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TV CASUALTIES: THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF POLITICAL MESSAGES IN NON-NEWS
PROGRAMS

A Dissertation Presented
for the Partial Fulfillment of the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree in
Political Science The University of Mississippi

Salvatore James Russo

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ABSTRACT

Prior works in the social sciences have demonstrated the importance that television can have in shaping the views and outlooks of viewers. Studies have examined how it is that overtly political broadcasting, such as political commercials or ideological cable news channels, can impact viewers. However, precious little scholarship in the field of political science has been devoted to examining how non-news programming, the lion's share of what is shown on television, can shape and mold viewers' outlooks and opinions. Television programming is often built around conflict, presenting a distorted view of the world wherein certain "in-groups," mainly the assumed audience of the broadcast, are invited to ridicule or feel hostility towards certain "out-groups." It is hypothesized that non-news programming can influence how television viewers feel toward the "out-groups" targeted for ridicule or exclusion in their broadcasts.

In order to test this hypothesis, both statistical analysis of pre-assembled data and an experimental design will be utilized. Cross-sectional data assembled by GSS and Annenberg will be analyzed using logit and ordinary least square models. Controlling for the socio-demographic, partisan, and ideological characteristics of a typical viewer of late-night satirical broadcasting or religious broadcasting, it is demonstrated that increased viewing of these types of television programs is significantly correlated with increased antipathy toward the "out-groups" or public figures held up for scorn or ridicule during these programs.

The experimental design involves an online survey where respondents answered a series of questions pertaining to their political views, political knowledge, and socio-demographic characteristics. Respondents were then randomly selected to be exposed to one of three video clips, one of religious broadcasting discussing California's Proposition 8, one of satirical broadcasting discussing California's Proposition 8, and a sample of network news discussing the same issue. A post-screening questionnaire regarding feelings towards targeted out-groups was then administered to the subjects. Exposure non-news television programming increased antipathy toward the "out-groups" targeted for hostility or ridicule within the television clips.

DEDICATION

To the memory of Salvatore Santo Russo (1948-2008). Endless gratitude goes to three incredible women in my life: Eileen Russo, Alana Russo and Chelsea Ratcliff.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of Professors Richard Forgette, Jonathan Winburn, Michael Henderson and Mark van Boening. Their vision and dedication has enabled this project to come to fruition, and I am grateful for their guidance in every aspect of completing this dissertation, from methodological concerns to my own neuroses. Credit belongs to them for any utility one may derive from my research; any mistakes remain my own. I am grateful to the Institute for Humane Studies for their generosity during my final year of graduate school. Finally, very special thanks to my “Tech People” Chris West, Phillippe St. Gerard and Marc Pane, without whose mechanical, artistic and audio-visual know-how, this project never would have gotten off the ground.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Americans watch more TV than the citizens of any other nation in the world (Gilson 2009). There are more television sets in the United States than toilets (American Psychological Association 1993; Bushman 2005). Like many other forms of media, television satisfies a myriad of needs and wants (Abelman 1987; Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch 1974). Of particular interest to political scientists, one of the needs satisfied by television is the need for information, including political information. Eighty percent of respondents in a recent survey in the United States replied that they regularly watch television news programs (Chen and Suen 2008), “and adults spend significantly more time with television than with any other medium” (Bushman 2005; 702; Television Bureau of Advertising 2003). While there is a substantial body of work exploring the influence that television news, political programming, and campaign advertising can have on those exposed to its messages, there is comparatively little work on the influence that non-news television programming can have on television viewers.

Non-news television broadcasts can present the world in an “us vs. them” manner, where certain out-groups are targets for ridicule or hostility (Bruce 1990; Carr 1992; Hughey 1990; Straub 1988). This presentation can influence how viewers of these programs feel toward those targeted out-groups. Using the case studies of religious television programming and satirical television programming, this work seeks to demonstrate how television programs can shape opinions towards targeted out-groups. Furthermore, this work discusses the potential political

ramifications of this effect. Religious and satirical programs were selected as case studies because of the popularity of both forms of programming and their relevance to the field of political science. Both forms of television media frequently carry disguised political messages, masked as pure entertainment in the case of satirical programs or spiritually uplifting messages in the case of religious programming, another compelling reason for the use of religious and satirical media as case studies.

Viewers of religious programming presumably seek to satisfy some spiritual desire, rather than to obtain political news. "The sermons, the preaching, the music, the experience of 'having your spirits lifted' and 'feeling close to God' are frequently expressed satisfactions that viewers derive from religious programs" (Gerbner et al. 1984; 4). Similarly, the viewers of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*¹, *Late Night with David Letterman* or *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* presumably seek entertainment. However, both religious program viewers and satirical program viewers may find their political attitudes and beliefs being shaped, even when they may not have intended to gain any sort of political information from the program they are watching. Due to their interest in receiving the messages of the program they are watching, viewers are susceptible to receiving and processing the *political* messages that are being transmitted within the satirical or religious context of the program (Zaller 1992).

Baum and Jamison (2006) argue that political content, when presented in an "entertaining context," can be "piggybacked (i.e., attached) to information intended primarily to entertain, and hence consumed incidentally," thus allowing ostensibly apolitical programming to inform those viewers who have low levels of interest in politics and low levels of knowledge of politics (Baum and Jamison 2006; 948). This work affirms Baum and Jamison in that

¹ Hereafter referred to as *The Daily Show* for the sake of brevity.

programming designed to be consumed by those not seeking political information can, in fact, inform viewers. Baum and Jamison (2006) conclude by implying that low-information voters utilize “soft news” sources, such as daytime talk shows, to provide them with the information that they need in order to make informed decisions. This work takes a different direction from Baum and Jamison (2006) by arguing that political views and attitudes can be transmitted through programming that presents itself as serving a primary role other than that of supplying political information and to audiences who are not necessarily seeking political information.

Previous academic work has discussed the impact of television (McLuhan 1964; Mutz and Reeves 2005; Robinson 1976) as well as the impact print and television media has upon those who receive mass media messages (Bartels 1993; Lippman 1922; McCombs and Shaw 1972; Mutz 1998; Noelle-Neuman 1974; Zaller 1992; Zaller 1996). This work will build upon these sources as well as the present literature that discusses media effects from overtly political sources (Goldstein and Freedman 2002; Groseclose 2011; Freedman and Goldstein 1999; Valentino et al. 2008). This dissertation also will add to the extant scholarship that has sought to empirically demonstrate that, broadly speaking, media matters. This dissertation then will diverge from much of the existing literature by addressing the impact that political information has upon the political outlooks and attitudes of those who receive its messages when the information is being transmitted through what shall be referred to in this work as *non-news sources*. Non-news sources refers to television programs that are not “news programs” in the traditional sense, and are not broadcast on cable news networks, that nonetheless present political content with consistent, specific framing and priming. Consistent, specific framing and priming, means that these media sources do not generally diverge from how they present their chosen out-groups and in-groups. Today’s enemy is not going to be tomorrow’s friend. Non-news sources

have set, distinct ideological and social views of the world, and these views are transmitted to their audiences within a television format that is salient to their audience. While non-traditional news sources can take many forms, the case studies are religious television and satirical television, which were chosen because of their popularity, their relevance to political science, and their systematic targeting of out-groups for scorn or condemnation.

The following statistics detail the popularity of religious and satirical television, as well as their relevance to political science. Conservative estimates of viewership for religious television place it around 15-20 million Americans per week (Bruce 1990; Green 1992; Hoover 1987). Much of the literature exploring religious television is from the heyday of televangelists in the late 1980s and early 1990s, including work describing Pat Robertson's run for the Republican nomination for President in 1988. Satirical media has been seemingly rediscovered by the academy due to the rise in popularity of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. The Pew Research Center 2012 Biennial Media Consumption Study states that approximately 26% of the American public watched *The Daily Show* "at least sometimes" and 23% said the same about *The Colbert Report* (Forgette, Morris and Russo 2013, Pew 2012). As will be explored later, both forms of television repeatedly target particular social out-groups for ridicule, derision or condemnation (Baumgartner and Morris 2006; Bruce 1990; Hughey 1990; Straub 1988). Prior works have explored how framing and priming takes place within the context of television.

Television Effects

With the rise of the 24-hour news cycle and ideologically driven cable news outlets, political scientists are increasingly interested in how television news outlets politically frame stories and prime their viewers. For example, academic studies validated the conventional wisdom and empirically demonstrated that Fox News presents content significantly to the right

of other mainstream television news sources (DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007; Groseclose and Milyo 2005). Building from these studies, researchers have also demonstrated that the public's perceptions on political matters can be and are affected by the ideological content of the news media messages that viewers consume (Groseclose 2011). Martin (2008) and Mutz (1998) demonstrated that media also subtly influences politics by "...informing beliefs about social reality that in turn shape political attitudes and behavior" (Martin 2008; 181). Thus, media can cause viewers to change their political beliefs and attitudes by directly appealing to political ideology, (e.g., the policies of Party X are bad for America), or in less direct ways. A subtle approach to influencing the public could include choosing the issues on which a television news program will focus. How a news program reports the issues is another less direct method of influencing the viewers' attitudes (Ebring, Goldenberg and Miller 1980; McCombs and Shaw 1972). This work contends that non-news sources also influence the political beliefs and attitudes of their viewers.

In a discussion about any form of media, it is necessary to pay attention to the consumers of that media. All television viewers are not created equal. Viewers' attitudes and experiences can shape the way they interpret media messages (Sharp and Joslyn 2001). Case in point, viewers of differing levels of political sophistication will be affected in different ways by what they see on television (Bartels 1993; Zaller 1992; 1996). Viewers who do not already have coherent political ideologies or sufficient prior knowledge of political affairs and events do not have the necessary political maturity to mount a defense to the sophisticated arguments being presented to them on television by news sources (Campbell et al. 1960; Price and Zaller 1993; Zaller 1992; 1996). Following this logic, this research shows that non-news sources can mold and shape the perceptions of viewers because their messages are not overt. It is further argued

that even sophisticated viewers may have their guard lowered and thus be ripe for media manipulation when they are exposed to political content in non-news sources. Non-news sources also reach the large numbers of Americans who are politically uninformed and unsophisticated, and, voluntarily or otherwise, do not expose themselves to news or televised political programming. “The most common mechanisms by which voters are purportedly able to resist dissonant media messages--such as selective reception, attention and retention (Campbell et al. 1960)--may simply be less applicable to (entertainment) talk shows, at least for low-awareness voters” (Baum 2005; 231).

In the same vein, Robinson (1976) and other proponents of the “videomalaise” theory mention the case of accidental news viewers. Videomalaise, a theory initially advanced by scholars such as Robinson (1976) and Dahl (1967), suggests that increased exposure to television journalism, or even just television itself, has a detrimental effect on the “national political ethos” (Robinson 1976; 411). By being bombarded with negative television news reports, television viewers grow increasingly distrustful of established political and social institutions. Additionally, they grow increasingly skeptical and cynical as they continually consume the kind of conflict-driven, sensationalized news stories that television readily offers. Robinson (1976) particularly feared that viewers who lacked political sophistication would be a kind of collateral damage of the media messages disseminated by television news programs. To Robinson, viewers with limited exposure to television news are accidental viewers who are too politically unsophisticated to properly process the news. Consequently, they become TV casualties--cynical and fearful. Videomalaise theory highlights why this research project is focusing on *television* to the exclusion of other forms of media (i.e., newspapers, the internet, etc.) Videomalaise theory also offers reasons why bombardment by television programming results in mostly *negative*

changes in views towards specific political figures and social groups. Robinson (1976) and others have highlighted how television focuses on conflict and how it presents a distorted, more intense, and more aggressive version of reality than exists outside of the small screen (Forgette and Morris 2006; Martin 2008; Mutz 2007; Mutz and Reeves 2005). Not only is there an overall media effect, but television has a singularly negative impact on the outlooks and attitudes of viewers.

Religious Media: An Overview

Do the viewers of religious broadcasting differ not only from the general population, but also from other religious Americans? In what way should consumers of religious media be expected to differ? On one hand, there is an overt “us vs. them” mindset to the theology of many religious broadcasters. Those who tune in are “saved,” but the rest of society is not. Specific out-groups in society are often targeted for ridicule and scorn, such as homosexuals and atheists (Straub 1988). When this theology is coupled with the confrontational nature of television itself (Forgette and Morris 2006; Robinson 1975; Robinson 1976), it is expected that consumers of religious media should be more hostile to targeted out-groups than those who do not consume religious media. These results should hold even when controlling for the conservatism or religiosity of the consumer.

Campbell (2006) argued that evangelical Christians see themselves as living in a distinct society within society. Assuming that much of this feeling of intra-societal alienation derives from their religious conservatism--which considers contemporary secular American society to be strewn with sinfulness--it follows that one may think consumers of religious media would feel similar disassociation from society. After all, religious television is often evangelical or conservative in its theology. This disassociation also stems from many fundamentalist and

evangelical Christians subscribing to a theological outlook known as premillennialism. This belief holds that the world must deteriorate into sinfulness until an Anti-Christ takes power over the Earth, whereupon Christ will return to Earth as king. Christ will then summon the faithful in what is known as the Rapture. A millennium of tribulations will then ravage the world before Christ will return to vanquish the Anti-Christ (Wilcox 2000). Wilcox goes on to explain the impact this worldview has on political efficacy:

“If...the world must inevitably worsen until Christ rescues his followers, then politics is a futile endeavor. Moreover, if Christ might come again at any moment and summon the pure to him, then the top priority for Christian must be to remain distinct from the sinful world to avoid temptation. Political involvement might lead to compromise with sin, which would leave the Christian unready for the trumpet call that would signal the second coming. The fundamentalist acceptance of premillennialism therefore created a strong resistance to political involvement...” (27)

This resultant disassociation from political affairs can lead to a disinterest and mistrust in the operations of the nation’s political institutions and decreased political efficacy (Scheufele, Nisbet and Brossard 2003).

However, the electronic church, in keeping with its revivalist roots, is often overtly political (Abelman and Neyendorf 1987; Hadden 1987). Issues of the day may be discussed in the context of sermons held up as examples of America’s sinfulness or presented in formats similar to the evening news (Abelman 1987; Straub 1988). It is proposed in this dissertation that consumers of religious television are particularly susceptible to having their political outlooks and opinions molded. By presenting political messages in a format or context that is more attractive and salient to the viewer than a typical news broadcast, religious television can influence an audience that might otherwise ignore traditional political coverage. Importantly, this religious information is being disseminated, not from the pulpit, but from the television. Keeping in mind McLuhan’s observation that “the medium is the message” (1964), it should be expected that a televised religious broadcast would have an effect upon the audience distinct from that of a

live religious sermon. This expectation ties in with extant literature's explorations into the unique impact of television itself (Forgette and Morris 2006; Martin 2008; McLuhan 1964; Mutz and Reeves 2005; Robinson 1976). The present work builds upon previous scholarship in the videomalaise school by suggesting that religious television has a confrontational component that is partially a product of the nature of the medium itself, and partially a product of the content of the messages being delivered by the television preachers.

It is expected that consumers of religious media have a more exclusionary, conservative worldview than other segments of society with respect to certain out-groups. Academic work that has performed content analysis of religious television has not been conducted in over two decades. While the following information may be considered outdated, the most popular televangelists of the late 1980s, including Jimmy Swaggert, Jim Bakker and Pat Robertson, devoted the largest sections of their time to covering political or social issues, as opposed to strictly religious issues (Abelman and Neuendorf 1987). It also bears mentioning that the trend was one where the blocks of time on their programs devoted to social or political issues, as opposed to religious issues, were on the increase as Abelman and Neuendorf's period of analysis concluded. In terms of distinct content on television, as opposed to coming from the pulpit, Abelman and Neuendorf (1987) also note the praise that televangelists had for the medium of television and the mass media itself:

“One of the most interesting findings, given the fact that mass media are common targets of political and social leaders, was that mass media were one of the few topics readily approved of by discussants in these programs. It is possible, however, that this is not necessarily a view generally held in religious circles, but rather an artifact of the media-dependence of electronic ministries” (164).

Televangelists thus seem to readily support the marriage between the old revival culture and the new method of delivering the message.

Satirical Media: An Overview

While political satire is hardly a new phenomenon, political science literature has remained mostly silent on the subject until recently. Even as studies examined the impact of the medium of television on the political views, efficacy, and behavior of the American populace, few political scientists took notice of satirical programming such as *Saturday Night Live* and its “Weekend Update” segment or the anti-establishment ethos behind *The Smothers Brothers* (Carr 1992). However, the popularity of the Comedy Central program, *The Daily Show*, among younger, more affluent, and college-educated Americans has helped spearhead a rediscovery of academic interest in political satire’s potential to shape the views and behavior of its audience. Late-night comedy shows tend to devote significant time and attention to political commentary, which has sparked interest of late within the political communication literature to satirical media (Baumgartner and Morris 2006; Fox et al. 2007; Holbert et al. 2007; LaMarre et al. 2009; Landreville, Holbert and LaMarre 2010; Moy et al. 2005, 2006; Young 2004; Young and Tisinger 2006). This rediscovery of satirical media has not been wholly confined to the left-leaning *The Daily Show*. Studies on late night talk shows in general also have begun to appear in academic journals, often providing some illuminating findings (Moy, Xenos and Hess 2005; Parkin 2010) Additionally, recent works demonstrate how younger Americans seem to learn substantive political issues better through comedic programming than through “straight news” programming (Parkin 2010). The ability of comedic programs to inform, as well as entertain, lends further credence to Zaller’s Receive-Accept-Sample (R-A-S) model. The R-A-S model proposes that viewers’ level of engagement is determinative of whether or not they will “receive,” or be able to understand and retain, a given message. If that message is able to fit in with the viewers’ previously held opinions or outlooks, they are likely to “accept” the message.

When then asked their opinion about an issue, viewers will “sample” the opinions that have most recently been “received” and “accepted.” By tuning in to a program that seems relevant to their interests, such as the comedic *Late Night with David Letterman*, younger viewers are not only receptive to what is being broadcast but likely to accept and store the messages that they are receiving (Zaller 1992).

Countering the prior convention that candidate appearances on entertainment programs would lead viewers to focus on superficial issues, Parkin (2010) was found that viewers of late night comedy programs could actually “become cognizant and knowledgeable of key issues in the campaign” (4), and, it was found that many viewers learn *more* about substantive political issues through this “entertaining medium” rather than through “straight news.” As Parkin (2010) concludes, “the entertaining aspects of unconventional news sources can have a real impact on what people know about politics and how they make their decisions” (13). This finding was particularly true among younger Americans. For younger viewers, the “entertaining context” of John Kerry’s appearance on *David Letterman*, even presented as a transcript rather than a video clip, caused increased interest toward substantive political issues (Parkin 2010).

This rediscovery of satirical television may stem from the generational divide in the consumption of, and *trust in*, satirical television. Landreville, Holbert and LaMarre (2010) make note of the results of a 2008 Pew Research Center survey wherein 27 percent of respondents aged eighteen-to-twenty-nine reported “sometimes” learning about the 2008 presidential campaign from comedy shows. By way of comparison, only 14 percent of respondents over fifty reported in kind (Landreville, Holbert and LaMarre 2010). This study was not unique in demonstrating the influence that satirical and humorous broadcasts can have on young Americans (Cao 2008; Hart and Hartelius 2007; Hollander 2005). As Carr (1992) proposes,

satirical media also often presents distinct in-group/out-group divides, wherein select out-groups are targets for mocking and ridicule.

Expectations

How do these forms of television affect the viewing public? The central assertion of this study is that exposure to non-news sources can influence the views and attitudes of the viewer. The present study will focus specifically on the theory that exposure to non-news sources leads the viewer to hold negative attitudes toward the out-groups targeted by that non-news source. In order to test this assertion, I will utilize both analysis of pre-existing datasets and an experimental design. In the experimental design, subjects will be exposed to religious television and satirical television. It is expected that exposure to these visual materials will lead viewers to hold stronger antipathy towards the out-groups mentioned in the visual materials when compared with the attitudes towards those same groups among those not exposed to the visual materials. It is also expected that this antipathy will remain statistically significant even when controls for political ideology, partisanship, and relevant socio-demographic characteristics are included in the model. The following table outlines the predicted results of the project's experimental design component. It is anticipated that exposure to the two forms of non-news will be correlated with stronger negative feelings toward the out-groups targeted in those clips. Due to the divisive, negative, conflict-laden nature of television broadcasts, it is not expected that exposure to visual materials will lead to increased *positive* attitudes towards the corresponding in-group for either religious media or satirical media. Representing Parkin (2010)'s "straight news," a local news broadcast will be used as the control treatment.

Table 1.1 Expected Results

Visual Materials to which Respondents are Exposed	Respondents' Attitudes Towards Targeted Out-Groups	
	Feelings Towards Left-Leaning Groups/Individuals	Feelings Towards Right-Leaning Groups/Individuals
Religious Media	More Hostile	No Change
Satirical Media	No Change	More Hostile
Local News	No Change	No Change

Data and Methods

Survey data from General Social Surveys (GSS) and Annenberg will be used in the statistical analysis in Chapter 4. The survey data contains questions pertaining to watching both satirical television (Annenberg) and religious television (GSS). Each of the surveys also asks questions needed to establish controls, such as questions regarding partisanship, and socio-demographic questions. In addition to the GSS and Annenberg survey data, this research project will utilize an experimental design. Previous works in the field have discussed the drawbacks associated with using only cross-sectional data in attempting to measure media effects such as agenda setting (Behr and Iyengar 1985; Iyengar, Peters and Kinder 1982; Ladd 2009). The use of an experimental design addresses the shortcomings that are inherent in the use of any survey data, particularly when using survey data to try to measure media effects. By complementing the results of survey data with an experimental design, discussed in detail in Chapter 3, this dissertation addresses the potential for self-selection among the respondents biasing the results. Similarly, the cross-sectional data statistical analysis supporting the results of the experimental

design shows the validity and robustness of the results in the field and outside a controlled experimental setting.

The potential for self-selection by audience members is a concern in media effects research. It is possible that there is simply a unique subset of religious Americans, who resemble other religious Americans, but who hold particularly hostile opinions towards certain societal out-groups. These religious Americans would gravitate toward religious programming that reflects their worldview. The potential for self-selection biasing the results of any analysis would also call into question the direction of the causal arrow of this study. That is, the network executives and the creative forces responsible for the content of television programs may modify their product based on what they feel the audience wants to hear (Behr and Iyengar 1985). One could argue that that religious media does not affect its audience, but that a core religious constituency wants to hear messages that reflect their political viewpoints and so they tune in to programming that they feel accurately reflects their values. Producers of religious programming would then try to make sure that their programming accurately captures the values of their audience. Similarly, it is possible that those drawn to late-night comedy programs such as *The Daily Show* already have little respect for conservative public figures. The late-night comedy programs could thus tailor their messages in order to appeal to the political sensibilities and cynical opinions of this subset of the American public.

While this dissertation acknowledge that networks will air programs that they feel will attract viewers, this does not mean that the programs do not still have an impact in shaping the views and attitudes of their audiences. Behr and Iyengar (1985) demonstrate that news coverage is mostly unaffected by public opinion; further, they found no empirical support for the position that public sentiment influences media messages in general. However, the same study was able

to find substantial empirical evidence to support the claim that television news can, and does, influence the viewing public. More recent literature has acknowledged that, while television may use conflict or negativity as a kind of bait to attract the audience, media does have a real impact upon the viewing audience (Forgette and Morris 2006).

Outline and Conclusion

The second chapter of the dissertation provides the literature review and theory sections. An overview of literature regarding media effects precedes a more detailed look at the two case studies for this dissertation: religious television and satirical television. The third chapter details the experimental design used to test the effect of being exposed to non-news. The fourth chapter analyzes large national datasets for the impact that non-news television can have on views towards targeted out-groups. The fifth chapter summarizes the results presented in the previous two chapters and then presents extensions of this research as well as the normative implications of its findings.

This dissertation addresses many questions currently unexplored in existing media effects literature. Non-news television programs fostering of out-group hostility warrants empirical examination, and this dissertation makes a significant contribution to the field by addressing this topic in a novel manner. This dissertation is in the vanguard of using new technology to explore media effects by utilizing an experimental design with respondents recruited via the new MechanicalTurk service offered by Amazon.com and hosted by Qualtrics.com.

CHAPTER II: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This work examines the impact that non-news--media that may not be billed or presented as being a source of political information that nonetheless contains political messages--has on the attitudes and beliefs of its consumers. Using the case studies of religious television and satirical television, this dissertation demonstrates through the analysis of survey data and the use of an experimental design that non-news television shapes the views and attitudes of its audience. This research was conducted with the a priori assumption that media can and does shape the opinions of television viewers and other consumers of mass media. However, political scientists have not always agreed.

There has been some debate in the field of political communications regarding just how much of an influence media has. The dominant view in the literature--up until the tail end of the Twentieth Century--was previously the minimal effects theory, which holds that media has little influence in shaping the beliefs or attitudes of the audience (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; McCombs and Shaw 1972; McGuire 1985; Neuman 1986). In describing--and ultimately refuting--the minimal effects theory, Bennet and Iyengar (2008) explain how minimal effects theory proposes that the media's impact is diluted after being passed through a psychological filter created by each individual's social networks, including "political parties, churches, unions and service organizations" (Bennett and Iyengar 2008; 707). Minimal effects theory has also been successfully countered by work demonstrating that media can and does have a real impact

on the views and behavior of those who consume media messages (Bartels 1993; Entman 1989; Iyengar, Peters and Kinder 1982; Iyengar and Simon 2000).

Prior works in the field explore the question of media effects in several ways. Some political scientists have looked at the impact of direct attempts to influence the American public. For example, scholars have examined the impact that campaign commercials, negative ads, and other media appeals from political campaigns have on the electorate (Goldstein and Freedman 2002; Freedman and Goldstein 1999; Niven 2006; Wattenberg and Briens 1999). Other works have sought a more generalizable approach by looking at how different forms of media can have varying degrees of impact on their audience or simply looking to see whether or not media messages impact the audience at all (Ebring, Goldenberg and Miller 1980; Price and Zaller 1993; Stroud 2008).

Another debate that circles the media effects literature is whether or not the selective reception of media messages impacts the general public. Some have proposed that, since the viewing audience self-selects messages with which they already agree, the media ultimately plays a small role in influencing the viewing public. Zaller (1992) and Gerbner et al. (1984) argue that the self-selection of media messages is inconsequential when it comes to television's impact on the views and attitudes of the viewing public. Zaller (1992) and Gerbner et al. (1984) argue that the relatively similar messages being disseminated from all television channels cause watching television to have a homogenizing influence on viewers. "Mainstreaming theory" holds that those who watch the most television, even from varied socio-demographic and geographic backgrounds, will have more similar views and outlooks than infrequent viewers from differing socio-demographic and geographic backgrounds (Gerbner et al. 1984). Similarly, Zaller (1992) argues that while people inform themselves by exposure to a wide variety of outlets, most of

these outlets carry similar messages and form a national mainstream opinion on a variety of issues. These two findings are similar to those of Mutz (1992) who argues that political coverage can serve to homogenize opinions in the United States. By constantly reporting the “horse race” and pegging certain candidates or issues as “winners” or “losers,” television coverage influences how Americans perceive those candidates or issues (Mutz 1992). This, too, may be seen as a form of “mainstreaming” opinion. However, even proponents of mainstreaming theory acknowledge that there may, in fact, be two distinct “mainstreams” being created by television viewership: a “general” mainstream and a “religious” mainstream (Gerbner et al. 1984). Litman and Bain (1989), sounding prescient in light of the present niche-oriented media environment, went a step further and suggested that religious television is a form of “narrowcasting,” or targeting a very specific message to a very specific audience. The question of who watches religious television will be discussed in more depth later in this dissertation.

Television presents a far more diverse array of programming options now than it did twenty or thirty years ago. Today, channels that did not exist when Gerbner et al. completed their work in 1984, (or Zaller his in 1992), compete for distinct blocks of the television viewing public, a phenomenon that did not occur in the era of three national television networks. With the concurrent rise of the internet during the growth of cable and satellite television, the nature of the mass media has changed greatly since 1992 (DiMaggio et al. 2001; Xenos and Moy 2007).

Information Processing and Media Effects

The analysis of media effects in Entman (1989) warrants consideration. Entman discusses the information processing approach and the “interdependence model.” Rather than assessing whether new information presented to individuals is congruent with their previously held beliefs, the information processing approach argues that salience is the key factor in determining whether

the individuals then processes that information in their pre-established schema systems.

"Processing may lead the person to either store the information or discard; if stored, the information may stimulate new beliefs or change old beliefs" (Entman 1989; 350). This is not wholly dissimilar from Zaller's R-A-S model of information reception (1992). Entman and Zaller's findings help highlight the relevance of non-news to the field of political science.

Viewers of non-news broadcasting receive and process the political messages concealed within satirical or religious programming as it is being presented to them in an attractive, or salient, package. A viewer who distrusts politicians or who is disinterested in politics may disregard a political advertisement or a speech by a politician. The same viewer could have his or her beliefs and opinions molded by non-news precisely because the political manipulation is subtle and the political information is presented as comedic or spiritual discourse.

The on line model of information processing offers another reason for political scientists to take interest in the potential power of non-news sources of information. The on line model finds that people do not necessarily store exact facts and figures relating to every person, place or thing about which they have an opinion. Rather, people retain a kind of internal "running tally" of positive and negative emotions, even while they may quickly discard the information that caused them to develop a positive or negative impression of the concept in question (Lodge, McGraw and Stroh 1989; Lodge, Steenbergen and Brau 1995; Lodge, Stroh and Wahlke 1990). For example, viewers may not necessarily remember that their impression of a given politician came from a comedian mocking them for their hypocrisy or a preacher chastising their immorality, but they will retain a negative impression of that particular politician. This is in keeping with literature that has discussed the importance of *affect* in the formulation of

preferences and in the decision-making processes (Damasio 2003; Gunnell 2007; Marcus, Newman and Mackuen 2000; Mutz 2007; Zajonc 1980: 1984).

The ability to make viewers feel, rather than think, may be the more powerful skill in influencing an audience. In particular, clinical and theoretical work alike has stressed the importance that *negative* emotional reactions have in influencing how people determine the importance of particular issues (Carter, Stamm and Heintz-Knowles 1992; McCombs 1999; Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000; Martin 2008; Miller 2007; Zajonc 1980). The findings from clinical research align with the present work's central theory: the attitudes and views of those who consume non-news are influenced by the negative depiction of out-groups within non-news.

Religious Media and Satirical Media

The two forms of broadcasts to be explored in depth in this work are religious and satirical television. Both satirical and religious broadcasts have long been staples of television, and both satirical and religious broadcasts are very popular.² Satirical and religious broadcasts each have each been given a measure of academic analysis in political science, and both satirical and religious television may present political messages to viewers, albeit in the guise of humorous or spiritually uplifting television. Both religious and satirical media target out-groups for scorn or condemnation within their broadcasts (Baumgartner and Morris 2006; Bruce 1990; Hughey 1990; Jamieson and Waldman 2003; Straub 1988). In light of these facts, both religious and satirical television programming deserve further empirical scrutiny: just what effect does

² Conservative estimates of viewership of religious television place the number around 15-20 million viewers per week (Bruce 1990; Green 1992; Hoover 1987). Between two to four million Americans in a given night watch *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* or *Late Night with David Letterman*, and about 1.5 million viewers watch *The Daily Show* at 11 PM. Given that Stewart is re-broadcast several times throughout the day, the total number of viewers is likely higher (Konodolojy 2013).

viewing either religious or satirical television have upon the viewing audience? The unique history and role of both religious and satirical television will be discussed distinctly, as shall the unique features of their consumers. While satirical and religious media will each have a different impact on the viewing audience, the reasons for the effect of each overlap. As such, the theory and hypothesis sections of this chapter shall discuss both forms of media. Before addressing the research questions of this dissertation questions directly, the reader will be provided with a brief history of religious television in the United States, followed by an overview of how satirical media has been studied by the academy. This will allow for the research questions offered by this dissertation to be placed in proper context

It is understood that there are other sources of religious media than simply television. Religious radio broadcasts were the basis of the electronic church, and remain highly popular to this day. Similarly, comedic online podcasts draw numerous fans, and online forms of social media such as Twitter have given birth to entirely new forms of comedy, such as the creation of satirical fake Twitter accounts. These include both parody accounts purportedly held by public figures (Edwin Edwards, Bill Clinton, Rahm Emmanuel) or entirely fake personages holding accounts that satirize modern life (Karl Welzein). However, the present work will focus strictly on television, rather than radio or broadcasts available on the internet. There are qualities unique to television that would lead to media effects distinct from those of the internet, radio or print media (Forgette and Morris 2006; McLuhan 1964; Mutz 2007; Robinson 1975; Robinson 1976.) Additionally, there is admittedly scant data currently available concerning, for example religious radio or satirical internet broadcasts. Data on these forms of media would have proven especially useful when attempting to demonstrate the singular nature of television media effects

Religious Television: Background and Context

One of the most distinct features of American culture is the value placed upon two seemingly incongruous social phenomena: religion, particularly Christianity (Wilcox 2000)³, and electronic media, particularly television. Living in the birthplace of television, Americans continue to watch more television than any other nation in the world (Gilson 2009). Among Western nations, America is unique in that prosperity and modernity has not led to an increase in postmaterial thought and a subsequent abandoning of formal religion (Andersen and Fetner 2008; Clark 2010; Eckstein 1988; Inglehart 1997). In light of America's continued love of the electronic media and of religion, it seems fitting that the first merger of religion and the electronic media occurred in the United States.

The first regular religious broadcasting in the world began on January 2nd, 1921 when the Cavalry Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania began transmitting services on the AM station KDKA (Stacey and Shupe 1982). This is the "mustard seed" which grew into the multi-million dollar⁴ multimedia phenomenon of religious broadcasting, dubbed by critics and

³ While Americans remain predominantly Christian, they still tend to hold those who hold some kind of religious beliefs in higher regard than those who are atheists. See Robinson 2011 where a Gallup poll from 2007 shows only 45% of Americans would vote for an "otherwise qualified" member of their political party who was an atheist for President of the United States. By way of comparison, 55% would vote for an "otherwise qualified" homosexual who was a member of their political party, and 72% would vote for an "otherwise qualified" Mormon member of their political party. Findings such as these make it appear safe to say that, while it is debatable whether or not America is a "Christian Nation," it is certainly a "Religious Nation". See Also Wilcox 2000

⁴ During the hey-day of televangelism in the early to mid 1980s, media expenditures for the top televangelists included \$106,000,000 by Jimmy Swaggart, \$100,000,000 by Jerry Falwell, \$66,000,000 for Jim Bakker and \$60,000,000 for Oral Roberts. Crushing the competition with his media empire was Pat Robertson, who spent \$233,000,000 in 1985. It should be noted that, these being among the more successful of the television preachers, their intake likely greatly exceeded their expenditures. The fact that Pat Robertson was spending nearly a quarter of a billion dollars in 1985 on his media empire must be stressed. In 2012 dollars, that means Pat

followers alike as, “The Electronic Church.” Academic works on the nature of religious media in the United States have been published, such as histories of religious media (Goff 1999; Lazerson 1985), biographies of televangelists such as Oral Roberts (Harrell 1985) or case studies regarding the 1988 Presidential run by Pat Robertson (Green and Guth 1988; Harrell 1987; Hertzke 1993). However, there are few empirical academic explorations into the nature of the *effects* of consuming religious media. This work hopes to address that gap in the literature by addressing the media effects associated with the consumption of religious television and satirical television, respectively.

History of The Electronic Church

After the Civil War, America experienced a great period of growth and migration. Immigrants from Europe came to America in unprecedented numbers. Populations boomed, not only in established urban centers, but also along the Western frontier. The religious revival of the late 1800s and early 1900s, including the Second Great Awakening in the West, was a response to this sudden change in American society. During this time period, non-Protestants arrived from overseas, and immigrants and native-born Americans alike were moving to unchurched, untamed lands in America’s West (Hadden 1987). Hadden (1987) proffers the theory that this upswing in religiosity was not just the case of requiring more preachers and churches to tend to the needs of a mobile and rapidly growing population; the revival was a reaction to the new “uncivilized” character of America, including the relatively new phenomenon of urban poverty in the United States. These charismatic⁵ preachers, and the adherents to their messages, believed that their new

Robertson was spending about \$525,000,000 in a single year on his television ministry, an extraordinary amount of money! (Elvy 1987; Mickelthwait and Wooldridge 2009)

⁵ When the word “charismatic” is used in this work, it is not being used in the secular sense, as in “possessing an extraordinary ability to attract,” but in the religious sense, meaning, “a form of Christianity that emphasizes the Holy Spirit.”

strain of Christianity offered both personal salvation to those who accepted the message of Jesus, and cures for the societal ills that were ailing the nation (Hadden 1987).

The revivalist preachers differed from the denominational structure of American Protestantism that had heretofore dominated the American religious landscape. These preachers, and those who assisted them in staging revivals and evangelistic crusades, were independent and autonomous from the denominational churches that already existed in the United States, but “crossed sectarian boundaries and drew their support from Christians who belonged to a wide variety of churches” (Hadden and Shupe 1988). Hadden and Shupe (1988) describe these organizational structures as *parachurches*. The independent, autonomous, yet cross-sectional nature of these parachurches is of particular importance as it “provide(s), in both form and content, the organizational model of the contemporary electronic church” (Hadden 1987; 9). Like the revivalist of the late 19th and early 20th century, the modern day televangelist is free from any denominational constraints, and draws audiences that reach across ecumenical boundaries (Harrell 1985). This freedom also means that the modern day televangelist is responsible for staging the entire “production” on his own. Paying for space, a choir, and the preacher’s own salary and lifestyle, are the duties of the preacher; there is no governing body to make sure bills are paid. This means direct solicitations from the preacher’s audience are required for the continued operations of the preacher’s ministry (Abelman 1987a, Hughey 1990).⁶ It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the greatest pioneer in the use of the relatively new medium of television to grow his ministry was also one of the last great “old time” tent revivalists in the United States, Oral Roberts (Harrell 1985).

⁶ For an example of a transitional figure in the rise of the electronic church, juggling missionary duties as well as maintaining ratings See Goff (1999)

The similarities between the revivalist preacher of the Second Great Awakening and the modern televangelist do not stop at how their ministries were organized. In terms of both structure *and* theology, there are strong links between the revivalist movement of the early 20th century and the electronic church of today. Like the modern televangelist, the revivalist of the late 19th century and early 20th century was preaching a conservative brand of Christianity, sometimes charismatic or Pentecostal, sometimes fundamentalist.⁷ The next key link between the revivalists and the televangelists is the fact that evangelicals and fundamentalists, theological descendants of those who traveled the countryside and built massive audiences during the revivalist period via parachurches rather than through the existing denominational structures in place in the United States, eventually took over the religious airwaves.

The Communications Act of 1934 allowed for the FCC to grant licenses to stations. While never specifying the details of the arrangement, it was understood that stations were required to offer some of their airtime to “public interest” programming, which included religious programming. Both national and local networks gave this airtime, free of charge, to

⁷ It is not possible to do justice to the theological distinctions between charismatics and Pentecostals, fundamentalists and evangelicals in the confines of this work without embarking upon a lengthy digression. While not essential for the understanding of the remainder of the work, the reader may want some insight as to what these words mean, as the terms will be used repeatedly. Pentecostals and charismatics believe in the importance of “spiritual gifts” being bestowed upon believers by the Holy Spirit, such as “glossolalia, prophecy, miracles and faith healing”. Fundamentalists take a more conservative approach, generally, and believe in the inerrancy of the Bible. Evangelicals stress the necessity for being “born again” into Jesus Christ, and like fundamentalists, see the Bible as the “the only trustworthy guide in moral and spiritual matters” and tend to see themselves at odds with the rest of society. Generally speaking, however, evangelicals tend to be more tolerant of those from different Christian backgrounds, such as Pentecostals, than do fundamentalists. Each of these groups has played a distinct role in the rise of the electronic church, and for reference the reader may want to think of men like Oral Roberts as examples of a Pentecostal figure, whereas Jerry Falwell would be representative of the fundamentalist movement. For a more detailed overview of these groups and their impact in American Politics, See Wilcox 2000; 25-30, Hertzke (1993), Campbell (2006), Green and Guth (1988), Harrell (1987), Smidt, (1988)

mainline religious groups (Hadden and Shupe 1988). In 1960, however, the FCC issued a directive stating that there was no requirement that “public interest” airtime be given away for free by the stations; networks could sell the airtime to, for example, religious groups, and still be serving the “public interest” as far as the FCC was concerned. The stations made the logical decision to stop giving away for free that which could be sold; after the FCC decree, ninety-two percent of all religious broadcasting in the United States became paid-time broadcasting (Hadden 1987). This shift caused the mainline churches, unwilling or unable to compete commercially, to lose their airtime to the evangelical and fundamental preachers for whom “the confluence of evangelical proselytizing zeal and the commercial fee-enterprise system go together well” (Hadden 1987; 16).⁸ The formation of the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) in 1944 also played a large role in allowing evangelicals to dominate the religious airwaves.

Founded by 150 evangelical broadcasters in Columbus, Ohio, the NRB quickly established powerful connections in Washington, DC, that have worked to represent the interests of non-denominational, evangelical broadcasters (Hadden and Shupe 1988). One of the major accomplishments of the NRB was ensuring that “public interest” air time could be purchased on the open market, rather than simply being set aside for mainline Protestant groups. Coming from a tradition where each preacher is individually responsible for their own ministry, the televangelist is thus able to continue in the revivalist model with minimum modifications.

Who Uses The Electronic Church?

There are demographic characteristics of the users of religious broadcasting that do set them apart from Americans as a whole. They tend to be older, lower income, less educated, more likely to be “blue collar” and more likely to be female. Additionally, and unsurprisingly, people

⁸ See Also Hughey (1990) and his discussion of the relationship between Protestantism and the free market capitalist system dating back to Weber.

who watch religious broadcasting tend to be more religious than the average American. Specifically, they are more likely to be church members, to participate in other religious activities, to be Protestant and evangelical and conservative in religious and social outlooks (Abelman 1987a; 199-200; Litman and Bain 1989). Additional studies have also shown that:

- Women are more likely to watch or listen to religious broadcasts than men;
- Non-whites moderately more likely to listen or view than whites;
- Viewers are more likely to live in rural areas than cities;
- And viewers are more likely to live in the South than the Northeast (Gerbner et al. 1984; Hoover 1987; Pettersson 1986)⁹.

Complimenting these studies are more recent works demonstrating that, among African-Americans, rural African-Americans in the South are more likely to watch religious programming than other African-Americans (Park and Baker 2007; Sherkat and Cunningham 1998).

Satirical Media: Context and Background

In addition to exploring the impact that religious television has upon its audience's views and outlooks, this work also looks to explore the impact that satirical television programs can have upon the audience's views and outlooks. Specifically, this dissertation empirically tests the concept that satirical media, by holding up certain targets for ridicule or scorn, does more than provide laughs for its audience. It is hypothesized that satirical media can and does influence the views of the audience as to those groups or persons made into the butts of the comedy. The divisive nature of television does little to bring groups together, but serves to cause greater

⁹ Pettersson's study examined Swedish consumers of religious media and found that, again, "...frequent TV service viewers are predominantly older, less educated, female, and "rural". They also score higher on such measures of religiosity as private prayer, Bible reading and identifying oneself as a "confessing Christian" or "religious person"." Pettersson, pg. 395

feelings of antipathy towards the “out-groups” targeted to be the objects of ridicule in televised satires (Forgette and Morris 2006; Martin 2008; Mutz 2007; Mutz and Reeves 2005; Robinson 1975). This work does not hypothesize that satirical media makes one more likely to support Democratic or liberal candidates or causes, but that satirical media does cause viewers to be more hostile to Republican or conservative candidates or groups. To begin with first principles, this chapter will begin with a definition and a distinction. Some clarification may be needed in explaining what is meant by the term, “satirical” television programming, as opposed to simply “comedic” television programming.

The creator of the long-running animated sitcom *The Simpsons*, Matt Groening, described the theme running through the series as, “the people in power don’t always have your best interests in mind” (Cantor 1999; 745). Indeed, a strain of anti-establishment thought seems to be present in all forms of satire, be it televised late night talk shows, humor magazines such as “MAD” or even in satire packaged as something as innocuous as a sitcom. Thompson (2009) provides a strong definition of satire while expressing the idea of “sitcom satire.” Looking specifically at the popular animated series *The King of the Hill*, Thompson (2009) states: “Most simply, to satirize is to scrutinize, which requires an object to study and, ultimately, to ridicule...Satire, then, means laughing ‘at’ someone whose behavior or beliefs deserve ridicule. The question is, who does the audience understand that someone to be?” (Thompson 2009; 40-41). Thompson (2009) not only provides this project with a working definition of satire, but also raises a question that this dissertation will explore. Who is being ridiculed in these televised satires, and how does this ridicule affect the audience? It is argued in this dissertation that while viewers may be tuning in for laughs, they are getting more than a welcome dose of humor; they also are having their views and attitudes shaped by the satirical programs they view.

Who Uses Satirical Media?

Who is the audience for satirical media, and why do they watch? There is scant empirical information regarding the audience for satire, generally. However, there have been several studies of individual satirical programs that generally indicate the audience for this form of entertainment tends to be younger, better educated and more likely to live in an urban area than the typical television viewer. The recent spate of research into *The Daily Show* stresses that Jon Stewart's audience is young, "hip" and college educated, thus making them the sort of demographic that academics, policy makers and advertisers find fascinating (Baumgartner and Morris 2006; Cao 2008; Fox and Sahin 2007; Hart and Hartelius 2007; Holbert et al. 2007; Hollander 2005; LaMarre et al. 2009; Young and Esralew 2011). However, even academic articles that discuss older satirical programming discuss how the target audience for the anti-establishment form of entertainment fits this same mold.

Cantor (1999) discussed how *The Simpsons* influences the way Americans think, "particularly the younger generation" (Cantor 1999; 734). Carr (1992) discusses the clashes between CBS and the comedic duo The Smothers Brothers regarding the political content of the program *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, culminating in the network's decision to cancel the program in 1969. In doing so, Carr (1992) describes how the satirical program's appeal with younger, more urban viewers "created a kind of us versus them rhetoric" (Carr 1992; 13). Similarly, there has been a spate of research in the field recently demonstrating that, while younger viewers may not *necessarily* watch more satirical media, they do seem to be more affected by it (Cao 2008; Hart and Hartelius 2007; Hollander 2005; Landreville, Holbert and LaMarre 2010; Parkin 2010; Young and Tisinger 2006). It has been argued that part of the reason for the success of programs such as *The Daily Show* in reaching younger audiences is the

fact that satire, while demanding and fostering skepticism from its audience, also holds out an ultimate promise that things can get better. "Though humor in art is less likely to elicit profound understanding of propaganda, it has an immediate appeal and more direct political consequences than pessimism" (Edelman 1988; 128 Young and Esralew 2011; 5). However, recent studies have demonstrated that viewers of *The Daily Show* report not only higher levels of confidence in their own abilities to understand the political landscape, they also report stronger negative feelings towards political candidates, a wide spectrum of political institutions and the news media generally (Baumgartner and Morris 2006). Further investigation into whether satirical media fosters cynicism and negative views towards select out-groups is thus warranted.

Baum (2005) broached the idea of viewers receiving political information from non-news sources including entertainment-focused talk shows, or "E-Talk shows." Keeping with the theory underpinning this work, Baum (2005) found that these ostensibly apolitical programs could and did still have an impact on how viewers felt about political figures. In a marked contrast from this work, Baum (2005) showed how E-Talk shows actually increased positive feelings towards political figures from viewers of the opposite party. At first blush, those findings may call into question "videomalaise" theory and its progeny, including the present work. A closer examination of Baum (2005) reveals some marked differences between that work and this dissertation. Baum (2005) concludes that E-Talk shows cause low-information voters to become more likely to cross party lines in order to support a candidate who appeared on an E-Talk show, as E-Talk show appearances humanize guests. This would seem to run against the distorting, confrontational aspect of television that is central to this analysis. However, when we look at how Baum (2005) analyzed respondents when looking for the effect of consuming E-Talk

Shows, we see that late night comedies have been excluded from consideration.¹⁰ Despite mentioning candidates appearing on late night talk shows such as *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* or *Late Night with David Letterman* in the introduction to his work, and despite examining the content of these two programs (as well as four daytime talk shows, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*, *Live! With Regis and Kathy Lee* and *The Queen Latifah Show*) in order to contrast E-Talk shows with “hard news” Baum’s analysis vis a vis the impact of consuming “E-Talk Shows” is concerned only with candidate appearances on *daytime* television talk shows “such as *Oprah Winfrey*, *Rosie O'Donnell* or *Jerry Springer*” (Baum 2005; 219).

A further contrast between this work and Baum (2005) is the fact that Baum’s work is focused around those instances where a political figure (such as a candidate for President of the United States) appears on a daytime talk show. It stands to reason that a regular viewer of daytime television may consider the rare occasion that a presidential candidate appears on the program to mark this a “very special episode,” and they will tune in and seek out political information. This does not exonerate the central theory of this dissertation; rather this work and Baum’s can co-exist quite easily. Simply because there are those “must see television events” where a political figure may appear on a program, and viewers specifically tune in to learn something about the issues or the figure, does not mean that viewers cannot also watch their regular nightly line-up of favorite programs, not expecting to encounter political messages, and nonetheless have their views altered by the programs they have watched.

In discussing his conclusion, the reader must also consider the fact that Baum (2005), despite mentioning satirical programs such as David Letterman’s in the body of his work and

¹⁰ In fairness to Baum, he was working with the data that available to him via the 2000 ANES. Questions regarding watching late night comedic talk shows were not asked in this particular panel.

despite analyzing the content of *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *Late Night with David Letterman*, does not consider in his model how often viewers watched these (or any other) late night talk shows. In short, Baum (2005) proffers his theory that low-information voters will gain a more favorable view of candidates due to their appearances on E-Talk shows without including satirical or comedic programs in his definition of “E-Talk Show”¹¹; Baum only includes non-satirical and non-comedic daytime television talk shows in his model. The failure to include satirical late night talks shows distinguishes Baum’s article from this dissertation. Just as talk shows do not have to be satirical, though, satirical programs are not limited to the talk show format.

Thompson (2009) also makes an intriguing case that satire can come in unconventional forms. Critical theorists both within and outside the field of political science have argued that television sitcoms--long thought banal escapism and cavalcade of mediocrity--have a substantive impact on the audience’s political views and attitudes (Goldman 1982; Rabinovitz 1989). While this concept is somewhat outside the scope of this project, continued explorations in the vein of the present work would seek to empirically test the idea that television sitcoms indeed have “fairly elaborate, though often unarticulated, political-ideological foundations” (Feldman and Sigelman 1985) that influence the opinions and behavior of the prime-time audience. This is again, not a new phenomenon, as Carr (1992; 3) notes that programs such as *All in the Family* in the early 1970s “pushed the boundaries of controversy and relevance...” A handful of scholars outside the discipline of political science have empirically tested the impact that sitcoms can have on their audience.

¹¹ Though it is debatable as to whether *The Jerry Springer Show* was actually intended as a highly crude satire of the popular daytime television talk show format.

The sitcom *Will and Grace*, notable for prominently featuring homosexual characters, was the subject of studies into how audiences responded to its characterizations of the more subdued gay character Will, as well as the more flamboyant character Jack (Cooper 2003). However, Cooper (2003) only intimated at the broader implications of his study. Work could be done to explore how the audiences' fondness for both Jack and Will could impact their views on gay rights.

What Does It All Mean?

The central argument of this dissertation is that non-news broadcasts influence the attitudes and opinions of those viewers. In light of television's propensity to highlight conflict and present a hostile view of the world to its viewers (Forgette and Morris 2006; Mutz and Reeves 2005; Robinson 1976), it is expected that non-news has its greatest impact influencing the negative views and outlooks of the audience. Rather than causing audience members to feel more warmly towards certain groups, persons or ideas, non-news fosters negative feelings towards certain out-groups targeted for ridicule or condemnation. Contrarily, some argue that consumers of non-news may be intentionally seek out such programs precisely for the political messages. In other words, low-information viewers may dislike "hard" news, but seek out "soft" news formats in order to receive information about the wider world around them (Baum 2005). In the light of their ubiquity, popularity and relevance to social scientists, this work focuses upon religious television and satirical late night talk shows.

How should those who are exposed to religious broadcasting differ from not only the general population, but from other religious Americans? In what way should consumers of religious television be expected to differ from those who do not consume religious television? How should consumers of satirical television differ from the general public, both in outlook and

in their socio-demographic characteristics? One notable feature of religious broadcasting is that there is an overt “us vs. them” component to the theology of many religious broadcasters. Those who tune in to the program are “saved,” but the rest of society is not. Specific “out-groups” in society are often targeted for ridicule and scorn, such as homosexuals and atheists (Bruce 1990; Hughey 1990; Straub 1988). Hughey (1990) calls this the distinction between the “righteous we” and “sinful others”:

“...in apparent reluctance to offend the very people on whose financial generosity they depend, modern televangelists generally imply that Hell is reserved for others. The viewing audience is usually assumed to be among the ranks of the ‘Righteous We’...while responsibility for any moral or other deficiencies in the larger society are pointedly attributed to ‘Sinful Others’ who are enemies of the godly-i.e, to abortionists, pornographers, homosexuals, rock stars, secular humanists, and liberals in general”(Hughey 1990; 42).

Considering this dichotomous view of society being presented in religious television, one composed of saved people of virtue and of damned sinners, it is expected that exposure to these messages will lead to antipathy--if not outright hostility--towards the societal out-groups being presented as sinful and Godless.

One of the key features of the audience for satirical media that has caused *The Daily Show* to be of such interest among academics-as well as journalists and advertisers-is that its audience skews young, college-educated and relatively affluent (Baumgartner and Morris 2006; Cao 2008; Fox and Sahin 2007; Hart and Hartelius 2007; Holbert et al. 2007; Hollander 2005; LaMarre et al. 2009; Young and Esralew 2011). If satire is particularly the purview of young educated urbanites, it stands to reason that the audience for such programs would skew liberal in their tastes and outlooks. Where this dissertation is staking new ground is in stating that the *type* of liberal outlooks and attitudes the viewers hold will be distinct from that of other well-educated urban liberals. It is in the hostility towards selected out-groups, such as conservative political figures and groups, where consumers of satirical media will be differentiated from their

ideological and socio-demographic peers. It is also anticipated that increased consumption of satirical late-night talk shows will not correlate significantly with increased positive feelings towards liberal political figures or groups.

Conclusion

Media effects remains a thriving area of study in the social sciences. With the minimal effects school having been largely discarded, social scientists have moved on to exploring the specificities of media effects. This includes studying the distinct effects that different forms of media have upon their audience. Works have demonstrated that television has a unique impact upon the viewing audience, and have analyzed how different forms of television broadcasts can have varying effects on viewers. While numerous works have examined the ways in which overtly political television broadcasts-such as political advertisements, presidential debates and cable news-can influence viewers' opinions, few works in political science have looked to explore the impact that the political messages contained in non-news broadcasts. This dissertation fills that gap. Examining the case studies of satirical late night talk shows and religious programming, this dissertation analyzes the impact these forms of television can have on viewers' opinions towards targeted out-groups. The next chapter will discuss the experiment that utilized in measuring the effect that exposure to satirical or religious media can have upon a viewers' opinions towards specific out-groups.

CHAPTER III: EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN: NON-NEWS SOURCES AND PROPOSITION 8

A major problem facing the researcher who wishes to measure media effects solely using survey data is the potential of self-selection occurring in the audience. It is possible that there is simply a unique subset of religious Americans, for example, who otherwise resemble other religious Americans, but who hold particularly hostile opinions towards certain societal out-groups. These religious Americans would gravitate towards religious programming that reflects their worldview. Thus, it could be possible that religious Americans who particularly dislike homosexuals or atheists are also the religious Americans who tune in to watch religious television due to the “righteous we vs. sinful others” messaging discussed in Chapter Two (Bruce 1990; Hughey 1990; Straub 1988). Any analysis on data sets pertaining to television viewing habits would run the risk of simply stating the obvious: people with certain views or opinions watch television programs that reflect their views and opinions. This leads into an additional potential hurdle, the idea that it may not be television influencing the viewer, but viewers influencing the content of television programs.

The potential for self-selection biasing the results of any analysis would simultaneously call into question the direction of the causal arrow of this study. One could argue that it is not the case that religious media effects its audience, but that there is a core constituency that is religiously and socially conservative. These religiously and socially conservative television viewers could want to hear messages that reflect their hostility towards homosexuals or atheists, and they would then tune in to programming that they feel accurately reflects their values.

Producers of religious television programs would then change the content of their broadcasts to make sure that it is particularly anti-homosexual or particularly anti-atheist. Similarly, it is possible that those drawn to late-night comedy programs such as *The Daily Show* already have little respect for conservative public figures. Other late night comedy producers and writers would then scramble to make sure their programs are filled with as many jokes about conservatives or Republicans as possible in order to attract these viewers. Simply put, there is a possibility that the audience is influencing the television program content (Chozick 2011). Network executives and the creative forces that are responsible for the content of television programs may modify their product based on what it is that they feel the audience wants to hear (Behr and Iyengar 1985). Fortunately, this argument has not proven insurmountable for media effects scholars.

It is uncontroversial that networks air programs that they feel will attract viewers. In fact, one of this study's central arguments is that one reason for the hostility towards out-groups present in these non-news sources of information is precisely in order to attract viewers; scholars in the field have demonstrated that television viewers are attracted to conflict (Mutz 2007; Mutz and Reeves 2005; Postman 1986). This fact does not mean that the programs do not still have an impact in shaping the views and attitudes of its audience.¹² Behr and Iyengar (1985) demonstrated that news coverage is mostly unaffected by public opinion. To the contrary, what Behr and Iyengar (1985) found was not that the public influenced media messages, but that media messages were influencing the public. More recent studies confirmed the findings of Behr and Iyengar (1985), and demonstrated that television news broadcasts did not just focus upon those issues or topics that viewers wanted to hear. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that the

¹² Nor does it change the fact that that television qua television is a hostile, confrontational form of media (Forgette and Morris 2006; Mutz and Reeves 2005; Postman 1986; Robinson 1976).

issues the media chooses to cover, and how the media chooses to cover those issues, influences how viewers prioritized issues (Goidel and Langley 1995; Iyengar and Simon 1993; Miller 2007; Mutz 1992). Coupled with the statistically significant findings from numerous scholars in the field of media effects (Bartels 1993; Forgette and Morris 2006; Groseclose 2011; Martin 2008; Mutz 1998; Zaller 1992; 1996), it can be stated with confidence that the influence that television media has over the American public is not a mirage, and that television content is not *just* a reflection of the values and norms of the home viewing audience. We know this in no small part because of experiments that have been conducted by scholars demonstrating the impact of media effects.

Experiments allow the researcher to probe, if not prove, causal hypotheses (Campbell and Stanley 1966; Cook and Campbell 1979; Iyengar, Peters and Kinder 1982). Additionally, experimental research has gained increasing prominence among researchers looking to demonstrate that media has more than just a minimal effect on its audience. Experimental designs in both laboratory and field settings have repeatedly demonstrated that media messages can cause change in political attitudes and behaviors (Forgette and Morris 2006; Gerber and Green 2000; Gerber et al. 2007; Hayes 2008; Iyengar 1987; Iyengar 1991; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Iyengar, Peters and Kinder 1982; Ladd 2009; Miller 2007; Mutz and Reeves 2005; Neuman, Just and Crigler 1992). This dissertation is therefore following accepted protocol in utilizing an experimental design to measure media effects, but will be utilizing state of the art resources such as Mechanical Turk and Qualtrics in doing so. There are some concerns in using experimental designs in the social sciences, however, and those shall be addressed in the next section.

Experimental Methodology in Political Science

Cook and Campbell (1979) highlight one of the concerns in using an experimental setting in the social sciences, the dilemma of making generalizable to the broader outside world the results divined in the controlled laboratory environment:

“The advantages of experimental control for inferring causation have to be weighed against the disadvantages that arise because we do not always want to learn about causation in controlled settings. Instead, for many purposes, we would like to be able to generalize to causal relationships in complex field settings, and we cannot easily assume that findings from the laboratory will hold in the field...most of the social phenomena of theoretical and practical social interest from which we want to generalize occur in markedly less controlled settings than either the laboratory or the staged short-term experiment...” (Cook and Campbell 1979; 7).

An experimental design intended to capture media effects may lead to such a dilemma. Consumers of religious or satirical media do not consume the media messages in “single-shot” doses. Viewers of *The Daily Show* or *The 700 Club* may be frequent viewers, watching the programs on a regular basis over a period of weeks, months or even years. Additionally, even those who only sporadically view satirical or religious media do not do so in a controlled laboratory environment. They may flip from channel-to-channel. They may have the television on as white noise as they complete other tasks or eat meals. The broadcasts themselves may be seen in the context of a larger television watching experience. Rather than viewing a concentrated dose of satirical or religious television, a viewer may watch a hockey game, then *The Daily Show*, then flip the channel to watch an action movie. In order to alleviate some of the concerns addressed above, the present study will have the subjects view the required visual materials in a time and place of their own choosing, rather than a laboratory or other unfamiliar environment. It is also expected that the fact that the visual materials are to be consumed on-line, at the leisure of the subject, may offer more of an ersatz approximation of the television viewing

experience than requiring the subjects to watch the visual materials in a classroom or other controlled environment.

There are also concerns that subjects in a social science experiment may attempt to adjust their behavior "given the artificiality of the research setting and their perceptions of the aims of the study" (Norris and Sanders 1998; 7). However, previous experimental works on media effects have instituted mechanisms that attempt to control for these factors. In order to try to control for subjects altering their behavior in order to conform to what they think is "correct" deception has been employed in order to keep subjects unsure as to the researcher's true aims (Norris and Sanders 1998). In the present case, respondents were told that they were being asked as to their television viewing habits, rather than being told that the experiment was seeking to study media effects. Answering critics (Livingston 1996) who say that experiments such as the one utilized in this dissertation are too far removed from realistic television viewing habits as it provides only a single "dose" of video treatment, as opposed to measuring long-term effects of consuming media messages, it has even been argued that the use of a single-shot experiment ensures that respondents do not become conditioned to the experimental setting itself (Norris and Sanders 1998; Norris and Sanders 2002). Experiments have also shown that such single-shot exposures to stimuli *can* produce the anticipated responses, but that the effects dissipate quickly, "so organizations using this kind of mobilization tool should either rely on repeated exposure or on an immediate capitalization of the mobilization effort" (Hooghe et al. 2010; 422). The dissipation of the effect is why the respondents in my experimental design are instructed to complete the post-screening questionnaire promptly upon viewing of the visual materials.

Experimental Design

This dissertation uses respondents recruited via the Amazon service Mechanical Turk

(MTurk)¹³, as that the use of undergraduate college students could lead to problems in terms of the generalizability of the findings. While scholars in other disciplines were the vanguard in using MTurk to recruit subjects, political scientists have begun to take advantage of the pool of respondents offered by MTurk (Berinsky, Huber and Lenz 2012; Buhrmester, Kwang and Gosling 2011; Chandler and Kapelner 2010; Chen and Horton 2010; Schaffner 2011; Sorokin and Forsyth 2008). The use of MTurk allows the analysis to feature respondents who are more representative of the population of the United States than those used in published political science articles which utilize samples of undergraduates alone to be analyzed in this dissertation (Berinsky, Huber and Lenz 2012). Berinsky, Huber and Lenz (2012) detail the operations of MTurk in their article:

“To initiate a survey using MTurk, a researcher (a “Requester” in Amazon’s lingo) establishes an account (www.mturk.com), places funds into her account, and then posts a “job listing” using the MTurk web interface that describes the Human Intelligence Task (HIT) to be completed and the compensation to be paid...Each HIT has a designated number of tasks and the requester can specify how many times an individual MTurk “Worker” can undertake the task. Researchers can also set requirements for subjects, including country of residence and prior “approval rate”...The MTurk interface gives the researcher a great deal of flexibility to conduct a study. In addition to using MTurk’s embedded workspace to set up simple tasks, the researcher can also refer subjects to an external website. For instance, subjects might be redirected to a webpage to take a survey with an embedded experimental manipulation...Additionally, outside websites make it easy to obtain informed consent, implement additional screening procedures, debrief after an experiment, and collect detailed information about the survey process (including response times for items...The final stage for the researcher is compensating subjects. The researcher can easily authorize payment for the task through the MTurk web interface” (Berinsky, Huber and Lenz 2012; 352-353).

While respondents were recruited using MTurk, the experimental design in this dissertation is hosted online by the Qualtrics.com service. While thus far there are few published works in the social sciences that have taken advantage of the services provided by Qualtrics

¹³ The experimental design was initially piloted at The University of Mississippi during the summer of 2012 in order to test face validity and technical issues.

(Berinsky, Huber and Lenz 2012; Lede Zuniga, Jung and Valenzuela 2012), academics in a wide variety of other fields have published research that has utilized Qualtrics to host surveys and also to recruit panels (Manuj et al. 2011; Patrick and Hagtvedt 2012; Rebman et al. 2012).

Structure of The Experimental Design

Subjects were randomly divided into three groups. The first group received a three-minute clip of religious media, specifically, a clip from *The 700 Club* featuring Pat Robertson discussing California's Proposition 8.¹⁴ The second group received a three-minute clip of satirical media, specifically, a clip from Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* featuring Jon Stewart discussing California's Proposition 8.¹⁵ The third group is the control group, and received a three-minute clip of network news¹⁶ reporting on the same issue being discussed in the visual materials presented to the two test groups. There are several reasons why Proposition 8 was selected to be the issue discussed in each clip. The debate over Proposition 8--and the coverage of that debate--featured each of the out-groups targeted by the respective forms of non-news television analyzed in this dissertation. Homosexuals and gay rights supporters were visible in their opposition to Proposition 8, just as conservative Christian groups, particularly the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, were visible in their support for the measure. This means that both religious television programs and satirical television programs were able to take stark

¹⁴ Proposition 8 was a California ballot measure/state constitutional amendment voted on in November of 2008. The measure stated, in the part relevant to this dissertation, "only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California". The clip from *The 700 Club* is a newscaster's commentary on Proposition 8 from the June 16th, 2008, episode of *The 700 Club* and Pat Robertson's commentary on gay marriage in California from the December 12th, 2007, episode of *The 700 Club*. Robertson's commentary in the June 16th episode, complete with references to "fire and brimstone" and a graphic retelling of the legend of Sodom and Gomorrah, was thought too incendiary for the purposes of this experiment.

¹⁵ The segment, entitled "I Now Denounce You Chuck and Larry" is from episode #13142 of *The Daily Show*, originally aired November 3rd, 2008.

¹⁶ KCRA 3, NBC's local affiliate in Sacramento, California. The video was uploaded to YouTube by KCRA's official YouTube account on October 20, 2008.

positions on the issue-and make clear just who the opposition is. Additionally, the fact that both *The 700 Club* and *The Daily Show* discussed the issue several times allowed for the researcher to have a selection of from which they could choose the appropriate treatments for this study.

As MTurk users could access the survey at the time and place of their choosing the experimental occasions, as well as the answering of the pre-screening questionnaires, has been randomized. This was done in order to achieve “balanced representation” of potential sources of bias such as “...time of day, day of week, portion of semester, nearness to examinations, etc.” (Campbell and Stanley 1966; 184). Each respondent in the same session will thus have more similar intrasession histories, and thus have sources of similarity other than the exposure to the visual materials (Campbell and Stanley 1966). Each test subject was given a prescreening questionnaire in order to obtain socio-demographic information, as well as determine their partisanship and ideology, their religiosity, and how often they consume religious, satirical and news media. After then being exposed to one of the three video clips, test subjects were then each given a brief post-screening questionnaire to gauge their opinions as to both the issue of gay marriage as well as the selected out-groups that were featured within the visual materials.

Hypotheses

Robinson’s (1976) videomalaise theory and its progeny propose that television presents a distorted vision of reality that is more negative and conflict-laden than the world outside the television screen (Dahl 1967; Forgette and Morris 2006; Martin 2008; Mutz 2007; Mutz and Reeves 2005). It is thus anticipated that exposure to non-news programs that contain political messages will lead to increased antipathy towards the out-groups targeted for derision in those programs. It is also anticipated that exposure to the treatments will not lead to a corresponding increase in warm feelings towards the implied in-groups for each form of media. While

television can present external targets for hostility or contempt, videomalaise theory taken to its next logical step would hold that television does not also foster positive, inclusive sentiments towards the “in group” broadcasting the message. In other words, television is a tool that can knock down, but it cannot build back up. Considering the work done in political science as well as in fields such as psychology demonstrating the importance of emotions in how humans make decisions as to how to react to stimuli, and the precedence that negative emotions have in this decision making process, it is further expected that viewership of non-news programs will lead respondents to feel negatively towards the out-groups featured in those programs without any corresponding positive feelings towards the groups diametrically opposed to those out-groups (Carter, Stamm and Heintz-Knowles 1992; Damasio 2003; Gunnell 2007; Lodge, McGraw and Stroh 1989; Lodge, Steenbergen and Brau 1995; Lodge, Stroh and Wahlke 1990 McCombs 1999; Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000; Martin 2008; Miller 2007; Mutz 2007; Zajonc 1980). This leads to four hypotheses that will be tested using this experimental design:

H1. Exposure to religious media should increase negative feelings towards homosexuals, and exposure to satirical media should not affect feelings towards homosexuals.

H1A. Subjects viewing *The 700 Club* video should have a lower mean Feeling Towards Homosexuals score than subjects viewing the *Local News* video.

H1B. Subjects viewing *The Daily Show* video should have the same mean Feeling Towards Homosexuals score as subjects viewing the *Local News* video.

H2. Exposure to religious media should increase antipathy for gay marriage, and exposure to satirical media should not affect feelings towards gay marriage.

H2A. Subjects viewing *The 700 Club* video should have a lower mean Support For Same-Sex Marriage score than subjects viewing the *Local News* video

H2B. Subjects viewing *The Daily Show* video should have the same mean Support For Same-Sex Marriage score as subjects viewing the *Local News* video.

H3. Exposure to religious media should not affect feelings towards the Church of Latter-Day Saints (CLDS), and exposure to satirical media should increase negative feelings towards the CLDS.

H3A. Subjects viewing *The 700 Club* video should have the same mean Feeling Towards CLDS score as subjects viewing the *Local News* video.

H3B. Subjects viewing *The Daily Show* video should have a lower mean Feeling Towards CLDS score than subjects viewing the *Local News* video.

H4. Exposure to religious media should not affect feelings towards conservative Christians, and exposure to satirical media should increase negative feelings conservative Christians.

H4A. Subjects viewing *The 700 Club* video should have the same mean Feelings Towards Conservative Christians score as subjects viewing the *Local News* video.

H4B. Subjects viewing *The Daily Show* video should have a lower mean Feelings Towards Conservative Christians score than subjects viewing the *Local News* video.

The testing of the hypotheses was conducted in two stages. For each treatment, there was one level of analysis where all respondents exposed to a given treatment were analyzed. There was a second level of analysis where respondents were grouped by partisan affiliation. The two levels of analysis enables the researcher-and the readers of this dissertation-to explore first whether there is a more general effect from consuming non-news programs with political messages, and secondly, whether there is also partisanship-determined effect that comes from consuming such messages. The second stage of analysis also allows for the researcher to determine whether the general effects of consuming non-news programs with political messages are, in fact, being driven by the partisanship of the viewing audience.

Data

In total there were 175 respondents in the experimental design coming from MTurk. MTurk workers were financially compensated for their participation, being paid \$0.25 for their completion of the survey¹⁷. Of the 175 respondents, roughly 63% returned surveys completed in their entirety, and there is an n of 110 completed surveys. A total of 134 respondents were exposed to one of the three treatments. Many respondents answered the questions of interest to

¹⁷ As referenced in Berinsky, Huber and Lenz 2012, MTurk can be used to route workers to surveys hosted on other online sources, such as Qualtrics, and that is what was done for this dissertation. MTurk workers were provided with the same randomized, two-digit code and timestamp, and provided this to the author. Payment was then authorized for the MTurk workers.

this dissertation, but skipped over questions that were not analyzed. Excluding these respondents from analysis serves little utility. Analysis conducted on all returned surveys, rather than simply the completed surveys, is therefore presented in this dissertation¹⁸. Earlier, published studies that have used experimental designs to measure media effects used sample sizes of less than 100; 85 respondents were used in Iyengar's 1987 article, and only 28 to 29 respondents were used in Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder's 1982 article. More recent published works in the media effects literature have used much larger groups. Recent published works include sample sizes of 468 (Miller 2007) and 919 (Norris and Sanders) being used in some designs. Experimental designs most similar to the one utilized in this dissertation have used sample sizes of 135 (Forgette and Morris 2006) and 157 (Hayes 2008). It is safe to say that the present work's sample size will be sufficient to derive generalizable, relevant results.

Among respondents who completed the entire survey, 36 received the satirical treatment, 41 received the religious treatment and 33 received the local news/control treatment. Among all respondents who received one of the three treatments, 50 received the religious treatment, 45 received the satirical treatment and 39 received the local news/control treatment. The average age for respondents is 36. The age of respondents runs from a low of 18 years old to a high of 67 years old. Partisanship among respondents skews more Democratic than the national average,

¹⁸ Analysis was also conducted on only the 110 surveys that were completed in their entirety. Apart from exposure to *The Daily Show* leading to more positive feelings towards CLDS among Republican respondents, albeit not at a statistically significant level, there were no statistically significant differences between the analysis conducted on only those surveys completed in their entirety and those surveys where questions of interest were answered, but the surveys were not completed.

with 30.83% of respondents considering themselves to be Republican or leaning Republican, 9.02% considering themselves Independent and 60.15% Democratic or leaning Democratic.¹⁹

The dependent variable used to test for feelings towards homosexuals is a 100-point feeling thermometer, where respondents were told to place the thermometer on a scale of “0” (lowest) to “100” (highest) to gauge their feelings towards homosexuals²⁰. Analysis of the pool of respondents reveals significant findings (See Table 3.1).

¹⁹ Recent (2011) national polls showed the partisan split of the United States to be 31% Democratic, 27% Republican and 40% Independent (Jones 2012).

²⁰ One possible point of confusion due to the way the feeling thermometers are numbered (0-100) is that some respondents may have intended to indicate the strongest possible displeasure for a group by leaving the feeling thermometer at “0” and other respondents may simply have not answered the question at all.

Table 3.1. Comparison of Mean “Feelings Toward Homosexuals” Scores

Media (Video)	n	Mean (std. err.)	Difference from Local News mean	Hypothesis ^a	t-statistic (p-value)
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	48	45.688 (4.287)	-17.424	H1A H ₀ : Diff ≥ 0	-2.490 (.0076)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	36	63.111 (5.702)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	43	63.302 (5.035)	0.191	H1B H ₀ : Diff = 0	0.025 (.9799)
<i>Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents only</i>					
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	27	52.481 (5.753)	-22.475	H1A H ₀ : Diff ≥ 0	-2.490 (.0043)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	23	74.957 (5.807)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	27	65.957 (6.374)	-9.253	H1B H ₀ : Diff = 0	-1.062 (.2945)
<i>Republicans and Republican-leaning independents only</i>					
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	16	34.375 (5.992)	-17.514	H1A H ₀ : Diff ≥ 0	-1.271 (.2200)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	9	51.889 (11.001)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	12	59.500 (9.154)	7.6111	H1B H ₀ : Diff = 0	0.519 (.6102)

^a Both H1A and H1B difference-in-means tests assume equal variances. ; p-values for equal variance F-tests are .2880 for H1A and .6386 for H1B. For Democrats only, they are .9700 and .7534, respectively. For Republicans only they are .3573 and .8743, respectively.

Compared to the control group--respondents exposed to the local news clip discussing Proposition 8--respondents exposed to the clip of religious media have statistically significantly lower opinions towards homosexuals. Using a two-sample t-test with equal variances, the difference in means drops from an average of 63 for respondents exposed to local news to an average approximately 46 for respondents exposed to the clip from *The 700 Club* (See Table 3.1). When the partisanship of the respondents is taken into consideration, exposure to the clip from *The 700 Club* is still shown to demonstrate stronger antipathy towards homosexuals than found in the control group. Most striking is the fact that there is a large and statistically significant drop in feelings towards homosexuals among *Democrats* who view the clip from *The 700 Club* (See Table 3.1). Democratic respondents exposed to the local news clip had an average feeling thermometer score of 75 towards homosexuals, while Democrats exposed to the clip from *The 700 Club* reported an average feeling score of 52. This 23-point difference is statistically significant at the .01 level (See Table 3.1). Republicans exposed to local news have lower mean feelings towards homosexuals--a mean score of approximately 52--than Democrats exposed to either *The 700 Club* or to those exposed to local news. Republicans exposed to *The 700 Club* have an even lower mean score towards homosexuals, approximately 34, but the difference between Republicans exposed to local news and Republicans exposed to *The 700 Club* was not found to be statistically significant at the .05 level (See Table 3.1). It should be noted that, even while not significant at the .05 level, the difference between the control group and the test group still moved in the appropriate direction to support Hypothesis 1. Coupled with the significant findings when respondents are not examined according to party, as well as the significant differences found between Democrats who were placed in the control group and Democrats

exposed to *The 700 Club*, it can be said that analysis of the homosexual feeling thermometer has yielded significant support for Hypothesis 1.

Feelings towards homosexuals was also used as a dependent variable during multivariate analysis. In an ordinary least squares model, exposure to *The 700 Club*, partisanship--where Republicans and Republican-leaning Independents were coded “-1,” Independents coded “0,” and Democrats and Democratic-leaning Independents were coded “1,”--age--an interval variable where respondents wrote in their age--and religiosity--an additive variable using questions asking respondents as to their church attendance and their belief in Biblical literalism--were used as independent variables as a way to test for the impact that exposure to *The 700 Club* had upon views towards homosexuals while still controlling for other pertinent factors. As Table 3.2 demonstrates, even when additional controls were added, exposure to *The 700 Club* resulted in statistically significantly lowered feelings towards homosexuals. At the .05 level, exposure to *The 700 Club* resulted in a 17.6 point difference in feelings towards homosexuals, controlling for the respondents’ partisan affiliation, age, and religiosity. Unexpectedly, exposure to *The 700 Club* also led to significantly lower feelings towards The Church of Latter-Day Saints. As Table 3.4 indicates, this decrease is most pronounced in Democratic and Independent respondents.

Table 3.2. OLS and Logit Estimations

Independent Variable	Coefficient estimate (std. err.) by estimation type and dependent variable			
	OLS Feelings towards gays	Logit Not opposed to gay marriage	OLS Feelings towards CLDS	OLS Feelings toward conservative Christians
Constant	82.928 (14.078)	2.003 (1.130)	11.765 (10.844)	18.147 (11.116)
Religious treatment dummy	-17.641 (7.098) p = .014	-1.140 (0.586) p = .052	-13.822 (5.387) p = .012	3.646 (5.487) <i>p</i> = .832
Satirical treatment dummy	-2.072 (7.069) <i>p</i> = .770	-0.816 (0.588) <i>p</i> = .544	-1.218 (5.380) <i>p</i> = .821	1.166 (5.487) <i>p</i> = .832
Democrat dummy	8.707 (10.659) <i>p</i> = .416	1.720 (0.828) <i>p</i> = .038	-1.788 (8.164) <i>p</i> = .827	-10.378 (8.362) <i>p</i> = .217
Republican dummy	-6.872 (11.386) <i>p</i> = .547	-6.872 (11.386) <i>p</i> = .547	14.647 (8.665) <i>p</i> = .094	12.087 (8.880) <i>p</i> = .176
Religiosity	-3.220 (1.644) p = .053	-0.374 (0.137) p = .006	4.353 (1.258) p = .053	10.427 (1.286) p = .000
Age	-0.426 (0.208) p = .043	-0.035 (0.017) p = .039	0.350 (0.162) p = .033	0.104 (0.165) <i>p</i> = .532
n	116	119	115	116
Adj. R ²	.172	.265	.227	.464
F, χ^2	4.99	43.53	6.59	17.56

Note: *p*-values are for two-tailed tests. F-statistics are shown for the OLS regressions, and the χ^2 -statistic is shown for the Logit regression. The Adjusted R² shown for the Logit regression is the pseudo-R² estimated by Stata.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that exposure to *The 700 Club* should result in decreased support for same-sex marriage and that exposure to *The Daily Show* should not have a statistically significant impact on support for same-sex marriage. Support for same-sex marriage was gauged in the post-screening series of questions using a five-point ordinal variable where respondents

were asked as to how strongly they agreed/disagreed with a statement saying that same-sex marriages should have the same rights and legal recognition as traditional marriages. This variable was then converted into a binomial variable whereby respondents expressing support for gay marriage were coded as “1” and those opposed to gay marriage were coded as “0.” Using a Pearson’s chi-square test, it was found that respondents who were exposed to *The 700 Club* were significantly less likely to support gay marriage than respondents who were exposed to the local news clip (See Table 3.3). When examining whether party played a role in respondents views towards gay marriage, both Democrats and Republicans who were exposed to *The 700 Club* were less likely to support gay marriage than those exposed to the local news clip (See Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Comparison of Proportions of Subjects Opposed to Gay Marriage

Media (Video)	n	Pct. (No.) opposed to gay marriage ^a	Difference from Local News pct.	Hypothesis	z-statistic (p-value)
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	49	53.06 (26)	21.48	H2A H ₀ : Diff ≤ 0	2.004 (.0225)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	38	31.58 (12)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	43	44.19 (19)	12.61	H2B H ₀ : Diff = 0	1.165 (.2440)
<i>Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents only</i>					
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	28	39.29 (11)	22.62	H2A H ₀ : Diff ≤ 0	1.795 (.0363)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	24	16.67 (4)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	27	22.22 (6)	5.56	H2B H ₀ : Diff = 0	0.499 (.6179)
<i>Republicans and Republican-leaning independents only</i>					
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	16	75.00 (12)	15.00	H2A H ₀ : Diff ≤ 0	0.806 (.2101)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	10	60.00 (6)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	12	83.33 (10)	23.33	H2B H ₀ : Diff = 0	1.224 (.2211)
<i>Independents</i>					
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	4	75.00 (3)	25.00	H2A H ₀ : Diff ≤ 0	0.730 (.2326)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	4	50.00 (2)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	4	75.00 (3)	25.00	H2B H ₀ : Diff = 0	0.730 (.4652)

^a Percent of subjects answering either “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” to the statement “Marriages between same-sex couples should be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages.”

Among Democrats this decrease in support for gay marriage was, as seen when analyzing Democrats' feelings towards homosexuals after exposure to *The 700 Club*, statistically significant. Among Republicans, the decrease was again not found to be significant. A logit model which incorporated the same controls in testing for the impact of exposure to religious media on feelings towards same-sex marriage found that exposure to *The 700 Club* again resulted in statistically significant movement in the expected direction (See Table 3.2).

Testing the impact of consuming satirical media produces statistically insignificant results. Exposure to *The Daily Show* does not increase positive feelings among Democrats--or non-Democrats--towards homosexuals or towards gay marriage (See Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3). We do not see Democrats moving favorably towards gay marriage or towards homosexuals upon exposure to *The Daily Show*. In fact, there is a drop in feelings towards both homosexuals and towards gay marriage among Democrats after exposure to *The Daily Show*, although this movement is statistically insignificant (See Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3). Exposure to *The Daily Show* produced mixed and statistically insignificant results among Republicans, with Republicans being exposed to the satirical media treatment having slightly warmer feelings towards homosexuals than those in the control group (See Table 3.1), but being less likely to support gay marriage (Table 3.3).

As to the impact of *The Daily Show* increasing out-group alienation towards the groups targeted for ridicule or scorn in the context of its comedy--in this case, conservative Christians and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints--among Democrats results again move in the predicted directions, but fail to reach statistical significance (See Tables 3.4 and 3.5).

Table 3.4 Comparison of Mean “Feelings Toward the Church of Latter-Day Saints” Scores

Media (Video)	n	Mean (std. err.)	Difference from Local News mean	Hypothesis ^a	t-statistic (p-value)
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	47	26.404 (3.327)	-7.380	H3A H ₀ : Diff = 0	-1.362 (.1768)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	37	33.784 (4.408)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	42	34.405 (4.147)	0.621	H3B H ₀ : Diff ≥ 0	0.102 (.5406)
<i>Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents only</i>					
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	26	23.115 (5.753)	-9.754	H3A H ₀ : Diff = 0	-1.313 (.1967)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	23	32.870 (6.168)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	26	25.423 (6.374)	-7.447	H3B H ₀ : Diff ≥ 0	-1.020 (.1872)
<i>Republicans and Republican-leaning independents only</i>					
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	16	34.750 (5.992)	-2.550	H3A H ₀ : Diff = 0	-0.340 (.7369)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	10	37.300 (3.792)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	12	56.667 (8.604)	19.367	H3B H ₀ : Diff ≥ 0	2.060 (.9714)
<i>Independents only</i>					
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	4	14.500 (8.190)	-15.750	H3A H ₀ : Diff = 0	-0.707 (.5191)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	4	30.250 (20.72)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	4	26.000 (12.40)	-4.250	H3B H ₀ : Diff ≥ 0	-0.176 (.4330)

^a Equal-variance difference-in-means *t*-tests are conducted if the *p*-value for the equal variance *F*-test is < .20; otherwise unequal-variances *t*-tests are conducted. *F*-tests *p*-values are .2990 for H3A and .9711 for H3B. For Democrats-only, they are .1045 and .0592, respectively. For Republicans-only they are .0249 and .0108, respectively.

Table 3.5 Comparison of Mean “Feelings Toward Conservative Christian” Scores

Media (Video)	n	Mean (std. err.)	Difference from Local News mean	Hypothesis ^a	t-statistic (p-value)
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	47	44.745 (4.819)	-8.340	H4A H ₀ : Diff = 0	-1.244 (.2170)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	37	36.405 (4.423)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	43	39.535 (4.928)	3.130	H4B H ₀ : Diff ≥ 0	0.466 (.6788)
<i>Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents only</i>					
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	26	33.346 (5.954)	-0.045	H4A H ₀ : Diff = 0	-0.005 (.9958)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	23	33.391 (6.174)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	27	30.926 (5.557)	-2.465	H4B H ₀ : Diff ≥ 0	-0.297 (.3837)
<i>Republicans and Republican-leaning independents only</i>					
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	16	60.625 (5.992)	15.825	H4A H ₀ : Diff = 0	1.506 (.1450)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	10	44.800 (6.081)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	12	65.250 (8.307)	20.450	H4B H ₀ : Diff ≥ 0	1.915 (.9651)
<i>Independents only</i>					
Religious (<i>The 700 Club</i>)	4	61.250 (20.67)	28.500	H4A H ₀ : Diff = 0	1.132 (.3007)
Local News (<i>KCRA 3 News</i>)	4	32.750 (14.36)	---	---	---
Satirical (<i>The Daily Show</i>)	4	20.500 (11.86)	-12.250	H4B H ₀ : Diff ≥ 0	-0.658 (.2674)

^a Equal-variance difference-in-means *t*-tests are conducted if the *p*-value for the equal variance *F*-test is < .20; otherwise unequal-variances *t*-tests are conducted. *F*-tests *p*-values are .2041 for H4A and .2640 for H4B. For Democrats-only, they are .9112 and .8945, respectively. For Republicans-only they are .2001 and .2362, respectively.

The dependent variables used in this series of tests are 100-point feeling thermometers where respondents were told to place on a scale of “0” (lowest) to “100” (warmest) their feelings towards The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and conservative Christians, respectively. It is worth noting that Republicans exposed to the satirical media treatment grew *more* fond of both conservative Christians and of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, although this movement is only marginally (at the .10 level) significant (See Tables 3.4 and 3.5). It is possible that there is a kind of “backlash” effect that comes from being exposed to television programs that explicitly mock or ridicule one’s beliefs or one’s peer group.

Conclusion

Exposure to the religious media treatment resulted in statistically significantly lower feelings towards homosexuals and towards gay marriage among Democrats, but not Republicans. Why might this be so? Readers should recall the strong link between televangelism and the tent revivals of the early-to-mid 20th Century. The purpose of conducting revivals was not to “preach to the choir,” but to win new converts and bring those who were unchurched or who had fallen away from religion back into regular church attendance (Harrell 1985). It is thus possible that Pat Robertson’s message is not tailored to be most persuasive among Republicans--who already had fairly negative opinions towards homosexuals and gay marriage--but among Democrats who had minimal experience in being exposed to that sort of rhetoric. Readers should also bear in mind that Pat Robertson is a highly charismatic²¹ man who has had a great deal of success over his four-decade long broadcasting career. It therefore stands to reason that those who have never heard Robertson’s message before could find themselves, at least momentarily, swayed by

²¹ The word “charismatic” is here being used in the secular sense, meaning, “exercising a compelling charm that inspires devotion in others.”

Robertson's appeals to national unity and his claim that no nation that has promoted homosexuality has endured. Similarly, Democratic respondents may have been familiar with *The Daily Show* and already held crystallized opinions towards Mormons and Christian conservatives. As such, Stewart's ridicule of these groups presented the respondents with nothing unfamiliar and thus failed to "move the dial." The fact that neither treatment caused statistically significant increased warmth towards in-groups bolsters the argument of this dissertation that television does little to increase positive feelings, but much to increase alienation and mistrust of societal "others."

As with any experimental design, there may be questions about the external validity of the results. The reasons for the statistical significance in consuming the religious media treatment, but not the satirical media treatment, could be contingent upon the vagaries of this particular pool of respondents. In order to demonstrate the broad generalizability of the central theses of this dissertation, the following chapter explores the impact of consuming non-news programming with political messaging--again religious and satirical television--by analyzing large-n, nationally collected cross-sectional data.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS OF CROSS-SECTIONAL DATA

Chapter Three presented results of an experimental design demonstrating that respondents exposed to religious media had increased antipathy towards targeted social out-groups. Chapter Three also presented mixed results regarding the consumption of satirical media. Having utilized an experimental design to explore the impact of consuming non-news programs that contain political messages, this dissertation now looks to test these results with larger samples in a less controlled setting. In order to test the external validity of the last chapter's findings, this chapter uses large-n cross-sectional data to test four hypotheses. It is expected that increased exposure to satirical media and religious media will be correlated with increased antipathy towards targeted out-groups. However, it is anticipated that there will be no corresponding increased warm feelings towards liberal groups or public figures associated with increased consumption of satirical media. It will additionally be demonstrated that consumers of religious media are not necessarily members of The Religious Right by demonstrating distinctions between consumers of religious media and agreement with planks of the Republican Party platform.

What is a Religious Television “Viewer,” and What is “Viewing”?

Despite the great changes in the world of mass media in the past thirty years, it still stands to reason that the religious television viewer remains distinct from the viewers of the various flavors of non-religious television. Academic work following Gerbner et al. (1984) explores the question of who consumes religious media, and has found that the consumer of

religious media is distinct from the general public in several notable ways (Abelman 1987a; Hoover 1987; Pettersson 1986). This work shall demonstrate not only that the consumer of religious media is distinct from the general public, but that it is due to their consumption of religious television that they are distinct. It will also be demonstrated that consumers of satirical television possess socio-demographic factors differentiating themselves from the American public, generally, but also different attitudes. Again, it will be demonstrated that it is the consumption of the satirical television messages that causes the viewer to hold these distinct views. Viewers of satirical media have been found to be generally younger, better educated, more likely to be urban and more affluent than the general public (Baumgartner and Morris 2006; Cantor 1999; Cao 2008; Carr 1992; Fox and Sahin 2007; Hart and Hartelius 2007; Holbert et al. 2007; Hollander 2005; LaMarre et al. 2009; Young and Esralew 2011) but there has been no study akin to Gerbner et al. (1984) proffering that there exists an entire “satirical mainstream,” to act as a basis of comparison. There is also no question about how to define a “viewer” of satirical television. This is not the case with religious television.

There are a few hurdles facing the researcher who wishes to measure attributes among those who watch religious television in the United States. Some of these hurdles do not exist in such treacherous form for those wishing to study the media effects of other television broadcasts, such as the other subject of this dissertation, satirical media. These hurdles include the fact that religious television programming has proven controversial. In order to minimize--or inflate--the influence of religious broadcasters, detractors and televangelists each had a vested interest in the number of viewers of religious television. This made the total number of viewers of religious television a contentious political point. Another hurdle is defining what is meant by “religious programming,” given the wide variety of television shows that can be considered religious.

Finally, there is also the difficulty of answering the first question that must be addressed: what is a “viewer?”

A problem that has vexed researchers is simply determining what constitutes “viewing” in a basic, empirical sense. While reliable numbers can be obtained in terms of how many religious television channels, radio stations and television programs exist (Stacey and Shupe 1982), more ticklish is the matter of determining how many viewers of religious broadcasting there are. The basic question that must be tackled is, how much religious broadcasting does one have to view in order to be classified as someone who views religious broadcasting? Estimates have varied from under 10 million Americans to over 100 million Americans (Horsfield 1984; Hoover 1987; Stacey and Shupe 1982). It should be kept in mind, too, that the size of the audience for The Electronic Church is a somewhat controversial subject. Just as critics and detractors of The Electronic Church want to minimize the influence of religious television, supporters of religious television--the televangelists themselves, in particular--have an interest in claiming a much larger audience share than they may actually command (Abelman and Neuendorf 1987; Horsfield 1984; Hughey 1990). A recent (April, 2001) Pew Research Center poll indicated that 49% of all Americans watched religious television, or listened to religious radio shows, “at least sometimes,” with 20% listening “frequently.” 16% stated they “hardly ever” watched religious television or listened to religious radio shows, with only 34% saying they never listened to or watched religious broadcasting (Pew Research Center 2001). The very different numbers produced when trying to determine the audience for religious media come in no small part from the very different ways used in calculating how much time one has to report watching religious broadcasting in order to be classified as a “viewer.”

The A.C. Nielsen Company, in their 1985 survey commissioned by Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, defined someone as a "viewer" of religious broadcasting if they watched six minutes or more of such programming in a month, while two academic studies only defined someone as a viewer of religious broadcasting if they watched fifteen or more minutes of such programming in a week (Hoover 1987). While researchers have made headway into understanding the demographic characteristics of the audience of religious broadcasting, one thing that is not clear is just how many Americans actually view religious broadcasting. Even keeping these difficulties in mind, reliable estimates for the number of Americans watching religious programming still put the number of viewers around 15-20 million Americans a week (Bruce 1990; Green 1992; Hoover 1987). This is a significant bloc of the United States population.

The GSS data utilized for the present study defines viewership in terms of how many hours and minutes a week a respondent watches "religious shows on television." Rather than dealing with the difficult matter of defining someone as a "viewer" of religious programming, analysis can be performed in order to see relationships between increased viewership of religious broadcasting and the holding of specific beliefs and attitudes. By focusing on whether or not watching more religious programming makes one more or less likely to hold certain beliefs, the dissertation does not need to address head-on the more difficult question of assigning the label of "viewer" to someone who watches religious programming based on how often they watch religious programming.

The question as to how to define someone as being a "viewer" of religious programming is related to another difficulty in attempting to examine the consumption of religious media; the

multitude of religious programming that is being treated as the monolithic concept, “religious programming.” As Abelman (1987) discusses:

“Religious fare consists of just about every popular secular programming genre, including talk shows (“The 700 Club”), game shows (“Bible Bowl”), children’s shows (“Davy and Goliath”), soap operas (“Another Life”), news-magazine shows (“Reel to Real”), sports programming (“Athletes in Action”) and music/variety shows (“PTL Club”) (Abelman 1987; 200)²²

Viney (1999) and Park and Baker (2007) each provide more recent breakdowns of this wide variety of religious programming, and the respective audiences for each type of religious television program. Due to the somewhat distinct nature of the television industry in the United Kingdom²³--the area of focus for Viney (1999)--an in depth analysis of Viney (1999) would provide more diversion than insight as to the areas of interest for this dissertation. More utility will be derived from exploring Park and Baker (2007) and their exploration of religious media in the American context. Park and Baker (2007) analyze the variety of religious programs and theatrically released motion pictures--among other forms of media--and find some distinguishing features between those who consume the distinct forms of religious television programs. To provide an example of the diverse forms of religious mass media and their audiences, it was demonstrated that viewers of *Touched by an Angel* were more likely to be older, female and far less likely to be well educated than those who viewed the Mel Gibson film *The Passion of the Christ*. Overall, respondents were more likely to have viewed more mainstream programs on

²² See also Straub (1988) and the discussion on Pat Robertson’s CBN founding a news program and a soap opera; pgs. 72-74, 82-87

²³ Including, but not limited to, state ownership of the major television networks in the United Kingdom, the lack of any strictly religious television networks and the fact that religious programs must conform to the ITC Programme Code. It still warrants mentioning that Svennevig et al. (1988), which also looked at the audiences for religious programming in the UK, found that viewers of religious programming tended to be older and female. Viney (1999) also found that the most popular religious program, *Songs of Praise* had an older audience.

network television such as *Seventh Heaven*, *Touched by an Angel* or *Joan of Arcadia* than have watched charismatic faith-healer--and former regent of Oral Roberts University (Bransetter 2007)--Benny Hinn's cable-only broadcast, *This is Your Day*. Unsurprisingly, mothers were most likely to have viewed the direct-to-video children's series *VeggieTales* (Park and Baker 2007). In short, this study is trying to deal with a broad swath of programs as a singular entity. While it seems difficult to imagine that someone who would not otherwise watch religious programming would make sure to tune into *Another Life*, it would have been beneficial to have been presented with data that would allow a researcher to distinguish just what sorts of religious programs the consumers of religious media are consuming. There are studies that addressed the content and format of religious television programs, but it would be presumptuous to assume that the figures presented in their work would be determinative of the formats viewed by the respondents in the GSS survey data (Abelman and Neuendorf 1987; Hadden and Swann 1981 Park and Baker 2007; Viney 1999).

The final hurdle in trying to collect data on the American public's use of religious broadcasting is what, exactly, constitutes *use* (Abelman 1987a). Hoover (1987) confronts the issue of trying to distinguish the quality of viewing and participation. Involvement in religious broadcasting, more than other types of media, can be seen as more than simply viewing the programs. As Hoover explains:

"Some contributors and 'members', seem not to view much at all, but can also articulate their sense of identification by contributing, subscribing to publications, attending local meetings of support groups for the broadcasters, traveling to the center where the program is produced, and participating in allied ministries and activities promoted by the broadcasts...Simply put, the measures of viewing most often used to assess the "audience" of the "Electronic Church" are totally inadequate to assess the depth and quality of the viewing experience, and are thus poorly fitted to the task of explaining the overall "impact" of religious broadcasting in any detail." (Hoover 1987; 148)

Thus, there is also the matter of *intensity* of viewership, something not regularly of concern in terms of media studies. Generally speaking one is or is not a viewer of a particular television program. When that program is built around exhortations for contributions, however, and indeed, when the lifeblood of the televangelist's ministry is receiving contributions from viewers, it would be of interest as to what proportion of viewers actually contribute to the ministry. Unfortunately, the GSS data upon which this study relies never asks, specifically, whether or not respondents contributed money to televangelists or religious media figures.²⁴

Hypotheses

Exposure to non-news programs that contain political messages should result in increased antipathy towards the out-groups mentioned in those broadcasts. As was mentioned in previous chapters, this expectation stems from an understanding of videomalaise theory and its progeny (Dahl 1967; Forgette and Morris 2006; Martin 2008; Mutz 2007; Mutz and Reeves 2005; Robinson 1976). It is not anticipated that the increased antipathy towards the out-groups derided in the broadcasts will be accompanied by a corresponding increase in positive feelings towards the apparent "in group" from whom the messages are being broadcast; specifically, it is not anticipated that watching satirical media will lead to stronger positive feelings towards liberal public figures or groups. In order to demonstrate that consumers of religious media are not simply socially conservative, Christian members of the Republican Party, it will also be demonstrated that consuming higher levels of religious media does not correlate significantly with support for specific planks of the Republican Party's platform.

²⁴ The GSS did ask how much one contributed to "other religious organizations" and to one's own congregation during the same time span as they asked regarding the consumption of religious broadcasts. However, no statistical significance was found between the amount of time one spends watching religious media and one's generosity in contributing to "other religious organizations" or to one's own congregation.

H1: Higher levels of religious media consumption will result in stronger antipathy towards the out-groups targeted by religious media;

H2: Higher level of religious media consumption will not be significantly correlated with Republican Party platform positions such as opposition to gun control, support for the death penalty and support for The Drug War;

H3: Higher levels of satirical media consumption will result in stronger antipathy towards conservative public figures and social groups;

H4: Higher levels of satirical media consumption will not be significantly correlated with positive feelings towards liberal public figures or groups.

Data and Methods

In addition to the experiment discussed in the last chapter, this dissertation will also feature statistical analysis of large, nationally conducted surveys. The data on the consumption of religious television was assembled and provided by General Social Survey (GSS) of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago in their General Social Surveys Cumulative file, 1972-2010. This file provides a total of 55,087 completed interviews with adults in the United States for analysis, though questions pertaining to watching religious television--“About how much time per week, in hours and minutes, do you normally spend watching religious shows on television?”--were only asked in the time periods 1988-1991 and again in 1998; a total of 5,813 respondents were asked about watching religious television. Controls for the respondents’ relevant socio-demographic characteristics--including their partisanship, ideological preferences, age, gender, income and whether respondents lived in an urban or rural area--are included in the linear regression models utilized in testing Hypotheses 1 and 2. Age, gender, residing in a rural area and income have all previously been demonstrated to be correlated with increased religiosity (Argue, Johnson and White 1999; Chalfant and Heller 1991; Joshi, Hardy and Hawkins 2009; Miller and Hoffman 1995). Age is an interval variable where respondents are asked their age in years. Gender is a binomial variable coded “1” for male and

“2” for female. Whether the respondent is from an urban or rural environment is controlled for using the variable “xnorcsiz,” an ordinal variable where respondents could choose the size of the city where they reside, from “large central city (over 250,000),” coded “1” to “open country within larger civil divisions, e.g., township, division,” coded “10.” Income was controlled for using the ordinal variable, “Income,” where respondents were asked to place their total family income from all sources before taxes for the last year on a scale running from “Under \$1,000,” coded as “1” to “\$60,000 or over,” coded as “20.”²⁵ Controlling for partisanship and ideology ensures that the statistical analysis is not simply capturing the views of “The Religious Right.” Partisanship is controlled for using the variable “partyid,” an ordinal variable where respondents were asked whether they viewed themselves anywhere from “Strong Democrat,” coded “0,” to “Strong Republican,” coded “7.” Ideology was controlled for using the ordinal variable “polviews,” where respondents could place themselves on a 7 point scale from “Extremely Liberal,” coded “1” to “Extremely Conservative,” coded “7.” Additional tests are also conducted to demonstrate how viewers of religious television are distinct from socially conservative Republicans.²⁶

The data on the consumption of satirical television was assembled and provided by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania in their 2004 NAES 2004 National Annenberg Election Rolling Cross-Sectional Survey. Ninety eight thousand, seven

²⁵ For respondents interviewed after 1990, the income brackets were adjusted and the highest, still coded as “20” is “\$75,000 or over.”

²⁶ It needs to be stressed that this dissertation does not aim to be another study of the Religious Right. There is already a fine volume of literature on the subject of the Christian Right, much of which has proven illuminating in providing proper context while performing the necessary research for this dissertation and inspiring some of the theories and hypotheses tested therein (Hertzke 1993; Jelen 1993; Klemp 2010; Lienesch 1982; Rozell and Wilcox 1996; Wilcox 1986; 2000). This dissertation is distinct from those works in that it explores the impact media has on those Americans who utilize religious television, specifically.

hundred and eleven interviews were conducted with adults in the United States during the campaign season of 2004 and for two months following the general election. Creating the main independent variable of interest, respondents were asked how many days in the past week they watched late night comedy programs “like ‘*The Late Show with David Letterman*’ ‘*The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*’ or ‘*The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*’.” This is an ordinal variable running from 0 to 7. A follow-up question then asked which late night comedy program they most often watched: ‘*The Late Show with David Letterman*’, ‘*The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*’, ‘*The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*’, ‘*Late Night with Conan O’Brien*’ or ”Other.” Control variables were created from the questions respondents were asked regarding their income, education, age, gender, race, partisanship, ideology, frequency of church attendance and whether they lived in an urban or rural area. Partisan ID was recoded as a binomial variable²⁷ where Republicans were coded as “0” and Democrats were coded as “1.” Ideology was controlled for using a 5 point ordinal scale running from “Very Conservative,” coded as “1” to “Very Liberal,” coded as “5.”²⁸ Education is a nine-point ordinal scale running from “Grade 8 or lower,” coded as “1” to “Graduate or Professional Degree,” coded as “9.” Gender is a binomial variable where males are coded as “0” and females are coded as “1.” Age is an interval level variable where the respondent gave their age in years. Income is a nine-point ordinal scale where respondents were asked to place their last year’s total household income before taxes on a scale of “Less than \$10,000,” coded as “1,” to “More than \$150,000,” coded as “9.” Race is a nominal, five point variable where Whites are coded as “1.” Race is included in the models essentially to check for

²⁷ Respondents who declared that they were Independents or “Something Else” were excluded from the models.

²⁸ In the NAES dataset, respondents who said they did not know the answer to a question or who refused to answer were coded as 998 and 999, respectively. These responses were not included in the models in this dissertation.

distinctions between white and non-white respondents. Whether a respondent lives in an urban or rural environment is controlled using a 3 point ordinal variable where respondents could choose whether they live in an “urban,” coded as “1,” “suburban,” coded as “2” and “rural,” coded as “3,” place of residence.

One question relevant to both the GSS and NAES datasets was how to code the religiosity of the respondents. Both the GSS and NAES ask a series of questions relating to a respondents’ religious behavior and denomination. Religiosity is relevant to views towards the out-groups targeted both by religious and satirical media, so finding the appropriate way to measure religiosity is of the utmost importance. Regarding the use of religious denominations to classify respondents, this work follows that of Olson and Warber (2008), Layman (1997) and Blazo and Russo (2013). These authors demonstrated that dividing Americans by denomination is less useful than observing levels of religious orthodoxy and moral conservatism among the adherents, regardless of denominational affiliations. Olson and Warber contend, “Conservative Baptists would have more in common politically with conservative Catholics than they would with fellow Baptists who are liberal” (Olson and Warber 2008: 193). Keeping this in mind, the variable constructed to measure religiosity in the GSS dataset includes a measure of Biblical literalism, as well as how often one prays. The use of this dynamic for gauging Christian orthodoxy is widespread in the relevant research and provides substantial validity (Bolce and De Maio 1999; Olson and Warber 2008; Wilcox 1986). One benefit of using biblical literalism is that it provides a crucial cross-denominational cleavage within the Christian majority of Americans. Whether the respondent is Protestant, Catholic, or nondenominational, a literal interpretation of the Bible implies religious conservatism (Hempel and Bartkowski 2008). Additionally, by looking at how the respondent views the Bible, rather than, for example,

frequency of attendance to religious services, it is ensured that the measure utilized accounts for those who are not only devout in practice, but strict in their beliefs as well (Blazo and Russo 2013; Layman 1997; Olson and Warber 2008; Scheufele, Nisbet and Brossard 2003).

Unfortunately, the NAES dataset does not contain questions pertaining to the respondents' views on Biblical literalism or frequency of prayer. As such, frequency of church attendance is used as a proxy for a respondents' religiosity. This is still in keeping with the extant literature in the field, including Olson and Warber (2008) and conforms with the assertion that denomination is a less useful measure of religious beliefs than outward characteristics of a respondents' religiosity.²⁹

The Annenberg dataset being analyzed for satirical media effects contains questions that allow to control for respondent ideology, income, level of education, age, gender, partisanship, race and whether or not the respondents lived in an urban, suburban or rural environment. Previous analyses have shown satirical television to be particularly popular among young, well-educated affluent urbanites, so controlling for these factors is essential (Baumgartner and Morris 2006; Cantor 1999; Cao 2008; Carr 1992; Fox and Sahin 2007; Hart and Hartelius 2007; Holbert et al. 2007; Hollander 2005; LaMarre et al. 2009; Young and Esralew 2011). Controlling for the socio-demographic criteria that make one likely to view satirical or religious television programs is done to demonstrate that, even among the groups most likely to consume these particular non-news programs with political messages, the consumption of these messages has an impact on their views towards the out-groups targeted during those broadcasts. Controlling for partisanship

²⁹ It should be kept in mind that the NAES' question about denomination includes Baptists, 'Christians', Jehovah's Witnesses, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians and non-denominational Christians all coded as "Protestants." This encompasses some of the most liberal denominations in the United States as well as some of the most conservative, particularly when one considers that many born again and evangelical Christians eschew labels other than "Christian." This unwieldy measure was thus not included in the models.

and ideology will make sure that any results showing respondents' antipathy towards George W. Bush or the National Rifle Association is not merely a result of the respondents' own partisanship or political ideology. Relevant to the present study, respondents were also asked about their television viewing habits. This includes specific questions regarding the viewing of late-night comedy programs such as *The Daily Show*. Respondents were also asked how much they trusted the two candidates running for President in 2004 (President George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry), as well as about the personal characteristics of the two candidates. Respondents were also asked to rate the favorability of groups including corporations, labor unions, the NRA and "Christian Groups." How respondents view these different groups--often placed on distinct ends of ideological and partisan divide--helps demonstrate how satirical programs influence viewers' feelings towards targeted out-groups as well as potential in-groups.

Breaking away from prior empirical studies of consumers of religious media, this study will control for the socio-demographic characteristics that seem most associated with watching religious television programming. Women, those with less money and those who live in rural areas tend not only to be more inclined to watch religious media; these socio-demographic groups are also generally just more religious than society as a whole (Argue, Johnson and White 1999; Chalfant and Heller 1991; Joshi, Hardy and Hawkins 2009; Miller and Hoffman 1995). It seems surprising, then, that prior studies examining the behavior or attitudes of consumers of religious broadcasting do not control for these characteristics. Additionally, it should hardly be surprising that the more religious segments of society are more likely to watch religious broadcasting than the less religious members of society. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, religiosity in the GSS dataset is measured via an additive variable consisting of how often the respondent prays and whether the respondent believes the Bible to be the literal word of God.

Results: Religious Television

Using logit models and data from the GSS circa 1988-1991 and 1998³⁰, a series of tests were conducted. The dependent variable in each of the models were questions from the GSS related to respondents' views towards atheists, homosexuals and Communists. This chapter will focus upon the models pertaining to homosexuals. This is both due to the strong support in the literature for believing homosexuals to be frequent foils for hosts of religious programs, and for the purposes of continuity as feelings towards homosexuals were discussed in the previous chapter.³¹ Respondents were asked whether they would want to ban books supporting homosexuals from their local libraries, whether they would allow a homosexual to teach at a college, and whether they felt homosexual should be allowed to "speak in (their) community." It also had to be determined that viewers of religious broadcasts were distinct from the more religious segments of society, generally, as well as distinct from the sort of person whose socio-demographic characteristics would make them likely to view religious broadcasting. Thus, controls were included for gender, income, size of respondent's current place of residence (city/town/village/etc.), and the religiosity of the respondent. Religiosity was measured via an additive variable based upon how often the respondent prays and their opinion as to the literalism of the Bible. Controls were also included for both the political partisanship of the respondents as well as their political ideology. These latter two controls are in place to ensure that consumers of religious broadcasting are not simply members of the "Religious Right" of the Republican Party, self-selecting to consume televised messages that coincide with their political worldview. Tests

³⁰ These were the two panels in which respondents were asked how much time per week, in hours and minutes, they normally spent watching religious shows on television

³¹ While frequent viewership of religious television was not significant in effecting respondents' views on whether atheists or Communists should be allowed to teach a college course, they remained significant in the predicted directions in the other four models.

were then conducted in order to see if those who consume religious media hold distinct views regarding specific out-groups targeted by religious television (Bruce 1990; Hughey 1990; Straub 1988). In each model, increased viewership of religious media causes one to be more likely to give the answer more hostile towards homosexuals (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Logit Estimations Demonstrating the Impact of Religious Media on Views Towards Homosexuals

Coefficient estimate (std. err.) by estimation type and dependent variable			
Independent Variable	Logit Gays speaking in community	Logit Gays teaching a college course	Logit Banning a book in favor of homosexuality
Constant	0.206 (.510)	0.284 (.462)	0.333 (0.455)
Watches Religious TV	-0.214 (0.55) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.248 (0.558) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.224 (0.055) <i>p</i> = .0001
Income	-0.99 (0.23) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.100 (0.21) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.044 (0.022) <i>p</i> = .0414
Sex	-0.493 (0.140) <i>p</i> = .0004	-0.563 (0.126) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.571 (0.123) <i>p</i> = .0001
Age	0.014 (0.004) <i>p</i> = .0005	0.020 (0.004) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.015 (0.003) <i>p</i> = .0001
Urban/Rural	0.136 (1.644) <i>p</i> = .00001	0.117 (0.021) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.083 (0.021) <i>p</i> = .0001
Religiosity	-0.292 (0.044) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.178 (0.036) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.289 (0.037) <i>p</i> = .0001
Political Ideology	0.150 (0.052) <i>p</i> = .0039	0.138 (0.46) <i>p</i> = .0029	-0.138 (0.046) <i>p</i> = .0025
Partisan ID	-0.036 (0.034) <i>p</i> = .2846	-0.019 (0.030) <i>p</i> = .5353	0.089 (0.030) <i>p</i> = .0032
n	1604	1588	1593
Adj. R ²	0.131	0.115	0.112
F, χ^2	214.6	220.78	219.84

Note: *p* –values are for two-tailed tests. The χ^2 -statistic is shown for the Logit regression. The Adjusted R² shown for the Logit regression is the pseudo-R² estimated by Stata.

In a slightly different vein, a regression was also run to see if increased consumption of religious media had a significant relationship with wanting to ban art “that mocks religion.” Again, even when controlling for socio-demographic characteristics and religiosity, increased consumption of religious broadcasting leads to increased support of banning said art. These findings lend support to the first two hypotheses asserted in this chapter; not only does a higher level of consumption of religious media lead one to hold views and beliefs distinct from religiously conservative members of society, Republicans and ideological conservatives, but these beliefs and attitudes are reflected in greater antipathy towards select out-groups.

Hypothesis 2 was tested by way of models analyzing whether increased viewing of religious television coincided with increased agreement with opinions on secular matters that tend to find uniform agreement among Republicans. It is understood that there would likely be some overlap with the Religious Right. However, if we look at *all* consumers of religious broadcasting, there may be some sharp distinctions from the Religious Right. For example, African-Americans are more likely to consume religious broadcasting than White Americans.³² Additionally, it is likely that even within the Religious Right, there may be a large population that does not consume religious broadcasting, and a smaller group that does. Additional analysis was conducted with this very question in mind; are frequent consumers of religious television simply a subset of the Religious Right, or is there a distinct effect coming from consuming the televised messages? This idea was tested by running logit models where it was examined whether watching religious television had any significant relationship with three issues commonly held in the Republican party: Opposition to the legalization of marijuana, opposition

³² See Pew Research Center Survey April 10, 2001, <http://people-press.org/report/?pageid=115>

to gun control, and support for the death penalty.³³ These are three issues where the Republican Party had--and remains to have--wholly clear positions (Republican Party Platform of 1988). Affinity for each of these issues were used as the dependent variable in a series of logit models, with controls for partisanship, ideology and socio-demographic criteria included, as well as religious television viewership. Marijuana legalization was coded as “0” for favoring legalization and “1” for opposition to the legalization of marijuana. Gun control was measured by a binomial variable wherein respondents were asked whether they supported (coded “0”) or opposed (coded “1”) potential gun buyers needing a police permit before they could purchase a firearm. Support for capital punishment was measured by a binomial variable where support for capital punishment was coded as “0” and opposition to capital punishment was coded “1.”

³³ Respondents were asked whether they would “favor or oppose a law which would require a person to obtain a police permit before he or she could buy a gun,” “Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal or not” and “Are you in favor of the death penalty for persons convicted of murder”. For each question, respondents were given a choice of “Yes,” “No” or “Don’t Know”.

Table 4.2 Logit Estimations Demonstrating the Impact of Religious Media on Views Towards Republican Platform Positions

Coefficient estimate (std. err.) by estimation type and dependent variable			
Independent Variable	Logit Support gun buyers needing police permits	Logit Favor or oppose the death penalty	Logit Favor or oppose legalization of marijuana
Constant	0.849 (.497)	-0.980 (.385)	0.670 (0.489)
Watches Religious TV	.011 (0.062) <i>p</i> = .8572	0.116 (0.045) <i>p</i> = .0105	.065 (0.076) <i>p</i> = .3898
Income	-0.029 (0.024) <i>p</i> = .2340	-0.049 (0.018) <i>p</i> = .0058	0.014 (0.025) <i>p</i> = .5755
Sex	-0.851 (0.133) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.252 (0.104) <i>p</i> = .0151	0.327 (0.130) <i>p</i> = .0124
Age	-0.003 (0.004) <i>p</i> = .4009	-0.003 (0.003) <i>p</i> = .2543	.011 (0.004) <i>p</i> = .0040
Urban/Rural	0.117 (0.023) <i>p</i> = .00001	-0.044 (0.018) <i>p</i> = .0164	.113 (0.025) <i>p</i> = .0001
Religiosity	-0.018 (0.038) <i>p</i> = .6384	-0.102 (0.03) <i>p</i> = .0006	-0.208 (0.040) <i>p</i> = .0001
Political Ideology	0.130 (0.051) <i>p</i> = .0102	-0.218 (0.039) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.322 (0.050) <i>p</i> = .0001
Partisan ID	0.080 (0.033) <i>p</i> = .0147	-0.126 (0.026) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.020 (0.034) <i>p</i> = .5687
n	1606	2300	1573
Adj. R ²	0.0624	0.0552	0.0992
F, χ^2	102.11	144.63	171.61

Note: *p* –values are for two-tailed tests. The χ^2 -statistic is shown for the Logit regression. The Adjusted R² shown for the Logit regression is the pseudo-R² estimated by Stata.

Increased viewing of religious television has no statistically significant relationship with views on the legalization of marijuana or gun control (Table 4.2). Running contrary to the standard Republican--and conservative--position of the day, viewing religious television programming is found to be significantly correlated with *opposition* to the death penalty (Table 4.2). These results lend support for the assertion that consumers of religious television are not simply Republicans with peculiar television viewing habits; rather, consumers of religious broadcasts are a distinct group of the American populace. There is a distinct effect of viewing religious television broadcasts.

Results: Satirical Television

Running a series of linear regressions on Annenberg data from 2004, greater viewership of late night comedies was found to be significantly correlated with being male, young, having a lower level of income Democratic partisan affiliation, living in an urban area, possessing a liberal ideology, decreased church attendance and increased levels of education. Race was not found to be significantly correlated with higher levels of watching late night talk shows. These results are not altogether surprising, considering how the literature has repeatedly found that satirical programming is the province of the young, “hip” educated urbanite (Baumgartner and Morris 2006; Cantor 1999; Cao 2008; Carr 1992; Fox and Sahin 2007; Hart and Hartelius 2007; Holbert et al. 2007; Hollander 2005; LaMarre et al. 2009; Young and Esralew 2011). Additional linear regressions that controlled for partisan affiliation, ideology, residing in an urban location, income, education, church attendance, age, gender and race were run, and it was found that those who watched late night comedies had significantly stronger negative feelings towards President

George W. Bush. These models used as their dependent variables a variety of questions relating to President Bush's personal qualities (See Tables 4.3 and 4.4)³⁴.

³⁴ For each of the opinion questions regarding President George W. Bush and Senator John F. Kerry, respondents were asked to place on a scale of 0 to 10 how much they agreed with a provided statement. Respondents were thus asked to place, on a scale of 0 to 10, how much they agreed with the statement that Bush was trustworthy, knowledgeable, out of touch, arrogant, reckless and that President Bush "shared their values". Similar questions were asked of respondents about Senator Kerry.

Table 4.3. OLS Results of Late Night Comedy's Impact on Views Towards George W. Bush: Positive Personality Traits

Independent Variable	Coefficient estimates (std. err.) by dependent variable		
	Feelings that Bush is trustworthy	Feelings that Bush shares respondents' values	Feelings that Bush is knowledgeable
Constant	9.60 (0.095)	9.841 (0.094)	10.158 (0.103)
Watching Late Night Comedy	-0.046 (0.008) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.045 (0.008) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.106 (0.009) <i>p</i> = .0001
Party ID	-3.906 (0.033) <i>p</i> = .0001	-4.072 (0.033) <i>p</i> = .0001	-3.083 (0.036) <i>p</i> = .0001
Ideology	-0.722 (0.016) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.847 (0.016) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.672 (0.017) <i>p</i> = .0001
Income	0.024 (0.008) <i>p</i> = .0020	0.036 (0.008) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.032 (0.008) <i>p</i> = .0001
Education	-0.085 (0.007) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.084 (0.007) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.188 (0.008) <i>p</i> = .0001
Age	0.004 (0.0009) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.001 (0.0009) <i>p</i> = .1471	-0.001 (0.001) <i>p</i> = .1645
Gender	0.083 (0.029) <i>p</i> = .0039	0.189 (0.028) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.33 (0.031) <i>p</i> = .0001
Race	-0.068 (0.017) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.05 (0.017) <i>p</i> = .0036	-0.019 (0.019) <i>p</i> = .2983
Urban or Rural	0.154 (0.020) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.158 (0.020) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.213 (0.022) <i>p</i> = .0001
n	34,844	34,746	27,531
Adj. R ²	0.470	.510	.405
F	3433.63	4022.57	2086.77

Note: *p* –values are for two-tailed tests.

Table 4.4. OLS Results of Late Night Comedy's Impact on Views Towards George W. Bush: Negative Personality Traits

Independent Variable	Coefficient estimates (std. err.) by dependent variable		
	Feelings that Bush is out of touch	Feelings that Bush is reckless	Feelings that Bush is arrogant
Constant	1.847 (0.153)	1.355 (0.124)	1.775 (0.152)
Watching Late Night Comedy	0.054 (0.014) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.54 (0.011) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.066 (0.014) <i>p</i> = .0001
Party ID	2.308 (0.054) <i>p</i> = .0001	2.584 (0.044) <i>p</i> = .0001	2.767 (0.054) <i>p</i> = .0001
Ideology	0.711 (0.026) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.662 (0.021) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.691 (0.26) <i>p</i> = .0001
Income	-0.04 (0.126) <i>p</i> = .0016	-0.02 (0.010) <i>p</i> = .0524	0.012 (0.013) <i>p</i> = .3524
Education	0.073 (0.011) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.100 (0.009) <i>p</i> = .0001	0.107 (0.011) <i>p</i> = .0001
Age	-0.002 (0.001) <i>p</i> = .1676	-0.003 (0.001) <i>p</i> = .0040	-0.004 (0.001) <i>p</i> = .0050
Gender	-0.109 (0.046) <i>p</i> = .0193	-0.316 (0.038) <i>p</i> = .0001	-0.356 (0.046) <i>p</i> = .0001
Race	-0.036 (0.028) <i>p</i> = .2077	0.027 (0.023) <i>p</i> = .2301	-0.043 (0.028) <i>p</i> = .1285
Urban or Rural	-0.065 (0.032) <i>p</i> = .0455	-0.088 (0.026) <i>p</i> = .0008	-0.051 (0.032) <i>p</i> = .1164
n	21,312	27,488	19,191
Adj. R ²	.209	.260	.269
F	626.30	1067.82	786.80

Note: *p* –values are for two-tailed tests.

It should be noted that viewership of late night comedies remained significant in each of these models, even as variables known to affect one's political opinions--such as race, income and residing in an urban location--would drop out of significance during some of the tests. Frequent viewership of late night talk shows was also significantly correlated with negative views of "Christian groups," even when all of the controls in the previous six models were included in the model. The consumption of satirical media did not have a statistically significant impact on viewers' feelings towards corporations, though it did run in the predicted, negative direction.

In a deviation from the hypotheses, it was found that viewing late night talk shows was significantly related with positive views towards 2004 Democratic Party Presidential candidate, Senator John F. Kerry of Massachusetts. Exposure to late night talk shows was found to have a significant positive relationship with views towards Senator Kerry's knowledge, trust in Senator Kerry and a belief that Senator John Kerry shared their values. These findings would seem to counter the contention proffered in this dissertation that, while television can increase negative feelings towards out-groups held up for ridicule, it is not likely to engender similar positive feelings towards in groups likely to be simpatico with the viewing audience. However, there are questionable results in looking for a similar relationship between viewing late night comedic talk shows and social groups that can be seen as liberal. Watching late night comedic talks shows was not found to be significant in a series of models where the dependent variables were feelings towards labor unions, environmental groups and Congressional Democrats³⁵, respectively.

³⁵ For each of the "group favorability" questions, respondents were asked to place the group on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being the lowest possible score. When asked about Congressional Democrats, however, respondents were asked whether they "strongly approved," "somewhat approved," "somewhat disapproved" or "strongly disapproved" of how the Democrats in Congress were performing. As such, this variable is an ordinal variable that runs from 1 to 4.

However, increased viewership of late night comedic talk shows was significantly correlated with warmer feelings towards homosexual groups and feminist groups. These findings warrant a revisiting of the Baum (2005) piece that was distinguished from this dissertation in an earlier chapter.

One of the points raised in Baum (2005) was that candidates for political office appear on talk shows in order to show their more “human” side, and subsequently curry favor with the public. Senator John Kerry appeared on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *The Daily Show with John Stewart* and *The Late Show with David Letterman* during the campaign season. President George W. Bush appeared on none of the above-mentioned programs, or any other comedic late night talk shows, during the 2004 campaign season.³⁶ It is thus possible that, even in the conflict-driven, negative world of television, personal appearances by a public figure can neutralize the otherwise negative vitriol that is broadcast over the airwaves.

As was mentioned earlier in this dissertation, there was been a recent spate of research centered on *The Daily Show* (Baumgartner and Morris 2006; Fox et al. 2007; Holbert et al. 2007; LaMarre et al. 2009; Landreville, Holbert and LaMarre 2010; Moy et al. 2005, 2006; Young 2004; Young and Tisinger 2006). In light of this interest in *The Daily Show*, the effects of this program in particular warrant consideration. Some might even argue that while Jon Stewart’s program is political, the other talk shows included in this dataset (*The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *Late Night with Conan O’Brien*, *The Late Show with David Letterman* and “Other”) are

³⁶ President Bush’s press secretary, Dana Perino, stated that President Bush, liked and respected the late night comedy programs, but he never went on them. “President Bush didn’t go on until after the presidency was over,” said Perino. “He just didn’t think it was a place where the president should be. And also, they’re dangerous” (Rothman 2012). However, then-candidate for president Governor George W. Bush appeared on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* in 2000 (Feldman 2012).

not political. The question to be addressed is: is Stewart's program driving the appearance that late night comedic talk shows cause negative opinions of conservative figures and groups? While this does not appear to necessarily be the case, *The Daily Show* does have some singular affects. The question on viewing late night talk shows was used to generate different dummy variables; one where viewing Stewart's show was coded "1" and viewership of any of the other listed programs (Leno's program, O'Brien's, Letterman's and "other) was coded "0." Similar variables were created for each of the other programs, plus "other." For each of these models, "other" was not included. Controls for partisan affiliation, ideology, age, income, urbanity, education, gender and race were included in each of the models. All of the tables presenting the results of these models can be found in the appendix of this dissertation.

When analyzing each of the late night talk shows individually, it is found that only *The Daily Show* remains significant in the predicted direction in thinking that President Bush does not share the same values as the viewer. Similar results are produced when analyzing the impact of late night talk shows on feelings towards the National Rifle Association (NRA). While there is no statistically significant relationship between watching late night talk shows and feelings towards the NRA when the looking at each of the programs individually, there is a negative, statistically significant relationship between viewing *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and feelings towards the NRA; none of the other talk shows produced a significant result. Similarly, when the dependent variable is the respondents' agreement with the statement that President George W. Bush is trustworthy, Stewart's program has a significant relationship and runs in the predicted direction . Viewing *The Daily Show* was found to be significantly, positively correlated with feeling that President George W. Bush is "reckless". However, Viewership of *The Daily Show* was not significantly correlated with negative feelings towards "Christian Groups," despite

the finding that viewing late night satirical talk shows was significantly related to negative feelings towards these groups.

Conclusion

Experimental designs are said to be high in internal validity, but low in external validity. As a way of adding to the external validity and generalizability of the results presented in the last chapter, large-n cross-sectional data culled from nationally conducted surveys was tested with a variety of OLS and ordered logit models. The results of these tests largely support the hypotheses presented at the beginning of the chapter. Increased viewership of non-news programs that contain political messages--in this case, religious television and satirical television--leads to increased antipathy towards the societal out-groups presented for scorn or ridicule during the broadcasts. Even among the segments of society likely to view religious television, analysis of GSS data demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between increased viewership of religious television and antipathy towards homosexuals. It was also demonstrated that consumers of religious television are not simply socially conservative, Christian members of the Republican Party, as there was no significant relationship between viewing religious television and support for various platforms of the Republican Party's presidential platform.

Analysis of the NAES datasets demonstrating statistically significant relationships between increased viewership of comedic late night comedy programs and negative feelings towards a variety of conservative public figures and groups. These results were determined when controlling for not only partisanship and ideology, but also the socio-demographic characteristics that make one likely to view satirical programming. Tests demonstrated mixed results in showing a relationship between viewership of satirical programs and increased positive feelings towards liberal and Democratic groups and figures. It appears that Baum (2005) may warrant further

consideration, as appearances by a public figure on a non-news program may cause the viewing public to feel more favorably towards that figure.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Political scientists, as well as other social scientists, have produced a thorough canon of scholarship exploring the impact that political advertisements, nightly and cable news, and campaign coverage can have on the audience. The motivation behind writing this dissertation was to address the impact that non-news programs, the vast majority of what is shown on television, have upon television viewers. If non-news programs are influencing the political views of millions of television viewers, it would behoove political scientists to study how and in what manner these views are being manipulated.

As was stated at the beginning of this dissertation, at the core of this research are the assertions that media effects are real and the role that non-news programs play in influencing their viewers warrants empirical examination. The research presented in the preceding chapters has helped demonstrate both of these assertions. Hypotheses based on the above assertions were tested through the use of an experimental design and the analysis of large-n cross-sectional data. Both iterations have shown that exposure to non-news programming that contains political messages leads to viewers' increased antipathy towards the social out-groups targeted for scorn or ridicule in those programs. Due to the divisive, conflict-laden version of reality presented by television, it was not expected that non-news programs containing political messages would lead to greater warmth toward the groups presenting the messages. This hypothesis was further informed by the power of affect in the decision making process, particularly the importance that

negative emotional reactions have in influencing how people feel towards certain people or ideas. This hypothesis was supported by the findings in chapters three and four.

Chapter Three presents intriguing evidence of the impact that non-news programs can have on a viewing audience. The results of the experiment also provide strong support for the argument that the effect of non-news programs is not merely a symptom of “self-selection.” It is acknowledged that the design dealt with a fairly small sample size, roughly 175 respondents. The sample was also disproportionately Democratic, which could have impacted some of the findings and may have somewhat weakened the generalizability of the findings. The partisan skew may also have been a reason for the unexpected results.

Future research could help explore some of the unexpected results of the experimental design. Exposure to the religious media treatment resulted in significantly more negative feelings towards homosexuals and gay marriage and no resulting increased empathy for Christian conservatives or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. These results support the hypotheses made in chapter three. As religious television targets certain social groups in describing a “righteous we vs. sinful others” view of the world (Bruce 1990; Hughey 1990; Straub 1988), exposure to these messages will then cause viewers to view the “others,” or out-groups, with disdain. However, due to the divisive, critical nature of television, viewers are not expected to also rally around the “we” to whom religious television alludes (McLuhan 1964; Dahl 1967 Robinson 1976). When the respondents were then divided by political party, it was revealed that exposure to the treatment had no statistically significant impact on Republican respondents, but caused a significant decline in positive feelings towards homosexuals and gay marriage among Democrats.

Democratic respondents' statistically significantly lower feelings towards homosexuals and gay marriage after viewing the religious media treatment raises many questions that warrant additional study. Are Democrats more likely than Republicans to have their minds changed by what they see on television? Is Robertson simply a highly persuasive and effective figure? Is the purpose of televangelism--harkening back to its revival tent roots--to win new converts, while other forms of non-news programs with political messaging are geared more towards "preaching to the choir?" Is there a kind of "saturation point" whereby ones opinions are crystallized to the point where new information--even information with which they agree--will not cause any real change in opinion (Campbell et al. 1960; Zaller 1992; 1993)? Future studies could also explore whether there is also a "backlash" effect of being exposed to visual materials that contradict a viewers' previously held beliefs or mock groups or figures to whom a viewer feels positively. While the results were not statistically significant--possibly due to the small sample size of Republicans--Republicans who were exposed to the satirical treatment became more fond of Mormons and conservative Christians than those who were not exposed to the treatment. This result may also have been due to the timing of the experimental design and the political landscape in the fall of 2012. Republican Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney is a Mormon, and his religion was on display during his presidential campaign. Republican respondents may have seen the jibes at the Mormon faith as being subtle jokes at their preferred candidate's expense.

The analysis of the cross-sectional data in Chapter Four presents evidence that even among the sub-sets of the American population who view religious and satirical media, there are distinct effects of consuming those messages. Viewers of both religious and satirical programs are more likely to hold negative feelings towards the figures and members of society typically targeted for ridicule and derision in those programs. The results of the National Annenberg

Election Survey (NAES) data presents some mixed results in terms of whether consuming satirical media leads to increased warmth towards liberal public figures. It is possible that making appearances on late night comedic talk shows, as Senator Kerry did in 2004, mitigates the flow of otherwise negative, “snarky” messages from those television programs. Future research projects could explore this possibility more fully.

This dissertation could lead to further empirical evaluations of how televised entertainment can mold audiences’ views towards certain segments of society. While this dissertation only explores two case studies, religious and satirical media, numerous other television program formats warrant examination. As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, there is scant empirical examination of television sitcoms. Popular and ubiquitous formats, such as crime drama/police procedurals, have also been known to offer commentary on topical political issues. The long-running program *Law & Order*, which also spawned a series of successful and popular spin-off programs such as *Law & Order: SVU*, often interwove real-life events into the drama by basing plots on real life crime or issues that are “ripped from the headlines” (Conroy 2009; Farhi 2009). The impact that entertainment programs such as *Law & Order* have on the audience’s views of different political issues may be significant; conservative pundits and bloggers alike have long chronicled a supposed liberal slant to the *Law & Order* franchise (Edroso 2010). If this popular series did consistently frame issues in a partisan manner, how did this influence the audience? The police procedural format is not an obvious vehicle for delivering political messages, but may nonetheless warrant examination. If *Law & Order* was able to broadcast political messages in the context of a police program for roughly two decades, what other seemingly innocuous television formats are also presenting political messages?

Future scholars could also modify the experimental design in order to address questions that this dissertation largely left alone. Television viewers do not watch their preferred programs in one-time, three-minute bursts. Rather, favorite programs are watched routinely over the course of months or even years. As such, the opinions and outlooks of the television audience are not being molded due to one-dose treatments, but subtly molded over time. Being able to repeatedly expose a panel of respondents to treatments over a fixed period of time would allow a researcher to examine whether there is a change in outlooks or opinions when respondents receive more than a brief, single treatment. Future studies could also try to incorporate the idea of “media choice” into the experimental design. In the real world, television viewers have the option of watching a single program or “grazing” and changing from one program to the next. Being able to account for this behavior in the context of analyzing the impact that non-news programs can have on views towards targeted out-groups would add to the results of this dissertation (Forgette, Morris and Russo 2013).

Future works could also test the degree to which videomalaise plays a role in entertainment media’s shaping of audiences’ views. For example, do programs like *Will and Grace* serve a role in humanizing and normalizing homosexuals to a “middle America” audience, or do they hold up the behavior of homophobes as being distasteful? Presenting homophobes or those opposed to gay marriage as buffoonish or repellent could motivate audiences to adopt positions in favor of gay rights. The results of the experiment and analysis of the cross-sectional data in this dissertation indicate that television does not increase positive attitudes for groups and individuals in society, but can increase negative opinions of certain segments of society. It would be expected that comedies such as *Will and Grace* would not cause viewers to have positive feelings towards homosexuals, but could increase the antipathy one feels towards homophobes or

those opposed to gay marriage. The normative question of the repercussions of what it means that television could be used into essentially shaming the American public into tolerance--or towards a healthier lifestyle, or into voting more or skipping church less frequently--is one that may be equally at home in a televised satire such as *The King of the Hill* than in a journal of political studies. Regardless of these normative implications, ironic or otherwise, there are still many questions to be explored in this field.

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APPENDIX

In my experiment, respondents were asked to place on a 100 point feeling thermometer how they felt towards the two major party candidates for president in 2012; President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney, whether they considered themselves “a liberal, a conservative or somewhere in between” (with options available for “very liberal/conservative,” liberal/conservative, and “slightly liberal/conservative”), 5 questions pertaining to their political knowledge (name of the Vice President of the United States, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, which party had the majority of in the House of Representatives in 2012, which United States institution has the responsibility for determining the constitutionality of laws and which of the two major parties in the United States is more conservative on the national level), how often they attend religious services apart from special events such as weddings and funerals, whether they consider themselves Republican, Democratic or Independent (if Independent, whether they “lean” to one of the two major parties, if they consider themselves a member of one of the two major parties, whether they were “strong” or “weak”), whether they consider their permanent place of residence as urban/suburban/small town or rural, whether they believe the Bible to be the literal Word of God, to be inspired by God, or to be a book of legends and fables, how many hours a week they watched TV news programs, religious television programs such as “Praise the Lord” and “The 700 Club” and how many hours a week they watched late night comedic talk shows such as “The Daily Show with Jon Stewart” or “Late Night with David Letterman,” their age, whether or not they were still dependents of their parents, their total household income the previous year, which state (or nation) they were from, and their race. After then being exposed to one of three video clips (Pat Robertson discussing California’s Proposition 8, Jon Stewart discussing California’s Proposition 8 or a local news channel’s coverage of Proposition 8, respondents were then asked to place on scale that ran from “Strongly

Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” whether they felt that marriages between same-sex couples should be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages. The survey ended with feeling thermometers, as respondents were then given 100-point feeling thermometers asking them to indicate their feelings towards the media, the Church of Latter-Day Saints, Homosexuals, Conservative Christians and Atheists³⁷, and then their feelings as to Liberals, Conservatives, The Republican Party and The Democratic Party.³⁸

As part of a research project we are conducting a brief survey. We ask that you answer the following questions, watch the enclosed video clip, and then answer another series of questions. The entire survey should take no more than 10 minutes. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and would be greatly appreciated. Your responses are wholly anonymous.

1. On a scale of 0-100, how do you feel about each of the presidential candidates? The higher the number, the more favorable you feel towards the candidate. The lower the number, the less favorable you feel towards him. A score of 50 should indicate that you feel neither favorably nor unfavorably towards that candidate. Please set the bar to the number that best corresponds to your feelings.

(0-100 scale “Feelings Towards President Barack Obama”)

(0-100 scale “Feelings Towards Governor Mitt Romney”)

2. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a liberal, a conservative, or somewhere in between?

-Very Liberal

-Liberal

-Slightly Liberal

-Moderate, Middle of the Road

-Slightly Conservative

-Conservative

-Very Conservative

3. Who is the current Vice President of the United States

-John Roberts

-Joseph Biden

-Rick Perry

-Harry Reid

-Sarah Palin

-Don't Know

³⁷ The order of these categories were randomized for each respondent

³⁸ The order of these categories were randomized for each respondent

4. Who is the current Prime Minister of the United Kingdom?

- David Cameron
- Stephen Harper
- Tony Blair
- Nicolas Sarkozy
- Don't Know

5. Which political party currently has a majority in the United States House of Representatives?

- The Democratic Party
- The Republican Party
- The Tea Party
- No political party has a majority in the United States House of Representatives
- Don't Know

6. Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not?

- The President of the United States
- The United States Senate
- The United States House of Representatives
- The Supreme Court of the United States
- Don't Know

7. Would you say one party is more conservative than the other at the national level? If so, which one?

- The Democratic Party
- The Republican Party
- Don't Know

8. How often do you attend religious services, apart from special events like weddings and funerals-more than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never?

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Few times a year
- Never
- Don't Know

9. Do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican or an Independent?

- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent

10. (If Republican is selected) Would you describe yourself as strongly Republican, or not very strongly Republican?

- Strong Republican
- Weak Republican

10. (If Democrat is selected) Would you describe yourself as strongly Democratic, or not very strongly Democratic?

- Strong Democrat
- Weak Democrat

10. (If Independent is selected) **Do you think of yourself as being closer to the Republican or Democratic Party, or neither?**

- Independent/Leans Democratic
- Independent
- Independent/Leans Republican

11. **Would you describe your permanent place of residence as urban, suburban or rural?**

- Urban
- Suburban
- Small Town
- Rural

12. **Which of these statements come closest in describing your feelings about the Bible?**

- The Bible is the actual word of God, and is meant to be taken literally, word for word
- The Bible is the inspired word of God, but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word
- The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history and moral precepts recorded by man
- Don't Know

13. **For each of the following types of television program, please indicate how many hours per week you spend watching them.**

(Scale of 0-10) Television news programs

(Scale of 0-10) Religious television programs, such as "Praise the Lord" or "The 700 Club"

(Scale of 0-10) Late night comedic talk shows such as "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" or "Late Night with David Letterman"

14. What is your age?

15. **Are you still a dependent of your parents?**

- Yes
- No

16. (If Yes) **By your best estimate, what was the total income of your parents/guardians last year, before taxes?**

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000-\$15,000
- \$15,000-\$25,000
- \$25,000-\$35,000
- \$35,000-\$50,000
- \$50,000-\$75,000
- \$75,000-\$100,000
- \$100,000-\$150,000
- More than \$150,000

16. (If No) **By your best estimate, what was your total household income last year before taxes?**

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000-\$15,000
- \$15,000-\$25,000
- \$25,000-\$35,000
- \$35,000-\$50,000
- \$50,000-\$75,000
- \$75,000-\$100,000
- \$100,000-\$150,000
- More than \$150,000

17. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

18. **Which state are you from? (If you are from outside the United States, please state your country of origin)**

19. **What is your race?**

- White/Non-Hispanic
- African-American
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Other (fill in blank)

20. The text provided with each of the three video clips: **Please watch the above clip before proceeding to the next part of the questionnaire. Hit the Play button in the lower left-hand corner of the video screen. Please be patient, as the clip may take a minute or two to load. Please watch the whole clip before clicking the button below to proceed.**

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement. Check only one response.

21. **Marriages between same-sex couples should be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

22. **On a scale of 0 to 100, please indicate how you feel about each of the following groups. The higher the number, the more favorable you feel towards that group. The lower the number, the less favorable you feel towards them. A score of 50 should indicate that you feel neither favorably nor unfavorably towards the selected group. Please set the bar to the number that best corresponds to your feelings.**

(Scale 0-100) The Church of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)

(Scale 0-100) Homosexuals

(Scale 0-100) Atheists

(Scale 0-100) Conservative Christians

(Scale 0-100) The media

23. On a scale of 0 to 100, please indicate how you feel about each of the following groups. The higher the number, the more favorable you feel towards that group. The lower the number, the less favorable you feel towards them. A score of 50 should indicate that you feel neither favorably nor unfavorably towards the selected group. Please set the bar to the number that best corresponds to your feelings.

(Scale 0-100) Liberals

(Scale 0-100) Conservatives

(Scale 0-100) The Republican Party

(Scale 0-100) The Democratic Party

Thank you very much for your participation in our survey. In accordance with University of Mississippi guidelines, we would like to assure you that your participation will be kept anonymous. If you are interested in the results of this survey, you may contact Mr. Salvatore Russo at sjrusso@go.olemiss.edu Your code for completing this survey

(Respondent was then provided with a randomly generated code)

VITA

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EDUCATION

University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi

Ph.D., Political Science, 2013 (expected), Fields: American Politics, Comparative Politics

Dissertation: “TV Casualties: The Negative Impact of Political Messages in Non-News Programs”

M.A., Political Science, 2011. Fields: American Politics, Comparative Politics

Program Scholar at the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, University of Michigan, Summer 2010

Fordham University School of Law, New York, NY

J.D., 2005

Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

B.A., 2002, Major: History, Minor: Political Science

WORKS UNDER REVIEW

“Identifying the Distinct Effects of Religious Nationalism on Political Engagement”(with Daniel Blazo) (Revise and Resubmit at *The Politics and Religion Journal*)

WORKS IN PROGRESS

“Following the Money: Institutional Capacity and Campaign Contributions at the State Level” (with Jonathan Winburn and Zach Baumann)

“Bargaining with Bakke: How Presidential Nomination and Party Affiliation Determine Supreme Court Behavior in Affirmative Action Cases” (with Jacob W. Dryden)

“Something *Good* is Going to Happen to You: The Consumption of Religious Television in the American Public”

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor of Record, University of Mississippi

POL 251: Introduction to Political Science Methods

POL 101: Introduction to American Politics

Graduate Instructor Excellence in Teaching Award Nominee, sponsored by the *Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*, University of Mississippi, 2012

Teaching Assistant, University of Mississippi

POL 101: Introduction to American Politics

POL 251: Introduction to Political Science Methods

POL 310: Political Parties

POL 312: Interest Groups

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Political Satire, Media Choice and Political Learning,” (with Richard Forgette and Jonathan Morris) *Southwestern Social Science Association* New Orleans, LA March 27-30, 2013.

“Something *Good* is Going to Happen to You: The Consumption of Religious Television in the American Public,” *Northeastern Political Science Association*, Philadelphia, PA. November 17-19, 2011.

“Following the Money: Institutional Capacity and Campaign Contributions at the State Level,” (with Jonathan Winburn) *State Politics and Policy Conference*, Hanover, NH. June 2-4, 2011.

“The Unique Effects of Religion, Nationalism, and Religious Nationalism on Political Knowledge,”(with Daniel Blazo) *Southwestern Social Science Association*, Las Vegas, NV. March 16-19, 2011.

“The Corrupting Influence: How Former Systems of Colonization Affect Present Levels of Corruption in Southeast Asia,”*Southern Political Science Association*, New Orleans, LA. January 5-8, 2011.

“The Relationship between Religious Nationalism and Political Knowledge in the American Electorate,” (with Daniel Blazo) *Mississippi Political Science Association*, Columbus, MS. November 5-6, 2010.

ACADEMIC HONORS

Archibald R. Murray Public Service Award, 2005

Exchange student to the Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2004

Pi Sigma Alpha: The National Political Science Honors Society, 2000-2002

Phi Alpha Theta: The National History Honors Society, 2000-2002

GRANTS AND AWARDS

Thomas C. and Irene W. Graham Fellow, Institute for Humane Studies, 2012-2013

Dissertation Completion Fellowship, University of Mississippi, Spring 2013

Summer Research Assistant Fellowship Award, University of Mississippi, Summer 2010

Political Science Departmental Travel Grant, University of Mississippi, January 2011, March 2011, November 2011, March 2013

Graduate School Travel Grant, Graduate School, University of Mississippi, March 2011, November 2011, March 2013

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Battiste, Aronowsky & Suchow, Inc. Staten Island, NY

Associate, 2008-2009

- Stood for indigent clients during arraignment in Richmond County Criminal Court.
- Argued motions in Richmond County Supreme Court.
- Conducted research, drafted and filed motions, answers and orders to show cause in criminal defense matters.
- Performed hearings, negotiated plea agreements, submitted subpoenas, contacted clients and witnesses and requested investigations as a part of day-to-day tasks of a public defender in New York City.

Salvatore S. Russo, Esq., Brooklyn, NY

Of Counsel 2005-2008, *Law Clerk* 2004, 1998

- Conducted research, drafted and submitted appeals to the Appellate Division of the Superior Court of New Jersey on behalf of indigent defendants.
- Conducted research, drafted and filed motions and answers, made appearances and negotiated plea bargains in criminal defense and civil cases in New York City and in New Jersey.

United States Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York, Brooklyn, NY

Summer Intern, 2003

- Assisted in all phases of pre-trial preparation in a criminal contempt trial, including assembling exhibits and transcribing recorded telephone conversations between federal agents and witnesses.
- Observed criminal trials, witness interviews and arraignments.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES & AFFILIATIONS

Advanced Placement Reader, 2012, 2013. American Government and Politics Examination, Educational Testing Service, Salt Lake City, UT.

Member, American Political Science Association
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Member, Northeastern Political Science Association

Member, Southwestern Political Science Association

Member, Southern Political Science Association