

TELEVISED POLITICAL SATIRE: THE NEW MEDIA OF POLITICAL HUMOR
AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

A Thesis

by

JOHN MARSHALL MCKENZIE, II

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2006

Major Subject: Communication

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ABSTRACT

Televised Political Satire: The New Media of
Political Humor and Implications for
Presidential Elections. (December 2006)

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Shows like *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, *The Colbert Report*, *Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher*, *Saturday Night Live*, and even *South Park* represent an under-researched subfield of discourse about political communication and persuasion. These shows manage to reach audiences not traditionally known for high levels of political engagement and draw them in with their comedic framework. This thesis investigates the impact of televised political satire on public perceptions of presidential candidates and campaign issues and the direct result these impacts may have on presidential elections. This thesis first gives some background in the types of communication and personalities of the front-men and –women of these shows and then moves into a historical account of how the exigence for this recent explicit hybridization between comedy and news emerged. It then analyzes how these comedians view their own role within media and politics. It provides a thick account of the liberalizing force televised political satire has been for the American political climate so far, and where it will likely lead us in the near future with the growth of new communication technologies.

For Marshall, Sallie, John, Patricia, Gail,
John, Mary, and Liz—thank you all for
your continuing love and support.
There will never be anything more
important than our family.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL SATIRE IN THE NEW ERA OF POLITICS

On April 29, 2006, late night political satirist Stephen Colbert gave the keynote address at the White House Correspondents Dinner.¹ The dinner is an annual event typically consisting of lighthearted teasing of both the president and the press in the style of a roast. Colbert, however, unleashed a twenty-four minute satirical diatribe attacking nearly every controversial facet of the Bush presidency under the guise of offering his utmost support to the president's plan. Colbert is the host of Comedy Central's late night political talk show *The Colbert Report*, a spin-off of the highly successful *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* where Colbert made his start as a fake news correspondent. Colbert presents himself as a satirical character more-so than one could say he simply acts as himself. Arguably, though, Colbert himself is just as sardonic as the role he plays on television. While *The Daily Show* approaches political issues from a distinctly left-leaning position, *The Colbert Report* acts as a foil to *TDS* by approaching the same issues in a style mimicking Bill O'Reilly's FOX News program *The O'Reilly Factor*. Colbert acts the part of a supremely confident, self-righteous conservative commentator, but does so in such a way as to satirize the positions he pretends to stand for, and to satirize news media more broadly.

Colbert's address at the Correspondents Dinner was given while standing only a few feet away from the President, and in front of an audience of 2600 media figures,

This thesis follows the style of *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*.

correspondents, and celebrities whom he lambasted for nearly half an hour. About the postwar government in Iraq, Colbert commented, "I believe the government that governs best is the government that governs least. And by these standards, we have set up a fabulous government in Iraq."² About the President's unwavering stance on all issues before him, Colbert stated, "The greatest thing about this man is he's steady. You know where he stands. He believes the same thing Wednesday that he believed on Monday, no matter what happened Tuesday. Events can change; this man's beliefs never will." About the news media's apparent lack of desire or ability to report on real issues, Colbert jabbed:

Over the last five years you people were so good, over tax cuts, WMD intelligence, the effect of global warming. We Americans didn't want to know, and you had the courtesy not to try to find out. Those were good times, as far as we knew.

But, listen, let's review the rules. Here's how it works. The President makes decisions. He's the decider. The press secretary announces those decisions, and you people of the press type those decisions down. Make, announce, type. Just put 'em through a spell check and go home. Get to know your family again. Make love to your wife. Write that novel you got kicking around in your head. You know, the one about the intrepid Washington reporter with the courage to stand up to the administration? You know, fiction.

Colbert's address is a quintessential example of how televised political satire has changed and is changing both the media and public opinions about the presidency and presidential candidates. Satire has a long history in America as a tool of social and political reform, yet today's late night political satire television represents a new era for political humor. Shows like *The Colbert Report*, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, *Saturday Night Live*, *Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher*, *Dennis Miller Live*, and even *South Park* are seen by millions of viewers each night they air. Film and television are

media through which satire can reach broader, more diverse audiences than it ever could or did through the traditionally favored media of pamphlets, newspapers, and magazines.

Ron Nessen, press secretary for President Gerald Ford, was one of the first to recognize the degree of influence televised political satire could have on a president's public image. In his biography *It Sure Looks Different from the Inside*, Nessen describes his time working for the president. He devotes an entire chapter to a discussion of *Saturday Night Live*, Chevy Chase's satirical portrayal of Ford, and the negative impact Nessen believes that parody had on Ford's public image. Nessen blames *Saturday Night Live* for Ford's defeat in the 1976 presidential election in his biography.³ Nessen writes about his experience:

I couldn't believe what I was seeing and hearing. A tall, young comedian named Chevy Chase was falling down, bumping into things, uttering malapropisms and misunderstanding everything said to him. He was pretending to be President Ford. Actor-author Buck Henry was playing me, briefing the "president" for a news conference and trying to prevent him from hurting himself.

Live from New York, it was "Saturday Night," the hottest thing on TV, with an audience of twelve million, practically a religion among college students, a weekly satirical program on which a group of young entertainers performed a series of sketches that were usually funny, always irreverent and occasionally tasteless.

The Monday after I discovered "Saturday Night," I ordered a videotape of the entire program. After that I watched with fascination every Saturday, wincing at Chase's portrayal of the president. I worried that the act could further damage Ford's public image, but stirring in the back of my mind was the notion that perhaps the popularity of "Saturday Night" might make it the vehicle to counteract the bumbler image.⁴

It's clear the power Nessen saw in satire, and how television magnified this power by enabling such a large audience to partake in it. He goes on in his biography to write about how he decided to host an episode of *Saturday Night Live* as a political

maneuver to show that the Ford presidency could laugh at itself, but how that backfired on him because *Saturday Night Live's* agenda was to use that episode to further discredit the president. Nessen believes the writers made the episode he hosted intentionally more vulgar than typical for the show, citing a sketch about a carbonated vaginal douche and another about Supreme Court voyeurism in inspecting a couple's bedroom habits.⁵ Nessen argues that *Saturday Night Live* used him to make his appearance seem like the Ford White House endorsed this type of vulgarity. He attributes great power to *Saturday Night Live* and the media when it comes to determining the outcome of the 1976 election. He calls the portrayal of Ford in the media as "a bumbler" his "biggest continuing problem in the White House. . . . After all, no one wants a clown for president."⁶

More than simply looking into the effects of televised political satire on public perceptions and public images of presidents, this work aims more specifically at understanding how televised political satire may affect the outcome of presidential elections. Could Nessen be right in calling *Saturday Night Live* Gerald Ford's greatest obstacle to being re-elected? Personally, I believe Nessen recognized the beginning of a trend of which we are now experiencing the culmination. I think Nessen would be incorrect to assume that *Saturday Night Live* held such great sway on its own that it cost Ford his re-election, but I do believe that circumstances have changed in the last two presidential elections such that televised political satire could indeed have a significant effect on voting. One issue we will examine later in this text is the closeness of the 2000 presidential election, with Bush's victory coming down to a mere 537 votes in Florida.⁷

Could the growing viewership that supports late night televised political satire programming be significant enough to push a barely losing liberal candidate over the edge into victory, given that the majority of these shows are not only liberal leaning, but filter the information they present through a liberal ideologue? I believe the data shows this could be the case. The statistical ramifications of late night political satire television are currently under-researched, but the existing data support the argument underlying Nessen's statements about *Saturday Night Live*: these shows do matter, and they do affect how people vote. They not only often present satirical or even negative images of presidential candidates, they give the public and the media new key terms with which to discuss politics.

One of Stephen Colbert's crafted terms, "truthiness," is now growing in its use outside of *The Colbert Report*. "Truthiness" was voted the 2005 Word of the Year by the American Dialect Society.⁸ "Truthiness" is an idea related to one of Colbert's recurring jokes. Colbert often states that he "doesn't trust books. They're all fact, no heart."⁹ "Truthiness" is about a gut reaction—what feels true. It's about what one wishes or perceives to be true, rather than what one knows to be true. Colbert uses this term essentially to satirize how he perceives the Bush administration makes its decisions. In Colbert's view, then, Bush makes his decisions based on "truthiness," he does what he feels is right and goes with his gut rather than the advice he's given which may be based in facts that could simply be untrustworthy. Colbert's character presents "truthiness" as a positive thing, but it's clear that the joke is that it really isn't. "Truthiness" thus is a way of criticizing public policy decisions, and the wider media has picked up on it and begun

to use the term in its own political analyses. This is but one example of how televised political satire can and does reshape elements of public discourse surrounding political issues.

The comedic setting of these shows often affords greater latitude when it comes to the types of approaches acceptable for commentators to take. In April 2003, *The Daily Show* aired a segment called “Bush vs. Bush.”¹⁰ The piece parodied presidential debates, and was completely constructed from two separate speeches by George W. Bush, one given while he was governor and another a recent speech he had given as president. The clips were edited in such a way as to still faithfully represent the points from each speech, but to have the two speeches set up as a debate against one another. The two speeches made essentially opposite points, and the piece was absolutely hilarious. Governor Bush argued with President Bush over every issue brought up for the duration of the clip, and the live audience was in riotous laughter by the end. Here’s a partial transcript of the segment:

Jon Stewart: Thank you Governor. Mr. President, you won the coin toss, the first question will go to you. Why is the United States of America using its power to change governments in foreign countries?

President Bush: We must stand up for our security and for the permanent rights and the hopes of mankind. The USA will make that stand.

Jon Stewart: Well certainly that represents a bold new doctrine in foreign policy, Mr. President. Governor Bush, do you agree with that?

Governor Bush: I’m not so sure the role of the United States should be to go around the world and say “this is the way it’s gotta be.”¹¹

The clip is the essence of the kind of commentary Jon Stewart, anchor of *TDS*, finds lacking in the real news media. Bill Moyers mentions the piece in an interview with

Stewart, calling Stewart the “masterful moderator” whose show is “held up to a fractured mirror to reveal a greater truth.”¹² The Bush piece illustrated fundamental contradictions in the current Bush platform from that of years before, and Stewart (with the other writers for *TDS*) essentially presented the public with the evidence. Stewart has spoken extensively both in episodes of his show and in interviews on other shows about the role of the media as a check on government, and how the mainstream news media has “dropped the ball” in being that check at least since the beginning of George W. Bush’s presidency.¹³ Stewart’s opinion is that the major news channels (CNN, Fox News, ABC, CBS, and NBC) have more or less been playing softball with the White House. When they ask questions of politicians they let them get away with non-answers or answers contradictory to previous statements they’ve made or otherwise unsatisfactory answers. Stewart thinks the media has forgotten the practice of investigative journalism in politics – journalism that seeks out the objective truth behind the issues – in favor of “fair and balanced” news that presents both sides of any issue but with no real resolution offered. Stewart’s essential argument is that what the “news” is doing isn’t news, but editorializing on current events.

In Chapter II, we temporarily leave the meat of the issues surrounding current events and satire and more closely examine the history of political satire in America and how themes in American humor have shaped the state of satire today. From Ben Franklin’s supposed “first American political cartoon,” we examine the slow start of American humor from its British roots, until Mark Twain became arguably the first truly “American” humorist. After Mark Twain vaudeville and burlesque performances grew in

popularity, adding a performative element to comedy, which would ultimately grow into stand-up comedy as we think of it today. Particularly relevant is that most of the humorists behind televised political satire shows began their careers as stand-up comedians. I also include in Chapter II an in depth discussion of John Zenger's *New York Weekly-Journal* published in the 1730s under British rule. Zenger is famous for printing the *Journal* and standing trial for printing materials seditious to the British colonial governor William Cosby. Zenger's was the first case in America in which a person was found innocent for publishing materials oppositional to the government in place. The *Journal* was an often satirical publication, and can serve as a means by which to understand better the role of televised political satire in relation to the mainstream media today.

I then return to discuss more critically the role of televised political satire with the media and the public in Chapter III. Here we will discuss many of the shortcomings of the mainstream news media as pointed out by Jon Stewart and the role the lackluster news media has played in creating an exigence for the kind of coverage and commentary these shows provide, and survey the types of satire many of these shows have presented in the past. The latter half of this chapter returns to connecting satire and presidential elections, illustrating quantitatively how televised political satire has affected public perceptions of presidential candidates and the political engagement of its viewers, particularly in regards to the 2000 and 2004 elections. We look specifically at how dramatic of an effect televised satire had on these two elections, and from that reach the focus of Chapter IV, in which we make predictions for the role of satire in 2008 and

beyond based on the arguments of Chapter III and research into changing media technologies.

In all, we seek to answer five primary research questions in the following pages:

RQ1: What is the role of televised political satire in relation to non-satirical news sources?

RQ2: Does televised political satire have an effect on the non-satirical news media? If so, what is that effect?

RQ3: Did televised political satire have a significant effect on the 2000 or 2004 elections?

RQ4: What kind of effect can we expect televised political satire to have on future presidential elections?

RQ5: What characteristics of political satire could be responsible for these effects?

My research reveals a specific answer for RQ1 and the role of televised political satire in relation to the mainstream news media based upon historical research into the origins of political satire in America as we understand it today. This will be discussed thoroughly in Chapters II and III. I have already briefly addressed RQ2 and how political satire affects non-satirical news media in this chapter, with the examples of ‘truthiness’ and Stephen Colbert’s address at the Correspondents Dinner, but I will return to this issue in Chapter III. In Chapter III we also examine RQ3 and the particular effects political satire has on presidential images and voting in presidential elections. These effects, we will discover, include increasing voter knowledge of campaign issues, increasing political activation and participation, and, I believe the data shows, can be a factor in persuading voters toward a particular candidate. Chapter IV will focus mainly

on answering RQ4 by showing how emerging media (HDTV and multicasting, for example) will amplify the effects of televised political satire in coming elections, and will also offer much toward answering RQ5. RQ5 will also be addressed in Chapters II and III as we discuss the nature of the relationship between non-satirical media and political satire television; much of the effect of political satire can be explained by explaining what social needs satire fulfills in the modern media-driven, political world.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL SATIRE IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Historically, American humor and political satire has its roots in a distinctly British style. Peter Briggs writes of the extent to which American colonials were entrenched in British culture in the 1700s: “By the middle of the eighteenth century American colonials were dependable importers of English culture—poetry, plays, and novels, of course, but also music, prints, paintings, theological works, instructional books and so on.”¹⁴ Briggs’s article “English Satire and Connecticut Wit” compares the satirical poetry of American John Trumbull with the English satire Trumbull most admired. Briggs uses Trumbull as an example of how American culturists so thoroughly mimicked the style of their English contemporaries and predecessors at the time. Briggs constructs an idea implicit throughout his article—that American writers, poets, and satirists were uneasy with developing a culture independent of English influence. Briggs writes:

More generally speaking, Trumbull can be seen thinking through his satiric situation, his characters, his themes, his strategies, in terms of the achievements of his English predecessors in satire. This is good neoclassical practice, of course, and much the same thing that Pope or Churchill had done before him; satirists strengthen their works by the implicit insistence that such works do not stand alone, that they are parts of an honorable tradition. At the same time, however, this continual recollection of English predecessors suggests cumulatively a reluctance or an inability on Trumbull’s part to imagine a distinctively American kind of satire, a new set of satiric norms and metaphors to go with a new setting for satire.¹⁵

There's an irony in Briggs's point, which is that just as American satirists and patriots were preparing for a revolution against England, they still reveled in a certain kind of "Toryism of the imagination" indicated by this cultural indebtedness to their mother nation.¹⁶ The thoroughness of this indebtedness is best illustrated in a passage of Trumbull's *M'Fingal* describing America's future in a nearly prophetic vision of the doctrine of manifest destiny:

To glory, wealth and fame ascend,
Her commerce rise, her realms extend;
Where now the panther guards his den,
Her desert forests swarm with men,
Her cities, tow'rs and columns rise,
And dazzling temples meet the skies;
Her pines descending to the main,
In triumph spread the watry plain,
Ride inland lakes with fav'ring gales,
And croud her ports with whit'ning sails;
Till to the skirts of western day,
The peopled regions own her sway (IV, 1033-44).¹⁷

What's shocking about this passage about American destiny, Briggs points out, is how closely it imitates Alexander Pope's poem *Windsor Forest* about *English* destiny. Briggs writes that "Aiming to describe an American future, Trumbull is once again swept unwillingly back into an English past."¹⁸ The significance that such an integral part of "the American dream" is borrowed from English poetry should not be lost, and goes to further illustrate the degree to which American culture was borrowed in its earliest stages.

Alan Gribben sees Mark Twain as the first to break this mould and be a truly American humorist.¹⁹ He writes that "Mark Twain is the only writer we have recognized

as an author of immortal American prose after having branded him a ‘humorist.’”²⁰ At the same time we should recognize the influence of humorists and satirists in America before Samuel Clemens. We can find this influence present especially in the cartoons and artistry used for social change from the Revolutionary era, through the civil rights and labor movements of the mid-20th century, up until the end of the Cold War and even today. Benjamin Franklin’s “Join or Die” was published in 1754, and is supposedly the first American political cartoon.²¹ His cartoon depicted the thirteen colonies as a fragmented snake which must be joined together in order to survive. Now heralded as a monument and symbol in the events leading up to the American Revolution, Franklin nonetheless was not primarily a satirist. Political cartoons and satire played a significant role in the Revolution on both sides. Amelia Rauser gives a fascinating history of the *British* struggle for symbols in political artwork in a 1998 *Oxford Art Journal* article.²² While Franklin, Revere, and others stirred the initiative of American colonists toward patriotic rebellion through their political cartoons and engravings, British nationals struggled to find comparable images to organize upon. Rauser discusses John Dixon’s 1774 work *The Oracle, Representing Britannia, Hibernia, Scotia, and America* and a caricature of the print published in 1783 by an anonymous artist after the war had been lost called *The Tea-Tax Tempest, or Old Time with his Magick-Lantern*. Dixon’s work portrays the British Empire in unity, while the second work uses similar imagery to show British troops being routed by American troops as a teapot explodes into flames.²³ The power political drawings, prints, engravings and paintings had as propaganda in the Revolutionary period is undeniable.

Closer to Clemens' period we see another instance in which political cartoons played a major role in satirizing government. In the 1860s and 1870s, Thomas Nast began the now cliché stereotype of big-city politicians as large, corpulent men "personifying power by their sheer mass" in a series of cartoons published in *Harpers Weekly*.²⁴ Nast is most famous for his cartoon "The 'Brains,'" depicting a fat politician with a moneybag for a head to represent his greed. Joseph Keppler, a competing cartoonist and founder of *Puck* essentially borrowed this imagery for his own cartoons which showed United States senators as gigantic figures with moneybags for bodies, so large they could barely move.²⁵

The political cartoon changed dramatically in the early 1900s from its late 1800s form. Images of greedy, moneybag-hoarding capitalists had become cliché, not effective enough to bring about any consequence at all. American socialist movements began rising in the late 1800s, often creating publications meant to generate interest in their views, but none were very successful until the creation of *The Masses* in 1911.²⁶ The cover art of *The Masses* often depicted political events and sometimes dealt with serious issues in lighthearted ways. One cover by Boardman Robinson advocated peace by depicting Christ as a deserter. Max Eastman, editor of *The Masses* founded a new magazine, *The Liberator*, after the end of the war which was meant to be just as radical as *The Masses* but in reality became much more grounded in the middle and independent. In 1924 the American Communist Party founded *The Daily Worker* which returned to much of the imagery of the late 1800s, giving stereotypical depictions of "fat capitalists, corrupt politicians, and warmongering officers."²⁷

The Great Depression moved many artists to depictions of exploited workers, the unemployed, and other negative conventions like Margaret Bourke-White's photograph of a bread line next to an optimistic billboard meant to inspire hope in the workers.²⁸ During World War II the use of political cartoons as propaganda grew considerably, and the messages they contained grew more dramatic. In the 1950s, however, many socialist artists were forced to be more cautious in their cartoons and writings because of the beginning of Senator Joseph McCarthy's Communist witch hunt.²⁹ McCarthyism forced cartoonists to be more creative in their images, and strangely was a significant factor in the shift to the styles of political humor that became more prevalent in the 1960s. Artists were forced to break from many of the stereotypical images they had relied on before, which resulted in the rise of more creative imagery and independent attitudes in the 1960s. Margolin attributes much of this to Alexei Brodovich, who created unusual layouts for *Harper's Bazaar* and trained the next generation of photographers and art directors both at the magazine and in workshops. Margolin also credits Bob Gage with pioneering brash and unique ad campaigns during the red scare.³⁰

George Lois was one important figure of the 1960s, as the director of cover art for more than 90 issues of *Esquire* magazine. Margolin writes that Lois's art "often juxtaposed improbable elements that provoked the viewer to question why they belonged together."³¹ Some examples include an image of a woman shaving to cover an article about the masculinization of women, and an article about Vietnam which told the story of M Company by showing a smiling American Lieutenant posing with a group of Vietnamese children with the caption "Oh my God – we hit a little girl." Margolin

suggests that these images worked because the new, younger generation's politics "were shaped more by an intuitive sense of justice than by all-encompassing ideological constructs."³² The stereotypical images of greedy capitalists were simply no longer effective. Leftist groups now used satire and humor as a persuasive device as a means by which to subvert the rhetoric of the Right; satirically indicating the places in which the rhetoric and the actions of the Right were inconsistent. David Mobley's 1969 poster "Emancipation" spoke to issues of civil rights with an image of Malcolm X towering over Abraham Lincoln as he delivered his Emancipation Proclamation.³³ Another example is a 1968 poster titled "Nixon's the One" by an anonymous artist which parodied Nixon's campaign slogan by showing a pregnant black woman wearing a "Nixon's the One" pin.³⁴

Many elements of these political cartoons have made their way to the television screen as well. Many late night political satire shows use headline panels to essentially caption the stories they report as they report them.³⁵ These panels often contain jokes in-and-of themselves. Stephen Colbert's segment "The Word" on *The Colbert Report* essentially makes all of its jokes in this fashion; Colbert will make a statement, while the 'funny part' is a typographical statement positioned next to him on a blue panel. *The Daily Show* headline panels often contain puns and unlikely images of political figures; it's a common occurrence for Stewart to have to pause in his monologue as the audience laughs at a panel and verbally recognize the joke himself.

Film was also used to satirize the politics of the 1950s and 1960s. The single most notable example is Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove Or: How I Learned to Stop*

Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964). Kubrick's film is a black comedy about the Cold War and the possibility of a nuclear apocalypse. Charles Maland writes an article on *Dr. Strangelove*, calling it a "moral protest of revulsion against the dominant cultural paradigm in America. . . the Ideology of Liberal Consensus."³⁶ This ideology primarily consisted of two assumptions: that the structure of American society was basically sound, and that Communism was a danger to the survival of the United States and democracy.³⁷ Maland paraphrases arguments by Geoffrey Hodgson about how these assumptions evolved into a widely accepted view of America:

From these two beliefs evolved a widely accepted view of America. That view argued its position in roughly this fashion: the American economic system has developed, softening the iniquities and brutalities of an earlier capitalism, becoming more democratic, and offering abundance to a wider portion of the population than ever before. The key to both democracy and abundance is production and technological advance; economic growth provides the opportunity to meet social needs, to defuse class conflict, and to bring blue-collar workers into the middle class. Social problems are thus less explosive and can be solved rationally. It is necessary only to locate each problem, design a program to attack it, and provide the experts and technological know-how necessary to solve the problem.³⁸

Maland continues by remarking that, in the ideology, "the *only* threat to this domestic harmony. . . is the specter of Communism."³⁹

During the 1950s and 60s the media focused on making it seem as though a nuclear war might be tolerable and that plans were in place to make the American way of life continue even after a massive nuclear engagement. Maland cites the examples of a *U.S. News and World Report* article ("If Bombs Do Fall") which detailed plans to allow citizens to still write checks on their bank accounts even if their bank had been

destroyed, a *Life* magazine article with the headline “How You Can Survive Fallout. 97 out of 100 Can Be Saved,” an advisory that the best cure for radiation sickness “is to take hot tea or a solution of baking soda,” and advertisements for fully equipped purchasable fallout shelters for \$700.⁴⁰ At the same time, Maland continues, a 1961 RAND corporation study found that a 3000 megaton attack on American cities would kill 80 percent of the population.⁴¹ This focus on selling the idea of nuclear war as somehow “not really that bad” or even “safe” was part of the ideology Kubrick sought to deconstruct with *Dr. Strangelove*. The media clearly were seeking to relieve public anxiety in a time when the Cold War was growing even more serious, but the effort ultimately failed as Americans became more dubious in their confidence toward American nuclear policy. This was partially a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which brought the United States closer to nuclear annihilation than the average American had been led to believe was possible.

A number of reassuring films about potential nuclear disasters were released around the time of *Dr. Strangelove*. *Fail Safe* is about the accidental nuclear destruction of Moscow by American nuclear weapons. Rather than end in all-out nuclear war, the President (played by Henry Fonda) agrees to allow the obliteration of New York City in return, creating a solution in which the rest of America is safe. *Red Alert* was another film depicting an accidental nuclear detonation. *Above and Beyond* is a film telling the story of Paul Tibbetts, who commanded the group that dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, yet focuses on Mrs. Tibbetts’ struggle to accept her husband’s secret work rather than the horrors of atomic warfare. In *A Gathering of Eagles*, General

Curtis LeMay, the real life commander of the Strategic Air Command, personally sought to guarantee that the film explained how many safeguards were in place to prevent an actual accidental war. The film tells the story of a young officer who takes command of a SAC base, fails a surprise alert, but eventually trains his men so they are ready to go to war if necessary.⁴²

Kubrick was obsessed with the gulf between man's scientific and technological competence and his apparent social, moral, and political ineptitude.⁴³ Maland quotes Kubrick as saying "it was very important to deal with this problem dramatically because it's the only social problem where there's absolutely no chance for people to learn anything from experience."⁴⁴ *Dr. Strangelove* uses nightmare comedy to satirize anti-Communist paranoia, culture's inability to realize the enormity of nuclear war, American nuclear strategy, and the faith man places in technological progress.⁴⁵ The story basically revolves around the actions taken by American General Ripper, who is essentially so paranoid about Communist subversion of American culture that he launches a B-52 nuclear attack against the Soviet Union. Ripper is so thorough in his distrust of Communists that he even fears infiltration of our body fluids: "I can no longer sit back and allow Communist infiltration, Communist indoctrination, Communist subversion and the international Communist conspiracy to sap and impurify all of our precious bodily fluids."⁴⁶ Only Ripper knows the code required to recall the bombers, so the President is forced to call the Soviet leader to brief him on the situation and give him the coordinates of the flight group. All but one bomber is shot down. The movie opens by explaining that the Soviets have constructed a doomsday device that would

automatically destroy the world if a nuclear weapon was detonated on Soviet soil, so the threat of nuclear apocalypse is imminent. Kubrick depicts a war-thirsty General Turgidson (played by George C. Scott, also famous for playing General Patton in the World War II film *Patton*) who seems excited at the prospect of the war and urges the President to send even more planes to attack. His argument is that fewer Americans would be killed in the case of a massive attack; 20 million would die rather than 150 million. The lines are delivered with enthusiasm for what would be a sacrifice of “a few lives” for a more secure “post-war environment.”⁴⁷ Other aspects of black comedy include the conversation between the American and Russian leaders, where they argue over who is sorrier about the mistake rather than trying to reach a solution, and the peculiar Dr. Strangelove (Maland likens Strangelove to Henry Kissinger) who offers strange plans for saving women in underground bunkers so they can be used to repopulate the earth.⁴⁸

Kubrick suggests that the real problem is human; while society is efficient with its ability to handle machines of destruction (the B-52s, the nuclear weapons), the more neutral machines of communication are ineffectual. Maland suggests that Kubrick perceives a human death instinct; nearsighted rationality leads man to create machines for progress, but then uses them to destroy life.⁴⁹ This is an attack on another branch of the Ideology of Liberal Consensus; that somehow American ingenuity with technology is able to protect us from disaster. The film ends with the nuclear annihilation of the world, as a member of the B-52 crew has to manually detach the nuclear bomb from its

mechanism and rides it like a cowboy would ride a bronco as it falls to the ground and detonates.

The film indicates an entirely new level to the darkness of the Cold War era, one that grew more apparent as the War continued. Kubrick wasn't the last to satirize the possibility of nuclear war. In 1982 G.B. Trudeau depicted in his weekly comic-strip *Doonesbury* a Pentagon spokesman explaining to the Senate that life would still be possible after a nuclear attack, that sixty percent of the economy could be reconstituted within twenty-four months unless "a disproportionate number of lawyers survive," and that, given enough notice, losses could be kept down to only twenty million people, which would be a 91% survival rate.⁵⁰

Another early example of political satire on film was the show *That Was the Week that Was*, sometimes abbreviated *TW3*. *TW3* actually began as a BBC show in 1963, but an American version aired on NBC from 1964 to 1965. The show was well known for its satirizing of 'the establishment.' Guest hosts included comedian Woody Allen, Henry Fonda, and Gene Hackman, with a regular cast including Alan Alda, Nancy Ames, and Buck Henry. In many ways, *TW3* was the precursor of shows like *Saturday Night Live* for including a variety of satirical political sketches and musical numbers. Later versions of the show include the Canadian *This Hour Has Seven Days*, airing from 1964 to 1966, and *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, which has aired since 1992. A Dutch version named *Zo is het toevallig ook nog 's een keer* aired from 1963 to 1966 as well. In 2004 an attempt to remake the show on ABC failed shortly after its premiere episode.⁵¹

One of the central impacts of film on political satire was to increase its exposure; far more people watch television and movies now than have ever read the newspaper or magazines regularly. *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* receive millions of viewers each night, for example.

To return to a thread I began earlier, however, a discussion of Mark Twain's influence on American styles of humor and satire is important. One can easily recognize the importance of Samuel Clemens by the sheer number of honors bestowed upon him and amount of critical attention he has received. Three schools including Yale University granted Clemens doctorates. Gribben writes that this was "a richly symbolic event: there sat Samuel Clemens, self-educated, a product of a rough-and-tumble border state and the strike-it-rich Far West, receiving the highest distinction awarded by a university."⁵² Richard Burton called Clemens the "one living writer of indisputable genius" in 1904.⁵³ Twain's style was distinctly American, eventually seeking to eliminate in his literature all elements of setting, dialect, manners, character development, and plot in favor of simply using the flexible narrative voice he's famous for.⁵⁴ Twain's writing became more and more political, especially in the postbellum period. Arthur Dudden writes that "the Civil War's tragedies most likely steered him toward acidity and savagery," citing Leo Marx in suggesting that "the growing bitterness in American humor sprang from postbellum despair."⁵⁵ Gribben describes Clemens' style as full of "hyperbole, anthropomorphism, [and] the occasional idiomatic expression," though what makes it effective is "the impression it delivers of a likable persona's actual speech, daringly punctuated with semicolons and structured around parallel phrases, then artfully frozen

in print.”⁵⁶ This type of carefully tinkered vernacular rhetoric is the crux of the “American style” of humor.

From Twain’s colloquial humor, though it was a written style, arose the next popular trend in American humor: vaudeville, burlesque, and variety theater.⁵⁷ While theater had certainly been a part of American culture since its inception, its growth in popularity in the early twentieth century represents the next stage from which we can encapsulate many characteristics of televised political satire. Vaudeville and burlesque eventually grew into stand-up comedy as we know it today. Stand-up comedy is vital to understanding the inner-workings of modern late-night televised political satire when one takes into account the fact that many late-night hosts and anchors made their starts in stand-up.⁵⁸

Lawrence Mintz writes of stand-up comedy in “Standup Comedy as Social and Cultural Meditation” that “the key to understanding the role of standup comedy in the process of cultural affirmation and subversion is a recognition of the comedian’s traditional *license* for deviate behavior and expression.”⁵⁹ Stand-up is about the interaction between a comedian and his or her audience. The comedian fosters the experience of public joking, shared laughter, and agreement on what deserves to be ridiculed or affirmed and furthers a sense of mutual support for common belief and behavior between audience members.⁶⁰ How the comedian manages his or her audience is key to his or her success. To the extent which the comedian can make the audience identify with his or her expressions or behaviors, recognizing them as reflective of their own opinions or behaviors on some level, or recognizing them as reflective of the natural

tendencies of humanity at large, the comedian can become the audience's *comic spokesman*.⁶¹ The comedian is like a delegate working with frequently taboo subjects and mannerisms under the pretext that his or her opinions are "mere comedy" and thus acceptable. The successful comedian has the power to lead the audience into a shared communion and celebration of togetherness in which laughter signifies a bond of agreement between members of the audience. It's largely because of this dynamic that comedy can be used so successfully as a persuasive tool. Taking into account how televised political satire shows usually have studio audiences which laugh along with the viewers at home, one can begin to see how William Riker's idea of heresthetics may come into play. Riker coined the term "heresthetics" to refer to structuring or controlling the processes of rhetoric to ensure that one can "win" by building them in one's favor.⁶² By controlling the contexts in which home audiences participate with shows like *The Daily Show* et al, producers are using their power to manipulate the television environment in such a way as to make their rhetoric more persuasive, effective, and funny. The choice to include a studio audience, to focus on the charismatic personalities of a single host or only a few correspondents—these are heresthetic manipulations of the show's setting. The stand-up comedian has the same power as a self-reflective ethnographer or anthropologist; he or she can tell a story unique to his or her own experience and background and relate it to the audience in such a way that it reveals some truth about culture at large. These comedic revelations act as a means to catharsis for the audience to come to consciousness about aspects of their public, political, or even private lives in need of re-examination. Thus when late night commentators present the

“fake news” they’re not only presenting some information about current events, they’re offering fragments of a story about the anchor as well as he or she includes his or her (apparent) personal humor and style in the retelling of events. This story envelops the audience in the persona of the comedian so as to reconstruct this almost shamanistic setting, creating the effect of being funnier, more persuasive, more effective, and inventing a better ethos for the comedian through heresthetics.⁶³

The structure of political satire television draws much from the history of American humor. By combining elements of political cartoons, film, and stand-up comedy we can begin to see how today’s satire mimics forms from the past, but synthesizes them in ways which previously have either not been possible or not taken advantage of. These shows continue the trend started by cartoonists in the 1950s of creating innovative critiques of American political policy rather than relying on the cliché stereotypes of fat-cat capitalists and shady politicians, and often function by combining the truthful with the absurd. Stand-up comedy has especially had a dramatic impact on televised political satire, as we can tell by the heresthetics in setting and relations between television personalities, studio audiences, and home audiences to create the atmosphere of audience ‘togetherness’ and agreement toward what should or should not be ridiculed.

One particular satire in American history deserves more notice than those discussed in the rest of this chapter, however. John Zenger was a printer in the 1730s for the independent satirical newspaper *The New-York Weekly Journal*. On November 17, 1734 John Peter Zenger was arrested on the charge of “seditious libel” for printing

materials libel to New York Governor William Cosby in *The New-York Weekly Journal*.⁶⁴ The ensuing trial and successful defense of Zenger has been heralded as the first moment in American judicial history to set precedent for the right to a free press found in the Bill of Rights.⁶⁵ A rich context surrounds the Zenger trial, centering upon Governor Cosby of New York. This context will, ultimately, lead us to a better understanding of the role of today's televised political satire in relation to the mainstream media and the government.

Governor Cosby had some experience in colonial administration prior to his arrival in New York on August 1, 1732. His first governorship had been over the island of Minorca – a governorship which would ultimately result in his removal from office for ordering goods to be seized from a Spanish merchant, selling them at an auction, and manipulating the records to indicate that he had never done so. When Cosby was appointed New York's governor almost 24 years later, the New Yorkers were unaware of the circumstances of his previous administration.⁶⁶ They were, however, quickly enlightened. For example, while Cosby was away in London for a year on business, leadership of the colony fell on Council leader Rip Van Dam. Upon Cosby's return he issued a royal decree ordering Van Dam to divide the sum of his past year's stipend (which had been voted to him by the Council) with him. When Van Dam offered a compromise with Cosby over the sum based upon calculations regarding actual work done by both men, Cosby sued. Because he did not believe he could win in a jury trial, he as Governor allowed the colony Supreme Court justices to handle the case as Barons of the Exchequer (meaning they would determine the verdict in place of a jury). When

Van Dam's defense argued before the Court that the court itself was invalid, the three judges split their decision such that Judges De Lancey and Philipse rejected the defense immediately and were strongly in the favor of the governor. The Chief Justice, Morris, published his written dissent through the new Zenger press. The governor immediately demoted Morris from Chief Justice and replaced him with Judge De Lancey, whom the governor essentially owned through a series of bribes.⁶⁷ The image of Governor Cosby should be clear by this point; the man was one who would not hesitate in any affair to manipulate both his money and his position of power in order to best benefit himself.

At the time of Governor Cosby's first appointment to New York there was only one newspaper printer in the colony. The *New York Gazette* became well known for publishing articles written by Francis Harison. Cosby had decided to make the *Gazette* his official colony paper, and so he had appointed Francis Harison as the head of editorial policy for the paper. Cosby would regularly pay Harison to write up positive comments about the legislature, but especially about Cosby himself in order to improve his public image. Take the following example of pro-Cosby propaganda from Harison published in the *Gazette* on January 7, 1734:

Cosby the mild, the happy, good and great,
The strongest guard of our little state;
Let malcontents in crabbed language write,
And the D...h H....s belch, tho' they cannot bite.
He unconcerned will let the wretches roar,
And govern just, as others did before.⁶⁸

All of these factors contributed to the rise of independent printer John Peter Zenger. The growing colonial disgust for Governor Cosby, the single colony printer

publishing a newspaper so clearly run by Cosby's men—these factors led to the beginning of the *New-York Weekly Journal*, a newspaper founded on the belief in a free press and printed by John Zenger. One of the first acts of the newspaper was to support the candidacy of Lewis Morris for assemblyman. Cosby wanted his own man elected and had rigged the election such that Quakers were not allowed to vote because Quakers could only affirm the oath required to vote rather than swear it. Morris won the election anyway, and the *New-York Weekly Journal* was there to publish the details of Cosby's failed plot.⁶⁹ The fundamental idea behind the journal was to illustrate the ways in which Cosby was violating the rules of his governorship, and to subsequently convict him in the eyes of the public on those breaches.⁷⁰

This history is vital to an understanding of the circumstances within the trial itself. It is necessary to understand how corrupt the governorship of William Cosby was, how overwhelmingly unpopular that made him in the colony, and how rigged against Zenger the trial really was. Nonetheless, after a brilliant defense by attorney Andrew Hamilton, Zenger was acquitted. A partial transcript of the trial itself was made, and from that transcript we analyze the arguments of both Hamilton and the prosecuting attorney, Richard Bradley.

Both Bradley and De Lancey make it apparent early in the trial that they believe the jury should only be allowed to decide the case based on whether Zenger did indeed publish the libelous paragraphs cited by the prosecution. When Hamilton admits that Zenger did indeed publish the materials he continues:

... yet I cannot think it proper for me (without doing violence to my own principles) to deny the publication of a complaint, which I think is the

right of every free-born subject to make, when the matters so published can be supported with truth; and therefore I'll save Mr. Attorney the trouble of examining his witnesses to that point; and I do (for my client) confess, that he both printed and published the two newspapers set forth in the information; and I hope in so doing he has committed no crime.⁷¹

To which Bradley replied:

Indeed, Sir, as Mr. Hamilton has confessed the printing and publishing of these libels, I think the jury must find a verdict for the king; for supposing they were true, the law says that they are not the less libelous for that; nay indeed, the law says their being true is an aggravation of the crime.⁷²

Hamilton, unlike Bradley and De Lancey, understands that he only need convince the jury of his argument. He turns the trial away from whether Zenger printed the newspapers and toward whether they constitute a libel. His next argument gets to the very nature of a free press – something *The New-York Weekly Journal* had published on shortly after Zenger's arrest:

I don't well know what the Observer means by Libels against the Government. Some People have a Knack of calling any Paper they don't like, that treats of Governours or Magistrates, a Libel against the Government; or if an ill Governour or Magistrate is described, or the ill Actions of any such, they (by a Happiness of Invention peculiar to themselves) presently think it is leveled at the Governour and Magistrates for the Time being.⁷³

Hamilton's argument was that any published complaint against the government does not make a libel. A libel must be false. Bradley, in his opening statements, had defined a libel as "false, malicious, seditious, and scandalous."⁷⁴ When Hamilton turns this argument against Bradley, he states that he will agree the words Zenger printed were a libel if only the attorney can "prove the words false, in order to make us guilty."⁷⁵

Some scholars have argued that Zenger's case wasn't really important because it didn't set any binding legal precedent. Alison Olson challenges this notion in her article

“The Zenger Case Revisited: Satire, Seditious and Political Debate in Eighteenth Century America.”⁷⁶ Olson’s article reminds us that before the trial, the only political satires that could be safely written in the colonies were typically written by governors, representatives, or officials already placed in positions of power by the King or parliament.⁷⁷ By contrast, Olson notes, in the years after the trial and before the Stamp Act over two dozen political satires were printed, nearly all of which were opposed to the established British governments.⁷⁸ What the Zenger case really accomplished was to make it possible for political dissent to be expressed in the press without fear of prosecution. In trials prior to Zenger’s, English officials typically determined that all satires directed at the government were threats to political stability, and thus seditious libels.⁷⁹ After Zenger, however, American courts typically left the determination of guilt or innocence to juries which often saw satire as a means of correcting political transgressions and would excuse the printers. Olson writes that this dynamic created a sort of double trial: if a politician took a satirist to court, his reputation would be on trial in both the satire and the court proceedings, as he would have to defend his own actions in court to prove that the satirist had printed untruthful words.⁸⁰ Thus, politicians were less likely to prosecute satirists in order to avoid making their reputation vulnerable unless they were certain they could win their case. No binding legal precedent was needed to promote this change.

The reason all of this is important for understanding the role of modern televised political satire in contemporary society is that Zenger’s *New York Weekly-Journal* had a very similar relationship to government and the media in 1730s. By making comparisons

between the *Journal* and today's televised satire, we can better illustrate the kinds of effects shows like *The Daily Show* have on contemporary media and politics.

The New-York Weekly Journal functioned as an opposition medium. It was simultaneously against the governor and against the only other newspaper media available at the time. *The New York Gazette* was not only complacent with a corrupt governor, it was controlled by him. The satire the *Journal* contained was the only real representative voice of the people of New York. I discussed in chapter one how Jon Stewart views the mainstream media today: that the media has essentially “dropped the ball” on being a check on government. While Stewart maintains that his is not a news show and that his duty is to comedy and not politics, the content of *The Daily Show* usually indicates otherwise. Stewart's show regularly makes cogent critiques of both the media and politicians in its well known pointed and satirical comedy style. A common structure for the show's humor is to show a recent clip of a politician saying one thing, Stewart making some comment on the clip, and then showing an older clip of the same politician saying something exactly opposite of the original clip. This is usually where the audience begins laughing, as Stewart wraps up the segment with another clever comment and often calls out the politician in question on his statements and asks for clarification. It's this construction of *The Daily Show*'s satire that makes it the same sort of opposition media that Zenger's *New-York Weekly Journal* was nearly 300 years ago; both Zenger and Stewart simultaneously confront the government and the mainstream non-satirical media in order to voice the need for change in both.

Like Zenger's *Journal* and the ensuing trial over it, so too has today's satire dramatically affected what the media can say about politics. It goes beyond inventing new words like "truthiness," the example I gave in Chapter I. It's about a pervasive and persistent critique of the complacency of the media with questionable public policy, and with news that does little or nothing to add to intelligent civic discourse.

Probably Stewart's most infamous critique of the media comes from his appearance on CNN's debate show *Crossfire*, a show which was cancelled shortly after Stewart's appearance.⁸¹ *Crossfire* was a show meant to give debates between two hosts, one from the Right and the other from the Left, and a guest from each side each time it aired. Stewart appeared as the lone guest on the show one evening and criticized the show for "partisan hackery" and for essentially being complacent in being part of the dishonest campaign strategies of both sides. The immediate result was a heated exchange between the hosts (Tucker Carlson in particular) and Stewart. The following excerpt comes from the beginning of Stewart's diatribe:

STEWART: I think, oftentimes, the person that knows they can't win is allowed to speak the most freely, because, otherwise, shows with titles, such as CROSSFIRE.

BEGALA: CROSSFIRE.

STEWART: Or "HARDBALL" or "I'm Going to Kick Your Ass" or. . .

(LAUGHTER)

STEWART: Will jump on it.

In many ways, it's funny. And I made a special effort to come on the show today, because I have privately, amongst my friends and also in occasional newspapers and television shows, mentioned this show as being bad.

(LAUGHTER)

BEGALA: We have noticed.

STEWART: And I wanted to -- I felt that that wasn't fair and I should come here and tell you that I don't -- it's not so much that it's bad, as it's hurting America.

(LAUGHTER)

CARLSON: But in its defense. . .

(CROSSTALK)

STEWART: So I wanted to come here today and say. . .

(CROSSTALK)

STEWART: Here's just what I wanted to tell you guys.

CARLSON: Yes.

STEWART: Stop.

(LAUGHTER)

STEWART: Stop, stop, stop, stop hurting America.

BEGALA: OK. Now

(CROSSTALK)

STEWART: And come work for us, because we, as the people. . .

CARLSON: How do you pay?

STEWART: The people -- not well.

(LAUGHTER)

BEGALA: Better than CNN, I'm sure.

STEWART: But you can sleep at night.

(LAUGHTER)

STEWART: See, the thing is, we need your help. Right now, you're helping the politicians and the corporations. And we're left out there to mow our lawns

BEGALA: By beating up on them? You just said we're too rough on them when they make mistakes.

STEWART: No, no, no, you're not too rough on them. You're part of their strategies. You are partisan, what do you call it, hacks.⁸²

Stewart is arguing that the media at large has reached a point of complacency such that politicians can count on journalists' inability to cipher out the truth. He recognizes that the public counts on and needs the media to help come to their own decisions about politics, but claims that now the media is a tool of the corporations and politicians rather than the people.

The writers in Zenger's *Journal* made nearly this exact argument in the 1730s. The *Gazette* was published to pander to Governor Cosby and conceal his misdeeds. Their crime wasn't merely that they were partisan and published only opinions which supported the government in office, but that they were dishonest and allowed themselves

to be controlled by a corrupt governor. The *Journal* openly critiqued Harison's writing through satirical representations, and condemned Cosby for his transgressions. The *Journal* played a role as the dissatisfied people's voice; the media had a duty to serve the people with the truth and failed to do so, and so the writers of the *Journal* became the representatives of the people.

We needn't buy into Jon Stewart's arguments about the media—that it has been irresponsible, complacent, and ultimately harmful to America—to recognize the role which televised political satire is creating for itself, much like the role of Zenger's satirists before. Stewart acts as a comic spokesman for America when he condemns Paul Begala and Tucker Carlson for hurting America with their ridiculous debates that do nothing to sort out the truths behind modern politics. He sees the news media as responsible for “helping” America, and himself responsible for showing America how it has been duped into being complacent along with its journalists. I don't believe Stewart would make this claim if asked outright; he has said several times (including while on *Crossfire*) that his is a comedy show and “the show that leads into me is puppets making crank phone calls.”⁸³ Stewart uses this point to seemingly erase his own responsibility, but the truth of the matter is that regardless of whether or not he claims it, he certainly takes it. He says he appeared on *Crossfire* with the agenda of telling the hosts that they're hurting America, and on his own show he regularly satirizes the news media as a source for his own jokes. Stewart's ‘mission’ undoubtedly has something to do with making the American people aware of how the media has been complacent, and with forcing the media to recognize its failures.

Ultimately, the role of both Zenger's *Journal* and Stewart's *Daily Show* has been to identify and condemn the mainstream media for its shortcomings in assisting the people by acting as a proper check on government. Simultaneously, both often have provided that needed check themselves. Zenger's *Journal* regularly called out Governor Cosby for his indiscretions, and *The Daily Show* has certainly done the same for today's politicians as well. While I've spent time in this chapter discussing the history of American political satire and determining why and how satirists have created a role for themselves in critiquing the media, government, and society, in Chapter III I discuss in more detail and more broadly how this crafted responsibility functions in its actual execution.

CHAPTER III
POLITICAL SATIRE, THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA,
AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

One pervasive critique of television media is that it has been largely responsible for the decline of civic engagement in American society.⁸⁴ More recent research has suggested that the opposite may be true, and that civic engagement operates in more and different channels than have been traditionally associated with it. Jeffrey Jones's book *Entertaining Politics: New Political Television and Civic Culture* challenges many of the assumptions about civic engagement, particularly as they collide with televised political satire.⁸⁵ Jones's argument is that researchers like Robert Putnam have misunderstood the breadth of channels in which civic engagement regularly takes place in for the everyday American. While "traditional measures of democratic vitality" like voting, party affiliation, and activism have decreased, other political activities haven't been included in measurements of civic engagement and are now on the rise.⁸⁶ Jones argues that the state of contemporary citizenship is that

Daily citizen *engagement* with politics is more frequently *textual* than organizational or "participatory" in any traditional sense. For better or worse, the most common and frequent form of political *activity*—its actual practice—comes, for most people, through their choosing, attending to, processing, and engaging a myriad of media texts about the formal political process of government and political institutions as they conduct their daily routines. Media are our primary points of access to politics—the "space in which politics now chiefly happens for most people," and the place for political encounters that precede, shape, and at times determine further bodily participation (if it is to happen at all).⁸⁷

What we examine in this chapter is largely an expansion of Jon Stewart's claim that the media have a responsibility to *help* the average American to participate politically. Jones's argument is essentially that engaging with the media can be a means of political participation itself, while Stewart argues that the media have not been fulfilling their role in this regard.

In an interview with Ted Koppel, Stewart summarizes the situation as he sees it:

STEWART: It's that the partisan mobilization has become part of the media process. That they realize that, this real estate that you possess, television, is the most valuable real estate known to rulers. If Alexander the Great had TV, believe me, he would have had his spin guys dealing. Napoleon would have had people working. The key to leadership is to have that mouthpiece to the people. And that's what this is. You guys are... This is the battle for the airwaves. And that's what we watch, and I think that's what is so dispiriting to those at home who believe that... I think, there's a sense here that you're not participating in that battle, and there's a sense at home that you're ABSOLUTELY participating and complicit in that battle.

KOPPEL: Go a little further on that.

STEWART: I'm a news anchor. Remember this is bizarro world. And I say, the issue is health care and insurance, and why 40 million American kids don't have insurance -- 40 million Americans are uninsured. Is this health insurance program being debated in Congress good for the country? Let's debate it. I have with me Donna Brazile and Bay Buchanan. Let's go. Donna. "I think the Democrats really have it right here. I think that this is a pain for the insurance companies and the drug companies and this is wrong for America." Bay. "Oh no, what it is..." And then she throws out her figures from the Heritage Foundation, and she throws out her figures from the Brookings Institute, and the anchor -- who should be the arbiter of the truth -- says, "Thank you both very much, that was very interesting." No it wasn't! That was Coke and Pepsi talking about beverage truth. And that game has, I think, caused people to think, "I'm not watching this."⁸⁸

Stewart means to say that the news media offers no real investigative commentary of its own; there's no effort to produce the truth for the viewer, but simply to present two sides of any issue as if that were enough. The impact of this contention

grows more certain if we accept Jones's argument that media viewership and civic participation are overlapping activities.

It's a democratically unhealthy arrangement for the government and big business to nearly exclusively dictate what is acceptable for the news media to air. Stewart sees the one-way flow of information from the government to the media to the people as undesirable when compared with the critical exchange of ideas and proliferation of discourse we could have instead. Political satire functions to interrupt this downward trickle by creating more pointedly critical discourse aimed at both the government and the media which then also reaches out to the American audience. This critical discourse is *engaging* to the people. One function of these shows is to be infectious. Stewart says he doesn't believe it should be the duty of a comedian to provide the only outlet for real, honest, political communication. Stewart wants to see better political dialogue in the media at large, and coming also from regular American laypersons. Today's political satire attempts to be infectious then—it begins a trend of critical political discourse by dismantling the one-way flow of information from government to the people by opening a path through which satirists, spokesmen of the people, openly review both government and the media. The goal, ultimately, is to replace the flow of discourse from business and government with a healthier, universal flow in which the media provides a valuable check upon the government, inputs political dialogue of critical worth, and promotes the same interest in political discourse in the average American whether it be through traditional measures of civic engagement like voting, lobbying, protesting, and membership in political organizations or through newer means of civic participation like

online involvement in the political blogosphere or simply a more politically conscious orientation in everyday life. This kind of public discourse is the heart of democracy in its oldest sense, which is exactly why satirists like Stewart see restoring it as such an essential goal to preserving America and why scholars like Jeffrey Jones argue that measurements of civic participation must include such things.

One important counterpoint to this argument is that the media actually does critique what the government does. There is plenty of dialogue on the news about how bad of a job the Bush administration is doing or how poorly the Democrats are able to organize to accomplish anything, for example. Stewart doesn't intend to suggest that the media doesn't criticize the government. His argument, rather, is that they tend to do it within a realm of safety. What makes clips like *The Daily Show's* "Bush vs. Bush debate" (the clip discussed in Chapter I) funny isn't just that it shows clips of the President contradicting himself, it's also the sense of irreverence the audience feels when watching them. Politicians constantly "flip-flop" (to borrow a term used to describe Senator Kerry in the 2004 Presidential election), and the video footage to prove it is abundant. Stewart basically questions why a late night comedian from Comedy Central must be the one to stop *debating* about politicians making dishonest claims and taking actions that violate promises they've made and actually *show* the public exactly what's been done by providing the tapes. In the earlier excerpt from his interview with Ted Koppel, Stewart was trying to explain this idea of a media safe zone. The media act subordinate to the government when they only give debate between two "talking-heads"

rather than actively coming out and presenting the public audience with the video evidence of the transgressions themselves.

Major news figures have been understandably hostile about Stewart's ideas and successes. The list of *The Daily Show's* political guests has grown enormously impressive, and includes a number of politicians other "real" news shows have often been unable to attract. *TDS's* prominent guest list includes Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, Al Gore, Madeleine Albright, Ari Fleischer, Henry Kissinger, Colin Powell, Tom Ridge, John Kerry, Bob Dole, Hillary Clinton, John Edwards (who actually announced his candidacy for the 2004 Presidential Election on the show), John McCain, Trent Lott, Zell Miller, Carol Moseley-Braun, Ted Kennedy, Newt Gingrich, Dick Gephardt, Michael Bloomberg, Rudy Giuliani, Howard Dean, Ralph Nader, and dozens of others. This has befuddled and angered a number of news figures. Bill O'Reilly, in an interview with Stewart, said, "You know what's really frightening? You actually have an influence on this presidential election. That is scary. I mean, you've got stoned slackers watching your dopey show every night, OK, and they can vote."⁸⁹ Later in the same interview O'Reilly questioned Stewart as to how a guest like John Kerry could have bypassed *The O'Reilly Factor* but appeared on *The Daily Show* instead. CNN news figure Howard Kurtz told Stewart in an interview, "Oh boy, you're loaded (UNINTELLIGIBLE) today," and asked that he not confuse himself with a "real journalist."⁹⁰ Ted Koppel ended his interview with Stewart with "I've had enough of you. You're finished."⁹¹

A number of other televised political satire shows have had strong political voices with wide audiences as well. The late 90s ABC political comedy talk show

Politically Incorrect was hosted by liberal, provocative and somewhat radical ideologue and comedian Bill Maher. The format of the show was that Maher would give a brief, usually funny, monologue on current events followed by a half-hour discussion between Maher and four celebrity, media, and political guests on a handful of political, social, or news issues. Maher made headlines several times for voicing controversial opinions on the Clinton/Lewinsky scandal and again for criticizing the American response following the 9/11 attacks.⁹² Maher saw the Lewinsky scandal as part of a major right-wing drive to discredit the Clintons and was one of Clinton's most adamant supporters. Maher regularly argued that Clinton was being persecuted for nothing more serious than lying about oral sex. About his public defense of Clinton, Maher later commented "I would like to think that when he's out of office, we could have a conversation with him. And I'd like to think he might say, 'Hey, I appreciated the support during that rough period, that little tough time I had. I appreciated you saying some of the things I couldn't say myself.'" ⁹³ Shortly after 9/11, Maher spoke on his show against President Bush's comments that the terrorists were cowards, and instead argued that the terrorists were more courageous than Americans, who simply "lob" cruise missiles from thousands of miles away.⁹⁴ Maher's *PI* represented a major step forward for political television; the guests needn't be experts in politics to give their political opinions. Guests ranged from non-political celebrities like actor William Shatner and rapper Ice Cube to regular political commentators like Ann Coulter and Michael Moore. One of the most important aspects of this format is that familiar celebrity faces not typically associated with politically minded thinking were shown to the public giving their opinions on political

issues. The average viewer would then see guests that weren't primarily politically oriented giving real political commentary, which reinforced the idea that one doesn't have to be a member of the political elite to partake in everyday political discussion. Civic engagement, if we accept Jones's criteria for it, includes exactly the kinds of speech Maher's show produced; lay opinions which are treated as no less valid than the opinions of professional political commentators. The fact is that it's important that the media and presidential campaigns *not* treat lay opinions as opinions that don't matter, because the vast majority of American voters are laypersons.

Another major series in televised political satire is *Saturday Night Live*, the longest running program under discussion in this chapter, which has aired weekly for nearly thirty years now. I related Press Secretary Ron Nessen's opinions of how the show affected the public image of Gerald Ford in Chapter I. John Matviko's article "Television Satire and the Presidency: The Case of Saturday Night Live" goes further and covers how public presidential perceptions have been shaped by *SNL* from Presidents Ford to Bush. When discussing Gerald Ford, the article heavily cites Ron Nessen's biography and concludes in much the same way Nessen did: *Saturday Night Live* set out to hurt Ford's public image and succeeded in doing so.⁹⁵ In portrayals of Jimmy Carter, the article says very little beyond describing them as "a cartoonish historical record of his administration" and "more good natured than intolerant."⁹⁶ When speaking of Ronald Reagan, the article recognizes the difficulty *Saturday Night Live* had in parodying him. While Ford was an easy target, Reagan was immensely popular, earning him a title as the "Teflon president." Satirical portrayals of Reagan lacked a

distinct or easy target. Over the course of Reagan's presidency the show shifted focus from Reagan's past as an actor, to Reagan's family, and finally to an image in a 1986 skit called "Mastermind" where while he seemed to be a forgetful older man in front of reporters he was the real mastermind behind every policy detail when they left the room.⁹⁷ *SNL's* portrayal of George Bush Sr. by Dana Carvey rested primarily on Carvey's uncanny ability to mimic the president. The article makes it clear that there was no maliciousness on the part of *Saturday Night Live* in Carvey's impression, and that Bush even invited Carvey to the White House and appeared on an episode of the show in order to imitate Carvey's imitation of him. The article quotes Bush as saying "Dana's given me a lot of laughs."⁹⁸ *SNL's* treatment of the Clinton presidency shifted from satire about events and policy in the beginning increasingly toward presidential scandal toward the middle and end.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the article describes *Saturday Night Live's* attitude toward Clinton as "downright affectionate." Darrell Hammond, one of the actors who portrayed Clinton illustrated the difference between his Clinton and Carvey's Bush: "He got Iran-Contra, taking down the Berlin Wall, the Gulf War. I get Bill Clinton dancing around with busty ladies, dropping his pants; there's a fat lady with a tape recorder, a wife with a rolling pin. It's like *The Benny Hill Show*."¹⁰⁰

A more recent article examined the role of *Saturday Night Live* in the 2000 presidential election. Chris Smith and Ben Voth examine *SNL's* parodies of the three presidential debates between George Bush and Al Gore and the subsequent responses of the two candidates.¹⁰¹ The authors detail the extent to which the candidates strategized about how to respond to the sketches, which portrayed Bush as a comic fool and Gore as

a “haughty exaggerator.” Both campaigns saw *Saturday Night Live* as a media force serious enough to require calculated strategy in response. Smith and Voth point out, for instance, that “instead of laughing at the exaggerated parodies of the Vice-President, the Gore strategists had him watch the *SNL* skits of the first debate in order to *correct* his perceived haughty and pompous behavior.”¹⁰² On November 5, 2000, the two candidates co-hosted “Presidential Bash 2000,” a *Saturday Night Live* special celebrating the past 25 years of the shows Presidential parodies. The show attracted 16 million viewers and acted as a forum for the two to engage in a form of self-deprecating humor Smith and Voth argue is critical for leaders to participate in to maintain political stability. They say that “By reveling in their own frailties and acting in a perspective of incongruity, Bush and Gore were able to get in the last word over the potentially devastating late-night frolics.”¹⁰³

While the effects of *SNL* on presidential images prior to the Bush/Gore campaigns were certainly important, Smith and Voth make it clear that in 2000 there was a significant shift in relevance from before. The Bush and Gore campaigns were actively trying to respond to and participate in *SNL*’s satire rather than mainly ignore it like so many previous presidents had during campaigns (Nessen and Ford being the notable exception). *SNL*’s Bush and Gore impressions contributed significantly to discourse in the wider media about the candidates. ‘Strategy,’ a term coined by *SNL* to satirize Bush’s penchant for mispronunciation, has become a term used regularly when discussing Bush and was even used by the President in a 2001 speech as a nod to the sketch in which it aired.¹⁰⁴ The repeated use of ‘lockbox’ to parody Gore’s plan for a

Social Security lockbox has become common humor about Gore's apparent obsession for using the term in the presidential debates.

Another popular show, though arguably not primarily a political satire show, nonetheless has included plenty of social commentary in its 10 season run. *South Park*, the usually irreverent cartoon series that airs on Comedy Central, regularly satirizes political, religious, and social issues. Notorious episodes include the sixth season's "Red Hot Catholic Love"¹⁰⁵ about the homosexual pedophilia scandals in the Catholic church, "Red Sleigh Down"¹⁰⁶ which was a Christmas special parodying a potential naïve opinion of American Christians about how bringing Christmas to Iraq would make everyone happy, "Douche and Turd"¹⁰⁷ which analogized the 2004 presidential election to an elementary school election between two equally undesirable potential new mascots (The mascots were a giant douche representing Bush and a turd sandwich as Kerry), "A Ladder to Heaven"¹⁰⁸ which parodied the original rationale for war in Iraq by showing American military leaders finding WMDs in heaven and making plans to bomb it after discovering Saddam Hussein was hiding there, "Goobacks"¹⁰⁹ which satirized the immigration debate by having time-traveling people from the future arrive and take American jobs for low pay, and "Cartoon Wars"¹¹⁰ which was a two-part episode that hashed out both sides of the free speech debate surrounding the Danish cartoon controversy of earlier this year.

The "Cartoon Wars" episode in particular received much attention after airing. The two-part episode used real-life rival cartoon *Family Guy* to represent *South Park* in a controversy over the cartoon airing an image of the Muslim prophet Mohammed.¹¹¹

The episode's plot involved a nationwide panic over the airing of the image of Mohammed on *Family Guy* and a movement to either have the episode pulled or censor the image when it would be shown out of fear of a violent Middle Eastern Muslim retaliation for showing the image. In the first part of the *South Park* episode, the image is censored by the network and the cartoon people are relieved that violence has been averted. Nevertheless, the show's producers are outraged that their free speech has been violated and they have been censored rather than allowed to fully express themselves. The twist is revealed that the *Family Guy* episode was only part one of a two part series, and further that Mohammed would be shown again in the second part. The *Family Guy* producers threaten to stop making new episodes if the network doesn't air the second part in its entirety. In the second part of "Cartoon Wars," the network unwillingly caves to the producers' request and agree to air the image of Mohammed, despite Muslim threats to retaliate. Characters in the show argue both sides of the issue. It is one of the most fundamental values of America that the producers of *Family Guy* be allowed to exercise their free speech, and caving to foreign threats of violence destroys the American way of life. On the other hand, the producers are acting irresponsibly by making a joke that threatens the safety and well-being of people in the real world; people's physical safety shouldn't be put at risk for the sake of a person's right to make a joke. The *South Park* episode included an actual image of Mohammed which would have been aired, had Comedy Central not censored it in real life. The cartoon was instead replaced by a panel which said "In this shot, Mohammed hands a football helmet to Family Guy. Comedy Central has refused to broadcast the image of Mohammed on its

network.” The following, uncensored portion of the *South Park* episode included images of Jesus Christ, President Bush, and the American flag being defecated upon as part of the threatened Muslim retaliation, illustrating the duplicity of the Comedy Central decision not to air an innocuous image of Mohammed, but to still air the irreverent images that followed.

Comedy Central sources revealed the next day that the decision had been made out of safety concerns related to the riots incited by the Danish cartoon controversy.¹¹² *South Park* served as an accessible public forum for a discussion about the place of free speech and concerns for public safety in not only the Danish controversy but in the current Western stand-off with Islamic extremism in general. *South Park* treated both sides of the free speech/safety argument justly and sparked intelligent criticism that ultimately left much of the decision about which is the “right” position to the viewer. It provided an implicit challenge to previous network news decisions not to air the images of the Danish cartoon during the controversy, under the presumption that free speech should be absolute in American democracy as well. This entire controversy—both over the Danish cartoons and over *South Park*—again illustrates the continuing power of the political cartoon in society to cause controversy and produce public debate.

By Jones’s argument, all of these are examples of satire sparking civic engagement. Stewart’s claim that the news media don’t participate in real political criticism beyond the borders of “safe” discussion is further validated by seeing how especially controversial shows like *Politically Incorrect* and *South Park* use their comic license to examine issues in ways that would never be allowed on network news or non-

satirical political television. In the remainder of this chapter I discuss the existing quantitative data surrounding televised political satire, especially as it relates to the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, and go beyond questions of how the media is affected by satire into more concrete data surrounding the outcome of political elections.

Quantitative research into the effects of televised political satire on presidential elections and civic participations is more of a burgeoning study than it is really already established. Nevertheless, the data that do exist indicate a relationship between televised political satire and civic participation. Aside from quantitative data, it's almost common sense to assume that there is an effect. Political elites and campaign managers certainly treat political satire as if it were a potent force in our culture. Presidential campaigns have changed direction based on the satire of *Saturday Night Live* and strategists attempt to compensate for any negative effect satire may have on the public image of their candidate. Ron Nessen considered *Saturday Night Live* the greatest continuing threat to the Ford presidency. A force this fearsome in the minds of the political elite must be considered to carry some weight in modern politics.

The existing data isn't so bold as to indicate precise numbers of votes shifting from one candidate to another in an election based upon the political satire a voter watches, but the evidence is nevertheless extremely pertinent to such a discussion. Two surveys conducted by the National Annenberg Election Survey do offer some valuable data. The first, entitled "Young People Watch More Late Night Television" gives us demographic data based on age telling us which age group watched the most late night television on average. "Late night television" was defined in the question as "a late night

talk show like ‘Late Night’ with David Letterman or ‘The Tonight Show’ with Jay Leno or the Daily Show with Jon Stewart.”¹¹³ Four age groups were used in the study. 18-29 year olds watched an average of 1.2 nights of late night television per week, while every other age group (all older) averaged .7 to .8 nights per week.¹¹⁴ The survey also offered data to show which late night show (out of Letterman, Leno, and Stewart) different demographics preferred, divided by age, gender, education, political party affiliation, political ideology, and how much the participant followed politics. In all categories, the vast majority had no preference, while out of those with a preference Leno always ranked first, Letterman ranked second, and Stewart ranked third.¹¹⁵

A second Annenberg survey asked participants for information regarding how often they watch network news, cable news, late night television, and how often they read the newspaper.¹¹⁶ Those that watched at least one night of late night television were asked whether they preferred the shows of Jay Leno, David Letterman, or Jon Stewart. The participants were also given a six question knowledge test that tested the participant’s knowledge of campaign issues in the 2004 presidential election (polling was conducted between July 15 and September 19 of 2004). The survey results showed that participants that favored *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* scored higher than any other group.¹¹⁷ The report reads:

Polling conducted. . . among 19,013 adults showed that on a six-item political knowledge test people who did not watch any late-night comedy programs in the last week answered 2.62 items correctly, while viewers of Letterman answered 2.91, viewers of Leno answered 2.95, and viewers of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart answered 3.59 items correctly. That meant there was a difference of 16 percentage points between Daily Show viewers and people who did not watch any late-night programming.¹¹⁸

The report did not go so far as to say that *The Daily Show* itself was responsible for the higher knowledge among its viewers, but suggested that *The Daily Show* assumes a fairly high level of political knowledge on the part of its audience and that that may be responsible as well. The report concludes that its findings are the result of “probably a bit of both.”¹¹⁹

Entertainment shows represent an important corner of the political market for presidential campaigns. Matthew Baum, in “Talking the Vote: Why Presidential Candidates Hit the Talk Show Circuit” explains the value of entertainment television in political campaigning.¹²⁰ He cites a Pew Center survey that indicated that 62% of respondents watch the news with the remote control in hand, ready to change the channel the moment they’re no longer interested by a story.¹²¹ Entertainment television offers a new venue for political figures to reach an inattentive public audience. Baum explains that “While typical talk show viewers are not among the most politically engaged Americans, such individuals do vote in significant numbers. . . One-on-one interviews on *Meet the Press* or the *Jim Lehrer News Hour* are unlikely to reach these potential voters. In today’s increasingly personality-driven political environment, appearances on E-talk shows afford candidates perhaps their best opportunity to communicate with a substantial niche of the electorate.”¹²²

While presidential candidates since Richard Nixon haven’t ignored the entertainment media circuit, using the entertainment media for political campaigning moved from the periphery to the forefront of political strategy in 2000. Baum cites appearances by candidates on Oprah Winfrey, Regis Philbin, Jay Leno, and Jon

Stewart's shows as examples of the increased focus on entertainment shows.¹²³ The demographics for the audiences of these types of shows indicate that viewers are on average "less educated, less interested in politics, and more likely to be young, female, and liberal."¹²⁴ Baum also cites the 2000 American National Election Study (ANES), which found that viewers were more likely to be Democrats (34%) or Independents (40%) than Republicans (26%).¹²⁵ The idea for campaigns is that the human interest component of these shows provides an attractive option for approaching potential supporters with a typically disinterested view of politics. The large number of Independent voters in the demographic makes this audience particularly important, as many of these Independents represent the critical group of undecided voters presidential campaigns must seek to persuade in order to win an election. Baum also points out that oftentimes disinterest in politics doesn't mean a person will not vote. The 2000 ANES study also found that 60% of respondents who indicated that they follow politics "hardly at all" or "only now and then" claim to have voted.¹²⁶ Baum's own research discovered that day-time entertainment talk shows (admittedly a bit different than late night political satire television) had a greater effect on viewers' voting habits than did network news in 2000:

The effects of daytime talk show viewing on low-awareness Republicans' attitudes toward Gore, and their Democratic counterparts' attitudes toward Bush, as well as on the same individuals' propensities to vote for the opposition party candidate, are larger and more significant than the corresponding effects associated with watching national network news. They also offer strong support for Hypotheses 8 and 9, as the strongest effects of watching daytime talk shows emerge among the *least* politically aware respondents, who are the *most* dependent on such programs for their political information. As predicted, among low-awareness individuals, increased talk show viewing is associated with a

substantial and statistically significant (or nearly so) increase in both likeability ratings and in the probability for voting for the *opposition* party candidate. The corresponding effects among highly aware respondents are both substantively smaller and run in the *opposite* direction, consistent with partisan predispositions. To the extent that talk shows matter at all for highly aware respondents, selective acceptance appears to indeed produce the hypothesized reinforcement effect, raising the probability of supporting their fellow partisan candidate.¹²⁷

While daytime entertainment talk shows are certainly not the same thing as late night televised political satire, Baum's research is still extremely relevant to our discussion. The emphasis on entertainment over news is the important distinction. What Baum's survey indicates is that as comedy shows are sought out for their newsworthiness as much as for their entertainment values, as some viewers turn more often to Comedy Central than to the 24 hour news networks for their news, the effect of the satire media on the public's voting habits will increase. Consequently, campaign rhetoric, as it grows more entertainment oriented, will likely see an increase in effectiveness as well. Baum shows us how standard network news stations are growing progressively more obsolete in political campaigning, especially since 2000. The role of entertainment satire in providing political news and commentary is growing not only because of things like Jon Stewart's comprehensive critiques of government and the media, but also because the political elite are realizing the potential of entertainment media to reach new demographics. Political strategists are discovering the lesson Baum relates in his conclusion: "If America's political leaders wish to communicate with members of the public who are not predisposed to seek out political information, they must put the information where these potential voters are likely to notice it."¹²⁸

A recent article by Jody Baumgartner and Jonathan Morris focuses its research specifically on the effects of *The Daily Show* on young adult viewer evaluations of Bush and Kerry in 2004.¹²⁹ Their study focuses specifically on young viewers of *The Daily Show* and hypothesized that exposure to *TDS* would result in more negative evaluations of Bush and Kerry, and further that evaluations of Kerry would be more negative than those of Bush. They cite a Pew Research Center study that reported that from 1994 to 2004, 18- to 24-year-olds spent on average 16 fewer minutes per day following the news, 25% pay no attention at all to hard news, that only 23% of regular *TDS* viewers report following hard news closely, and finally that over half (54%) of young adults in the age group reported getting at least some news about the 2004 presidential campaign from comedy programs like *The Daily Show* and *Saturday Night Live*.¹³⁰ Baumgartner and Morris's research does not immediately seem to support some of the conclusions they draw from it as solidly as they would claim. The two researchers' methodology includes choosing two clips to present to two audiences, one from *The Daily Show* and another from *CBS Evening News*. The two hypothesize that evaluations of the lesser known candidate, in this case Kerry, will be more negatively affected than those of Bush by exposure to *TDS*. Their research supposedly supports the claim by showing a significantly greater negative impact on Kerry evaluations over Bush evaluations from watching the *TDS* clip, however fails to account for the fact that the content of the chosen *TDS* clip included twice as many negative references to Kerry than to Bush. Their hypothesis is not that *The Daily Show* treated Kerry more negatively than it treated Bush, but rather that viewer responses would be more negative toward Kerry than Bush.

In the chosen clip, the two researchers reveal that a total of 165 seconds spent making four different negative jokes about Kerry, while only 129 seconds spent making *two* different negative jokes about Bush. It seems obvious that in order to make an accurate statement about viewer evaluations of the two candidates, the clip should spend at least roughly equal time joking about each candidate. Baumgartner and Morris do not account for this in their assessment of the results of their study.

Despite questionable interpretations of some of the data Baumgartner and Morris collected, the survey research itself seems both intact and helpful for reinforcing the idea that televised late night political satire does in fact have an effect on its viewers. Their research indicated that, while holding all other variables constant, exposure to *The Daily Show* caused a 23% increase the probability that a participant would disagree that he or she has faith in the electoral system.¹³¹ The data also indicated an 11% increase in the probability of a participant disagreeing with the statement that he or she trusts the media if he or she were exposed to the *TDS* clip.¹³² Neither of these relationships existed among participants exposed to the *CBS Evening News* clip instead. Viewing *The Daily Show* clip also had a significant positive effect on the internal efficacy of participants. Internal efficacy refers to “beliefs about one’s own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in, politics.”¹³³ In the author’s words, “even though *The Daily Show* generates cynicism toward the media and the electoral process, it simultaneously makes young viewers more confident about their own ability to understand politics.”¹³⁴

These increases in internal efficacy are especially important for considering the potential effects of *The Daily Show* and shows like it on political activation. Baum’s

research that indicates that people who believe they know more about politics are more likely to participate in it (by voting, etc) is significant, given Baumgartner and Morris's results. Baumgartner and Morris caveat the idea that exposure to *TDS* may increase political activity by explaining that creating a more cynical public may contribute to a sense of alienation from the political process, and subsequently can perpetuate a dysfunctional political system.¹³⁵ In Stewart's paradigm, however, the *existing* systems of the media and politics are in atrophy and in need of repair. Stewart recognizes the potential power of the media to empower the people, yet argues they are in disuse, or at least are underused. A fully functional democratic political system includes a public with the ability to use the media to effectively voice their political opinions.

The data before us indicates three main effects of viewing televised political satire. First, according to the *National Annenberg Election Survey*, it significantly increases viewer knowledge of campaign issues. Second, from Baum's research we can discern that viewers grow more likely to vote for a candidate they previously disagreed with after seeing an appearance on an entertainment show, and more reinforced in their political beliefs after seeing a candidate they previously have identified with. Third, from Baumgartner and Morris's research we extract that regular viewers grow both more critical of media and the government and more confident in their belief that they are able to understand politics.

Overall, the data we've covered tends to lead one to the argument that televised political satire is ultimately a slightly liberalizing force in voter behavior. The comedians behind late night televised political satire shows are overwhelmingly liberal oriented:

Bill Maher was a staunch supporter of Clinton, Jon Stewart is well known for his liberal stance and powerful criticisms of the Bush administration, and Stephen Colbert's lampooning of the President at the White House dinner has already become famous as a satirical critique of conservative policy, for example. What this indicates is that as more people turn to entertainment television in the form of late night political satire for their political news, more viewers will have their perceptions of the political landscape shaped by the words of liberal ideologues. Given Baum's research indicating that roughly 40% of entertainment talk show viewers identify as political independents, and Baumgartner and Morris's research indicating that exposure to *The Daily Show* leads viewers to be more confident in their own abilities to understand politics, we can infer that many of these independent viewers may be persuaded by the rhetoric of programs like *TDS* into believing that the liberal explanation of politics they've been exposed to is, in fact, the best explanation of the political world. Considering research regarding increased voter participation among those that believe they understand politics, it's natural to also infer that many of these independent viewers may become independent voters as their perceived knowledge (and, according to the *NAES* study, real knowledge) of politics increases.

Baum's research also indicated that favor for an opposition candidate increases after seeing an appearance by the candidate on an entertainment talk show, despite prior research indicating that exposure to political campaigns in the wider media tends to reinforce partisan predispositions rather than challenging them. In 2004, John Kerry appeared on *The Daily Show*, while George Bush did not. The effects of this appearance,

given Baum's research, undoubtedly included not only helping to galvanize the support of liberal viewers, but also persuading many of those independent and conservative viewers more casual in their political knowledge to soften their perspectives toward Kerry.

It's also important to note that this effect needn't be particularly large to be significant. Attributing a single percent point shift from one candidate to another would be a tremendously significant effect for televised political satire to cause on its own. To be fair, the liberal shift predicted in the last paragraph would face several limiting factors as well. First, inevitably many of the politically independent oriented viewers of these shows would already be voters, and many would already regularly vote for the liberal candidate. Second, many conservative viewers would be galvanized in their conservatism by the same viewership, and as such, be both more likely to vote and more likely to vote conservatively. Given both Baum's research regarding the demographics of entertainment talk show audiences and the *NAES's* research into *The Daily Show's* audience, however, we learn that the young and liberal audiences of these shows are larger, and so the effects on liberals would be greater than the effect on the somewhat smaller number of conservatives. Third, there is certainly a chance that there is a thus far unmeasured result of long term exposure to televised political satire which may diminish the liberalizing effect.

It is undeniable that there will be more candidate appearances on shows like *The Daily Show* during the 2008 presidential campaign season. By Baum's argument, these appearances will significantly affect the perceptions of viewers that may be otherwise

disengaged from politics in the favor of the candidates they see, while reinforcing the beliefs of already politically engaged viewers. In the next chapter, we use many of the arguments made in this chapter to make predictions for the role of televised political satire in the 2008 presidential race, including caveats about how much of an effect is needed in order to truly call the influence “significant”. How coming changes in media technology will affect the impact of satire and final conclusions regarding the role of televised political satire in both the media and presidential elections will also be discussed.

CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS, AND PREDICTIONS FOR THE ROLE OF TELEVISED
POLITICAL SATIRE IN THE 2008 ELECTION

The media are in a period of great shift now. Stewart's arguments about media accountability and the value of the news for quality political inquiry are taking root, and television is slowly working to become more critical. In 2004, ratings for *The Daily Show* increased by 22% from 2003.¹³⁶ People are listening to Stewart's arguments. Televised political satire's crafted role for itself—as a critic of the media, society, and government, and source of political activation for the public—is becoming reality. We can anticipate similar ratings boosts to *The Daily Show*, *Saturday Night Live*, and other political satire shows in 2008 and 2012 as the presidential campaign seasons heat up again. Other external factors will amplify the effect of political satire as media technology improves.

The switch to HDTV as a television standard is predicted to occur between 2007 and 2009. The slowness with which this switch has occurred has been the result of the slowness with which the government has decided on a set of international standards for HDTV. Richard Solomon's testimony during a hearing before the Subcommittee on International Scientific Cooperation of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1989 sums up many of the issues

surrounding the need for government involvement in setting an international standard for HDTV, as opposed to letting the technology and the free market develop one on its own:

In a rational world, the government would keep out of most standards issues, except for those that directly affect the mission of government agencies – the military, public safety, and the like. Standards are complicated, and there are too many economic and non-technical issues involved to trust the government to make the right decisions; the free market tends to do better. Furthermore, thanks to our Constitution, entertainment broadcast television is not a government activity in the United States, and neither is movie production.

All things being equal, the State Department should have made that clear to the International Telecommunication Union in the first instance, and stated that the U.S. government would not participate in standards-making for high-definition production, and had that position been rejected, indicate that *we would actively oppose any effort by other governments to set production standards for our industries*. As the single largest consumer and producer of video and film, we *do* have the clout to get such views across. We don't have to buy anything from anyone that we don't need or want.

Unfortunately, the world is not that rational, and things are not always equal. However, that does not argue for encouraging irrationality, just for including reality in strategic planning.¹³⁷

This testimony falls within the second of three periods described by Jeffrey Hart in describing the history of the development of HDTV standards. The first period begins with the development of the NHK HDTV standard in Japan in the early 1980s and ends with the US rejection of that standard in 1988. The second period begins in 1988 and ends with the adoption of a digital television (DTV) standard in the United States in 1993. The third period ranges from 1993 to the present.¹³⁸ Solomon's testimony was made during a volatile period during which the U.S. had rejected one standard but not yet accepted another.

Hart describes the debates surrounding this standard setting as “game-like”:
“Business players were seeking advantage both in domestic markets and in international competition; national governments were lobbied by a combination of domestic and international interests and were maneuvering for advantage with other governments.”¹³⁹

Hart also argues that broadcasting systems are inherently likely to be regulated by governments for three reasons. First, there were historical precedents for state monopolies over postal and telegraphic systems that in many countries were expanded to include radio and television broadcasting as part of their mandate. Second, the news content of broadcast media made them important for the expression of ideas and thereby susceptible to regulation because of the role of the media in the protection of free speech in a democratic society. Third, Hart argues that broadcasting itself is a collective good in many ways. Bandwidth itself is limited, and thus must be protected or regulated.¹⁴⁰ The slowness of HDTV standard setting in the United States clearly limited how soon HDTV could go into wide production and diffusion, and in doing so also slowed the rate by which the cost of production could be reduced, and therefore also the cost to consumers to purchase HDTV sets. The complexity of the standards setting process is a result of the complex group of interests with vested concern in the implications and outcomes of HDTV adoption. For example, public broadcasting found themselves in a difficult situation at the end of the 1980s and sought greater position in the emergent HDTV framework. This position was the result of the slowness with which public broadcasters realized that greater diversity in programming was necessary to reduce the pressure for privatization in the late 70s and early 80s. Their revenues were tied to user fees that were

based on the purchase of television receivers. When almost all homes already had receivers, license fee revenues plateaued while programming and transmission costs continued to rise.¹⁴¹ The special interest actors involved in the standards debates include the broadcasting industry, the TV and film production firms, and the consumer electronics industry. These competing interests presented public policy-makers with the difficult task of not only negotiating bargains between existing stakeholders, but also of anticipating how the interests of stakeholders would change in the light of changing technology.¹⁴²

This standards debate has slowed wider and quicker diffusion of HDTV to the American public. The link from this discussion of HDTV technology and its standards to its effects on televised political satire is two-folded. First there is how HDTV itself will actually affect its viewers. In 1964, the NHK Science and Technical Research Laboratories began researching future television technologies, which ultimately led them to the idea for HDTV in 1969. HDTV represented an improvement over standard television because it would provide a higher resolution image (the initial idea was for over 1000 scanning lines versus the standard 525 and 625 at the time) and a wide aspect ratio.¹⁴³ By the time HDTV had reached the prototype phase of development, NHK had devoted much of its research to the study of human visual capacity and was concerned with optimizing things like screen size, aspect ratio, resolution, and viewing distance. For example, NHK research discovered that the eye's ability to resolve details is fully satisfied with a 14 cycles/degree viewing angle (leading to the NHK HDTV 1125-line system which was designed to provide a resolution of 14 cycles/degree). NHK's ideal

aspect ratio was discovered through this research as well, determining that a horizontal viewing angle of close to 30 degrees would be ideal. They found that “the viewer’s sense of presence was largely related to eyeball movement. When the image encompassed a large fraction of the eye’s total viewing angle...then the viewer developed a sense of presence and of realism.”¹⁴⁴ NHK has continued its research into human visual perception from the 1970s until the present, also offering periodic workshops and seminars to demonstrate their findings to other experts.¹⁴⁵

NHK’s research into determining what was necessary in order to provide the ideal “presence” and “realism” in their HD systems more than a decade before going into production indicates the existence of something beyond entertainment value for the viewer. HDTV represents a new means by which to negotiate the relation of the real with the virtual. All this research into resolution and aspect ratio is about finding ways to more thoroughly involve the viewer with what the screen is displaying. Greater viewer involvement indicates the presence of a more democratized media – the more prescient the media a viewer perceives the more readily the viewer can internalize, integrate, and critically analyze information and themes in reference to his/her own existence. This, combined with trends toward personalized media technologies, may lead the viewer beyond simple viewership to a new brand of critical awareness and civic participation previously impossible. By bridging the gulf from the one-to-many (or to-nation or -world) mass media structure to a national media network with more of a personal or community feel may reduce the perceived separation of the individual from the nation at large. While many future technologies focus on personalization through networks of

personal preference selections and reputation systems, HDTV, as presented through NHK research, represents a crucial middle phase. The logical end of NHK's research into the connections between field of vision, resolution, and perceptions of human involvement and awareness indicates that HDTV manages to subtly suggest personal empowerment and personal civic relevance and participation merely by improving resolution to a level more realistic than traditional television, and by improving the aspect ratio and screen sizes to a degree such that viewing television encompasses a wider field of vision than before. What this means for satire (and for all television, really), is that its viewers will be more attentive, critical, and can more readily internalize the messages they receive as the image they see appears more personal and realistic and less like a distant image projected into a television. HDTV indicates an augmentation of individual civic empowerment, an evolution to a television system with the highest degree of resolution yet seen for business or industrial purposes, and, of course, more realistic explosions, alien attacks, and sports entertainment. We can easily see how HDTV (and other electronics) will "continue its influence as the defining signifier of our age. It remains a strong and growing entity, informed not only by continuing technological advances, but by a record of consumer satisfaction and trust that is the envy of other industries."¹⁴⁶

A second advance HDTV represents for media technology is the inclusion of relatively new "multicasting" technologies. Multicasting is most commonly discussed in the role it will play in transforming the internet, but as digital television and the internet become more intertwined the potential of multicasting for affecting HDTV becomes

more real.¹⁴⁷ Multicasting has been around for a long time; in 1998 many corporations were already using multicasting in their corporate networks.¹⁴⁸ George Lawton writes that the “fear of a new technology is one of the greatest limitations to the widespread implementation of multicasting.”¹⁴⁹ Multicasting has to do with how information is encoded for digital transmission. In Internet video applications it’s commonly used to increase the quality of streaming video by providing two or more independent layers, which are decoded independently.¹⁵⁰ These layers are usually meant to be cumulative, but in a noncumulative layering approach, multiple description coding (MDC) can be used for noncumulatively layered multicasting.¹⁵¹ The application of multicasting for HDTV is that a viewer may watch one show while simultaneously recording other shows. It works by reducing the video quality of each show to something comparable to regular definition television. This is different from existing TiVO or DVR systems because those systems only record one show at a time, and you are unable to watch a program different from the one you are recording.

One effect this application of multicasting will have is that it will inevitably reduce the competition between television programming. Suddenly I will no longer have to choose between my two favorite shows that air at the same time on different channels; I can record one and watch the other or even record both and watch both later. Even more interesting is the degree to which multicasting is constantly improving. In 1995, Brian Evans describes multicasting in digital television systems by saying that “it is technically possible to embed five separate live NTSC television programs or eight pre-recorded NTSC VHS-quality programs within the basic data stream.”¹⁵² In 2005, an

experiment was conducted successfully which multicasted DTV programming from satellite to broadband access network cooperation with China Telecom. Experimental results achieved very high-definition results (1920x1080 resolution) and were able to successfully deploy 100 DTV programs simultaneously.¹⁵³ Ultimately, if such technical improvements persist, it seems that multicasting will nearly completely neglect inter-channel competition over time-slots in the future, as a viewer will be able to record nearly every channel simultaneously.

What widespread HDTV usage ultimately means for televised political satire and the media are two things. First, as I've discussed, is the increased political activation of its viewers because of the dramatically improved resolution, screen sizes, and aspect ratios of HD quality television. Second, multicasting will virtually eliminate programming competition as people become more able to record more simultaneously broadcasted shows such that viewers can have simultaneous access to *The Daily Show* or *Saturday Night Live* and some other completely unrelated, nonpolitical programs. The experiment by Luo and Sun indicate that this capability may soon be so improved as to allow users to have 100 programs simultaneously multicasted to them, which would effectively reduce program competition to zero.

These factors will ultimately augment the power of political satire to affect presidential elections. Consider the results of the 2000 presidential election. George W. Bush's victory came down to only 537 votes in Florida that would have made the difference for Al Gore.¹⁵⁴ Given such close results, had a multicasting infrastructure been incorporated into HDTV systems, and had HDTV systems become standard in the

United States, one can speculate that Al Gore could have been elected in 2000 rather than George W. Bush. Had multicasting effected the viewership of *The Daily Show* and other televised political satire programming at that time by reducing time-slot competition significantly enough such that, of all the Floridians regularly watching these shows that typically would not have been able to, out of those that would have voted, and finally out of those that would have actually been persuaded to vote Democrat that otherwise would not have – if that number were greater than 537 then Al Gore would have been elected president in 2000.

But rather than sticking to “what-if” scenarios about 2000 and 2004, we should look forward to 2008 to make some predictions of how these changes may affect the presidential race two years from now. I spoke of televised political satire as a liberalizing force at the end of the previous chapter. This “force” may seem more apparent in the near future given the effects the switch to HDTV as standard for television will inspire. Given Baum and the *NAES*’s research into how political awareness and opinions of presidential candidates can shift based on televised political satire viewership, and how the demographic of the audiences reveals them to be friendlier to the liberal ideas most often presented by these shows, a liberalizing effect is undeniable. This effect will take place both by reinforcing the political beliefs of already liberal viewers, but also by swaying the large numbers of independent voter/viewers to more liberal beliefs as well. Though Baum’s research indicates that many conservatives would not be persuaded to change either their political attitudes or voting behaviors, many viewers that identify as conservatives are not politically active or informed (the same can be said of other

viewers, of course). This suggests that they may more easily exchange their ideology for one that favors liberalism. Though this effect, in its current state, may be too small to be found significant in quantitative research, we're in the peculiar situation where recent presidential elections have been decided by small handfuls of people whose voting behavior, if measured with the rest of the nation, wouldn't be considered significant toward revealing a national outcome. Nevertheless, the 2000 election came down to the votes of 537 Floridians, and the 2004 election could have ended in a Kerry victory had votes in Ohio been cast slightly differently. Our strange circumstance is that the effects of political satire needn't be *statistically* significant to nevertheless *be* significant in affecting the outcomes of future elections. This is perhaps one factor compounding the difficulty in reaching full quantitative accounts of the effects of political satire on elections.

The research which has been done, however, does indicate significant effects from political satire viewership. Research by Baum, Baumgartner and Morris, and the *National Annenberg Election Survey* do much to show how satire affects political knowledge and civic engagement. Stewart's arguments for media reform are being heard, as the data suggest his own show affects not only his audience, but the news media as well. Shows like *Saturday Night Live* and Maher's *Politically Incorrect* have affected public perceptions of presidents in the past, ranging from Nessen's analysis of Chevy Chase's impersonations of Gerald Ford, to Will Ferrell's caricature of George Bush, to Maher's defense of Clinton and staunch disagreement with Bush. Researchers agree that the influence of political satire grew exponentially in the 2000 election, and

has grown even more since.¹⁵⁵ The strategies of political campaigns have changed to incorporate the power of this new wave of political satire, explaining why a candidate like John Edwards might announce his presidential candidacy on a comedy show, or John Kerry would appear on *The Daily Show* but not *The O'Reilly Factor*. In 2008 and beyond we can expect the same types of strategies to emerge again, and for satire's power to be even further magnified by the looming HDTV transition ahead. All the effects of a major switch to HDTV, in particular the eventual near elimination of time-slot competition and the creation of a more realistic and engaging medium for the regular American viewer, will augment the effects of satire enough that quantitative research may be able to detect not only measurable, but significant effects of satire viewership on voting behavior rather than just political attitudes and knowledge. Baum's research has represented an important beginning in this field.

The messages we receive from the media help to shape our impressions of reality, and political satire television is working hard to make the average American's impressions more critically informed. Political satire is becoming and in many ways already has become the new medium of real political discourse and criticism. Its characteristic forms and use of the comedian as a spokesman of the people makes it able to engage an audience in ways impersonal political pundits are no longer capable of. By creating an atmosphere of shared laughter and mutual audience agreement of what can be joked about, the 'journalists' of political satire create an audience capable of coming together to realize and think critically about the role of the media and actions of government in a democratic society. It is through political satire that America may

ultimately be able to cross the threshold from discovering political “truthiness,” to the truth.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

¹ A video of Colbert's address is available online, see: Colbert, Stephen. "Colbert Roasts President Bush - 2006 White House Correspondents Dinner." (C-SPAN, April 29, 2006), 24 min. 10 sec. Streaming video, <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-869183917758574879>.

² These quotes were all taken from Kurtzman, Daniel, "Stephen Colbert at the White House Correspondents' Dinner: Transcript of Colbert's Presidential Smackdown," <http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/stephencolbert/a/colbertbush.htm>.

³ Ron Nessen, *It Sure Looks Different from the Inside*, (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1978), 163.

⁴ Nessen, 172-173.

⁵ Nessen, 175.

⁶ Nessen, 163.

⁷ See *CBS News Online*, "CBS News State Results for Election 2000," http://www.cbsnews.com/campaign2000results/state/state_fl.html.

⁸ Metcalf, Alan. "Truthiness Voted 2005 Word of the Year by American Dialect Society," *American Dialect Society*, January 6, 2006, http://www.americandialect.org/index.php/amerdial/truthiness_voted_2005_word_of_the_year.

⁹ Colbert makes this joke in his address at the White House Correspondents Dinner, for example.

¹⁰ A clip of the segment can be found on Comedy Central's website, see: Jon Stewart, "Bush vs. Bush debate," *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, (Comedy Central, April 2003), 5 min., 34 sec. Windows Media Player file, http://www.comedycentral.com/sitewide/media_player/play.jhtml?itemId=12814.

¹¹ "Bush vs. Bush debate," *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, April 2003.

¹² Moyers, Bill, Interview with Jon Stewart by Bill Moyers, *NOW*, PBS, July 11, 2003.

¹³ Stewart has done interviews with Larry King on CNN's *Larry King Live*, Ted Koppel on ABC's *Nightline*, Howard Kurtz on CNN's *Reliable Sources* (note the significance that Jon Stewart, a comedian, is considered a "Reliable Source" by a network news station), Bill O'Reilly on FOX News's *The O'Reilly Factor*, and Bill Moyers on PBS's *NOW* in which he gives cogent critiques of the news media at large.

CHAPTER II

¹⁴ Peter M. Briggs, "English Satire and Connecticut Wit," *American Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 16.

¹⁵ Briggs, 21.

¹⁶ Briggs, 23.

¹⁷ Quoted in Briggs, 24.

¹⁸ Briggs, 24.

¹⁹ Alan Gribben, "The Importance of Mark Twain," *American Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 30-49.

²⁰ Gribben, 30.

²¹ Victor Margolin, "Rebellion, Reform, and Revolution: American Graphic Design for Social Change," *Design Issues* 5 no. 1 (Autumn 1988): 59.

²² Amelia Rauser, "Death or Liberty: British Political Prints and the Struggle for Symbols in the American Revolution," *Oxford Art Journal* 21, no. 2 (1998): 153-171.

²³ Rauser, 153-155.

²⁴ Margolin, 60.

²⁵ Margolin, 60.

- ²⁶ Margolin, 60.
- ²⁷ Margolin, 61.
- ²⁸ Margolin, 61-62.
- ²⁹ Margolin, 62.
- ³⁰ Margolin, 62.
- ³¹ Margolin, 63.
- ³² Margolin, 64-65.
- ³³ The image is reproduced in Margolin, 65.
- ³⁴ Also reproduced in Margolin, 66.
- ³⁵ *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, *The Colbert Report*, the weekly “Weekend Update” segment of *Saturday Night Live*, *Talk Soup*, and a number of other shows use headline panels, for example.
- ³⁶ Maland, Charles. “Dr. Strangelove (1964): Nightmare Comedy and the Ideology of the Liberal Consensus.” *American Quarterly* 31:5, Special Issue: Film and American Studies (Winter 1979): 697.
- ³⁷ Maland, 698.
- ³⁸ Maland, 698.
- ³⁹ Maland, 698, emphasis added.
- ⁴⁰ Maland, 699-700.
- ⁴¹ Maland, 700.
- ⁴² Maland 714-715.
- ⁴³ Maland, 701.
- ⁴⁴ Quoted in Maland, 702.
- ⁴⁵ Maland, 705.
- ⁴⁶ This line is uttered by General Ripper, played by Sterling Hayden, in Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove*.
- ⁴⁷ Maland, 708.
- ⁴⁸ Maland, 708-710.
- ⁴⁹ Maland, 712.
- ⁵⁰ Dudden, 50.
- ⁵¹ Not much scholarly information exists on the program, but an online Wikipedia article gives a good summary of much of the information regarding the show, see “That Was The Week That Was,” *Wikipedia*, online encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/That_The_Week_That_Was.
- ⁵² Gribben, 30.
- ⁵³ Quoted in Gribben, 31.
- ⁵⁴ Gribben, 32.
- ⁵⁵ Arthur P. Dudden, “The Record of Political Humor,” *American Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 53.
- ⁵⁶ Gribben, 32-33.
- ⁵⁷ Lawrence Mintz, “Standup Comedy as Social and Cultural Mediation,” *American Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 72.
- ⁵⁸ Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, Bill Maher, Dennis Miller, and nearly every cast member of *Saturday Night Live* began their careers as stand-up comedians. For some biographical/humorous reading, see Stewart’s *Naked Pictures of Famous People* (1999), Dennis Miller’s *The Rants* (1997), and Bill Maher’s *When You Ride Alone You Ride With Bin Laden* (2005).
- ⁵⁹ Mintz, 74.
- ⁶⁰ This argument is taken from Mintz, p. 73, discussing the theories of anthropologist Mary Douglas.
- ⁶¹ Mintz, 74.
- ⁶² William Riker, *The Strategy of Rhetoric*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).
- ⁶³ For a discussion of the comedian as shaman, see Mintz 74-75; E.T. Kirby “The Shamanistic Origins of Popular Entertainments,” *Drama Review* 18 (March 1974): 5-15; and Albert Goldman’s *Freakshow* (New York: Athenaeum, 1971).
- ⁶⁴ Vincent Buranelli, *The Trial of Peter Zenger*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975), 38.

- ⁶⁵ Paul Finkelman, "The Zenger Case: Prototype of a Political Trial," in Michal Belknap, *American Political Trials*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 22.
- ⁶⁶ Buranelli, 9-10.
- ⁶⁷ Buranelli, 11-14.
- ⁶⁸ Quoted in Buranelli, 21.
- ⁶⁹ Buranelli, 23.
- ⁷⁰ Buranelli, 28.
- ⁷¹ Stephen Parks, ed, *Three Trials: John Peter Zenger, H.S. Woodfall and John Lambert 1765-1794*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1974), 14.
- ⁷² Parks, 14.
- ⁷³ Leonard Levy, ed, *Freedom of the Press from Zenger to Jefferson: Early American Libertarian Theories*, (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966), 33.
- ⁷⁴ Parks, 20.
- ⁷⁵ Parks, 20.
- ⁷⁶ Alison G. Olson, "The Zenger Case Revisited: Satire, Sedition and Political Debate in Eighteenth Century America," *Early American Literature* 35, no. 3 (2000): 223-245.
- ⁷⁷ Olson, 224.
- ⁷⁸ Olson, 224.
- ⁷⁹ Olson, 224.
- ⁸⁰ Olson, 224-225.
- ⁸¹ Some speculate that Stewart's appearance was largely responsible for *Crossfire*'s cancellation, but, while such speculations may actually be true, they still are unsubstantiated.
- ⁸² Jon Stewart, interview by Paul Begala & Tucker Carlson, *CNN Crossfire*, CNN, Oct 15, 2004.
- ⁸³ Jon Stewart, interview by Paul Begala & Tucker Carlson, *CNN Crossfire*, CNN, Oct 15, 2004.

CHAPTER III

- ⁸⁴ See H. Keum and others, "The Citizen-Consumer: Media Effects at the Intersection of Consumer and Civic Culture," *Political Communication* 21 (2004): 369-391. Keum et al's article includes an in-depth discussion of many of the arguments leading to the conclusion that the media is responsible for a decline in civic engagement.
- ⁸⁵ Jeffrey Jones, *Entertaining Politics: New Political Television and Civic Culture*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005).
- ⁸⁶ Jones, 15.
- ⁸⁷ Jones, 16-17. Emphasis in original.
- ⁸⁸ Jon Stewart, interview by Ted Koppel, *Nightline*, ABC, July 28, 2004.
- ⁸⁹ Jon Stewart, interview by Bill O'Reilly, *The O'Reilly Factor*, FOX News, Sept 20, 2004.
- ⁹⁰ Jon Stewart, interview by Howard Kurtz, *CNN Reliable Sources*, CNN, Nov 2, 2002.
- ⁹¹ Jon Stewart, interview by Ted Koppel, *Nightline*, ABC, July 28, 2004.
- ⁹² Jones, 3-4.
- ⁹³ Quoted in Jones, 4.
- ⁹⁴ Jones, 3.
- ⁹⁵ Matviko, 338-339.
- ⁹⁶ Matviko, 339.
- ⁹⁷ Matviko, 341.
- ⁹⁸ Matviko, 342.
- ⁹⁹ Matviko, 343.
- ¹⁰⁰ Matviko, 344.

- ¹⁰¹ Chris Smith and Ben Voth, "The Role of Humor in Political Argument: How 'Strategy' and 'Lockboxes' Changed a Political Campaign," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 39, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 110-129.
- ¹⁰² Smith and Voth, 117.
- ¹⁰³ Smith and Voth, 116-117.
- ¹⁰⁴ "Strategy," *Wikipedia*, online encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategy>.
- ¹⁰⁵ Original air date July 3, 2002.
- ¹⁰⁶ Original air date December 11, 2002.
- ¹⁰⁷ Original air date October 27, 2004.
- ¹⁰⁸ Original air date November 6, 2002.
- ¹⁰⁹ Original air date April 28, 2004.
- ¹¹⁰ Two-part episode, original air dates April 5, 2006 and April 12, 2006.
- ¹¹¹ It should probably be pointed out that the events of the show's plot were entirely fictitious, and there was never any planned episode of *Family Guy* to show the image of Mohammed.
- ¹¹² Joel Ryan, "'South Park' Censored," *E!Online*, April 13, 2006, <http://www.eonline.com/News/Items/0,1,18798,00.html>.
- ¹¹³ "Young People Watch More Late Night Television," *National Annenberg Election Survey*, May 3 2004, 1.
- ¹¹⁴ "Young People," 2.
- ¹¹⁵ "Young People," 2.
- ¹¹⁶ "Daily Show Viewers Knowledgeable About Presidential Campaign, National Annenberg Election Survey Shows," *National Annenberg Election Survey*, September 21, 2004.
- ¹¹⁷ "Daily Show Viewers," 2.
- ¹¹⁸ "Daily Show Viewers," 1.
- ¹¹⁹ "Daily Show Viewers," 2.
- ¹²⁰ Matthew Baum, "Talking the Vote: Why Presidential Candidates Hit the Talk Show Circuit," *American Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 2 (April 2005): 213-234.
- ¹²¹ Baum, 215.
- ¹²² Baum, 214.
- ¹²³ Baum, 213.
- ¹²⁴ Baum, 215.
- ¹²⁵ Baum, 215.
- ¹²⁶ Statistics cited in Baum, 214.
- ¹²⁷ Baum, 228.
- ¹²⁸ Baum, 230.
- ¹²⁹ Jody Baumgartner and Jonathan Morris, "The Daily Show Effect: Candidate Evaluations, Efficacy, and American Youth," *American Politics Research* 34, no. 3 (May 2006): 341-367.
- ¹³⁰ Baumgartner and Morris, 344.
- ¹³¹ Baumgartner and Morris, 352.
- ¹³² Baumgartner and Morris, 352.
- ¹³³ Cited from Niemi et al., 1991 in Baumgartner and Morris, 353.
- ¹³⁴ Baumgartner and Morris, 353.
- ¹³⁵ Baumgartner and Morris, 363.

CHAPTER IV

- ¹³⁶ Baumgartner and Morris, 343.
- ¹³⁷ Richard Solomon, hearing before the U.S. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, *High Definition Television: The International HDTV Standard-Setting Process and the Role of International Standards on U.S. Competitiveness*. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, May 31, 1989.

- ¹³⁸ Jeffrey Hart, *Technology, Television, and Competition: The Politics of Digital TV*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 221.
- ¹³⁹ Hart, 221.
- ¹⁴⁰ Hart, 17-18.
- ¹⁴¹ Hart, 59.
- ¹⁴² Hart, 231.
- ¹⁴³ Yiyang Wu and others, "Overview of Digital Television Development Worldwide," *Proceedings of the IEEE*, 94, no. 1 (Jan 2006): 10.
- ¹⁴⁴ Ernesto Martin, "HDTV – A DBS Perspective," *IEEE Journal on Selected Areas in Communications SAC-3*, no. 1 (Jan 1985): 76-77.
- ¹⁴⁵ ATR, "Research Report '97," 1997, in *ATR Human Information Processing Research Laboratories*, 4.5.3-4.5.4., http://www.hip.atr.co.jp/RRep/RRep97/activities_E.html.
- ¹⁴⁶ Conrad Persson, *Guide to HDTV Systems*, (Indianapolis: Howard W. Sams & Co., 1999), 141.
- ¹⁴⁷ Chaunfei Luo and Jun Sun, "Design and Implementation of an End-to-End System for DTV Multicasting to Home Over Broadband IP Access Network," *IEEE Transactions on Broadcasting* 51, no. 3 (Sept 2005): 348.
- ¹⁴⁸ George Lawton, "Multicasting: Will It Transform the Internet?" *Computer* (Jul 1998): 13.
- ¹⁴⁹ Lawton, 15.
- ¹⁵⁰ Taehyun Kim and Mostafa Ammar, "A Comparison of Heterogeneous Video Multicast Schemes: Layered Encoding or Stream Replication," *IEEE Transactions on Multimedia* 7, no. 6 (Dec 2005): 1123.
- ¹⁵¹ Kim and Ammar, 1123.
- ¹⁵² Brian Evans, *Understanding Digital TV: The Route to HDTV*, (Piscataway: IEEE Press, 1995), 214.
- ¹⁵³ Luo and Sun, 352.
- ¹⁵⁴ *CBS News Online*, "CBS News State Results for Election 2000," http://www.cbsnews.com/campaign2000results/state/state_fl.html.
- ¹⁵⁵ Baum, 213.

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