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Funny Politics: Examining the Motivations for Political Satire Consumption and Avoidance, and the Effects of Political Satire Television Consumption on Political Knowledge, Engagement, and Trust in Institutions

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FUNNY POLITICS: EXAMINING THE MOTIVATIONS FOR POLITICAL SATIRE
CONSUMPTION AND AVOIDANCE, AND THE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL
SATIRE TELEVISION CONSUMPTION ON POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE,
ENGAGEMENT, AND TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

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Alexandra Rae Martinez

2019

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my parents who've continued to believe in and push me to achieve all the endeavors I strive for. I also dedicate this study to those who find joy, entertainment, and intrigue in the unique art form that is political satire.

FUNNY POLITICS: EXAMINING THE MOTIVATIONS FOR POLITICAL SATIRE
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SATIRE TELEVISIONS CONSUMPTION ON POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE,
ENGAGEMENT, AND TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

by

ALEXANDRA RAE MARTINEZ, B.A.

THESIS

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of the Requirements

for the Degree of

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Department of Communication

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Abstract

Political satire television is continuing to develop into an integral part of political rhetoric and evaluation to its viewers. This thesis explores the effects that consumption of political satire television might have on its consumers. Specifically, this study uses quantitative methods to examine the effects political satire has on political knowledge, political engagement, and trust in democratic institutions. Further, this study provides insight into the motivations for viewing or avoiding political satire TV. This research uses a survey compiled of scales employed by previous research, slightly altered to reflect the changes in today's political climate and satire TV shows and hosts. The results of the survey were examined using bivariate correlations and linear regressions to uncover potential relationships and effects. Results revealed that, as political satire consumption generally has a positive effect on political knowledge and engagement, when controlled for certain variables, only political knowledge maintained a positive relationship with political satire consumption. Implications of these results insinuate that people who choose to consume political satire television are more political knowledgeable than those who do not, and that entertainment is the foremost motivation for consumption.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

BACKGROUND

The popularity of political satire has drawn political communication scholars to take a keen interest in studying how it's perceived and processed by viewers and the subsequent effects on knowledge, efficacy, engagement, and trust in institutions (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006, 2007, 2008; Becker, 2011; Cao & Brewer, 2008; Lee & Kwak, 2014; Moy, Xenos & Hess, 2005; Young, 2004, 2006; Young & Tisinger, 2006). Political satire television shows have become prominent in the world of news media with shows like *The Daily Show* providing a stage for political communication in the form of criticism and humor for its viewers (Holbert, 2013) and has evolved into a legitimate resource from political rhetoric (Holbert, 2013). Political satire has become sufficiently accepted into entertainment and news media, so much that in 2006 Jon Stewart was cited by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 most influential entertainers in the world (Baumgartner and Morris, 2008), and the same year, award-winning humorist Stephen Colbert hosted the high-profile White House Correspondent's Dinner, whose then-absurdly conservative and egocentric character in *The Colbert Report* coined the term "truthiness," a term that was later voted "Word of the Year" by the American Dialect Society (Baumgartner & Morris, 2008). More recently, New York Senator Kristen Gillibrand and California Congressman Eric Swalwell both announced their candidacy for president in the upcoming 2020 election on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* (Bradley, 2019; Reed, 2019). Studies by Pew Research have revealed that, while viewers use a variety of sources for political news, many trusted in *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* as a staple in their day-to-day news consumption (Pew Research Center, 2014).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Some early research, most of which was based on experiments in marketing and psychology, suggests that humor has some ability to change attitudes and persuade audiences, meanwhile other literature has illustrated that negatively framed political messages can create a more cynical public opinion (Baumgartner & Morris, 2008; Jones, 2005). Additional studies have yielded results that suggest that consumption of political satire affects political efficacy and political participation (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006,2007; Lee & Kwak, 2014; Moy, Xenos & Hess, 2005, Young, 2004, 2006). Amidst the backdrop of such research regarding notions of political community and civic participation, researchers have used a variety of approaches in examining this phenomenon.

After reviewing the extant literature there were a number of gaps that I will aim to fill with this study. First, a vast majority of the literature regarding political satire TV focuses on the effect that The Daily Show and The Colbert Report have on their viewers. While influential in its own right (Baumgartner and Morris, 2008), the popularity and success of The Daily Show has allowed some of its ensemble of “correspondents” to pursue successful entertainment endeavors of their own (Baumgartner & Morris, 2008, NBC.com, HBO.com, TBS.com). This has led to the landscape of political satire television shows to expand. Another notable shift in the satirical TV show dynamic is the retirement of Jon Stewart from The Daily Show, who was an integral actor to the proliferation of political satire’s edge from entertainment into legitimate news media landscape (Young, 2013). In the upcoming literature I will discuss these shifts and changes in the faces of these political satire TV shows.

Another area of research that has had little, if any, overview is the recent change in administration from the eight-year Obama administration to the newly elected Trump

administration. This is important because President Trump has been good for satirical material with his continuous faux pas, late-night Twitter rants, attack on news media and affinity for “alternative facts” (Hill, 2017). From Alec Baldwin’s Trump character on Saturday Night Live to Seth Meyers’ nightly segment “A Closer Look” Trump has become a satirical talking point for today’s humorists.

Many studies regarding this phenomenon have been mostly conducted in the Midwest of the U.S. or has used data previously collected from national surveys. No research has been conducted in the geographical southwest, which is where this study will be conducted.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to add to the extant literature by quantitatively examining the prospective relationship and subsequent effects of consuming political satire television shows, as well as the motivations for consuming such media, and why some might choose to not watch or avoid political satire TV shows. This study will help researchers more clearly understand the special relationship political satire has with its audience. I intend to use this study’s results to clarify the profile of who consumes political satire, the motivations behind why individuals choose exposure to satirical TV shows, why some might choose to avoid them, and the subsequent effects on viewers’ political knowledge, engagement, and trust in the democratic institutions critiqued by political satirists.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter 2, the literature review, examines the extant literature with regards to conceptualizations of political satire, its history, the characteristics of viewers/audiences of political satire TV shows, and its relationships to political engagement, political knowledge, and trust in democratic institutions. Chapter 3 discusses the methods used in

this study. In that chapter, I will discuss the sample of the study, procedures used for collecting that data, the variables used, the measurement instruments used to measure those variables, and the statistical techniques used for data analysis. In chapter 4, I report the results obtained from the statistical tests conducted on the data collected. In chapter 5, I discuss the results of the study, the implications of what the results mean for future research, and the limitations that I came across. Finally, in chapter 6, I provide a summary of the study to conclude the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

POLITICAL SATIRE: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Political satire is not new to contemporary media. Quite the contrary, political humor and satire, as Lichter (2018) so eloquently puts it, is an “inherent part of the human condition” (p. 14). Political satire is a form of political communication that uses humor as a pointed outlet for a modicum of insights and criticism towards government, political players, traditional news reporting, and all around absurdities of the system (Hmielowski, Holbert, & Lee, 2011; Lichter, 2018). Additionally, it is, by nature, conjectured to have the potential to affect political perceptions, beliefs, and behavior regardless of its overwhelming negative characteristic (Rill & Cardiel, 2013; LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam, 2009).

Satire dates back to ancient days when Egyptians created drawings of Egyptian leaders and Indian cartoonists poked fun at inept rulers and Krishna, the Hindu god (Lichter, 2018). Playwright Aristophanes targeted Athenian leaders and was indicted for crimes of treason after the showing of his second play *Babylonians* which attacked the state offices, politicians (Foley, 1988; Lichter 2018; Welsch, 1983). However, satire wasn't popularized until the Enlightenment, an era during which people used art as a mirror to reflect society's follies and immorality and facilitated by increased literacy rates and the expansion of print media (Coletta, 2009; Lichter, 2018). According to Adams (1999), satire uses laughter as an archetypal weapon to denigrate specific subjects to elicit disdain, ridicule or indignation for the sole purpose of laughter and amusement. Not unique solely to democracies, political satire has played a role in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, Cuba, China, and other nondemocratic regimes, engaging its audience in humor within the political context (Lichter, 2018).

Political Satire TV Today

Moving beyond the variety of forms that satire can encompass, most of what we might consider “mainstream” political satire, today, is within the current late night television environment (LaMarre et al, 2009; Lee & Kwak, 2014;; Young, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2013). Much of the previous research focusing on political satire has examined the persuasive effect (Holbert, Tchernev, Walther, Esralew, & Benski, 2013), negative emotions and political participation (Lee & Kwak, 2014), persuasion and messaging (Holbert et al, 2013; Innocenti and Miller, 2016), trust (Moy & Pfau, 1999), and effect on political knowledge (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1993). Much of this research has examined what Lichter (2018) has named the first of three types of political satire television, and that is the straightforward joke mostly delivered by one-liner savvy hosts like Jay Leno and David Letterman. Other literature focused on the more complex and second type of satire, that of The Daily Show with John Stewart and the no longer running The Colbert Report, which is motivated more so by a desire to reflect or think (Cao & Brewer, 2008; Becker 2014; Young, 2013). The third type of satire included in this lineup of satire television research is sketch comedy, exemplified by the well-known and decades-old Saturday Night Live, which has a history of parodying political characters, mimicking political processes like elections and committee hearings, and notorious for it’s recurring fake news segment “Weekend Update” (Day & Thompson, 2012).

While much ground is covered about these specific satirical TV archetypes, there has been very little, if any, research done including all three. Additionally, from the most recent of literature that I have been able to find, there has been little research examining these satirical archetypes that include (1) exploring how these shows might be consumed or approached differently in the new

political climate considered the “Trump Era,” and (2) the expansion and change of the faces of political satire TV shows

The “Trump Era” effect

By “Trump Era,” I mean the time that has passed since the 2016 election of realtor and reality TV show star Donald Trump as president of the United States. Since the election, journalists, news pundits, and political satirists have been scrambling to untangle the implications and pretense behind a president. President Trump has made use of incredulous Tweeting as his main form of communication to the American constituency (Ott, 2017), curates outrageous threats (e.g. building a wall along the southern border, preventing Muslim immigration, reneging on trade treaties) with a populist communication style and tone (Ahmadian, Azarshahi, Paulhus, 2016). Further, he practices self-aggrandizing and callous one-upmanship within his campaign speeches and volatile commentating dominates his political persona (Hall, Goldstein, and Ingram, 2016).

Awareness of how the election of Donald Trump and how it has changed, not only the tradition of the face of the presidency, but how it has affected satire delivery as a whole can be seen in journalists’ reactions to his unorthodox leadership style. As an example, some of the articles published by distinguished magazines and newspapers include “In the Trump Era, We Are Losing the Ability to Distinguish Reality from Vacuum” (Gessen, 2018) from *The New Yorker Magazine*, “Is Satire Possible in the Age of Trump?” (Greenman, 2019) from *The New York Times*, “Liberal Satire is Getting Dangerously Lazy in the Trump Era” (Charles, 2018) from *The Washington Post*, and “Is Satire Dead in the Age of Trump?” (Warner, 2017) published by *The Chicago Tribune*.

Unconventional politics among a record number of investigations into links between Donald Trump's campaign and his business dealings (Bensinger & Schoofs, 2017) has posed a foundation for constant fixation and humorous critiques for political satire TV hosts.

Shuffling of personalities in political satire TV

To begin, a number of political satire TV shows have emerged over the last few years, adding on to the landscape of politically entertaining media consumers can choose from. These shows include HBO network shows Last Week with John Oliver and Real Time with Bill Maher, NBC network late-night show Late Night with Seth Meyers, and TBS's Full Frontal with Samantha Bee. Interestingly enough, John Oliver was originally a member of Jon Stewart's team of comedian pundits on The Daily Show with Jon Stewart (HBO.com, n.d), as was Samantha Bee (TBS.com, n.d.) who, as Jon Stewart went into retirement, moved on to establish their own political satire TV shows. Moreover, Seth Meyers was originally a cast member on Saturday Night Live and regular anchor on the ongoing segment "Weekend Update" (NBC.com), who was picked up by NBC to host his own late night talk show in which he has "forged his own identity in a crowded landscape of political shows that derive their energy from righteous anger" (Setoodeh, 2018).

Now, The Daily Show has rebranded after the retirement of its crowned jewel host Jon Stewart. Stewart, who has been largely away from the political satire stage, aside from a few cameos in Late Night with Stephen Colbert, passed the torch to young South African comedian Trevor Noah (comedycentral.com) changing the shows title to The Daily Show with Trevor Noah. The show has been fairly steady since the handing of the torch and continues to stay relevant in the political satire landscape as well.

Political satire veteran Stephen Colbert, who also found his political satire footing as a correspondent on The Daily Show with Jon Stewart and became a cornerstone of political satire

when he hosted his own Comedy Central late-night show *The Colbert Report*, which aired immediately after *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart, masquerading as a self-indulgent conservative news personality who used his persona to reflect the absurdity of conservative news reporting (Baumgartner & Morris, 2008). Colbert hung his hat and shut down *The Colbert Report* to find a new home replacing David Letterman as host of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*. Leading all of late night television in the ratings polls (Koblin, 2019), Stephen Colbert has seemingly become the new crowned jewel of political satire television and has made such a splash with his jabs at the Trump administration that he, along with Jon Oliver, made what White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders named the “Mueller Madness” brackets which featured what “angry and hysterical haters who got alleged collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia wrong” (Wise, 2019).

These political satire shows and hosts have provided ample opportunity for consumers of political satire to choose the satirical flavor of choice. The changes have opened up opportunity for further research into whether the expansion of political satire TV shows and hosts has significant effects on their audience

POLITICAL SATIRE TV CONSUMPTION: WHO, WHY, AND WHY NOT?

Much of the previous literature on this topic has reported that those who report consuming political satire are typically more often young people (Hmielowski, 2011; Holbert & Lee, 2011; Young, 2013). Young and Tisinger’s (2006) analysis of news consumption among younger consumers of political humor indicated that many of the viewers reported getting their political information, not from traditional sources, but from *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. Further, a number of Pew Research surveys (2006, 2008) revealed that when it came to engaging

as a political news audience, younger people were actively abandoning mainstream sources of news, and turning to political humor television instead.

Lee and Kwak (2013) indicate that although there is research debating the substance that political humor might embody, the humor is still able to grab young viewer's attention by offering them rich emotional experiences that traditional news reporting, which can be stale and at times simplistic. In addition to using humor as intrigue for younger viewers, humorists fundamentally invite their viewers to 'talk and play with their with their affective qualities inherent in sarcastic humor (Lee & Kwak, 2013; Jones 2010).

However, young viewers have not been solely collecting their social, economical, and overall political news from The Daily Show or The Colbert Report. The idea that the show's audience is indeed deserting traditional news in favor of late-night comedy shows is concerning in terms of sufficient, substantive information gathered to make informed decisions about politics (Young & Tisinger, 2006). In fact, Jon Stewart thought the idea that young people were tuning in to The Daily Show to actually get news preposterous: Stewart argued: "The truth is I know [most kids] are not [getting their news from us] because you can't – because we just don't do it. There's not enough news to get...If [kids] came to our show without knowledge, it wouldn't make any sense to them" (Young & Tisinger, 2006). Although, Baum (2005) contends that people cannot learn about politics from The Daily Show, but rather tune into his show already aware of the political news of the day. The argument that soft news entertainment news presumably leads to increased exposure to hard news programs (Baum, 2005) is contradicted by Young and Tisinger (2006) considering that the context of the more politically oriented comedy shows like The Daily Show or perhaps Real Time with Bill Maher, are tuned in by viewers that are likely already informed on about the political issues of the day.

However, a study about news consumption of young adults by Antunovic, Parsons, and Cooke (2018) found that many of the students that participated typically had news consumption habits that they learned from home, like watching NBC and reading The New York Times, mostly from Twitter and on their mobile devices. Furthermore, unlike other previous research, only one of their participants reported watching late-night political shows like The Daily Show and The Colbert Report.

Viewer Motivations and Uses and Gratifications

In past studies researchers have used the uses and gratifications theory as a way to understand underlying dimensions of consuming a variety of media and political communication (Lariscy, Tinkham, Sweetstar, 2011; Young, 2013). Lariscy et al used uses and gratifications to examine internet-based political communication activity, concluding that young people consider solitary activities to be constituted as political participation. Young (2013) used uses and gratifications to evaluate consumer's viewing and avoidance motivations, concluding that viewers appeared to be driven by unique audience characteristics like finding secondary level of enjoyment to news participants were previously aware of news, and avoiding because of an inability to understand the humor and lacking previous knowledge.

Another unique predictive construct for understanding the motivations for consumption of political satire TV is affinity for political humor (Hmielowski et al, 2011). Measuring affinity for political humor will help identify the dimensions that incite, and the extent to which, consumers appreciate political humor (Hmielowski et al, 2011). I ask:

RQ1: *Who consumes political satire TV shows (and what are some of the predictors)?*

RQ2: *What are viewer's motivations for consuming political satire TV in the age of Trump?*

RQ3: *What are the motivations for those avoiding political satire in the era of Trump?*

POLITICAL SATIRE AND POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

In his summary of the normative approach to political satire, Holbert (2013) concluded that, although there's evidence that political satire can offer substantive information, consuming political satire content did not contribute to the political knowledge of its viewers. Further, Baum (2005) suggests that viewers who consumed soft news in the political sense are mostly watched by viewers categorized as "uneducated." Prior (2003) concluded with a similar argument by examining the effect of people's preferred news formats on their political knowledge and after analysis concluding that attention to current political issues did not reliably translate into a learning effect. Exposure to such soft news, according to Prior (2003), can still have an affect on other political reasoning element, notably political attitudes and voting behavior. But in the absence of consistent learning effects, suggests that individual heuristics may compensate for lack of knowledge. However, the labeling of political entertainment such as the ones used in this study is not an accurate label according to Hoffman and Young (2011). It has been suggested that political entertainment can be divided by whether the audience is expecting predominately political entertainment, or that politics is a secondary dimension (Holbert, 2005). In his study, Young (2013) determined that consumers of political satire televisions did so in part because they had already possessed an awareness of political news and the satirical TV shows brought another level of enjoyment to information processing. In turn, young viewers switched from traditional news consumption to using political satire TV as their news source (Hoffman and Young, 2011).

Conversely, a 2007 Pew Research study discovered that the changing formats of news consumption wasn't as impactful on the general public in that that the amount of people's knowledge on domestic and foreign affairs, which was shown to be comparable to the previous

two decades. Furthermore, the study also reveals that the most knowledgeable third of the public surveyed is four times more likely than the bottom third to convey that they enjoy keeping up with the news “a lot.” However viewers of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* were discovered to be more informed than those who didn’t watch. Young (2013) found in his study that 41% of his participants who chose to expose themselves to political satire watched the shows as sources of information. So, in the wake of this information I hypothesize:

H1: There is a positive relationship between political satire TV show consumption and political knowledge.

POLITICAL SATIRE AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Previous literature has examined the connections of exposure to satire-oriented TV shows and democratic politics, with behavioral outcome variables of interest like internal political efficacy and political engagement (Becker, 2011). The term political engagement is used interchangeably by Gaston (2001) with civic engagement, about which he questions political engagement as a condition for political effectiveness. The term engagement encompasses a concept that can be influenced by one’s civic knowledge, interest, and efficacy (Becker, 2011; Gaston, 2001).

Baumgartner and Morris (2006) found that Jon Stewart’s style of humor and rational criticism of absurd political instances and figure heads actually clarified politics for viewers, increasing the audience’s reported level of internal efficacy. Hoffman and Young (2011) state that political efficacy is “the belief in one’s own competency and the feeling that political and social change is possible” (p. 161). Internal political efficacy, more specifically, is a common fare within political participation literature and is proven to be significantly connected to politically oriented behaviors, serving as a moderator between public affairs stimuli and the political gratification

associated with political humor viewing experiences (Becker, 2011; Holbert, Lambe, Dudo & Carlton, 2007). Holbert et al (2007) agree with Baumgartner and Morris (2006) that The Daily Show has a unique influence on its viewers' sense of internal political efficacy and that the variable should remain central in analyzing political satire's influence on perception and behaviors.

Studies by Lee and Kwak (2014) and Cao and Brewer (2008) consider the community among consumers of political satire relish the conduit of negativity toward the inconsistency and absurdity of the system and its players, which in turn might have an indirect effect on political participation, however, there was also the moderating factor of an increase of that participatory efficacy with respondent's level of education.

At the same time, additional findings suggest that exposure to The Daily Show's brand of political humor influences young viewers in effect of lowering support for presidential candidates meanwhile boosting cynicism associated with democratic processes (Becker, 2011; Lichter 2018). There is evidence that suggests exposure to political satire can galvanize negative evaluations of elected officials and other political institutions (Moy et al, 2005). In response to inconclusive aggregate results of this research, I ask:

RQ4: What is the relationship between television political satire consumption and political engagement?

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Research examining the connection of political trust and exposure to political humor is limited. Notably, Baumgartner and Morris (2006) provides insight into the measurement of political trust, or lack thereof and exposure to The Daily Show; suggesting that in addition to positive effects of political efficacy among viewers, viewers also developed more cynical attitudes towards government institutions. Basically, trust is the measure of confidence an individual might

have about whether or not the government and its elected officials do what's right (Moy & Pfau, 1999). That sentiment can extend to include the media (the fourth estate) and financial institutions the same breath (Becker, 2011). Trust in government has fluctuated up and down for decades (Doherty, Kiley, Tyson, & Jameson, 2015). It plummeted during the 1960's due to the Vietnam War and Watergate, rose back up a bit in the 1980's and 90's due to economic expansion and lower tax rates, but has been on the decline since Bush Jr.'s presidency (Doherty et al, 2015; Hetherington, 2008). The source of political trust has been researched, and "priming" is one of the sources that Hetherington (2008) attributes to public trust in institutions, which occurs when public attention to specific issues "influence the weight assigned to it during the formation of political evaluations (p. 500)."

The style of humor found in political humor paints the complexities of political function in a fashion that emphasize the absurdity and incompetence of political elites and the political system. This can influence viewers to place a lot of the blame of the perceived malfunctioning of the political system not on themselves, but those who run it and make the policy decisions (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Moy et al, 2005). Exposure to political satire like The Daily Show might leave an impression of widespread distress about the current political climate and people in places of power; evidence suggests that exposure to political humor can incite negative evaluations of political candidates and institutions as humorists make a habit of ridiculing the electoral and political processes (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006, 2007; Moy et al, 2005). However, it can be argued that cynicism toward these institutions is healthy for a representative democracy in that the greater the distrust of the public, the less likely to be bamboozled by political elites and the media (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006).

In contradiction to Baumgartner and Morris' extant literature, Becker (2011) found in her study that political comedy had emerged as significant and positive predictor of political trust. She reported that Jon Stewart in *The Daily Show* provided a forum through which citizens were able to critically evaluate the media and politicians, which could essentially revive trust in politics and faith and confidence in government. Although she does contend that trust and perceived media performance holds greater influence on viewer's confidence in government. In efforts to provide clarity on the effect that political satire consumption has on viewers' institutional trust, I hypothesize:

H2: There is a relationship between political satire TV consumption and trust in institutions.

Chapter 3: Methods

PARTICIPANTS

In this study, I implemented a combination of snowball and convenience-sampling methods to accumulate a meaningful sample size of participants from the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP). However, although not all participants were students, they were all still affiliated with the university. In order to produce this sample, I initiated contact with current and previous professors, asking of them to relay the survey invitation to their students, colleagues, and teaching assistants. Outreach for the survey took place before and while the survey was live, lasting approximately five weeks, and ultimately leading to a final sample of 238 respondents. The sample includes 142 (59.7%) participants who identified as females, 93 (39.1%) who identified as males, 1 (.4%) who identified as transgender, and 2 (.8%) who preferred not to answer. Additionally, 219 (92%) participants were students, while 19 (8.0%) of the sample were not students. Of the students in the sample 39 (18.1%) reported their classification as freshman, 55 (25.6%) as sophomores, 54 (25.5%) as juniors, 58 (27.0%) as seniors, and 9 (4.2%) were graduate students.

PROCEDURE

I constructed a survey with the software Question Pro, using scales, questions of interest, and information from previous research to provide answers to the research questions and hypotheses posed in the study. Prior to the survey going live, the content used for the study was submitted to and approved by UTEP IRB. A pilot test was conducted and completed by three undergraduate and 10 graduate students, and two UTEP staff members over a span of five days. Small grammatical changes were made to the survey subsequent to the pilot. The survey then went live for three weeks from March 11th to April 1st, 2019. I extended invitations for survey participation to colleagues and professors by email, and in person providing the URL link

<https://satirestudy.questionpro.com> to share with their students, classmates, TAs and fellow colleagues. Furthermore, flyers were printed out and shared, enclosing information about the study and distributed in the UTEP library, and on poster boards in a number of academic buildings on campus including the Education building, Student Union building, Liberal Arts building, and the Health and Human Sciences building.

When taking the survey, respondents were first asked to provide consent to participate in the study, before being allowed to answer any further questions. Respondents who did not consent to the study (N = 0) were directed to the thank you page. Those who consented (N = 238) to the study were allowed to answer subsequent survey questions. After completing some demographic and background questions, the respondents who consented to the study were asked to answer “Yes” or “No” to the dichotomous question “Do you watch political satire TV shows?” The answer to this question filtered the respondents’ survey directionality. Respondents who answered “Yes” (N = 128, 55.7%) were prompted to answer questions from a variety of scales concerning their motivations for consuming political satire TV and how they perceive they are affected by it. The scales utilized were derived from previous literature that measured motivations driven by those seeking information, entertainment, taking into consideration the opinions of satirical TV hosts, and social cues, as well as their affinity for political humor.

Those who answered “No” (N = 102, 44.3%) were split into a separate survey course that measured what their motivations were for avoiding political satire TV shows. Toward that last quarter of the survey all respondents were prompted to answer questions that asked about their political engagement, political knowledge, and trust in U.S. institutions.

The survey was comprised of a variety of scales and questions that measure the respondents’ demographics, exposure to political satire television, motivations for political satire

consumption, motivations for political satire avoidance, as well as respondents' affinity for political humor, political knowledge, political engagement, and trust in institutions. The survey was divided into six sections. Section 1 was concerned with basic demographic information and assessed participants' political ideology, interest, and political efficacy. Section 2 examined the frequency of political satire TV consumption and general motivations for and gratifications from consuming political satire TV; or the general motivations for avoiding political satire TV shows, depending on the participant's answer to the initial filter question. Section 3 identified various news and media types that the participants consume to get political news. Section 4 focused on the participants' general political knowledge. Section 5 was concerned with the participants' likelihood for engagement and participation in political activity. Finally, section 6 measures the participants' general confidence and trustworthiness in key United States public institutions

MEASUREMENT

Control Variables

Gender. Respondents chose from (1) female, (2) male, (3) transgender, or (4) prefer not to answer. Respondents were 142 (58.0%) female, 93 (38.0%) male, 1 (.4%) transgender, and 2 (.8%) preferred not to answer.

Political ideology. Consistent with the scale used by Hoffman and Young (2011), the Political Ideology scale ranged from (1) "very liberal" to (5) "very conservative." Respondents were asked to choose the ideological option that they most closely identified with. On average, more people tended to be more liberal; of the respondents, 43 (18.0%) identified as "very liberal," 84 (36.8%) as "mostly liberal," 75 (32.9%) as "neutral/mixed," 24 (10.5%) as "mostly conservative," and 2 (.9%) as "very conservative" ($M = 2.38$, $SD = .94$).

Eligibility to vote. Respondents were asked to answer yes or no to whether they are eligible to vote in the United States. Of the respondents, 203 (88.3%) said they were eligible to vote in the U.S. and 27 (11.7%) said they were not.

Political efficacy. The Internal Political Efficacy scale was used by Hoffman and Young (2011) to measure respondents' beliefs about one's own competence to understand, and participate effectively in politics. The scale employed consists of five, 5-point Likert items ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree." Higher scores indicated ones own beliefs about their competence to understand and participate effectively in politics. The alpha reliability found for the Internal Political Efficacy scale was fair at .74 ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .79$).

Political Interest. This question was used by Hoffman and Young (2011), ranging from (1) "not at all" to (4) "very much."

Affinity for political humor (AFPH). This scale was crafted by Hmielowski, Holbert and Jayeon Lee (2011). The AFPH scale uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree" prompted respondents to answer 11 items crafted to reflect four distinct and connected dimensions: incongruity, superiority, anxiety relief, and social cohesion (see Appendix). The higher the AFPH score the greater affinity for political humor. The reliability of this scale was good at .85 ($M = 3.53$, $SD = .59$)

Traditional news consumption. This scale was used by Young (2004). The scale was a semantic differential ranging from (1) "never watch" to (5) "daily" and asked respondents about 5 traditional news items (see Appendix). The higher the score, the more exposure to traditional news.

Main Study Variables

Political engagement. The scale I used to measure respondents' inclination for political engagement was used by Hoffman and Young (2011), which was consistent with measuring

traditional measures of engagement among young adults. The scale totaled 14-Likert type items ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree.” Scores that were higher indicated a greater the propensity for political participation. The alpha reliability found for the modified scale was excellent at .90 ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.27$).

Political knowledge. To capture respondents’ political knowledge constructs, Delli Carpini, and Keeter (1993) suggested using questions that tested individuals civics knowledge and knowledge of the political parties and leaders, e.g. what government is and does. Five questions examined respondents’ knowledge of major political figureheads in different parties and departments, two questions examined knowledge of current events, and two questions examined knowledge of common political processes. Correct answers were coded as 1 and incorrect answers coded as 0, with a KR-20 of .85 ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 2.92$).

Trust in institutions. Originally created by Lipset and Schneider (1987) and later researched and adapted by Moy and Pfau (1999), the Confidence in Institutions scale examines the concept termed “trustworthiness” of the nation’s democratic institutions according to the perspective of respondents. The scale measures six items (see Appendix) ranging from 1 “very untrustworthy,” to 7 “very trustworthy.” I modified the scale by adding five more items that reflect more appropriately a list of relevant institutions that concern the U.S. citizenry in respect to trust. Two studies (Doherty, Kiley, Tyson and Jameson, 2018; Doherty, Kiley, and Johnson, 2015) released by the Pew Research Center report results that reflect the prevalence of concern for the items added (see Appendix). The higher scores for this scale indicated a greater trust in U.S. institutions. The alpha reliability found for the modified scale was good at .88 ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.05$).

Political satire exposure. First, respondents were asked an initial filter question “Do you watch political satire TV shows?” Respondents that answered “Yes” to the question were prompted

to answer from a 4-point semantic differential scale from Hmielowski et al (2011) ranging from (1) “never watch” to (4) “watch all the time” for seven political satire television shows. “Yes” answers were coded as 1 and the “No” answers were recoded from 2s to 0s so that the variable would correspond with the 0 variable from those who chose “Yes” for the filter question but proceeded to indicate that they never watched any of the television shows provided in the subsequent question regarding political satire TV exposure .The shows are: The Daily Show with Trevor Noah, The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, Late Night with Seth Meyers, Last Week with John Oliver, Real Time with Bill Maher, Saturday Night Live, and Full Frontal with Samantha Bee. In order to consolidate these items into a single variable, the items were summed and divided by number of items ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 3.87$).

Motivations for consumption. To analyze the respondents’ motivations for consuming political satire TV shows, I used a list crafted by Young (2013). The participants were prompted to indicate their satire viewing motivations using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree.” This is a multidimensional scale divided by four sections for motivation evaluation (See Appendix).

Information driven. This first section was comprised of six Likert-type items examining which motivations for political satire TV consumption are driven by a need for information. The higher the score the more political satire TV viewers turned to political satire TV shows for information. The reliability for this scale was great at .90 ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .85$).

Entertainment driven. This section had four Likert type item to examine the entertainment driven motivations for consuming political satire TV shows. However, during the analysis, the last two items were found problematic and inconsistent with the their sentiment of entertainment. I modified the list by removing the two problematic items and replacing them with two items from

a different list of motivations created by Young and Lee (2013). Those items were “they are funny/entertaining and put me in a good mood,” and “they make news more interesting.” These two items made the scale more consistent in terms of being defined as entertainment motivations. The items were summed and divided by the number of items. The reliability of the modified scale was good at .81 ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .72$).

Opinion driven. This section originally was comprised of four, 5-point Likert items examining the opinion driven motivations for consuming political satire TV shows. However, the last item in this group proved to be problematic and was generally inconsistent with how this motivation was measured. Consequently, I kept the first three items and removed the last item. The reliability of the opinion driven motivations was fair at .73 ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .83$).

Social driven. This last motivations section was comprised of six Likert type items examining the socially driven motivations for watching political satire TV shows. The scale had good reliability at .80 ($M = 2.67$, $SD = .79$).

Motivations for avoidance: This list of avoidance reasons coded by Young (2013) consists of six avoidance motivations of non-viewing, whether the reason being intentional avoidance or mere disinterest. These motivations for avoidance will be expressed through a table of descriptive statistics (see Appendix) ranging from least relatable to most relatable per statement.

ANALYSIS

To answer the first three research questions, which inquire about the demographics of political satire TV consumers, the motivations for consumption and motivation for avoidance of political satire consumption, I input the sample data into SPSS and conducted frequency analyses for the demographic data set, and each separate motivational scale to provide detailed information about the descriptive frequencies for the responses. Further, in order to reveal the predictors of

those who consume political satire TV, I conducted a linear regression analysis. This yielded results necessary for analysis of the respondents to the survey.

In order to analyze the relationships between political satire TV consumption for the last research question and hypothesis 1 and 2, bivariate correlation, linear regressions, and descriptive statistics were evaluated. The correlation results yielded from the bivariate correlation provided general, overarching insight into whether there were relationships between consuming political satire TV and political knowledge, political engagement, and trust in institutions. To further understand these relationships, a more nuanced analysis incorporating the control variables was conducted using a linear regression model for each relationship concerning political knowledge, political engagement, and trust in institutions distinctively.

Chapter 4: Results

WHAT ARE THE PREDICTORS FOR CONSUMING POLITICAL SATIRE?

Table 1 (see Appendix for all Tables presented) presents the correlation matrix of study variables concerning political satire TV consumption. The variables that are significant in predicting exposure to political satire are political interest ($r = .36, p < .01$), political ideology ($r = -.17, p < .01$), and affinity for political humor ($r = .35, p < .01$). This shows that overarching relationships between the independent variables with political satire exposure, in that political interest, political ideology, and affinity for political humor are predictors of consuming political satire. However, Table 2 presents the coefficient results from a linear regression showing that only national news exposure as a significant predictor for consuming political satire consumption.

CONSUMING POLITICAL SATIRE

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the four subsets of motivations for political satire consumption.

Information driven. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of respondents' information driven motivations for viewing political satire television. Of the informatively driven motivations examined, the primary motivation for watching political satire television was "because they help me learn about others", closely followed by the motivation "to find out what's going on in the world." The motivation on the tail end of the list is "to keep up with government performance."

Entertainment driven. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for the entertainment driven motivations for consuming political satire television. Of the motivations examined, respondents agreed most with the statement "because they make me laugh." The motivation that the respondents agreed with the least of the four items was "because they are exciting."

Opinion driven. In Table 6, of the three items, the opinion driven motivation that respondents agreed with the most was “to hear views from like-minded commentators/hosts.” The motivation that was agreed with the least in regards to opinion was “to help form opinions on issues.”

Social driven. Table 7 presents the social driven motivations for consuming political satire television. Of the six items, respondents agreed most with the motivation statement “to keep up with what other people around me may be talking about.” The motivation agreed with the least of the six items was the statement “because most of my friends do.”

POLITICAL SATIRE TV EXPOSURE AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Table 8 presents the correlation matrix of the main study variables. The matrix shows that all variables except for trust in institutions significantly correlated with exposure to political satire TV. What’s also apparent is that all variables, except for trust in institutions, are significantly correlated with each other. The highest correlation is between political satire TV exposure and political knowledge ($r = .42, p < .01$)

The third research question in this study examined if there was a relationship between political satire TV exposure and political engagement. Table 8 presents the results between political satire television exposure and political engagement. These results reveal that consuming political satire television ($\beta = -.01, p = .88$), after control variables were taken into account, does not relate significantly with an individual’s political engagement [$\Delta F (1, 170) = .03, p = .88$]. The results indicate that a number of the control variables predicted more significantly an individual’s predisposition for engaging politically. Taking political satire exposure into consideration as the independent variable, political efficacy ($\beta = .30, p < .01$) and gender ($\beta = -.18, p < .01$) are the more significantly related variables for political engagement, followed by political interest ($\beta =$

.19, $p < .05$), national news exposure ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$), and whether an individual is eligible to vote ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .05$).

POLITICAL SATIRE TV EXPOSURE AND POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

To examine the relationship between political satire TV consumption and political knowledge, Table 9 presents the results from the linear regression performed. The results show that after controlling for a number of variables, political satire TV exposure stood firm as being significantly, and positively related to an individual's political knowledge [$\Delta F (1, 191) = .04$, $p < .01$]. In other words, after including the control variables, political satire TV exposure remains a significant predictor and is positively related to individuals' political knowledge, indicating that H1 is supported. Other significant predictors included political interest ($\beta = .36$, $p < .01$), national news exposure ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$), education level ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$), and gender ($\beta = .12$, $p < .05$).

POLITICAL SATIRE TV EXPOSURE AND TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

To examine the relationship between political satire TV exposure and trust in institutions, Table 10 presents the results from the linear progression performed. After the inclusion of control variables, there was no evidence that exposure to political satire television has a significant relationship with individual's trust in institutions [$\Delta F (1, 180) = .92$, $p = .34$]. This result expresses that H2 is not supported. Furthermore, the same result was found for each control variables except for political ideology, which was found to be significant in all three of the regression models ($\beta = .28$, $p < .01$).

MOTIVATIONS FOR AVOIDING POLITICAL SATIRE TV

Tables 10 presents the descriptive statistics regarding satire avoidance motivations, while 11 presents the correlation matrix of study variables regarding avoidance motivations. The results show that avoidance motivations are negatively correlated with political interest ($r = -.52^{**}$, $p <$

.01) in that those who are not interested in political matters significantly avoid political satire TV shows. Moreover, avoidance motivations were also significantly related to political ideology ($r = .31^{**}$, $p < .01$) in the sense that those who choose to avoid political satire TV tend to identify more conservatively than those who consume political satire.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The general purpose of this study was to examine the motivations for and against consuming political satire television, and the relationships that exposure to political satire television consumption have with political engagement, political knowledge, and trust in institutions. There is a growing mass of scholars with interest in the topic of entertainment media's effect on the realm of politics, and the potential preexisting orientations toward political humor (Becker, 2013; Holbert, 2014).

WHAT ARE THE PREDICTORS FOR CONSUMING POLITICAL SATIRE TV?

The results yielded provide insight into these elements, showing that while political satire does relate to political engagement and political knowledge over all, only political knowledge is significantly and positively related with political satire TV exposure. Results also show that there is no relationship in any aspect with individual's trust in governmental institutions.

The results from the correlation conducted show that individuals who are interested in politics are very likely to seek out political satire television. It's fair to conclude that as someone is generally interested in politics, the humor within the well-informed jokes used by the TV shows hosts pose intrigue to those who become frustrated with the heated political climate of today (Hmielowski, 2011). People who self identify as leaning more liberally on the ideological spectrum are also more apt to consume political satire TV. This relationship adds to the concept that while there is no ideological label to political satire TV, satirical hosts might provide an outlet for liberal individuals to validate their bias through their jokes toward major conservative political characters such as President Donald Trump. Lichter and Farnsworth (2018) in their study of over 6,000 satirical monologues of the four leading satirists found that nearly half of the jokes took aim at the

president. Furthermore, LaMarre et al (2008) shows that consumers of political satire interpret the meaning of jokes in ways that support their ideological leanings.

The linear regression of the potential predictors of political satire consumption tells a more limited story, however. The regression presents that it is only national news exposure that is significantly predictive of who might consume political satire television. Further research on this difference can be useful to clarifying these results.

Moving on, results that showed the most significant variable for predicting consumption of political satire TV is an individual's Affinity for Political Humor. According to the scale, the peak three reasons of those who consume political humor do so because it can reveal the weaknesses of our political leaders and institutions, because it makes viewers aware that the political system is dysfunctional, and that it helps make better sense of why our political system is dysfunctional. These results help formulate a better picture of people who choose to consume political satire and also shed light on what the underlying elements to seeking out political humor are (Hmielowski, 2011; Becker, 2014).

MOTIVATIONS FOR CONSUMING POLITICAL SATIRE

From the results from the AFPH scale, those who choose to watch political satire TV shows do so to point out what Hmielowski et al (2011) determined as "societal inconsistencies (p. 101)." In other words, viewers of political satire TV understand the norms of society and acknowledge inconsistencies and appreciate the satirization of the norms governing traditional news media reporting through ironic inversions of the news and cynical jokes. Furthermore, consumers of political satire TV show that they find humor in the faux pas of politicians and leaders of opposing political parties, in essence making them feel better and more secure about their own political

beliefs. This is telling of the superiority dimension that Hmielowski (2011) describes as the “hostility, malice, aggression, derision, disparagement, or aggressive function of humor (p. 101).

From the results regarding motivations for consuming political satire, the most ubiquitous motivation for consuming political satire TV is with those who are looking for entertainment. More specifically, the most significant motivation was “because they are funny/put me in a good mood.” Consumers use satire TV as a mechanism for taking the news that they are already knowledgeable of and looking for entertainment value, as these satirical shows can provide rich, emotional experiences that traditional news reporting lacks (Lee & Kwak, 2014).

People who are searching for information about the news and political elements are also predominant consumers of political satire television. This information helps explain why young adults have been found to turn to political satire for their news consumption, even more so than traditional news media (Pew Research, 2008). However, to those that are consuming political satire TV, as seen above, interest in politics is germane to the viewer profile. As previously stated, political interest and political knowledge were significant in relationship to each other and political satire exposure.

The expectation of entertainment in regards to political bias validation contributes to further development of the uses and gratifications theory. Consumers of political satire find solace in the pointed jokes and dialogue that Lichter and Farnsworth (2018) say are predominately aimed at President Trump and his conservative administration. Viewers of political satire use it as an outlet of hilarity, or a source of emotional release.

POLITICAL SATIRE EXPOSURE AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

The results from the bivariate correlation analysis showed that exposure to political satire television is ostensibly related to an individual’s inclination for engaging politically within

their community. But when the linear regression was conducted, there were control variables that were more significantly predictive of one's proclivity for political engagement, which in turn lowered the significance of the effect of political satire exposure, in line with the analysis findings of Cao and Brewer (2008). This finding adds to research that argues with Baumgartner and Morris (2006) who found that political satire exposure goes as far as to undermine political participation due to cynicism instigated by exposure to political satire.

Education, and general political interest were variables that have been shown to stimulate political efficacy, a significant variable in this model, and an important personal-psychological variable that connects communication directly with engagement (Becker, 2014; Jung & Gil de Zuñiga, 2011), but there are other underlying impactful variables. For instance, one variable that stood out as being predictive of political engagement was gender. The significance of gender is in direct contradiction to Verba, Burns, and Scholzman (1997), who concluded that men are more politically engaged than women. With this result, it can be argued that the gender disparity in regards to political engagement has been closing.

But it's curious as to why political engagement isn't affected by satirical consumption. While satirists engage with their audience with consistency by performing the role of entertainment by bringing to light political hypocrisies and poking fun at the mass of traditional news reporting, aside from a few exceptions, satirists generally don't pose a "call to action" towards their audience (Holbert, 2013). Recently, Stephen Colbert spent months plugging his faux children's book *Whose Boat is this Boat? Comments that Don't Help in the Aftermath of a Hurricane* in a long running joke against President Trump by using unedited flippant or irrelevant quotes from the president during his tour of North Carolina in the aftermath of Hurricane Florence. Using his call to action to purchase his book, he raised over \$1 million in relief funds (Proctor, 2018). But, aside from that

unique instance, satirical hosts do not typically urge movement or action from their audiences, leaving engagement outside of the traditional realm of political satire consumption.

POLITICAL SATIRE EXPOSURE AND POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

The results pertaining to the connection between exposure to political satire television was the most positive outcome of all the results, supporting H1 indicating satire exposure as being positively related to political knowledge. While it has been previously postulated that the relationship between political satire and political knowledge is weak at best (Holbert, 2013), and that the results from this study show that entertainment is the primary motivator for political satire consumption, the increasing salience of political satire television shows might proliferate the information intake by viewers, in turn helping them in becoming more politically knowledgeable. With that said, within these results, it found that political satire exposure produces political knowledge in lieu of national news exposure in respect to significance, which is present in Holbert, Lambe, Dudo, and Carlton (2007), who found that viewing *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart to be detrimental to perceptions of traditional TV news. While it is shown that satire exposure has a definite effect on viewer's knowledge, it is also possible that education and political interest moderate this relationship as they were positively and significantly related to political knowledge in this model.

POLITICAL SATIRE EXPOSURE AND TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

The results for political satire exposure's relationship with trust was discouraging in that there was no significant result that showed a connection, in essence not supporting H2. In fact, the only variable that showed significant connection to trust in institutions was ideology. The results for the relationship between ideology and trust in institutions showed that those who identified as liberal were less likely to have confidence in the country's governmental institutions.

According to Yang (2006) trust means “a psychological state that enable individuals to accept vulnerability and place their welfare in the hands of other parties, expecting positive intentions or behaviors from other parties.” In this particular study, trust means the confidence that individual’s have in the public institutions that are government-run. Previous literature has found that negativity in the media has played a part in consistently low levels of trust from the general public toward the government (Moy & Pfau, 1999) since the 1970s, however, trust has been declining especially among Republicans since the final years of Bush Jr.’s presidency (Doherty et al., 2015). But the results from this study have provided no evidence to show that exposure to political satire has an effect on that dimension.

It’s an interesting feat to learn from these results that although political satire television is full of a barrage of negative jokes (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006), there is no significant relationship between satire exposure and declining trust in government. From this it can be assessed that while political satire is watched for entertainment and information, the idea that the jokes are merely that, just jokes, can be insinuated.

MOTIVATIONS FOR AVOIDING POLITICAL SATIRE TV SHOWS

Looking at the descriptive statistics of the avoidance motivations for people who do not choose to consume political satire, it seems that most find political satire TV to be boring, and uninteresting. Also, looking at the correlation table, there’s significant relationships with those who have little concern with political interest, and relates to those who chose to identify more conservatively on the ideological spectrum. From this we can characterize those who avoid political satire as merely uninterested in politics altogether and can insinuate that, because there’s a more liberal context that consumers connect with, that the relationship avoidance has with the

conservative leaners, that they are not as susceptible to the entertainment value that political satire TV has to offer.

IMPLICATIONS

The breadth of the results culminates a mildly disappointing, but useful idea of who consumes political satire, why they choose to consume political satire, and what the effects of consuming satire have on that population, as well as why those who choose not to consume, avoid political satire. The profile of a typical person who chooses to consume political satire television are anyone who tends to lean in a more liberal direction politically, who are inherently interested in all things politics, educated, consumers of traditional media, and have a proper sense of internal political efficacy. The predominant reason for tuning in to watch political satire TV is for its entertainment value, in that, many who are watching enjoy the critique and degradation of political players and traditional news reporting while appreciating a general sense of bias vindication. One notable affect that those who consume political satire experience is building of political knowledge from the jokes based on day-to-day current events and news. But what is also found, is that while political satire consumption does affect knowledge, it does not change consumers' political views or ideology, nor alter their political behavior.

On the other hand, those who avoid political satire all together have basically a reverse set of characteristics, in that they are typically more conservative or merely not interested in politics whatsoever.

LIMITATIONS

There are a number of limitations that came across during this study. For one, the sample was majority undergraduate students, mostly female, and mostly liberal. The results might have been more telling if I had collected a larger sample of conservative male participants for the

study. A larger sample size in general would have been ideal for more accurate results. Also, including age and ethnicity was something that I missed as I was compiling my survey and might have served as good control variables that I have not taken into account. Future research might include excerpts from each satire TV show to provide content in which to be evaluated by participants to get a clearer sense of what it is they do and do not like about political satire. Furthermore, I would have spent more time in analyzing the respondents' perceptions of their own sense of political engagement, knowledge, and trust in comparison to the results yielded from this study. In the survey I asked them specifically about these elements, but will proceed to evaluate the answers ad hoc.

As potentially more studies in the El Paso border region, adding a more explicit ethnic component to the analysis can shed a clearer light on how political satire is perceived among a larger, mostly Hispanic population. Additionally, as the political climate rapidly changes and the news cycle is increasingly quicker and fast changing, spotlighting specific attitudes toward current issues in comparison to consumption can pose insight for future academics.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study provides a set of information that is helpful for researchers to better understand a subset of elements related to political satire television. As has been mentioned, satirical content has been shown to be an accessible and entertaining form of news consumption for its viewers. This study has produced results that show that although many who choose to watch political satire TV shows predominantly for its entertainment value, they're exposure to this media positively affects consumers political knowledge. The humor used by hosts of these satirical shows draws in a mostly liberal audience whose predetermined political biases are validated by the humorous critique and negative tone toward the political system and its figure heads. While political knowledge has been found to be positively affected, this study showed that it has no effect on consumer's political engagement beyond the efficacy and political interest that the individual already had. Additionally, this study has conclusively proven that exposure to political satire TV shows has absolutely no effect on an individual's trust in government institutions. Finally, those who decide to avoid exposure to political satire television are principally uninterested in politics and don't find political humor to be funny. In summary, this study has given a clearer insight into what and how the entertainment and news medium that political satire is, has on its viewers.

Future research might be more effective in describing viewers of political satire TV with more questions regarding demographic specifics like ethnicity, income, and age, as those are key demographic questions that this study did not take into consideration. More detailed results may conclude different or similar results, thus adding to the wider breadth of this subject of research.

Appendix A: List of Tables

Table 1. Correlation Matrix of Study Variables for Political Satire Exposure

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Political Satire TV Exposure	3.34	3.87	-	.36**	.42**	.34**	.03
2. Political Interest	2.88	.89	.36**	-	.53**	.52**	-.05
3. Political Knowledge	3.89	2.92	.42**	.53**	-	.44**	-.00
4. Political Engagement	4.64	1.03	.34**	.52**	.41**	-	.04
5. Trust in Institutions	3.41	1.03	.05	-.04	.01	.03	-

Note: *indicates significant (two tailed) correlation at $p < .05$ and ** at $p < .01$

Table 2. Multiple Linear Regression Analyses Results Predicting Political Satire Exposure

Predictors	B	β
Gender	.61	.08
Education Level	.38	.12
Ideology	-.60	-.14
Eligibility to Vote	-.93	-.08
National News Exposure	.93	.29**
Political Interest		
ΔR^2	.22	
R^2	.49	

Note: *indicates significant (two tailed) correlation at $p < .05$ and ** at $p < .01$

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Motivations for Consuming Political Satire

Exposure Motivations	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Entertainment Driven	3.99	.72
Information Driven	3.35	.85
Opinion Driven	3.26	.83
Social Driven	2.67	.79

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Entertainment Driven Motivations

			<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)
I watch political satire TV:	M	SD	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Because they are exciting	3.7	.90	1 (.8%)	12 (9.6%)	33 (26.4%)	57 (45.6%)	22 (17.6%)
Because they make me laugh	4.31	.86	1 (.8%)	6 (4.8%)	10 (8.0%)	44 (35.2%)	64 (51.2%)
They are funny/entertaining and put me in a good mood	3.96	.96	3 (2.4%)	7 (5.6%)	19 (15.2%)	59 (47.2%)	37 (29.6%)
They make news more interesting	3.97	.88	2 (1.6%)	5 (4.0%)	23 (18.4%)	60 (48.0%)	35 (28.0%)

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for Information Driven Motivations

			<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)
I watch political satire TV:	M	SD	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
To find out what's going on in the world	3.44	1.08	5 (4.0%)	18 (14.3%)	26 (20.6%)	59 (46.8%)	15 (11.9%)
To keep up with government performance	3.30	1.04	5 (4.0%)	24 (19.4%)	39 (31.5%)	41 (33.1%)	15 (12.1%)
To keep myself an informed citizen	3.29	1.03	7 (5.6)	21 (16.8%)	37 (29.6%)	49 (39.2%)	11 (8.8 %)
Because they help me learn about others	3.47	.92	3 (2.4%)	16 (12.8%)	37 (29.6%)	57 (23.3%)	12 (9.6%)
To gain important new information	3.36	.95	3 (2.4%)	23 (18.4%)	35 (28.0%)	54 (43.2%)	10 (8.0%)
To fulfill my need to be "in the know"	3.29	.10	4 (3.3%)	25 (20.3%)	36 (29.3%)	47 (38.2)	11 (8.9%)

Table 6. Opinion Driven Motivations

			<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)
	M	SD	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
To help form opinions on issues	3.07	1.09	10 (8.0%)	28 (22.4%)	41 (32.8%)	35 (28.0%)	11 (8.8%)
To learn the hosts' opinions	3.29	.10	10 (8.0%)	13 (10.4%)	39 (15.9%)	57 (45.6%)	6 (4.8%)
To hear views from like-minded commentators/hosts	3.42	.99	7 (5.6%)	15 (12.1%)	30 (24.2%)	63 (50.8%)	9 (7.3%)

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for Social Driven Motivations

			<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)	<i>N</i> (Valid %)
I watch political satire TV:	M	SD	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
To keep up with what other people around me may be talking about	3.59	.92	6 (4.8%)	8 (6.4%)	28 (22.4%)	72 (57.6%)	11 (8.8%)
To appear informed to those around me	2.79	1.15	18 (14.6%)	35 (28.5%)	32 (26.0%)	31 (25.2%)	7 (5.7%)
Because most of my friends do	2.08	.96	39 (31.7%)	46 (37.4%)	28 (22.8%)	9 (7.3%)	1 (.8%)
To make me more sociable	2.40	1.05	27 (21.8%)	45 (36.3%)	30 (12.2%)	20 (16.1%)	2 (1.6)
To have something to talk about with others	2.65	1.15	25 (20.2%)	32 (25.8%)	31 (25.0%)	33 (26.6%)	3 (2.4%)
To feel part of a community	2.68	1.18	26 (20.8%)	28 (22.4%)	37 (29.6%)	28 (22.4%)	6 (4.8%)

Table 8. Multiple Linear Regression Analyses Results Predicting Political Engagement

Predictors	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
	B	β	B	β	B	β
Gender	-.23	-.10	-.43	-.18**	-.43	-.18**
Education Level	.15	.15*	-.00	-.00	-.00	-.00
Ideology	-.25	-.19**	-.15	-.11	-.15	-.11
Eligibility to Vote	-.84	-.20**	-.51	-.12*	-.51	-.12*
National News Exposure	.41	.39**	.17	.17*	.17	.17*
Political Interest			.27	.19*	.27	.19*
Political Knowledge			.05	.12	.05	.12
Political Efficacy			.50	.30**	.50	.30**
Political Satire TV Exposure					-.00	-.01
ΔR^2		.28**		.17**		.000
R^2		.28**		.45**		.45

Note: *indicates significant (two tailed) correlation at $p < .05$ and ** at $p < .01$

Table 9. Multiple Linear Regression Analyses Results Predicting Political Knowledge

Predictors	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
	B	β	B	β	B	β
Gender	1.03	.19**	.73	.13*	.64	.12*
Education Level	.55	.26*	.37	.16*	.30	.13*
Ideology	-.07	-.02	.17	.05	.26	.08
Eligibility to Vote	-1.09	-.12	-1.03	-.11	-.89	-.10
National News Exposure	.90	.38**	.53	.22**	.38	.16*
Political Interest			1.31	.40**	1.19	.36**
Political Satire TV Exposure					.16	.21**
ΔR^2	.13**		.25**		.03**	
R^2	.12**		.37**		.40**	

Note: *indicates significant (two tailed) correlation at $p < .05$ and ** at $p < .01$

Table 10. Multiple Linear Regression Analyses Results Predicting Trust in Institutions

Predictors	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
	B	β	B	β	B	β
Gender	-.16	-.08	-.17	-.09	-.18	-.09
Education Level	.05	.06	.04	.05	.03	.04
Ideology	.29	.26**	.30	.27**	.31	.28**
Eligibility to Vote	.02	.01	.08	.27	.09	.03
National News Exposure	.02	.03	.03	.03	.01	.01
Political Interest			-.12	-.10	-.12	-.10
Political Knowledge			-.00	-.00	-.01	.12
Political Efficacy			.16	.12	.15	.12
Political Satire TV Exposure					.03	.09
ΔR^2	.07		.01		.01	
R^2	.07		.08		.09	

Note: *indicates significant (two tailed) correlation at $p < .05$ and ** at $p < .01$

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics for Motivations for Consuming Political Satire

Exposure Motivations	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Entertainment Driven	3.99	.72
Information Driven	3.35	.85
Opinion Driven	3.26	.83
Social Driven	2.67	.79

Table 12. Correlation Matrix of Study Variables – Avoidance Motivations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Avoidance Motivations	3.22	1.02	-	-.52**	.31**	-.07
2. Political Interest	2.88	.89	-.52**	-	-.22**	.16*
3. Political Ideology	2.38	.94	.31**	-.22**	-	-.03
4. Education	2.75	1.20	.07	.16*	-.03	-

Note: *indicates significant (two tailed) correlation at $p < .05$ and ** at $p < .01$

Table 13. List of Variable Items

Variables Items

Variable	Item
Internal Efficacy ($\alpha = .74$)	I consider myself to be well qualified to participate in politics I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing the country (USA) I think that I am better informed about politics than most people Sometimes politics seems so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on People like me have no say over what the government does
Political satire TV Exposure (missing alpha)	The Daily Show with Trevor Noah The Late Show with Stephen Colbert Late Night with Seth Meyers Last Week Tonight with John Oliver Real Time with Bill Maher Saturday Night Live Full Frontal with Samantha Bee
Informative Motivations ($\alpha = .90$)	To find out what's going on in the world To keep up with government performance To keep myself an informed citizen Because they help me learn about others To gain important new information To fulfill my need to be "in the know"
Entertainment Motivations ($\alpha = .81$)	Because they are exciting Because they make me laugh They are funny/entertaining and put me in a good mood They make news more interesting
Opinion Motivations ($\alpha = .73$)	To help form opinions on issues To learn the hosts' opinions To hear views from like-minded commenters/hosts
Social Motivations ($\alpha = .80$)	To keep up with what other people around me may be talking about To appear informed to those around me Because most of my friends do To make me more sociable To have something to talk about with others To feel part of a community
Political Engagement ($\alpha = .90$)	Attend a political meeting, rally, or speech Contact a public official or political party about a political issue Display a bumper sticker or yard sign Vote in a general election, if eligible to do so Vote in a primary election, if eligible to do so Vote in a local election, if eligible to do so

	<p>Talk to friends/family about current political issues</p> <p>Argue or debate with friends/family about current political issues</p> <p>Volunteer for a political campaign or civic organizations</p> <p>Donate money to a social/political organization</p> <p>Write an op-ed or a letter to a newspaper editor regarding a political issue</p> <p>Encourage or discourage people to vote for a policy or candidate</p>
<p>Political Knowledge (KR-20 = .85)</p>	<p>Which member of the House of Representatives is best known for being the youngest member of the house and proposing the “Green New Deal”</p> <p>Which U.S. Senator holds the position of Senate Majority Leader</p> <p>President Donald Trump was under criticism for claiming that he would pull U.S. troops out of which war-torn country in December 2018</p> <p>Which of Trump’s appointees has recently resigned as U.S. Attorney General</p> <p>Who, as U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, implemented a controversial policy of separating parents and children accused of crossing the border illegally</p> <p>The practice of setting boundaries of electoral districts in order to favor a specific political party and deemed illegal in a few states is called</p> <p>How many estimated government workers were reported to be effected by the most recent government shutdown</p> <p>The process whereby legislators delay or prevent the passing of a law in Congress by standing and speaking at indefinite length</p> <p>Who is the person that has been subpoenaed by the FBI to testify before Congress and was once known as President Trump’s “fixer”</p>
<p>Trust in Institutions ($\alpha = .88$)</p>	<p>The Presidency</p> <p>Congress</p> <p>The criminal court system</p> <p>The news media</p> <p>Federal law enforcement agencies (FBI, Border Patrol, etc.)</p> <p>The public school system</p> <p>The government</p> <p>Political parties</p> <p>The electoral system</p> <p>The armed forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, etc.)</p> <p>The police</p>

Appendix B: IRB Supporting Documents

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO IRB EXEMPTION

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
Office of the Vice President for Research and Sponsored Projects
Institutional Review Board
El Paso, Texas 79968-0587
phone: 915 747-8841 fax: 915 747-5931
FWA No: 00001224

Please note that University of Texas at El Paso IRB has taken the following action on IRBNet:

Project Title: [1397805-1] Funny Politics: Examining the motivations and effects of political satire television consumption

Principal Investigator: Alexandra Martinez, BA

Submission Type: New Project

Date Submitted: February 14, 2019

Action: EXEMPT

Effective Date: February 15, 2019

Review Type: Exempt Review

Should you have any questions you may contact Bernice Caad at bcaad@utep.edu.

Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title: Funny Politics: Examining the motivations and effects of political satire television consumption

You are being invited to participate in this study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research being undertaken, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the study. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you fully understand the study in order to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

Purpose

The goal of this study is to examine people's attitudes, behaviors, and experiences in consuming political satire television shows.

Procedures

Participating in this study is completely voluntary, and you will not be penalized in any way if you decide not to participate in this study. If you do decide to participate, please keep in mind that there are no correct or incorrect answers. Just answer each question as honestly as possible. You should simply select or provide the response(s) that best reflect(s) your opinions or describe(s) your actions. You will also be asked to provide some basic information about your demographic characteristics, but no information will be used to identify you specifically. Your feedback will be kept confidential, and you will not be contacted in any way after you participate in this study. It will take you approximately 12-15 minutes to complete this survey.

Benefits

Your participation represents a valuable contribution to scientific research on political satire consumption and its impact. Ideally, the results of this study will yield insight into people's experiences related to political satire consumption. This may inform research on, theories of, and approaches to public communication, political communication, and mediated communication.

Risks and Discomforts

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts beyond those encountered in everyday life.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Your name or other identifying information will be kept separate from and will not be associated with your responses on the survey. Your study-related information will be kept confidential. No

participants will be identified in any publication or presentation of research results; only aggregate data will be used.

Voluntary Participation

In order to participate in this study, you must be 18 years or older. Taking part in this research study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this research you may contact Alexandra Martinez through email at armartinez15@miners.utep.edu or Dr. Yannick Atouba at yatouba@utep.edu . UTEP IRB has approved this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research you may call the IRB at 915-747-5680 or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

Consent Statement and Signature

I have read this consent form and understand that moving forward and answering the survey items will represent my agreement to participate in this study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I agree I disagree

Appendix C: Survey

Demographics

What is the year that you were born? _____

What's your gender?

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Trans
- d. Prefer not answer

Are you a student?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes what is your major?

Education classification

- a. Freshman
- b. Sophomore
- c. Junior
- d. Senior
- e. Master's student
- f. Ph.D. student

If no,

What's your highest education level?

- a. High school diploma
- b. Some college
- c. Associate degree
- d. Bachelor's degree
- e. Master's degree
- f. Ph.D.

Are you of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity?

- a. Yes
- b. No

What is your race?

- a. White
- b. Black or African American
- c. Asian/Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian
- d. Native American
- e. Two or more races/multiracial
- f. Other _____

Political Affiliation and Ideology

How much are you interested in politics?

- a. Very much
- b. Somewhat
- c. Very Little
- d. Not at all

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your understanding of the American political system. (5 point scale: 1=strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I consider myself to be well qualified to participate in politics					
I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing the country (USA)					
I think that I am better informed about politics than most people					
Sometimes politics seems so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on					
People like me have no say over what the government does					

What is the political party you typically affiliate with?

- a. Democrat
- b. Republican
- c. Independent
- d. Other _____

Choose the option that best represents your political ideology.

- a. very liberal
- b. mostly liberal
- c. Neutral/Mixed
- d. mostly conservative
- e. very conservative

Are you eligible to vote in the United States?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Did you vote in the last general election?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Do you watch political satire TV shows? (Filter question)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Sometimes

[If yes or sometimes:]

Political Satire Viewership and U&G

Which and how often of the following political satire televisions shows do you consume/view?

	Never watch	Occasionally watch	Often watch	Watch all the time
The Daily Show with Trevor Noah				
The Late Show with Stephen Colbert				
Late Night with Seth Meyers				
Last week with John Oliver				
Real Time with Bill Maher				
Saturday Night Live				
Full Frontal with Samantha Bee				

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about reasons and motivations you watch these shows:

I watch a political satire TV show because:

(5 point scale: 1=strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
It's funny/ put me in a good mood/entertaining					

It's how I learn about the news/main issues of the day					
It is truthful					
It helps me understand the background, context, and/or implications of political issues.					
It is relatable					
It has a tendency towards liberal world views					
It makes news more interesting					

Motivations for viewing political satire

For this section, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following motivations for viewing political satire tv shows.

I watch political satire TV shows....

Information driven

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
To find out what's going on in the world					
To keep up with government performance					
To keep myself an informed citizen					
Because they help me learn about others					
To gain important new information					
To fulfill my need to be "in the know"					

Entertainment driven

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Because it's exciting					

Because it makes me laugh					
Because it's a habit I have					
Because there's nothing better to do					

Opinion-driven

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
To help form opinions on issues					
To learn the commentator's opinions					
To hear views from like-minded commentators					
To expose myself to views that are different from my own					

Social-driven

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
To keep up with what other people around me may be talking about					
To appear informed to those around me					
Because most of my friends do					
To make me more sociable					
To have something to talk about with others					
To feel a part of a community					

In this section, we are interested in understanding your general appreciation for political humor, and its role and importance in your life.

Please indicate your level of agreement for each of the following statements regarding your appreciation for political humor, its role, and importance in your life. (5 point scale: 1=strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I appreciate political humor because it can reveal the weaknesses of our political leaders and institutions.					
I appreciate political humor because it can make me feel more knowledgeable about politics.					
I appreciate political humor because it can aid me in reinforcing my political beliefs.					
I appreciate political humor when it makes me aware that our political system is dysfunctional.					
I appreciate political humor because it can help me express my political opinions.					
I appreciate political humor because it can reduce the anxiety I feel towards politics.					
I appreciate political humor when it helps me make better sense of why our political system is dysfunctional.					
I appreciate political humor because it can help me better cope with awkward situations.					
I appreciate political humor because it can help me effectively criticize politics and politicians.					
I appreciate political humor because it allows me to be friendly with people who hold political views that are different from my own.					
I appreciate political humor because it allows me to form stronger bonds with people who hold similar political views as my own.					

Answered by all participants

(From Matsa) Do you agree or disagree that political satire tv shows are:
(5 point Likert: 1 = strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Credible					

Stereotypical					
Funny/Humorous					
Misleading					
Informative					
Inaccurate					
Essential					
Trustworthy					

Other (Specify)	
-----------------	--

How often, if ever, do you learn something about political figures, the government, or news events from the political satire tv shows you watch?

- a. Never
- b. Hardly ever
- c. Sometimes
- d. Very often
- e. All the time

How much, if at all, do you learn about politics, the government, policies, or news events from the political satire tv shows you watch?

- a. A lot
- b. Very much
- c. Quite a bit
- d. Very Little
- e. Not much at all

Are you influenced by the political satire tv shows that you watch?

- a. Definitely Yes
- b. Maybe/probably Yes
- c. Definitely No
- d. Maybe/probably No
- e. I don't know

Please indicate how much you think the political satire TV shows you watch influence:

Your **political beliefs** (i.e., what you hold to be true; your convictions or thoughts about how things are or should be; your ideologies. E.g., the judicial system is unfair/fair, capitalism is the best economic system, belief in feminism, liberalism, etc.)

Your **political attitudes** (i.e., your enduring feelings or dispositions toward particular policies, politicians, political entities/issues, etc. e.g., your feelings towards the death penalty, abortion, prayer in school, affirmative action, the democratic party, etc.)

Your **political behavior** (what you do or how you act to affect the political system. e.g., voting, overt support for political causes, boycotts, encouraging/discouraging people to support a particular candidate/policy/issue, participation in political campaigns, etc.)

Your **political engagement** (i.e., how engaged or active you are politically. e.g. voting, attending rallies, contributing money to candidates, posting political signs/stickers, etc.)

Your **political knowledge** (i.e., what and how much you know about how the political system operates. e.g. knowledge of civic information, candidate information, current or past legislation, legislation processes, policy etc.)

	Not at all 1	Very little 2	Quite a bit 3	Very much 4	A lot 5
Your political beliefs					
Your political attitudes					
Your political behavior					
Your political engagement					
Your political knowledge					

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:
(strongly disagree to strongly agree)

Watching political satire tv shows:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Increases my knowledge of politics					
Decreases my understanding of politics					
Increases my trust in politicians					
Decreases my trust in political institutions					
Increases my cynicism about the political system					
Increases my willingness to make a difference in the political system					

If answer is “no” to “viewing political satire tv”

Rate the following reason (1 – 5, 5 being most relatable) as to why you avoid watching political satire tv shows.

	1	2	3	4	5
I don't find them to be funny					
I find them offensive					
I don't understand them					

I'm not interested in the topics					
I find them to be boring					
I've never seen any of them					
I don't like the hosts					
I don't agree with the hosts' opinions or views					
The time slots are not convenient					
The shows have the facts wrong and inaccurate					
My friends don't watch these shows					
Other (please specify)					

Answered by all participants (do or do not view political satire tv)

Do you believe that political satire tv shows influence the political views of their viewers?

- a. Definitely Yes
- b. Maybe Yes
- c. Maybe No
- d. Definitely No
- e. I don't know

Media Exposure

Using the 5-point scale below, please indicate how often you watch, listen, or read news about current political issues from:

(5 point scale: 1= never, 2=less than once a week, 3=once a week, 4= a few times a week, 5=daily)

	Never	Less than once a week	Once a week	A few times a week	Daily
National news (on TV or online)					
Local cable news (on TV or online)					
Newspaper (hard copy or online)					
National Public Radio					

Political Talk Radio (including Podcasts)					
Other (please specify)					

Political Knowledge

In this section please indicate your answer to the next few questions about politics to the best of your knowledge. If you do not know the answer to the question simply mark ‘I don’t know’

What new member of the House of Representatives now holds the record for youngest representative elected to the House?

1. Veronica Escobar
2. Haley Stevens
3. Alexandria Ocasio Cortez
4. Beto O’Rourke
5. I don’t know

Which U.S. Senator holds the position of Senate Majority Leader?

1. Lindsey Graham
2. Paul Ryan
3. Mitch McConnell
4. Nancy Pelosi
5. I don’t know

President Donald Trump has been under criticism for claiming that he will pull U.S. troops out of which war-torn country in December of 2018?

1. Sudan
2. Afghanistan
3. Syria
4. Iran
5. I don’t know

Which Trump appointee has recently resigned as U.S. Attorney General?

1. John Kelly
2. Jeff Sessions
3. Sean Spicer
4. Michael Whitaker
5. I don’t know

Who, as U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, implemented a controversial policy of separating parents and children accused of crossing the U.S.-Mexico border illegally?

1. Jeff Sessions
2. Kirstjen Nielsen
3. John Kelly

4. Sarah Huckabee Sanders
5. I don't know

The practice of setting boundaries of electoral districts in order to favor a specific political party and deemed illegal in a few states is called _____

1. redistricting
2. electoral meddling
3. preferential vote practice
4. gerrymandering
5. I don't know

How many estimated government workers were reported to be affected by the most recent government shutdown?

1. 200,000

	Extremely unlikely	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very likely	Extremely likely
Attend a political meeting, rally, or speech							
Contact a public official or political party about a political issue							
Display a bumper sticker or yard sign							
Vote in a general election							
Vote in a primary election							
Vote in a local election							
Talk to friends/family about current political issues							
Argue or debate with friends/family about current political issues							
Volunteer for a political campaign or civic organization							
Donate money to a social/political organization							
Write an op-ed or a letter to a newspaper							

editor regarding a political issue							
Post comments on political issues online							
Participate in an organized protest, boycott, or strike to support or oppose a political issue							
Encourage or discourage people to vote for a policy or candidate							

2. 1 million
3. 800,000
4. 600,000
5. I don't know

What is the process by which legislators delay or prevent a decision being made in Congress by standing and speaking at indefinite length?

1. Congress process delay
2. obstruction
3. filibuster
4. furlough
5. I don't know

Who is the person that has been subpoenaed by the FBI to testify before Congress and was once known as President Trump's "fixer?"

1. Paul Manafort
2. Michael Flynn
3. Jared Kushner
4. Michael Cohen
5. I don't know

Political participation and engagement

Please indicate how likely you are to participate in the following activities.

(1= extremely unlikely, 7= extremely likely)

Trust in institutions

Please indicate your perception of trustworthiness in each of the following institutions
(7 point semantic differential anchored by “untrustworthy” to “trustworthy”)

		Very untrustworthy	Untrustworthy	Somewhat untrustworthy	Neutral	Somewhat trustworthy	Trustworthy	Very trustworthy
The Presidency								
Congress								
The criminal court system								
The news media								
Federal law enforcement agencies (FBI, Border patrol, etc.)								
The public-school system								
The government								
Political parties								
The electoral system								
The armed forces (army, navy, air force)								
The police								

Border politics

Please indicate how important each of the following these border issues is to you ranging from I don't think about the issue to extremely important

	I don't think about this issue	Not important at all	Not very important	Neutral	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Extremely important
Border security (along the border and at ports of entry)							
The border wall being built							
Immigrants' rights							
Quality of life on the border							
Education							
The economy							
Lowering taxes							
LGBTQ rights							
The environment							

Are there other border issues not listed above that are extremely or very important to you?

- a. Yes
- b. No

if yes, please specify:

Thanks!!!

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