude confidence at Phase 3. Initial attitudes toward candidates, political interest, and

political knowledge functioned as covariates. Results indicated significant omnibus effect for the covariate of initial attitudes toward candidates, F (6,31) = 3.80, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .42$, and a significant omnibus effect for the interaction between experimental condition and gender, F (6,31) = 2.74, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .35$.

Subsequent univariate tests revealed significant effects for the covariate of initial attitudes toward candidates on the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates, F (1,36) = 21.06, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .29$, general attitudes toward candidates, F (1,36) = 12.90, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .20$, perceived candidate competence, F (1,36) = 13.13, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .22$, perceived candidate character, F (1,36) = 19.56, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .24$, perceived candidate sociability, F (1,36) = 5.00, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .10$, and attitude confidence, F (1,36) = 9.70, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .15$; of an interaction between experimental condition and gender on the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates, F (1,36) = 10.39, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .14$, general attitudes toward candidates, F (1,36) = 5.58, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .09$, perceived candidate competence, F (1,36) = 6.45, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .11$, perceived candidate character, F (1,36) = 12.76, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .16$, perceived candidate sociability, F (1,36) = 5.01, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .10$, and attitude confidence, F (1,36) = 11.90, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .18$. Planned comparisons were computed to further assess the pattern of means.

Hypothesis 20: Candidate Appearances as Boosters

Hypothesis 20

Hypothesis 20 predicted that, for those who receive an inoculation pretreatment that warns of a specific channel's influence (late night comedy), as compared to those who do not, candidate appearances confer resistance to conventional attack messages.

More specifically, Hypotheses 20(a) predicted that channel inoculation treatments and candidate appearances confer resistance in terms of feelings toward candidates. Results of planned comparisons supported this prediction, with those receiving a channel inoculation treatment and then viewing candidate appearances indicating more positive feelings toward candidates when compared to those only viewing candidate appearances, F (1,36) = 3.18, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .04$, (channel inoculation plus appearance: $M = 59.23$, $SD = 27.22$; channel only: $M = 48.28$, $SD = 25.97$).

Hypothesis 20(b) predicted that channel inoculation treatments and candidate appearances confer resistance in terms of general attitudes toward candidates. While planned comparisons failed to reveal significance, F (1,36) = 1.52, $p > .10$, a post hoc test indicated significant effects, whereas those receiving channel inoculation treatments and candidate appearances indicating higher general attitudes toward candidates than those receiving only a channel inoculation, t (45) = 2.50, $p < .05$, (channel inoculation plus appearance: $M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.77$; channel only: $M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.36$). (See Table 13).

Hypothesis 20(c) posited that channel inoculation treatments and candidate appearances confer resistance in terms of perceptions of candidate competence. Planned comparisons failed to reveal support for this prediction, F (1,36) = 0.02, $p > .10$.

Hypothesis 20(d) predicted that channel inoculation treatments and candidate appearances confer resistance in terms of perceptions of candidate character. While a planned comparison failed to reveal significance, F (1,36) = 1.06, $p > .10$, a post hoc test revealed a significant effect, such that those who received channel inoculation treatments and viewed candidate appearances indicated more positive perceptions of candidate character than those receiving only channel inoculation treatments, t (45) = 2.12, $p < .05$,

(channel inoculation plus inoculation: $M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.76$; channel only: $M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.38$). (See Table 13).

Hypotheses 20(e) and 20(f) posited that channel inoculation treatments and candidate appearances confer resistance in terms of perceived candidate sociability and attitude confidence. Results of planned comparisons failed to support these predictions: perceived sociability, F (1,36) = 0.45, $p > .10$, and attitude confidence, F (1,36) = 0.00, $p > .10$.

Hypothesis 20 was supported in terms of feelings toward candidates, general attitudes toward candidates, and perceptions of candidate character, with channel inoculation enhancing the inoculative effect of candidate appearances when compared to those only viewing candidate appearances.

Omnibus and Univariate Analyses for Hypotheses 21-23

To assess effects of inoculation treatments on elicited irritation, a 2 (experimental treatment condition: inoculation and no inoculation) X 2 (source of attack: comedy or no comedy) X 2 (gender: male and female) MANCOVA was computed on 4 dependent variables: elicited irritation at Phase 2, and perceptions of competence, character and sociability of the source of a counterattitudinal message at Phase 2. Results failed to indicate significant omnibus effects, but because theory warranted the predictions, planned comparisons were computed to further assess the means (Huberty & Morris, 1989).

Hypotheses 21-23: Irritation

Hypothesis 21

Hypothesis 21 posited that, for people who receive an inoculation pretreatment, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages elicit greater irritation upon encountering counterattitudinal messages. Results did not support this prediction, F (1,185) = 0.39, $p > .10$. (See Table 14).

Hypothesis 22

Hypothesis 22 predicted that, for those inoculated, counterattitudinal messages with humor elicit less irritation than counterattitudinal messages without humor. Results of planned comparisons failed to support this prediction, F (1,185) = 1.82, $p > .10$. Post hoc tests failed to indicate significant effects for monologues, but indicated significant effects for parodies, t (65) = 3.39, $p < .01$, (parody: M = 1.98, SD = 1.74; conventional attack: M = 2.59, SD = 1.28). (See Table 15). Hypothesis 22 was partially supported, with parodies eliciting less irritation than humorless attack messages for those inoculated.

Hypothesis 23

Hypothesis 23 posited that, for those inoculated, sources of counterattitudinal messages who use humor are perceived more positively than sources who do not use humor. Results of planned comparisons failed to reveal significant effects on perceived competence, F (1,185) = 0.33, $p > .10$, perceived character, F (1,185) = 0.02, $p > .10$, or perceived sociability, F (1,185) = 1.50, $p > .10$. Post hoc tests failed to indicate significant effects for parodies, but revealed significant effects for monologues on perceived competence, t (64) = 3.45, $p < .01$, (monologue: M = 4.55, SD = 0.96; conventional attack: M = 4.17, SD = 1.08), and on perceived sociability, t (64) = 4.36, $p <$

.01, (monologue: M = 4.50, SD = 0.97; conventional attack: M = 4.02, SD = 0.89). (See Table 16). Hypothesis 23 was partially supported, with sources of attack messages that use humor perceived more positively than sources of attack messages that do not, but only in the monologue condition.

Omnibus and Univariate Analyses for Hypotheses 24-25

To assess effects of inoculation treatments on conventional attack messages, a MANCOVA with experimental condition (inoculation and no inoculation) as the between-subjects factor was computed on 10 dependent variables: feelings toward candidates, general attitudes toward candidates, perceived candidate competence, perceived candidate character, perceived candidate sociability, attitude confidence, intentions to seek more information, intentions to talk to others about candidates, intentions to contribute time or money, and intentions to vote for candidates. Initial attitudes toward candidates functioned as a covariate. Results indicated a significant omnibus effect for the covariate of initial attitude, F (10,54) = 7.20, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .57$.

Subsequent univariate tests revealed significant effects for the covariate of initial attitude on the dependent variables of feelings toward candidates, F (1,63) = 36.49, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .34$, general attitude toward candidates, F (1,63) = 56.14, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .45$, perceived candidate competence, F (1,63) = 14.51, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .18$, perceived candidate character, F (1,63) = 47.88, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .42$, perceived candidate sociability, F (1,63) = 10.28, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .14$, and intentions to vote for candidates, F (1,63) = 12.48, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .15$.

Though omnibus results failed to indicate significance for experimental condition, because theory warranted the predictions, planned comparisons were computed to further assess the pattern of means (Huberty & Morris, 1989).

Hypotheses 24-25: Inoculating against Conventional Attacks

Hypothesis 24

Hypothesis 24 posited that, for those who receive inoculation pretreatments, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to political attack messages.

More specifically, Hypotheses 24(a), 24(b), 24(c), and 24(d) predicted that, for those who receive inoculation pretreatments, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to political attack messages, manifested in feelings toward candidates, general attitudes toward candidates, perceptions of candidate competence, and perceptions of candidate sociability. Results of planned comparisons supported these predictions. Those inoculated and then encountering political attack messages indicated more positive feelings toward candidates, F (1,63) = 5.35, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .05$, (treatment: $M = 57.06$, $SD = 20.35$; control: $M = 47.14$, $SD = 23.07$), more positive general attitudes toward candidates, F (1,63) = 5.50, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .04$, (treatment: $M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.24$; control: $M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.56$), more positive perceptions of candidate competence, F (1,63) = 2.91, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .03$, (treatment: $M = 4.88$, $SD = 1.12$; control: $M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.25$), and more positive perceptions of candidate character, F (1,63) = 4.08, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .03$, (treatment: $M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.09$; control: $M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.21$). (See Table 17).

Hypothesis 24(e) and 24(f) posited that, for those who receive inoculation pretreatments, as compared to those who do not, inoculation messages confer resistance to political attack messages, manifested in perceived candidate sociability and attitude confidence. Results failed to support these predictions: perceived candidate sociability, F (1,63) = 0.44, $p > .10$, and attitude confidence, F (1,63) = 0.38 $p > .10$.

Overall, with exceptions of perceived candidate sociability and attitude confidence, Hypothesis 24 was supported. Inoculation conferred resistance to conventional political attack messages, manifested in feelings toward candidates, general attitudes toward candidates, and perceived candidate competence and character.

Hypothesis 25

Hypothesis 25 predicted that inoculation treatments enhance the likelihood of political participatory behaviors.

More specifically, Hypothesis 25(a) and 25(b) predicted that inoculation treatments enhance the likelihood of seeking more information about candidates and talking to others about candidates. Results failed to offer support for these predictions: seeking more information about candidates, F (1,63) = 0.84, $p > .10$, and talking to others about candidates, F (1,63) = 0.12, $p > .10$.

Hypothesis 25(c) and 25(d) posited that inoculation treatments enhance the likelihood of contributing time or money to candidates and voting for candidates. Results supported these predictions. Those inoculated and encountering political attack messages indicating higher intentions of contributing time or money to candidates, F (1,63) = 3.04, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .04$, (treatment: $M = 7.16$, $SD = 14.84$; control: $M = 2.00$, $SD = 7.19$), and

higher intentions of voting for candidates, F (1,63) = 3.47, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .04$, (treatment: $M = 29.24$, $SD = 34.05$; control: $M = 16.00$, $SD = 27.75$). (See Table 17).

In sum, Hypothesis 25 was partially supported. Inoculation treatments had no significant effects on intentions to seek more information or talk to others about candidates, but did enhance behavioral intentions in the face of political attack messages in terms of contributing time or money and voting for candidates.

Omnibus and Univariate Analyses for Hypothesis 26

To assess effects of forewarnings on elicited threat, a MANCOVA was computed with the between-subjects factor of type of inoculation treatment (single forewarning and double forewarning) for those participants encountering conventional attack messages at Phases 2 and 3 on 3 dependent variables: elicited threat at Phase 1, elicited threat at Phase 2, and elicited threat at Phase 3. There was a significant omnibus effect of experimental condition, F (3,29) = 4.19, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .30$. Subsequent univariate tests revealed significant effects of experimental condition on the dependent variables of elicited threat at Phase 1, F (1,31) = 5.38, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .15$, elicited threat at Phase 2, F (1,31) = 8.06, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .21$, and elicited threat at Phase 3, F (1,31) = 8.78, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .22$. Planned comparisons were computed on these significant omnibus and univariate results to further assess the pattern of means.

Hypotheses 26-27: Forewarning and Threat

Hypothesis 26

Hypothesis 26 predicted that inoculation pretreatment messages that contain another forewarning after the refutations of counterarguments (double forewarning) elicit and maintain greater threat than those inoculation pretreatment messages that contain

only one forewarning prior to the refutations (single forewarning). Results of planned comparisons supported this prediction. Double forewarning inoculation treatment messages immediately elicited more threat directly following the message,F (1,31) = 7.79, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .21$, (double: M = 3.17, SD = 1.08; single: M = 2.24, SD = 0.94), more threat after encountering a conventional political attack message, F (1,33) = 6.57, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .17$ (double: $M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.19$; single: $M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.14$), and more threat after encountering a second conventional political attack message, F (1,33) = 11.59, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .29$, (double: $M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.27$; single: $M = 1.95$, $SD = 0.69$). (See Table 18). Overall, Hypothesis 26 was supported. Inoculation messages with double forewarnings elicit and maintain more threat.

Hypothesis 27

Hypothesis 27 predicted a positive correlation between elicited threat and conferred resistance, such that double-forewarning messages confer more resistance than single-forewarning inoculation treatment messages. Correlation results failed to indicate any significant correlations between elicited threat and conferred resistance.

Omnibus and Univariate Analyses for Hypothesis 28

To assess effects of inoculation on perceived generalized self-efficacy, a MANCOVA was computed with the between-subjects factor of experimental condition (inoculation and no inoculation) on 2 dependent variables: perceived self-efficacy at Phase 1 and perceived self-efficacy at Phase 2. Results failed to indicate significant omnibus effects for experimental condition, but because theory warranted the predictions, planned comparisons were computed to further assess means (Huberty & Morris, 1989).

Hypothesis 28: Perceived Generalized Self-Efficacy

Hypothesis 28

Hypothesis 28 posited that inoculation enhances participants' perceptions of generalized perceived self-efficacy. Results failed to indicated significant effects on perceived self-efficacy immediately following inoculation treatments, F (1,69) = 0.51, p > .10. Results revealed significant effects on perceived self-efficacy following a conventional political attack, F (1,72) = 2.51, p < .05, eta^2 = .03, but the direction was opposite than predicted (treatment: M = 3.28, SD = 0.44; control: M = 3.44, SD = 0.39). (See Table 19).

Hypothesis 28 was not supported. Not only did results fail to reveal significant differences in perceived generalized self-efficacy immediately following inoculation treatments, but perceived self-efficacy was significantly lower for those inoculated following a conventional attack.

Chapter 7

Discussion

While campaign managers, staffers and journalists have long maintained that late night comedy impacts political image (e.g., Kurtz, 1999; Sella, 2000, Weintraub, 2000), evidence for late night comedy's effects has been largely anecdotal, leading researchers to call for scholarship addressing impacts of late night comedy (Cooper & Bates, 2003; Niven et al., 2003; Pfau et al., 2001; Young, 2003a, 2003b). Conventional wisdom suggests that monologues and parodies are assumed to hurt candidates, and candidate appearances are thought to help them. But as Kathleen Hall Jamieson, political communication scholar and director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, observed: "It's very tricky to figure out the hidden inferences, whether someone is helped or hurt [by late night political comedy]" (as cited in Rainey, 2004).

This investigation examined effects of late night monologue content, political parodies, and candidate appearances on attitudes toward candidates and political behavioral intentions. This investigation also examined the efficacy of inoculation treatments both against and with late night comedy content. Multivariate analyses and planned comparisons confirmed political late night comedy's power to influence attitudes, demonstrated that distinct types of late night comedy have different effects, and revealed important implications of using conventional inoculation treatments both *against* late night ridicule (monologues and parodies) or *with* late night comedy (candidate appearances). Results of this investigation also underscore Jamieson's observation: effects of late night comedy on political attitudes and behavioral intentions sometimes contrast conventional wisdom. One of the most important overall findings of

this study is that politicians are both helped and hurt by late night political humor, depending on type of comedy and interactions with conventional inoculation treatment messages.

Effects of Late Night Comedy on Political Attitudes

One of the most important findings of this study is the confirmation that political late night comedic content influences political attitudes. As politicians, consultants, and media observers have speculated, political late night comedy influences images of political candidates, whether the politicians are the targets of (e.g., monologue jokes and parodies), or participants in (candidate appearances), the late night ridicule. However, some effects are in opposite directions than many have speculated.

It was predicted that monologue and political parody content would have detrimental effects on feelings and attitudes toward candidates and their images, whereas candidate appearances would enhance feelings and attitudes toward candidates.

Multivariate analyses and subsequent planned comparisons revealed that monologues and candidate appearances functioned as predicted. Monologues derogated feelings toward candidates, and candidate appearances bolstered attitudes, attitude confidence, and perceptions of candidate competence, character, and sociability. Monologues functioned as predicted in regard to their effects on feelings toward candidates, exemplifying Speier's (1998) observation: "The political joke as a weapon is pragmatic: it inflicts wounds" (Speier, 1998, p. 1358). Monologues often contain sharp political barbs (Berke, 2000; Davis & Owen, 1998), and focus on candidate image over issues (Amundson & Lichter, 1988; Dye et al., 1992; Niven, et al., 2003). The results of this study support Jamieson and Waldman's (2003) argument that late night comedic

content can derogate political image. In terms of feelings toward politicians, late night comedy monologue jokes damage political image.

While monologue content damages feelings toward candidates, there were no observed impacts of monologue jokes on general attitudes toward candidates, or on perceptions of candidate competence, character, or sociability. While it is possible that monologue attacks only derogate feelings toward candidates, another explanation is the timing of this investigation. Political observers note that it takes time for late night comedy to "catch up" to front-runners and for late night television comedians to hone their jokes toward specific attributes. In late May of 2004, long after John Kerry became the presumptive Democratic party nominee, Rob Burnett, executive producer for *Late Night with David Letterman,* lamented that Kerry had provided "no great material yet. It wll happen; it just hasn't happened yet" (as cited in Rainey, 2004). Jay Leno offered a similar observation about John Kerry, noting that his late night comedy caricature had yet to be solidified (Rainey, 2004). Future investigations may reveal stronger effects for monologue ridicule later in campaigns, when jokes become more barbed. Nevertheless, that this study found significant derogation of feelings toward candidates, even in the early stages of primary elections, suggests that monologue ridicule is quite powerful.

In summary, late night monologue political content derogates feelings toward candidates, but there is no evidence of impacts on general attitudes or perceptions of candidate competence, character or sociability. Whether similar results would be revealed later in a campaign, when late night monologue jokes become more frequent and more abrasive, is unknown and should be the focus of future investigations.

As predicted, and consistent with speculation of campaign managers, candidate appearances were effective means of enhancing perceptions of candidate image. Contrasting the ancient political philosophy of Emperor Louis the Pious, who "never … allowed his white teeth to be bared in laughter" (as cited in Innes, 2002, p. 133), and more recently, Senator Thomas Corwin's advice to "never make people laugh," (as cited in Schutz, 1977, p. 24), participating in political humor has both immediate and longer-term benefits for politicians (Moy et al., 2004).

More specifically, the study revealed that candidate appearances had immediate positive impacts on general attitudes toward candidates and on all three levels of candidate image: competence, character and sociability. These benefits reflect the observation that politicians using humor are perceived as more personable (Nilsen, 1990), and sociable (Schutz, 1977), and complement Lyttle's (2001) experimental research that found sources of humor to be perceived as more competent and trustworthy. Results of this study suggest that appearing on late night comedy programming has immediate benefits for candidate image, and candidates would be wise to take advantage of such opportunities.

However, while monologues and candidate appearances functioned largely as predicted, with minimal negative impacts of monologue content and widespread positive effects of candidate appearance, multivariate analyses and subsequent planned comparisons revealed that late night parody content functioned opposite than predicted. There were significant effects of late night political parody content, but instead of derogating candidate image, parodies *bolstered* general attitudes toward candidates, and parodies *enhanced* perceptions of candidate competence, character, and sociability.

Parodies were expected to harm candidates' images. Employing a mixture of satire, parody and mimicry, the ridicule of late night comedy variety shows were predicted to derogate viewers' feelings and attitudes toward candidates. One journalist called *SNL*'s political parodies "devastating" (Peyser, 2000), and viewers have admitted learning information about politics from such programming ("Cable and Internet loom large," 2004), including becoming aware of politicians' faults (Downey & Earle, 2000). However, the results of this investigation indicate that political parodies actually enhance, instead of derogate, candidate image. Instead of having *devastating* effects, late night political parody content has *enhancing* effects.

One explanation for why political parodies failed to derogate candidate image is the nature of the comedic material itself. *Saturday Night Live* does not typically contain political attacks as harsh as those found in monologue jokes (Smith & Voth, 2002), and *SNL* producer Lorne Michaels, referring to the work of one of *SNL*'s political parody writers, called the parodies "gentle, not vicious" (cited in Peyser, 2000, p. 38). Viewers may have viewed the parody material as good-natured, innocent humor, instead of serious political argumentation. However, while this explanation is consistent with why parody content failed to derogate candidate image, it does not address why parody content *enhanced* candidate image.

The explanation for parody's positive effects may instead by found in the nature of humorous messages. Though the candidates themselves were not appearing in the parodies used in this investigation, and instead, were being portrayed by other actors, candidates may have benefited from the deprecating humor (Schutz, 1977). Instead of self-deprecating humor, political late night comedy parodies may instead offer *pseudo-*

self-deprecating humor. While personal appearances on late night comedy talk shows have been lauded for their ability to help candidate images (Smith & Voth, 2002), results of this investigation suggest that the candidates themselves do not even need to show up, but instead, can reap benefits from being parodied.

Additionally, it was predicted that late night comedy's effects would be more pronounced for those of lower political knowledge, lower political interest, or female viewers. However, multivariate analyses did not support these predictions. There were no differences between those with lower and higher political knowledge or male and female viewers related to the late night comedy content. While there were differences between those with lower and higher political interest, but the direction was opposite than predicted. Those with higher political interest were more impacted by the late night political content. These results suggest that while late night comedy may be more entertaining to lower political interest viewers when compared to other types of political messages (West & Orman, 2003), those with higher political interest are more impacted by political content.

Results reveal that late night comedy affects political attitudes, offering a more nuanced understanding of effects on candidate image. Though research reveals effects of late night comedy regardless of political affiliation (Baum, 2002b), future research should examine late night comedy effects with candidates of other political affiliations as well.

Inoculating Against Late Night Comedy

Aware of late night comedy's popularity and increasingly political content, contemporary campaign managers have expressed dismay and hopelessness in protecting against comical, unconventional late night attacks. David Ginsberg, research director for

Al Gore's 2000 bid for the presidency, bemoaned late night comedy's perceived impacts: "Once something makes the leap from news to the late night shows, it's completely out of your hands" (as cited in Jamieson & Waldman, 2003, p. 48). This investigation assessed inoculation's efficacy in the face of late night comedy attacks as a way to preempt ridicule. While inoculation had not been assessed in the face of such unconventional political attack, McGuire (1964) and others purported that inoculation could work against "any persuasive message…with or without its conclusions explicitly drawn" (p. 192). Additionally, inoculation has been found to effectively protect candidate image in political contexts against written messages (e.g., Pfau et al., 1990; Pfau et al., 2001) television advertisements (An & Pfau, 2004a), and political debates (An & Pfau, 2004b).

Thus, it was predicted that inoculation treatments could also successfully confer resistance to late night political content. However, multivariate analyses and planned comparisons indicate that inoculation is not very successful against late night political attacks. Not only did inoculation fail to confer resistance to comedic attacks on all but one indicator, but also in some respects, post hoc tests revealed that inoculation actually backfired. These results clarify an observation offered by Pfau and colleagues (1997a): "[I]t is difficult to specify the precise circumstances (e.g., contexts, topics, message approaches, and receivers) in which inoculation is an appropriate approach," (p. 190-191). In this study, late night comedic political attacks thwarted resistance conferred by inoculation against conventional political messages.

Against parody and monologue content, inoculation failed to confer resistance nearly across the board. However, there was one exception. Planned comparisons revealed a significant effect of inoculation against monologue content in terms of

intentions to share with other people the monologue jokes they heard about candidates. While this finding may at first appear insignificant in the context of absence of effects on the other measures of resistance, diminishing intentions to repeat late night monologue jokes should not be underestimated. Nearly eight out of ten people report talking about things they hear on the *Late Show with David Letterman* with their friends, and one out of two reveal that they talk to family members about late night content (Schaefer & Avery, 1993). Research indicates that word-of-mouth communication affects attitudes toward candidates (Chaffee & Cho, 1980; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1991; Pfau, Diedrich, Larson, & Van Winkle, 1995; Popkin, 1991), with people particularly motivated to spread negative information (Lau & Ng, 2001; Smith & Vogt, 1995). That inoculation decreases intentions to share jokes ridiculing candidates may help contain the potential damage of monologue ridicule, particularly considering the negative effects of monologue content on feelings toward candidates.

With parody content, inoculation not only failed, but also backfired. Post hoc tests indicated that inoculating against parody content boomeranged in terms of feelings toward candidates; general attitudes toward candidates; perceptions of candidate competence, character, and sociability; and attitude confidence. Inoculation also backfired against parody content in terms of two behavioral intentions: voting for candidates and telling others positive things about candidates. Not only did inoculation fail to confer resistance to parody ridicule, but the combination of inoculation and parody content damaged candidate image and behavioral support for candidates more than parody content alone.

Why would inoculation fail to confer resistance, and instead, backfire, with late night comedic ridicule, and specifically, parody content? Although it was predicted that counterarguing output would be diminished for those encountering late night comedy when compared to those encountering conventional attack messages, multivariate results and subsequent planned comparisons failed to support this prediction. Those encountering comedic attacks generate the same number of counterarguments and refutations as those encountering conventional attacks. The explanation for this boomerang effect must lie elsewhere.

Inoculation's failure to confer resistance, and even backfire, may instead be explained by the contrasting effect of serious and humorous treatments of the same topic. Powell (1975, 1977) found that exposure to parody content about a candidate protected against subsequent conventional, non-humorous political argumentation. He posited that the reason for the inoculative effect of parody was the contrast between humorous and non-humorous treatments of the candidates. When a non-humorous message follows a humorous message, the response may be to reject the non-humorous source because it fails to entertain and instead, seems to treat the issue too seriously. A similar effect may be responsible for inoculation's inefficacy against comedic material, but in a different chronological order than that studied by Powell. In this current investigation, individuals received a conventional inoculation treatment (non-humorous) and later, encountered a comedic attack. The contrast between the two may have caused individuals to reject the argumentation from the inoculation treatment message, post hoc, after encountering a humorous treatment.

Another explanation for inoculation's failure to confer resistance, and in some respects, boomerang, may be found in the perceptions of the attack message. Wan and Pfau (2004) investigated the use of inoculation to preempt public relations crises, comparing an inoculation strategy, an image-promotion strategy, and a combination strategy that employed both inoculation and image-promotion. In an image-promotion strategy, a company's positive attributes are emphasized to create a "reservoir of goodwill" before a crisis occurs. Wan and Pfau's investigation confirmed the efficacy of all three approaches, but also revealed that if a crisis does not occur, an image-promotion strategy is superior. Wan and Pfau's results may be helpful in understanding why inoculation backfired when used against parody content. Individuals may not have considered the parody content to be a serious attack against the candidate. Political humor cloaks arguments in the veneer of acceptable, entertaining messages (Combs & Nimmo, 1996; Whaley & Holloway, 1997), and people often fail to defend against humorous argumentation (Speier, 1998). It is possible that those encountering parody content did not perceive the messages as strong attacks, and as a result, image was derogated.

At this point, there can be only speculation as to why inoculation failed to confer resistance to comedic argumentation, and with parodies, boomeranged. Future research should assess how individuals process and interpret late night comedic material to better understand how to preempt its potential damage. Nevertheless, results of this study suggest that candidates should not "make a big deal" out of the ridicule found in late night comedy television, like *Saturday Night Live*, in efforts to preempt its damage.

Finally, it was predicted that inoculation's effects would be more pronounced with those of higher political interest, higher political knowledge, and males. Multivariate

analyses indicated that inoculation effects were more pronounced with those of higher political interest, but there were no significant differences with political knowledge or gender. With political knowledge, the measurement instrument may have been at least partly responsible for the null findings.

While the differences between those with higher and lower political interest were predicted, the rationale underscoring the prediction was not supported. It was reasoned that because late night comedy would be more influential on those with lower political interest, inoculation would be more successful with those with higher political interest. However, as previously reported, late night comedy had greater impacts on those with higher political interest. It is feasible that just as higher political interest motivated individuals to attend more closely to the political content of late night comedy, political interest also motivated individuals to attend more closely to the content of the inoculation treatment messages. Further research should investigate both how and why political interest moderates effects of inoculation treatments.

Inoculating With Late Night Comedy

If conventional inoculation treatments fail to confer resistance, and with parody content, run the risk of backfiring, what options do candidates have against late night ridicule? One option proposed in this investigation was to use late night comedy itself. To paraphrase a familiar refrain, perhaps candidates can fight funny with funny. Extant evidence suggests that humorous treatments of politicians can effectively inoculate against non-humorous attacks (Powell, 1975, 1977).

It was predicted that candidate appearances on late night television talk shows would inoculate against conventional attacks. However, while candidate appearances on

late night talk shows were effective in enhancing candidate image, multivariate analyses and subsequent planned comparisons indicated that candidate appearances were less effective in protecting against subsequent conventional attacks. There were no effects on general attitudes or perceptions of candidate competence, character or sociability. In terms of feelings toward candidates, those who viewed candidate appearances before being subjected to conventional attacks actually indicated less positive feelings toward candidates after the attack.

However, planned comparisons revealed that candidate appearances were successful in derogating sources of counterattitudinal messages. Source derogation enhances resistance to attack messages (e.g., Stone, 1969; Tannenbaum & Norris, 1965). Consistent with Powell's (1975, 1977) reasoning, after encountering humorous treatments of issues, messages that do not use humor may be perceived as less credible. Encountering serious, non-humorous attack messages against candidates, after seeing the candidate in the positive atmosphere of late night comedy, causes viewers to derogate the sources of counterattitudinal messages.

In summary, while candidate appearances have immediate impacts on candidate image, the image boost does not fare as well against conventional political attacks. However, viewing candidate appearances does derogate sources of counterattitudinal messages after encountering a conventional attack message. Candidates who appear on late night television comedy programs gain both an immediate image boost and more derogation of sources of subsequent attack messages.

Inoculating with Late Night Comedy: Candidate Appearances as Booster Sessions

It was predicted that candidate appearances would be more successful in inoculating against subsequent attack messages when used in conjunction with conventional inoculation messages, compared to either treatment alone.

While candidate appearances alone were only mildly effective in conferring resistance to conventional attacks by derogating sources of counterattitudinal messages, multivariate analyses and planned comparisons revealed that candidate appearances in conjunction with conventional inoculation treatments were superior to either method alone. The combination of candidate appearances and inoculation were superior to appearances alone in terms of feelings toward candidates, perceived candidate character and perceived candidate sociability. Thus, for optimal effects on candidate images, candidate appearances should be preceded with conventional inoculation messages.

When used *after* conventional inoculation treatments, candidate appearances acted as "boosters," an effect consistent with the medical analogy on which attitudinal inoculation is based. Just as medical inoculations often require additional treatments as the inoculative effect decays over time (Stahl & Liljeqvist, 2000), attitudinal inoculations should also be enhanced with boosters (Compton & Pfau, 2004c; Pfau et al., 1990). While extant findings on booster efficacy have been mixed, indicating limited, if any, effects (McGuire, 1961b; Pfau et al., 1990, 1992, 1997a, 2004b; Pfau & Van Bockern, 1994; Tannenbaum et al., 1966), Pfau (1995) cautioned that these results should not be interpreted as disproving booster sessions' efficacy.

Additionally, though it was predicted that candidate appearances would provide more of a booster for those with lower political interest, lower political knowledge, and females, multivariate analyses did not support this prediction.

Results of this study are consistent with Pfau's speculation that booster sessions may enhance inoculation more than presently realized. Candidate appearances acted as effective boosters to conventional inoculation treatment messages. The combination approach of inoculation followed by candidate appearances was superior to inoculation alone in terms of perceived candidate character, perceived sociability, attitude confidence, and derogating the sources of counterattitudinal messages in terms of their perceived competence or character. There were no differences in candidate appearances' booster effects in terms of political knowledge, political interest, or gender.

These results offer intriguing implications for future inoculation research. Those studying the inoculation process of resistance have often expressed disappointment in the lack of evidence for booster effects (Pfau et al., 1990, 1992, 1997a; Pfau & Van Bockern, 1994). This study reveals that employing unconventional boosters, instead of repeating another conventional inoculation message, holds particular promise.

Inoculating with Late Night Comedy: Comedic Attacks Prior to Conventional Attacks

This investigation also assessed whether exposure to comedic attacks after conventional inoculation boosts inoculation against subsequent conventional attacks. Might there be a "double inoculation effect," conferring resistance to comedic attacks and then conventional attacks? In the medical context, exposure to repeated viral or other offending agents often strengthens the body's immunity (Nossal, 1999). Would similar effects occur with attitudinal inoculation?

Multivariate analyses and subsequent planned comparisons and post hoc tests suggest that double inoculation can occur, but only against monologue content. Those inoculated, exposed to monologue content, and then exposed to a conventional attack indicated more positive perceptions of candidate character and candidate sociability. However, with feelings toward candidates, the opposite occurred, with those encountering monologue content before conventional attacks indicating less positive feelings toward candidates.

Exposure to parody content before encountering conventional attack messages weakened the inoculative effects in terms of feelings toward candidates, general attitudes toward candidates, and perceptions of candidate competence. Instead of a "double inoculation" effect, encountering parody ridicule before conventional attacks weakens resistance.

Contrary to prediction, multivariate analyses indicated that effects of encountering comedic content prior to the conventional attack were not more pronounced with those of lower political interest, lower political knowledge, or female viewers. There were no differences in terms of political knowledge or gender, and the direction with political interest was opposite than predicted. Those higher in political interest were more influenced by the late night comedic content; this is consistent with findings reported earlier that those with higher political interest are more affected by political content.

In sum, there is support for using multiple attacks to booster inoculative efficacy, but not without risk. In this investigation, exposure to monologue attacks prior to conventional attacks boosted inoculation on some variables, but exposure to parody attacks prior to conventional attacks weakened inoculation. It is likely that exposure to

parodies failed to boost inoculation for the same reasons inoculation failed to confer resistance to parody content. Parodies' failures to boost inoculative effects against conventional attacks, in conjunction with earlier findings of inoculations' failure to confer resistance to parody ridicule, suggests one clear and simple message: Inoculation and political parody don't mix.

Channel Inoculation Treatments: Assessing the Size of the Blanket of Protection

Inoculation has proven effective in protecting against novel counterarguments—arguments that are not specifically refuted in the treatment messages—in both early research (McGuire, 1961a, 1961b, 1962, 1964; McGuire & Papageorgis, 1962; Papageorgis & McGuire, 1961) and more contemporary research (Pfau, 1992; Pfau & Burgoon, 1988; Pfau et al., 1990, 1997a, 2001a, 2004b; Pfau et al., 2003). Pfau et al. (1990) termed this power of inoculation its "broad blanket of protection" (Pfau et al., 1990). Yet, to date, the size of this blanket of protection is unclear. Inoculation can confer resistance to novel counterarguments, but how far does the protection spread?

To address this issue, our investigation was the first to assess inoculation messages designed to confer resistance to an entire channel—in this study, late night comedy television programming. Instead of warning of specific counterarguments and providing refutations as in conventional inoculation pretreatment messages, this study assessed the viability of a channel inoculation treatment. Channel inoculation messages warned of the potential effects of late night comedy, in general, to affect support for political candidates.

However, planned comparisons revealed that against comedic content (monologue and parody content combined), channel inoculation treatments not only

failed, but also backfired. Planned comparisons revealed that those receiving channel inoculation treatments and then encountering comedic content expressed *lower* feelings toward candidates, more *negative* general attitudes, and more *negative* perceptions of candidate competence, character and sociability. Just as conventional inoculation treatments failed to confer resistance, and instead, boomeranged against comedic content, channel inoculation treatments had similar effects. Presumably, channel inoculation treatments failed for the same reasons conventional inoculation treatments failed.

Furthermore, closer examination of the effects of channel inoculation reveal indicative differences between channel inoculation's efficacy against monologues and its efficacy against parody content. Post hoc tests revealed that against monologue content, channel inoculation worked as predicted to bolster attitude confidence. It was only against parody content that the channel inoculation treatments boomeranged. Notably, channel inoculation backfired against parody content on all six measured dependent variables: feelings; general attitudes; perceptions of competence, character, sociability; and attitude confidence. These results underscore previous findings that monologue and parody content function differently—both in terms of immediate effects on candidate image and in inoculation's efficacy. Parody thwarts both conventional inoculation *and* channel inoculation.

Multivariate analyses revealed no differences in channel inoculations' efficacy when comparing those with lower and higher political knowledge and female and male viewers. There were significant differences with political interest, but the direction was opposite than predicted. Those with higher political interest were more affected; this is

consistent with findings reported earlier that political content is more influential with those of higher political interest.

Because candidate appearances were able to boost conventional inoculation's efficacy, the study also assessed whether candidate appearances could boost channel inoculation. Planned comparisons indicated that candidate appearances amplified channel inoculation in terms of feelings, general attitudes, and perceived candidate character. These results further highlight the viability of booster treatments working in conjunction with conventional inoculation treatments.

Finally, as another test of the size of the blanket of resistance conferred by inoculation treatments, the study assessed whether channel inoculation treatments could confer resistance to conventional attacks. Inoculation treatments have established efficacy in conferring resistance to novel counterarguments, but could a treatment designed to undermine the channel of late night comedy television also confer resistance to another mode of attack? Results of planned comparisons indicated that they could, but only in terms of general attitudes toward candidates. On the variables of feelings and perceptions of competence, character and sociability, there were no effects, and the channel inoculation treatments diminished attitude confidence after exposure to conventional attacks.

These results offer a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the size of the blanket of resistance conferred by inoculation treatments, answering calls by researchers to test the limits of inoculation's conferred resistance (e.g., Compton & Pfau, 2004c). There was evidence of some success in using channel inoculation treatments—inoculation messages designed to confer resistance to genres of attack instead of specific

argumentation. However, against comedic attacks, channel inoculation had similar effects to conventional inoculation: Limited efficacy against monologue content, and boomerang effects against parody content. Channel inoculation was most effective when used in conjunction with candidate appearances before exposure to the conventional attack. Interestingly, channel inoculation also conferred resistance to conventional attacks in terms of general attitudes toward candidates, reconfirming that inoculation's conferred resistance is beyond the specific content refuted in the treatment message. As Pfau and Kenski (1990) noted, inoculation's usefulness would be limited if it could only refute those attacks explicitly refuted in the treatment messages. If this were the case, one wanting to use inoculation would have to predict the arguments of the opposition, each and every time and with accuracy. However, results of this study reveal that inoculation's power to confer resistance expands well beyond not only the arguments employed in the messages. Channel inoculation treatments did not raise or refute *any* of the arguments that were in the conventional attack, and the conventional attack was not of the genre warned about in the channel inoculation message. Yet, in spite of a lack of specific argumentation and a different mode of attack, these inoculation treatments conferred some resistance to the attack message.

Inoculation, Elicited Irritation, and Comedic Material

Early inoculation research focused almost exclusively on cognitive processes involved in resistance (Compton & Pfau, 2004c; Pfau, 1997), mirroring a trend in social influence research (Dillard & Wilson, 1993). However, as Zuwerink and Devine (1996) observe, a nuanced understanding of persuasive dynamics requires assessments of affective as well as cognitive processes. More recent inoculation research has ventured

into the domain of affect, examining potential impacts of general positive and negative affect (Lee & Pfau, 1997), happiness and anger (Pfau et al., 2001a), and visually-invoked affect responses (Nabi, 2003). This study focused on another type of affect: irritation. While irritation may resemble anger (Compton & Pfau, 2004c), research suggests that irritation may be a distinct emotion that enhances resistance (Jacks & Devine, 2000; Zuwerink & Devine, 1996) and derogates sources of messages (Duncan & Nelson, 1985).

In regard to irritation, multivariate analyses and subsequent planned comparisons failed to indicate any differences in those inoculated and those not inoculated upon encountering counterattitudinal messages. While Jacks and Devine (2000) and Zuwerink and Devine (1996) studied forewarning and not the inoculation process, their research suggests that elicited irritation enhances resistance. The absence of elicited irritation upon encountering counterattitudinal messages may help explain the failure of inoculation to confer resistance to the comedic argumentation of parodies and monologues. Indeed, Jacks and Devine (2000) speculated this very conclusion, noting that "a few good jokes" (p. 29) may reduce irritation and hence, undermine resistance.

When examining the separate conditions of conventional, monologue and parody attacks, significant differences emerge. Post hoc tests revealed that viewers of parody content indicated significantly lower irritation upon encountering counterattitudinal messages than those encountering a conventional political attack message. It is possible that inoculation failed to confer resistance to parody content because the humor lessened irritation (Jacks & Devine, 2000).

Finally, post hoc tests also revealed that sources that use humor enhance both the perceived competence and sociability of sources of counterattitudinal messages. This

finding reflects earlier research that indicated an image boost for those using humor (Duncan & Nelson, 1985).

In summary, humorous political content failed to elicit irritation, an affective response that enhances resistance to counterattitudinal messages. These findings may shed light on inoculation's failure to confer resistance to humorous late night comedic messages. Further research should assess to what extent humor thwarts the inoculation process of resistance.

Inoculation's Efficacy against Conventional Attacks: More Nuances of Inoculation

Inoculation has established efficacy in United States senatorial (Pfau & Burgoon, 1988) and House of Representatives campaigns (Pfau et al., 2001a), presidential campaigns (Pfau et al., 1990, 2001a), state senatorial campaigns (Pfau et al., 2001a), and gubernatorial campaigns (An & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b). This study assessed inoculation's efficacy during presidential primaries.

Planned comparisons revealed that, consistent with earlier inoculation research in political contexts, inoculation conferred resistance against conventional attacks during the primary campaigns. Inoculation was most effective in terms of attitudinal measures of resistance, with those inoculated indicating more positive feelings toward candidates, more positive general attitudes toward candidates, and more positive perceptions of candidate competence and character, after encountering a counterattitudinal message. Inoculation was also successful on two behavioral dimensions: intentions to donate time or money to campaigns and intentions to vote for candidates.

This study, in addition to inoculation research in the political realm spanning the last fifteen years (An & Pfau, 2004a, 2004b; Pfau & Burgoon, 1988; Pfau et al., 1990,

2001a), suggests that politicians have another option beyond the conventional campaign strategies of bolstering, attacking, and refuting (Kaid & Davidson, 1986; Trent & Friedenberg, 1983) and can also inoculate, in a preemptive tactic, against political attacks.

This study also examined effects of forewarnings on elicited threat throughout the inoculation process of resistance. The use of forewarnings in conventional inoculation treatment messages is not new. McGuire and Papageorgis (1962) first incorporated an explicit forewarning into their inoculation messages and found that the addition of forewarning enhanced resistance. McGuire (1964) speculated that forewarning further motivates the individual to process the content included in the inoculation treatment message. Thus, with McGuire's reasoning, the forewarning influences resistance during processing of the inoculation treatment message.

However, threat is also assumed to play a role during the interim between the inoculation treatment and the subsequent attack (Pfau, 1997; Pfau et al., 2004a), continuing to motivate inoculated individuals to generate their own counterarguments and refutations. This explanatory suggests that forewarning continues to impact resistance beyond the initial reading of the inoculation message.

Until this study, explicit forewarnings have been used at the beginning of inoculation messages, consistent with McGuire's (1964) explanation that forewarnings motivate the processing of message. However, with this placement of forewarnings, reading refutations of counterarguments would seemingly assuage the motivating nature. Some research has found an immediate boost to attitude confidence (Compton & Pfau, 2004a) and belief strength (Papageorgis & McGuire, 1962) immediately following

inoculation treatment. Thus, this study assessed the use of double forewarning inoculation messages. These treatment messages included an initial forewarning and a concluding forewarning. Multivariate analyses and subsequent planned comparisons indicated that double forewarning messages elicited significantly more threat than single inoculation messages, including immediate elicited threat, elicited threat after a first attack, and elicited threat after a second attack. Remarkably, even weeks after the inoculation treatment, the double forewarning message continued to elicit more threat than the single forewarning message. This finding supports the idea that threat continues throughout the inoculation process, beyond initial processing of the inoculation treatment message (Pfau, 1997). However, there was no correlation between elicited threat and conferred resistance. While double forewarning messages elicited more threat, the increased threat did not affect resistance. Results of this study indicate that more threat does not necessarily mean more resistance.

In summary, this study offers a more refined understanding of what elicits threat in an inoculation message and threat's duration during resistance. Threat has played a pivotal role in the conventional explanation for how inoculation confers resistance, beginning with McGuire's speculation in the early 1960s (McGuire, 1962; McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961) and continuing through contemporary inoculation research that has measured threat (e.g., Pfau & Burgoon, 1988; Pfau et al., 1990; Pfau et al., 1992; Pfau et al., 1997a). Future research should continue to explore this component of inoculation, an element that may be "the most distinguishing feature of inoculation" (Pfau, 1997, p. 137).

This study also assessed impacts of inoculation on perceived generalized self-efficacy. Contrary to prediction, inoculation treatments did not enhance perceived

generalized self-efficacy. Multivariate analyses and subsequent planned comparisons failed to support the predicted effects on self-efficacy. There was no significant difference in perceived self-efficacy immediately following inoculation. Furthermore, after the attitude attack, those inoculated indicated significantly *lower* levels of perceived generalized self-efficacy. If inoculation had failed to confer resistance to the attack messages, this effect on generalized self-efficacy would be more explicable. However, inoculation was successful against these messages. Why would effective inoculation treatment messages lessen perceived generalized self-efficacy after an attitude attack?

Elicited threat may account for this effect on self-efficacy. McGuire considered threat to be "shock value" (McGuire, 1961a), or the recognition that an attitude is vulnerable after encountering counterarguments in the inoculation message. Forewarning elicits even more threat than the implicit threat generated by counterarguments alone (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1962). Thus, irrespective of the effectiveness of an inoculation treatment, inoculation treatment messages elicit threat, or recognition of vulnerability. Elicited threat may be responsible for the dip in perceived generalized self-efficacy. Future research should examine whether this diminishment of perceived generalized self-efficacy persists throughout time, or if, as elicited threat diminishes, perceived generalized self-efficacy increases. Additionally, future inoculation studies should examine effects of inoculation treatments on other types of perceived efficacy, such as coping efficacy, communication efficacy, and target efficacy (see Afifi & Weiner, 2004).

Limitations

The first limitation concerns the sample. Participants were undergraduate students, and their attitudes may be "more unstable, changeable, weak, and inconsistent"

(Sears, 1986, p. 522). Students' political schemas are often undeveloped or even nonexistent, making them more susceptible to experimental materials than older, more experienced voters (An & Pfau, 2004a), and inoculation is most effective with strong party identifiers (Pfau & Burgoon, 1988). However, a sample of undergraduates for this study is particularly relevant to assess the proposed hypotheses. Most late night comedy viewers are young (Hamilton, 2003) and politically inattentive (Baum, 2003b; Davis & Owen, 1998). Additionally, control and randomization afforded by student samples yield significant benefits (Pfau et al., 2002). Nevertheless, future research should examine similar predictions with non-student samples. Furthermore, increased cell sizes in future late night comedy research would enhance power.

The second caveat of this study is the nature of late night comedy content across conditions. While care was taken to ensure similarity among the written inoculation treatment messages and attack messages using Becker, Bavelas, and Braden's (1961) Index of Contingency, similarity among the late night comedy conditions was limited to television programs and time. Though Niven, Lichter and Amundson (2003) found, "rather than being idiosyncratic, the major late night shows exhibit quite similar patterns in choice of targets, the partisan ratio of targets, and the subject matter of their jokes" (p. 130), future research should use additional assessments of late night comedy materials to further refine similarity, including such factors as the severity of ridicule and tone.

While there were some large effect sizes, others were rather small. However, in the political context, even small changes can be profoundly influential (Jeffries, 1986). Furthermore, results of this study are likely conservative and probably underestimate effects for three main reasons. First, most of the study took place near the end of the

primaries, and during the final days of the study, one contender, John Kerry, took and maintained a solid lead over other candidates. Had the race remained unsettled during the duration of the study, results would likely have been more robust. Second, primary races generally do not command much interest or attention for many, if not most, Americans (Popkin, 1991), and are instead a get-to-know-you period (Pfau et al., 1993). Results of this study are likely conservative if compared to a study taking place either during the apex of the primary campaign or a study conducted just before or during the general election campaign. Additionally, late night comedic content during primaries is tame when compared to late night comedic content emerging during general election campaigns (Rainey, 2004). In this study, the contested primary campaign was for the party currently out of power and featured candidates who were relatively unknown (e.g., no former vice presidents). Thus, both the citizenry and comedians were getting to know the candidates (Rainey, 2004). For these reasons, results of this study are probably conservative.

Conclusion

Late night political comedy influences viewers' attitudes and behavioral intentions. Yet results of this study reveal that effects are more nuanced than conventional political wisdom may suggest. Further, while this study reveals limitations of an inoculation strategy in the face of late night comedic messages, it also indicates that a combination of late night content and conventional inoculation demonstrates promise against subsequent attacks. Finally, the study offers more nuance into the process of inoculation, further explicating elicited threat and irritation and assessing impacts on perceived generalized self-efficacy.

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