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Are You Kidding Me? Comparing Student Perceptions and Recall of Comedy and Hard News

Donald L. Winzer

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ARE YOU KIDDING ME? COMPARING STUDENT PERCEPTIONS
AND RECALL OF COMEDY AND HARD NEWS

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

Donald L. Winzer

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Communications Media

We hereby approve the thesis of

Donald L. Winzer

Candidate for the degree of Master of Science

Mark J. Piwinsky, Ph.D.
Professor of Communications Media, Chair

James Lenze, Ph.D.
Professor of Communications Media

B. Gail Wilson, Ed.D.
Professor of Communications Media

ACCEPTED

Randy L. Martin, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: Are You Kidding Me? Comparing Student Perceptions and Recall of Comedy and Hard News

Author: Donald L. Winzer

Committee Chair: Dr. Mark J. Piwinsky

Committee Members: Dr. James Lenze
Dr. B. Gail Wilson

There are more comedy news shows today than before, and comedy news has been more trusted and popular for younger audiences since 2012. This study sought to find if framing theory was applicable to audience perceived believability and immediate recall of comedy news and hard news versions of four different news stories from the last five years. An online quasi-experiment using Qualtrics was used, where participants viewed comedy news and hard news stimuli and were tested on believability and immediate recall. Hard news was rated significantly more believable than comedy news. Contrary to the literature, there were no differences in recall based on news type. In addition, the researcher found that increased consumption of news of either type resulted in increased immediate recall, regardless of the stimulus news type.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Over the last 20 years, audience trust in comedy news has been steadily increasing. In a survey of high school students, only 18 percent said they trusted hard news sources such as CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC "a lot" in 2018, a 12-point decrease from 30 percent in 2016 (Knight Foundation, 2018). In the place of traditional hard news media, comedians have been stepping up to deliver the news, and audiences are taking them seriously.

In 2008, a poll found comedian and *Daily Show* host Jon Stewart was the fourth most trusted news anchor in America, tied with hard news hosts Anderson Cooper, anchor of the CNN news show *Anderson Cooper 360°*, and Brian Williams, chief anchor and nightly news host for MSNBC (Kakutani, 2008). Researchers began taking notice of Stewart's increased popularity and investigated the potential political effects of *The Daily Show*. Baumgartner and Morris (2006) found that viewers of *The Daily Show* reported increased confidence in their ability to understand politics, as well as an increased cynicism toward the democratic system and traditional news media.

Comedy news hit the tipping point in 2012, when it became more popular and more trusted than hard news by viewers under 35 (Pew Research Center, 2012). In 2015, *Time Magazine* began reporting on political comedy show host John Oliver's serious political impact, labeling it the "John Oliver effect" (Luckerson, 2015). *Time* reported that the ripples from Oliver's show have led to shifts in audience action such as increasing donations to various charitable organizations and even changes in legislation including civil forfeiture and bail requirements (Luckerson, 2015).

One example of the “John Oliver effect” was the case of Civil Forfeiture laws. Oliver reported on civil forfeiture in 2014. In response to Oliver’s coverage, the Attorney General at the time, Eric Holder, announced major limitations on the law (Luckerson, 2015). The case continued to gain traction, and in 2019 the Supreme Court ruled it is unconstitutional for states to impose excessive forfeitures of property as criminal penalties (Wolf, 2019).

Then in 2017, researchers Chattoo and Feldman investigated the difference in responses to a comedic documentary and a serious documentary about global poverty. They found that both documentaries increased awareness of the issue. However, the comedy documentary produced significantly larger increases in awareness, knowledge, and actions. The researchers attributed this to the increased emotional response to the comedy method of information communication.

Problem Statement

Today, nine major networks and several streaming services host comedy-based news programming. This study is needed because, as these shows grow in popularity and younger audiences enter voting age, it becomes increasingly important to understand how comedy news programs compares to their traditional counterparts. Broader ideas also need to be considered regarding the future of broadcast news, such as, the potential conflict with traditional news broadcasters if comedy news is becoming more trusted, the potential challenge to the importance of traditional news by comedians delivering their version of the news, and the ways that broadcast news might attempt to adapt to these changes in audience taste.

Theoretical Basis

This study investigated the perceived believability and immediate recall of comedy news utilizing framing theory. Framing theory focuses on the context that information is presented

(Entman, 1993). A “frame” is a structure that provides context, images, and language that collectively affect how an audience perceives a subject. The nature of the frame can influence or change the perception an audience has on a subject. Frames provide a framework that defines problems, diagnose the cause, make moral judgments, and suggest solutions for the problems (Entman, 1993). This study used framing theory to examine a potential difference in perceived believability in and immediate recall of news stimulus with a comedy news frame versus stimulus with a hard news frame.

While framing is usually applied as the perspective on an issue, often based on the political slant of the news source, it is also the modality in which the information is being delivered. In the case of comedy news versus hard news, that modality is not always Republican or Democrat, but funny or serious. This draws from McLuhan’s (1964) statement that the medium is more important than the message; meaning that the channel through which a message is communicated is more important than the actual content of the message. In the case of this study, McLuhan’s concept of media could apply not only to the physical medium of transition, but the framing and structuring of the media message, with comedy news being a different channel than hard news. Thus, McLuhan’s definition of “channel” here is broad enough to encompass the way that information is delivered, for example, in the form of a joke versus a serious statement. This study specifically focused on the impact that the different frames of comedy news and hard news might have on believability and immediate recall.

Research Questions

In this study, the researcher examined the attitudes of undergraduate college students on hard news stimulus versus comedy news stimulus, and how that relates to their level of information recall. As the attention to comedy news is increasing among a younger age group,

studying college students may provide insights into their preferences that may influence future voting and the direction of news. Two research questions were used for the purposes of this study.

RQ1: Are there significant differences in perceived believability between comedy news and hard news for undergraduate college student audiences?

RQ2: Are there significant differences in information recall between comedy news and hard news for undergraduate college student audiences?

Methods

There is some research available regarding audience perceptions and retention of comedy and hard news. For example, Kim and Vishak (2008) and Nabi, Moyer-Guse, and Byrne (2007) both used experiments to examine questions of perception and recall of hard news versus comedy news. Kim and Vishak (2008) found that audiences do not learn information from comedy news as well as they do from hard news, and Nabi et al. (2007) found that audiences are more likely to dismiss information in the form of a joke. However, their studies are over a decade old and did not target younger audiences, as undertaken in this study.

For the purposes of matching a hard news stimulus and a comedy stimulus, four issue items were selected. These issue items ranged in topic, including current political news surrounding a new proposed Congressional resolution, the Green New Deal, crime news including the Equifax hack and “El Chapo” drug trafficking case, and a feature story about a Texas-based plumber whose truck was sold to ISIS. More detail on the four issue items can be found in Chapter Three. Once the four issue items were selected, comedy news and hard news stimulus were selected for each issue item.

The four comedy news programs this study used are the *Colbert Report*, *Full Frontal* with Samantha Bee, the *Daily Show* with Trevor Noah, and *Last Week Tonight* with John Oliver. The four hard news network programs came from CBS, PBS, NBC, and MSNBC. When selecting these programs, several factors were considered. These including news story subject, delivery style, and diversity. These news segments were then matched on the basis that they contained similar enough information that could be tested for immediate recall. The segments were also similar enough in video length or could be edited without changing the key informational content and flow. Though the matched news segments were similar in content and length, the difference in delivery style was key. For example, both *The Colbert Report* and *CBS News* ran news stories with a similar length about a Texas-based plumber's truck appearing on the front lines of the Syrian Civil War in 2014, but the way each news source delivered the information was much different.

The dependent variables of this study are believability and information retention. An online quasi-experiment was created that allowed the participants to view different examples of either comedy news or hard news to gauge their perceived believability. This believability score was gauged using a three-component believability survey taken immediately after watching each news stimulus based on surveys from prior research (Austin & Dong, 1994; Flanders, 2018), see Appendix E. This survey tested to what extent the participant saw each news source as credible, accurate, and if they were confident enough to share the story. Following the believability survey for each issue item, participants were then asked to take an immediate recall test to gauge information learning. After watching all the stimuli and completing all believability and immediate recall tests, the participants were asked to complete additional demographic questions regarding news consumption habits and political affiliation. The quasi-experiment was

conducted online in Spring 2019, targeting 1,000 undergraduate students at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), a mid-sized university in western Pennsylvania

Key Terms

The following terms will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Two. This list provides basic working definitions.

Believability

Believability is defined here as an index for audience trust (Robinson & Kohut, 1988). In this study, believability is measured in a three-point scale: credibility of information, credibility of the source, and likelihood of sharing the information (Austin & Dong, 1994; Flanders, 2018). This will be developed more in Chapters Two and Three.

Comedy News

Comedy news is defined as news media that conveys the news in a humorous way. Comedy news segments can be found on full shows that meet these criteria such as the *Daily Show*, or as smaller segments from talk shows such as the *Late Show*. This interpretation of comedy news is specific for the purposes of this study.

Hard News

Hard news is defined here as news media which usually takes a serious approach and avoids humorous or comedic elements (Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017).

Immediate Recall

Immediate recall is defined as how much participants remember immediately after watching the example news segments (Mayer & Chandler (2001). Immediate recall will be tested based on a short series of multiple-choice questions.

News Segment

A news segment is a short piece of a news broadcast that focuses on one particular issue. In terms of comedy news, the researcher identified individual segment within a broadcast, or a smaller piece of a monologue that focuses on one topic.

Overall News Consumption

Overall news is defined as a group of news segments that can include both hard news and comedy news. This definition is specific to this study. See Hypotheses H1.4A and H2.4A.

Political Perspective

The participant's liberal or conservative leaning based on a self-reported five-point scale including very conservative, slightly conservative, neutral, slightly liberal, and very liberal. This interpretation is consistent with previous studies (Kiley & Keeter, 2015), and, because it is self-reported, will allow the researcher to capture the participant's own perspective. See Hypotheses H1.3 and H2.3.

Conclusion

In Chapter Two, the Literature Review examines Framing theory, the history of comedy news, and prior studies. Chapter Three explores methods of selecting the undergraduate student sample, briefly overviews the content of the four issue items and the structure of the instrument. Chapter Four profiles the demographics of the subjects, tests the individual research questions and hypotheses, and summarizes the results pertaining to believability and immediate recall. Chapter Five draws conclusions about these results and offers suggestions for future research

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was designed to test the effects of news frames, comedic versus serious, on audience perceived believability and immediate recall. Studies on comedy, the news, and comedy's effect on the news that come from both quantitative and qualitative studies in a variety of fields will be discussed. The literature review covers areas including the history of comedy news, background for comedy, as well as the background and applications of framing theory. Prior research in the literature review includes studies on comedy overall, as well as comedy's impact on news audiences. Finally, the literature review includes an examination of previous research on believability, as well as an explanation of this study's believability scale.

History of Comedy News

Comedy and satire are not new ideas; from Athenian playwright Aristophanes in 400 BC to Jonathan Swift in the 1700s to Jane Austen and Mark Twain in the 19th century, satirists and comedians have skewered all manner of subjects (Portman, 2016). The first American show to include comedy in the news was *That Was The Week That Was*, which aired from 1963 until 1965 and was based on a UK show of the same name (Gardner, 2018). Since the days of *TWTWTW*, numerous comedy news shows have come and gone, garnering little academic attention. However, it wasn't until Jon Stewart's comedic responses to George W. Bush's presidency on *The Daily Show* in the early 2000 that researchers started investigating the potential effects of comedy news (Baumgartner and Morris, 2006). As mentioned in Chapter One, Baumgartner and Morris (2006) found significant positive and negative results for perception and recall of Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* audience. Participants reported increased confidence in their ability to understand politics, as well as an increased cynicism

toward traditional news media and the democratic system. This increased cynicism through comedy was considered dangerous by some, because it could keep people from being democratically minded. For this reason, Stewart was even accused of political heresy in a humorous article by Hart and Hartelius (2007). Just one year after Hart and Hartelius's critical article, a poll found that Jon Stewart was the fourth most trusted news anchor in America, tied with CNN's Anderson Cooper, and NBC's Brian Williams (Kakutani, 2008).

This trend of increased trust in comedy news continued, and in 2012, comedy news was reported as more popular and more trusted than hard news by viewers under the age of 35 (Pew Research Center, 2012). In 2015, *Time Magazine* began reporting on John Oliver's real-world impact, labeling it the "John Oliver effect" (Luckerson, 2015). *Time* pointed out that Oliver succeeded where his comedic predecessors failed in transforming boring political topics into interesting and relevant news for a young audience, who in turn rallied for change in a way previous comedy news audience did not.

In 2017, researchers Chattoo and Feldman investigated the difference in responses to a comedic documentary and a serious documentary about global poverty. They found that both documentaries increased awareness of the issue. However, the comedy documentary produced significantly larger increases in awareness, knowledge, and action. Chattoo and Feldman (2017) attributed this to the increased emotional response to the comedic method of information communication.

In a 2018 survey of high school students, only 18 percent reported that they trusted hard news sources such as CNN, FOX News and MSNBC "a lot," a 12-point decrease from a study by the same foundation in 2016 (Knight Foundation, 2018). Comedy news audiences in 2018 also saw President Donald Trump threaten legal action against the weekly comedy program

Saturday Night Live following its holiday sketch based on the film *It's a Wonderful Life*, where Trump was never elected president, as well as liberal-leaning comments on their comedy news skits (Johnson, 2018).

Comedy Background

Comedy can come in all shapes and sizes and one of the most often used frameworks for analyzing comedy was developed by Avner Ziv in 1988. Ziv (1988) divided humor into five categories: aggressive, sexual, social, defensive, and intellectual. These categories are used to help analyze the comedy styles and approaches of different comedians. For example, John Oliver has an aggressive comedy style, often utilizing vulgar insults when referring to lambasted subjects, while Samantha Bee utilizes more sexual comedy, relying more on jokes about sexual activity, and Trevor Noah from *The Daily Show* seems to prefer the social approach to his comedy. Comedy can, and often does, exist in multiple categories at once.

As much of the research on comedy news focuses specifically on the satirical forms, it is essential to consider how satire fits into the comedy news structure. Research on satire is useful because it covers some of the comedy news broadcasters, but it does not cover everyone. As Simpson (2003) pointed out, satire is complex because it can exist in more than one place in Ziv's 1988 framework, especially overlapping in the aggressive, social, and intellectual categories.

Despite the difficulty to pin down exactly where satire fits in the comedy framework, some theorists have attempted to define satire. Phiddian (2013) stated that satire can be defined as, "a rhetorical strategy (in any medium) that seeks wittily to provoke an emotional and intellectual reaction in an audience on a matter of public... significance" (pg. 1). Phiddian's definition has three key components, including witty delivery from the speaker, an emotional and

intellectual reaction from the audience, and a topic that has public significance. Condren (2014) wrote at great length about how satire can be defined, but his key function of satire is that it exposes moral, social, or intellectual failings. Combining these two definitions gives satirical analysts a more complete understanding of the subject. Defined this way, satire is a rhetorical strategy that uses witty delivery to provoke an emotional or intellectual reaction from an audience to expose moral, social, or intellectual failings on a matter of public significance. It is important to focus on satire because it is a commonly studied dimension, and because satire itself is a way of approaching believability through comedy.

There are three ways that satire works. First, satire cannot just mock a target; it must expose some sort of failure in order to correct it (Condren, 2014). Second, satire also must punish or persecute; a joke cannot exist without a subject. Finally, satire must approve of the values that are implied by the process of making someone the laughingstock of a joke. In other words, satire could not exist if it also shamed the process of making a joke about someone. Other theorists have examined the methods of satire, including hyperbole, absurdity, and obscenity to shock readers (Rubin, Conroy, Chen, & Cornwell, 2016).

Satirical analysts have broken satire into two categories: Juvenalian and Horatian. Juvenalian satire is more hostile, sarcastic, and pessimistic (Condren, 2014). Swift's *A Modest Proposal* is considered Juvenalian satire because of its suggestion to simply eat the excess population of Ireland to decrease crime. Horatian satire is more playful, teasing, and mocking (Condren, 2014). Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* is considered Horatian satire with a mocking look at the U.S. military leadership during the Cold War, even moving into the dimension of the comedically bizarre by presenting the positive ramifications of full-scale nuclear war.

Different comedians have varying methods of communication. For instance, researchers have broken down Jon Stewart's communication method into two elements: diatribe and chreia. Diatribe is a monologue to "shock, criticize, and deride" (Hart & Hartelius, 2007, p. 264) opponents. Chreia is defined as 'a brief statement of an incident or situation followed by a pungent remark' (Cutler, 2005, p. 37). Chreia is typically used to highlight a paradoxical situation or catch-22. Stewart's methods of comedy therefore fit more into the aggressive, social, and intellectual categories proposed by Ziv (1988) than the sexual, or defensive. Based on this interpretation, Stewart leans more toward Juvenalian satire being more hostile and pessimistic. Not every comedy news anchor utilizes satire, however. For example, Samantha Bee from *Full Frontal* uses pieces of Ziv's (1988) sexual approach to her comedy news. This information was helpful in defining the scope and different approaches to comedy news, as well as selecting the particular stimulus for this study as the researcher wanted to include comedy news segments that featured a broad range of comedy styles and interpretations.

Theoretical Background

Framing Theory

This study investigated the perceived believability and immediate recall of comedy news versus hard news using framing theory. Framing theory has its roots in the agenda setting tradition, which looks to understand the effects of the media on audiences' understanding of issues. Framing theory became important as journalism evolved in the 20th century. Until the mid-20th century, journalists opted for the conventional journalism method (Fink & Schudson, 2013). Also known as the, "just the facts, ma'am" method, conventional journalism was simply the reporting of an event that happened with no additional analysis, interpretation, or context. It wasn't until the latter half of the 20th century that contextual journalism became popular.

Contextual journalists (Fink & Schudson, 2013) looked to succeed where their predecessors failed at analyzing, interpreting, and contextualizing news events. Contextual journalism represented a shift from objective reporting into subjective field where issues were placed within a context, also known as a frame.

Framing theory was first proposed by Goffman in 1974. Goffman (1974) stated that people interpret what is going on in their world through a framework. Entman (1993) continued research on framing theory and developed a more media-centric definition, stating that the way something is presented to the audience, known as the “frame,” influences how the audience processes the information. Frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements, and suggest solutions, similar to what the contextual journalists were trying to accomplish. The context or frame is given by the broadcaster. Typically, framing theory is used to analyze the effects of a political frame, such as news depicted in a more liberal or conservative way. Framing theory is built on McLuhan’s (1964) theory that the medium is the message; meaning the channel that a message is communicated is more impactful to the audience than the actual content of the message. McLuhan’s concept could apply not only to the physical medium of transition, such as a television broadcast versus a radio broadcast, but the framing of the message, with the comedy news frame being a different channel than hard news frame.

In a sense, the traditional frame presents news in a very formal way. In contrast, contemporary audiences are seeing a growing popularity in framing the news in a humorous way. Often both the hard news sources and comedy news sources communicate the same information, but comedy news sources try to project the story in a different light. The researcher wanted to test how these different frames come into play with audience perceived believability and immediate recall.

Prior Studies

Comedy in the News

When examining studies on comedy versus hard news, there is considerable information specifically on comedy news and political information. Given the nature of politics as a competition, with each party trying to structure and control its messaging, framing theory is especially important. It is important to note that this study is not specifically about political information retention and belief, though the Green New Deal issue item was specifically selected because it is political information. Studies about political news can still be useful to this study on the grounds that they also investigate differences in perception or recall from comedy versus hard news.

Young people have several motivations for watching comedy news (Young, 2013). Participants of Young's 2013 study reported five reasons why they preferred political comedy news: Watching for the humor, to learn about current events, because they saw it as unbiased, to make news fun, and to contextualize the news. These findings are interesting, because they tap into the uses and gratifications for hard news as well, especially learning about current events, the unbiased nature, and contextualization of the news.

Comedy news broadcasting could be a good way to learn political information (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014). Bartsch and Schneider (2014) hypothesized that the need for entertainment satiated by comedy news sources would inspire those audience members to be more interested in consuming hard news about politics. The results indicated that the positive emotions from consuming the comedy news and fictional entertainment led to those individuals reflecting more on hard political issues. This was consistent for both fictional films and comedy news. Bartsch and Schneider (2014) claimed that audiences watching comedy news or fictional entertainment

can be inspired to investigate legitimate political issues as a result of the positive emotions from being entertained.

Political novices enjoy watching comedy news (Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017). They sought to test whether political novices were attracted to comedy news more frequently than politically engaged individuals when consuming political news. They also hypothesized that confirmation bias, the tendency for people to favor information in a way that confirms their preexisting beliefs (Plous, 1993), would be present in comedy news consumption and wanted to uncover whether confirmation bias was stronger for comedy news or hard news media. Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis (2017) found that a potential benefit of comedy news is that it may serve as a gateway to engage political novices, and it might even engage audiences with counter-attitudinal views. However, a potential downside of comedy, especially satiric, news is that it can undermine people's sense of being able to influence politics, causing more cynicism. This finding is consistent with Hart and Hartelius's (2007) criticism of Jon Stewart.

However, audiences do not learn or retain information as well from comedy news sources (Kim & Vishak, 2008). They investigated whether the comedy media, such as the *Daily Show*, change the way people learn and remember political information and make political judgments compared to traditional news media. Their results indicated that entertainment media did not promote political information learning as much as traditional news media containing the same topics and themes in the same duration of time. This seems to confirm the earlier studies that found traditional news media is more effective at communicating political information effectively (Bennett, 2001; Holbrook & Hill, 2005; Young, 2004).

Comedy news also inspires less scrutiny and analysis in audiences (Young, 2004). Young analyzed data from the 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey to explore three

aspects of political joke communication: the connections and associations of comedy programming, the mechanism through which political humor is processed in the brain, and the implications of comedy news' impact on political involvement, knowledge, and cynicism. Results of this study support the idea that political humor is a distinct form of information communication that involves different information processing. Participants engaged in significantly less scrutiny when listening to arguments as political jokes on comedy news shows than when listening to arguments on more traditional political programs. This data can be interpreted that audiences of comedy news are less interested in analyzing and scrutinizing the opinions of the argument but are more interested in the entertainment aspect.

Comedy news could also promote cynicism in its audience (Hart & Hartelius, 2007). They argue that comedy news pundits, namely Jon Stewart, still attractive cynicism that undermines the political process and turns audiences apathetic. Hart and Hartelius (2007) argue that Stewart's tactics, especially those surrounding the importance of voting, keep audiences from actively engaging in politics. The researchers posit that cynicism is attractive to political novices and young voters because it makes them feel part of the "in" group. Instead of cynicism, Hart and Hartelius (2007) recommended that American audiences adopt the practice of skepticism; not to discount politics but to obtain knowledge by critically questioning and scrutinizing their place in the democratic process.

Comedy in Recall and Messaging

One notable early study on comedy and recall was conducted by Ziv (1988), who developed the five categories for humor. Ziv found that in a collegiate setting, students will score higher on exams if the information is presented with humor included in the lectures, even when the information and professor delivering the lecture are the same. More recently, use of a

comedy frame has been shown to increase information learning and social action among audience members (Chattoo & Feldman, 2017). They tested the audience response to two documentaries about global poverty, one that presented the information in a somber, serious light, and another that presented the information through comedy. They found that the comedy documentary produced significantly larger gains in audience awareness, knowledge, and actions than the serious documentary. Chattoo and Feldman theorized that this had to do with the relatability, positive emotions, and entertainment value.

The use of comedy in advertising campaign messaging can increase reach (Campo, Askelson, Spies, Boxer, Scharp & Losch, 2013). Campo, et al. (2013) set out to monitor the effectiveness of a contraceptives campaign that utilized humor in its messaging. They found that humor was a significant predictor of how successfully the campaign was spread by students on a college campus. Campo et al. (2013) theorized that the college student audience was more inspired to spread the campaign because of the comedy frame and recommended that other campaigns use a comedy frame to increase reach effectiveness.

However, in contrast to advertising, audiences are more likely to dismiss information from comedy news sources because it is in the form of a joke (Nabi, Moyer-Guse & Byrne, 2007). Nabi, et al. (2007) wanted to explore the persuasive effects of information delivered through jokes and compare that to the persuasive effects of information delivered from hard news sources. Nabi et al. (2007) conducted an experiment where participants read excerpts from a political pundit and then excerpts from a comedian to determine which message would persuade the audience more. Their results indicated that both messages persuaded equally, but participants discounted the information received from the comedian because they were considered to be jokes. Nabi et al. (2007) also found that the funny message was considered

credible only when it was attributed to the comedian, and the hard news message was not considered credible when it was attributed to the comedian. They concluded that, because the audience expected a comedian to say something funny, a serious message from a comedian does not connect with the audience.

Dependent Variables

To test the difference in audience perception of comedy versus hard news segments, two dependent variables were selected: believability and immediate recall. These dependent variables were selected based on previous studies' exploration of this subject (Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017; Nabi et al., 2007; Young, 2007).

Believability

As some studies have suggested that younger people are more receptive to comedy news, it is essential to determine whether their level of believability in comedy news is stronger than in hard news. This could be an important factor in shaping how news organizations create the news in the future and what new formats might develop. There are many interpretations of believability. Bradley and Greenberg (1966) tested believability by comparing two news mediums with conflicting stories and asking participants which medium they believed more. Robinson and Kohut (1988) based a believability scale off the reliability of contemporary politicians. Magerko (2015) deconstructed believability into audience expectation and the fulfilment of that expectation, stating that when reality better met expectation, believability increased.

However, for the purposes of this research, a modified version of the three-component scale developed by Austin and Dong (1994) was used because it was the most easily adaptable to this research study. Austin and Dong's believability test examined three facets of believability;

a) information credibility, how closely the information represents real life, b) source credibility, how accurately the news source delivered the information, and c) level of bias, how biased was the source that delivered the information. The three-component believability scale that this research study uses is based on the one developed by Austin and Dong (1994). The scale for this study, however, replaced the C) factor, level of bias, with the likelihood of the participant sharing the information. For the purposes of this study, the scale used to test believability is as follows: a) information credibility, b) source credibility, and c) likelihood of sharing the news.

The modified Part C, likelihood of sharing the news, is based on a framework for believability developed by Flanders (2018). Flanders found a significant relationship between perceived credibility of information and willingness to share that information, where the more likely an individual is to share information, the more credible they consider the information. In combining believability scales of Austin and Dong (1994) and Flanders (2018), the researcher hopes to create a comprehensive test for determining audience believability.

Immediate Recall

Information processing and load of the information can impact what people recall. When an audience member consumes too much information in a short amount of time, it can lead to information overload. Mayer and Chandler (2001) tested how the incorporation of several news elements in a single program, such as text applied to the video versus a video without text, affected information recall. They found that participants who watched news videos with text scored lower on information recall, this was attributed to information overload. They believed that adding text to news videos could distract the audience from comprehending the information.

Jacoby (1984) had a different stance on information overload. He argued that some consumers stop exposing themselves to information before overload occurs, and suggested

researchers focus less on information overload, and more on what is helping people remember only the useful information. This research looks to explore if the comedy news frame will overload the audience or enhance specific information learning.

Conclusion

Looking at these sources, we see that comedy can increase information learning (Chattoo & Feldman, 2017), may be more attractive to novices (Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017), and may be a good way to learn information (Barsch & Schneider, 2014), but it could lead to less scrutiny, worse information learning, and the information might be learned by accident.

Audiences could also dismiss the information from comedy news sources because it is in the form of a joke from a comedian (Cao & Brewer, 2006; Kim & Vishak, 2008; Young, 2004; Nabi et al., 2007). Chapter Three will set out the methods of exploring the question of how the comedy versus hard news frame affects believability and immediate recall.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

To test the audiences' perceived believability and immediate recall of comedy news and hard news sources, a quantitative study using an immediate recall test was used. Participants took a believability survey and recall test immediately after viewing four news segments, two comedy news and two hard news, to test for perception and short-term information recall. The study was concluded with a demographic survey to gauge information including political perspective, ideology, and news consumption habits.

Development of Materials

Stimulus

Participants were asked to watch video news segments on four different issue items. The four issue items selected were a Texas-based plumber's truck found in Syria in 2014, the Equifax hack in 2017, the El Chapo trial in 2018, and the Green New Deal in 2019. These issue items were selected because they range in subject matter and year released. The four issue items were covered by both comedy news and hard news sources and there were clear differences in how each source treated these issues. Despite their differences, the same key factual elements were presented from both the comedy and hard news sources. It was the delivery, not the content, that was different. The video news stimuli ranged in length from 1:24 to 2:18 minutes. Five of the eight news segments were reduced in length by the researcher. This was done to maintain a consistent relative length to avoid respondent fatigue and dropout. The researcher tried to maintain a two-minute length while preserving all of the content that would be common between both the comedy and hard news versions, as well as the original segment flow. The five video

segments that were edited were the comedy segment for the Equifax story, the comedy and hard news segments for the “El Chapo” story, and the comedy and news segments for the Green New Deal story have been edited for length.

Table 1

Edits to Video Stimulus

| <u>Story</u> | <u>News Type</u> | <u>Original Length</u> | <u>In-Survey Length</u> | <u>Number of Recall Questions</u> |
|------------------|------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Texas Plumber | Comedy | 2:14 | 2:14 | 4 |
| | Traditional | 2:18 | 2:18 | |
| Equifax Hack | Comedy | 15:15 | 2:16 | 6 |
| | Traditional | 1:24 | 1:24 | |
| “El Chapo” Trial | Comedy | 6:56 | 2:02 | 4 |
| | Traditional | 6:56 | 2:00 | |
| Green New Deal | Comedy | 5:28 | 2:13 | 5 |
| | Traditional | 6:40 | 2:06 | |

For the comedy news sources, four different comedians were selected: John Oliver, Trevor Noah, Samantha Bee, and Stephen Colbert. These comedians were selected because they have a diverse delivery style, comedic approach, age, race, and gender. In addition, in all cases, these shows include consistent comments on newsworthy items. For the hard news sources, four different news networks were selected: NBC, PBS, ABC, and MSNBC. These networks were selected because they are hard news sources that offer diverse delivery styles, ages, races, and genders of hosts and have regular nightly newscasts.

What follows is a summary of the four news items used for the study with comments on their content. In 2014, a Texas-based plumber’s truck was found on the front lines of the Syrian

civil war being used by ISIS fighters, with the plumber's information and logo still on the side of the truck. The comedy news source for this story is the *Colbert Report* with Stephen Colbert on the Comedy Central network and the hard news source is *CBS Evening News*. The content is similar across both news segments because both stories cover information including the name of the business, the owner, where the truck was purchased, and who purchased the truck. Neither of these segments have been edited for length.

In 2017, the credit reporting agency Equifax was hacked, compromising the data of over 140 million Americans. The comedy news source for this story is *This Week Tonight* with John Oliver on HBO and the hard news source is *NBC Nightly News*. Both news segments included the information on when the hack occurred, the information that was stolen, the name of the organization affected, and the name of the CEO. The John Oliver segment on the Equifax hack in 2017 was originally 15 minutes long but has been edited for length so only the first two minutes and 16 seconds were included in the experiment, as that contained all of the essential elements of the story and didn't impact the flow of the story.

In 2018, the drug trafficker Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán went on trial in New York after the FBI convinced former associates to testify against him. *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah on the Comedy Central network is the comedy news source for this story and *PBS News Hour* is the hard news source. The content in both news segments includes information such as the name of the person on trial, what he is on trial for, the location of the trial, and the key witness. Both the comedy and hard news segments for this issue item have been edited for length. For both cases, only the first two minutes were included, because the additional time basically restated the same information and provided commentary that did not impact key items.

In 2019, congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez proposed a resolution called the Green New Deal with the goal of reducing carbon emissions in the United States by 2030. The comedy news program selected for this story was *Full Frontal* with Samantha Bee on TBS and the hard news program was *PBS News*. Across both news segments, the content is similar because they both cover information including the name of the congresswoman who proposed the resolution, the name of the proposed resolution, the type of congressional proposal, as well as the goals, and timeline of the resolution. Both the comedy and hard news segments for this issue item have been edited for length by removing content from the beginning and end of the videos, while still preserving flow and key information.

Sampling Procedure and Experimental Process

The research was conducted at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), a mid-sized western Pennsylvania university in the Pennsylvania State System for Higher Education. According to the IUP website, IUP has a student population of 9,215 undergraduate students and 2,110 graduate students. The gender breakdown of the students is 58 percent female and 42 percent male. Regarding diversity, 2,466 of the students are from minority groups and 711 are international students (IUP, 2019). Undergraduate college students were selected as the sample group because they make up the demographic that now trusts comedy news over traditional hard news (Pew Research Center, 2012). Given this tendency, they may have an impact on the patterns, tendencies, and coverage of future news

The subject pool was a random sample of 1,000 undergraduate students at IUP provided by the Applied Research Lab. The survey was conducted in April of 2019; 120 participants responded to some of the stimuli and 92 fully completed the survey. The initial power analysis suggested the study needed 116, although this number was not reached, the researcher was able

to find significant differences in several of the hypotheses. It should be noted that the power analysis was based on a pre-sample that included members of the target sample as well as others who were no longer undergraduate students. As a result, the findings suggested a larger sample may have been necessary than if the pre-sample was all undergraduate students. The participants were randomly divided into two groups, A and B. Each group watched videos pertaining to the same four issue items. Experiment group A was given comedy news videos for the Texas-plumber's truck in Syria and the Equifax hack issue items as well as hard news videos for the El Chapo trial and the Green New Deal issue items. Experiment group B was given hard news videos for the Texas plumber's truck in Syria and Equifax hack issue items as well as comedy news videos for the El Chapo trial and the Green New Deal issue items.

Once the sample was obtained, the participants were sent an introduction email with a copy of the informed consent and a link to the online experiment (see Appendix B). The survey instrument was an online Qualtrics survey with three components. Upon opening the survey instrument (see Appendix E), participants were asked to confirm that they consented to the study (see question 1). After confirming this, participants were asked to complete a short demographic survey on age, gender, GPA, and educational standing (see questions 2 to 5). Participants were then asked to view the stimuli, two hard news and two comedy news segments on the four-issue items discussed above (see questions 6 through 36).

After watching each news segment, participants were asked to complete a believability survey to gauge their level of trust in the information, level of trust in the news source, and their likelihood of sharing the information (see questions 6 to 8, 14 to 16, 20 to 23, and 28 to 30). Along with the believability survey, participants were asked how well they thought the presentation style helped them understand the issue. After participants completed the

believability survey, they were given an immediate recall test on specific information from the news segment (see questions 9 to 13, 17 to 19, 24 to 27, and 31 to 35). After watching all four videos, participants were asked to complete a second demographic survey that addressed additional information including political party identification and news consumption habits (see questions 37 to 42). This quasi-experiment was anonymous.

The survey instrument including demographic surveys, believability survey, as well as the recall tests, can be found in Appendix E. Faculty from the Communications Media Department and master's students in the Strategic Communication program at IUP checked to ensure face validity. The initial review raised questions of experiment length which led to the editing of the videos. Subsequent reviews lead to changes in both the survey question wording and answer options for the believability test, immediate recall test, and demographic questions. The recall test was shifted from true or false questions to a four-point multiple choice question format to increase difficulty. In addition, a five-point Likert scale was developed for the believability questions to provide greater distinction in feelings and room for analysis. Finally, a five-point scale was developed for demographic questions to collect more accurate data on news consumption habits, political party affiliation, and political perspective.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: Are there significant differences in perceived believability between comedy news and hard news among undergraduate student audiences?

The researcher expected that comedy news will be perceived as more believable than hard news sources among the participants consistent with the findings of Knoblock-Westerwick and Lavis (2017), who found that younger audiences find comedy news more believable or trustworthy. To gauge believability, a three-component scale was used (see Appendix E,

questions 6 to 8, 14 to 16, 20 to 23, and 28 to 30), including the level of perceived credibility of the information, level of perceived credibility of the news source, and willingness to share the information. Believability was scored based on the average of those three variables. The willingness to share component is effectively an endorsement of the information (Flanders, 2018). If participants are more likely to share the information, they're more likely to believe it. Each part had five scoring options, and the calculation of believability will be based on the average score. The researcher expected that participants who identify as more democratic or liberal will believe the comedy news more than participants who are republican or conservative because of confirmation bias (Kim & Vishak, 2008), as these hosts are openly left leaning.

H1.1: Participants will find the comedy news sources significantly more believable than the hard news sources.

H1.2: There will be a significant difference in the believability of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the political party identification of the subjects.

H1.3: There will be a significant difference in the believability of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's political perspective.

H1.4: There will be a significant difference in the believability of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's news consumption habits.

RQ2: Are there significant differences in information recall between comedy news and hard news among undergraduate student audiences?

Given the work in the literature regarding believability (Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017), the researchers wanted to investigate whether the increased believability would make it more engaging and improve recall or make it more distracting. There were four to six recall questions per issue item with a total of 19 questions across all four issue items. Percent correct

was used as the measurement of recall. The researcher expected that participants would score higher on immediate information retention for hard news sources than comedy news sources, based on studies found in Chapter 2 (Kim & Vishak, 2008; Young, 2004; Nabi et al., 2007).

H2.1: Information recall will be significantly higher for hard news sources than comedy news sources.

H2.2: There will be a significant difference in the immediate recall of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the political party identification of the subjects.

H2.3: There will be a significant difference in the immediate recall of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's political perspective.

H2.4: There will be a significant difference in the immediate recall of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's news consumption habits.

Conclusion

In order to test the research questions and hypotheses, an online quantitative study using a three-component believability survey and immediate recall test was used. The sample consisted of 1,000 random undergraduate students at a mid-sized university in western Pennsylvania. Participants were randomly divided into two groups to watch either the comedy or traditional news versions of four news stories, each group receiving two comedy and two hard news segments.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

In this study, the effects of comedy and hard news frames on perceived believability and immediate recall of four news stories were examined. Two types of news segments were utilized: one with a comedy news frame that presented information in the form of a joke or with the support of jokes, and one with a hard news frame that presented information formally. Determining whether the addition of comedy to the news helps or hurts audience believability and immediate recall is the purpose of this study.

Framing theory (Entman, 1993) serves as a foundation for this study. To test the effects of the comedy versus hard news frame, an online quasi-experiment was utilized in which a three-question believability survey and immediate recall test measured the perception and recall among the sample.

The Stimulus

As detailed in Chapters Two and Three, several components went into choosing the eight different news segments to serve as the stimulus. First, the comedy and hard news pairs for each story needed to contain the same factual information to be tested for immediate recall. Second, the comedy segments needed to utilize different comedic approaches (Condren, 2014; Rubin et al., 2016; Ziv, 1988). Chapter Three outlined which news segments were altered in length by the researcher and why. As outlined in Chapter Three, the four topics were a Texas plumber's truck found in Syria in 2014, the 2017 Equifax hack, the 2018 "El Chapo" trial, and the proposed Green New Deal (see Appendix E).

Profile of the Sample

The subjects were 1,000 randomly sampled undergraduate students enrolled at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, a mid-sized institution in western Pennsylvania. The study was conducted in Spring 2019. Initially, 142 students started the experiment, but only 92 responded to all questions. Responses to any or all of the stories were included in the analysis. The gender division among the sample was a little uneven, with 44% male, 51% female, and 5% other participants. Current gender demographics at the university indicate undergraduate enrollment of 58.49% female and 41.55% male (IUP, 2019). Table 4.1 illustrates the division of gender.

Table 2

Sample Gender Breakdown

| <u>Gender</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Male | 45 | 44.55% |
| Female | 52 | 51.49% |
| Other | 5 | 4.95% |
| Total | 101 | 100.00% |

The GPA distribution was also skewed, with 46% of the participants scoring 3.50 or above. Table 3 illustrates the sample GPA breakdown.

Table 3

Sample GPA Breakdown

| <u>GPA</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Under 2.00 | 4 | 3.92% |
| 2.00-2.49 | 11 | 10.78% |
| 2.50-2.99 | 19 | 18.63% |
| 3.00-3.49 | 21 | 20.59% |
| 3.50 or above | 46 | 45.09% |
| Total | 102 | 100.00% |

Table 4 shows the distribution of ages in the sample. Age was not a specific factor in any of the hypotheses, however as expected most of the participants were under the age of 24. This age group is part of the same Generation Z category the Knight Foundation (2018) used. This study included undergraduate students of all ages, but the majority of participants were under the age of 35 (97.18%), with the 18-24 age group having the highest participation over the other ages (92.96%).

Table 4

Sample Age Breakdown

| <u>Age</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|------------|--------------|----------------|
| 18-24 | 132 | 92.96% |
| 25-34 | 6 | 4.22% |
| 35-44 | 5 | 3.52% |
| 45+ | 0 | 0.00% |
| Total | 142 | 100.00% |

Table 5 represents a breakdown of the sample's class rank. Seniors made up the largest portion of the sample (34%), followed by Juniors (26%), Sophomores (24%), and finally Freshmen (16%).

Table 5

Sample Class Rank Breakdown

| <u>Class Rank</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|-------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Freshman | 19 | 16.96% |
| Sophomore | 27 | 24.11% |
| Junior | 29 | 25.89% |
| Senior | 37 | 33.03% |
| Total | 112 | 100.00% |

Statistical Techniques

The first research question compared audience believability of comedy news versus hard news versions of the same four news stories. This involved looking at the difference in believability based on a variety of factors, including political party and perspective, as well as news consumption habits. In order to gauge believability, a three-component believability scale was created, which can be found in Chapter Three.

The second research question compared immediate recall based on comedy versus hard news version of the same four news stories. This involved examining differences in immediate recall of comedy versus hard news segments, considering the same factors that RQ1 examined. Recall was tested using immediate recall tests administered after the participant completed the believability surveys for each news segment and used an average of the scores on each recall question answered.

For the analyses of RQ1 and RQ2, one-way or two-way ANOVA tests were used based on the particular hypothesis. In the case of the one-way ANOVA (H1.1 and H2.1), the Levene's test was not significant so the ANOVA F-value could be used. In the case of the two-way ANOVA, SPSS automatically adjusted for homogeneity of variance problems.

Results

Introduction

In order to test audience perception and immediate recall of comedy news stimuli versus hard news stimuli, two research questions and eight hypotheses were used. By analyzing the responses provided, the research showed that the findings generally tended to not support the hypotheses and were statistically significant.

RQ1: Are there significant differences in perceived believability between comedy and hard news among undergraduate student audiences?

The first research question focused on the overall difference in perceived believability of comedy news versus hard news. Participant level of believability was calculated based on the average score of responses to three questions each on a five-point scale, with one being the least believable and five being the most. Individual participant believability score was calculated from the average of those variables.

H1.1: Participants will find the comedy news sources more believable than the hard news sources.

Table 6

News Type and Believability

| <u>Category</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> | <u>Std Error</u> | <u>F-Value</u> | <u>Sig.</u> |
|-----------------|----------|-------------|-----------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Comedy | 59 | 2.67 | .88 | .114 | 4.571 df=1,118 | .035 |
| Hard | 61 | 3.02 | .91 | .117 | | |
| Total | 120 | 2.85 | .91 | .08 | | |

Note. Levene's=.126 (df=1) Sig=.723

The first hypothesis investigates the impact of the comedy news and hard news frame on audience believability. Levene's test was not significant, therefore an F-test was used for the ANOVA. As can be seen in Table 6, there was a significant difference for the believability of comedy versus hard news, indicating that hard news was significantly more believable than comedy news. For hard news, the mean was 3.02 compared to a mean of 2.67 for the comedy news. This suggests that, though the literature found younger audiences tend to prefer comedy news more (Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017), they still find hard news more believable. Based on the results, this hypothesis was rejected.

H1.2: There will be a significant difference in the believability of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the political party identification of the subjects.

Because H1.2 was looking at a two-way difference, the interaction of news type and political party on believability, a two-way ANOVA was used. There was a significant difference between party individually ($p = 0.012$); democrats had a mean of 3.08, republicans had a mean of 2.80 and independents had a mean of 2.43 (see table 7 and 8). A Tukeys HSD was run that showed the difference between democrats and independents was significant ($p = 0.008$) but was not significant between democrats and republicans or republicans and independents. This

suggested that participants who identified as democrats found the stimuli most believable, republicans found it the second most believable, and independents found it the least believable. However, the overall interaction between the news type and the participants' political party on believability was not statistically significant. Based on these results, H1.2 was rejected.

Table 7

Believability by Political Party and News Type

| <u>News Type</u> | <u>Political Party</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Std. Deviation</u> | <u>N</u> |
|------------------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Comedy News | Democrat | 2.96 | .87 | 25 |
| | Republican | 2.65 | .61 | 9 |
| | Independent | 2.24 | .82 | 13 |
| | Total | 2.70 | .85 | 47 |
| Hard News | Democrat | 3.20 | .82 | 25 |
| | Republican | 2.95 | 1.04 | 10 |
| | Independent | 2.64 | .92 | 12 |
| | Total | 3.00 | .91 | 47 |
| Total | Democrat | 3.08 | .85 | 50 |
| | Republican | 2.81 | .86 | 19 |
| | Independent | 2.43 | .88 | 25 |
| | Total | 2.85 | .89 | 94 |

Note. Levene's $F = .692$ ($df=5$) $Sig. = .631$

Table 8

Factorial Analysis of Believability by Political Party and News Type

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Type III Sum of Squares</u> | <u>Degrees of Freedom</u> | <u>Mean Square</u> | <u>F-Value</u> | <u>Sig.</u> |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Corrected Model | 9.146 ^a | 4 | 1.829 | 2.489 | .037 |
| Intercept | 613.49 | 1 | 613.492 | 834.695 | .00 |
| Stimulus News Type | 1.95 | 1 | 1.946 | 2.647 | .107 |
| Political Party | 6.86 | 2 | 3.432 | 4.669 | .012 |
| Stimulus News Type and Political Party | .1 | 2 | .05 | .069 | .934 |
| Error | 64.679 | 88 | .735 | | |
| Total | 838.861 | 94 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 73.825 | 93 | | | |

H1.3: There will be a significant difference in the believability of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's political perspective.

As in the previous hypothesis, H1.3 utilized a two-way ANOVA to test news type, comedy versus hard, and political perspective. Political perspective was self-identified using a five-point scale from very conservative to very liberal (see table 9). As can be observed in table 10, the difference for the interaction of stimulus news type and the participants' political perspective on believability was not statistically significant ($p = .911$). From this result it could be interpreted that political perspective does not factor into believability by stimulus news type, even though the comedy news sources were generally more liberal. H1.3 was rejected because of these results.

Table 9

Believability by Political Perspective and News Type

| <u>Political Persp.</u> | <u>News Type</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Std. Deviation</u> | <u>N</u> |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Very Conservative | Comedy | 2.92 | .59 | 2 |
| | Hard | 3.42 | .59 | 2 |
| | Total | 3.17 | .56 | 4 |
| Slightly Conservative | Comedy | 2.5 | .29 | 6 |
| | Hard | 3.19 | .85 | 7 |
| | Total | 2.87 | .73 | 13 |
| Neutral | Comedy | 2.36 | .85 | 12 |
| | Hard | 2.59 | .94 | 12 |
| | Total | 2.8 | .88 | 24 |
| Slightly Liberal | Comedy | 089 | .83 | 21 |
| | Hard | 3.06 | .9 | 21 |
| | Total | 2.98 | .86 | 42 |
| Very Liberal | Comedy | 2.86 | 1.29 | 6 |
| | Hard | 3.3 | 1.04 | 5 |
| | Total | 3.06 | 1.15 | 11 |
| Total | Comedy | 2.7 | .85 | 47 |
| | Hard | 3.00 | .91 | 47 |
| | Total | 2.85 | .89 | 94 |

Note. Levene's $F=1.141$ ($df=9$) $Sig.=.344$

Table 10

Factorial Analysis of Believability by Political Perspective and News Type

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Type III Sum of Squares</u> | <u>Degrees of Freedom</u> | <u>Mean Square</u> | <u>F-Value</u> | <u>Sig.</u> |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Corrected Model | 7.834 ^a | 9 | .870 | 1.108 | .366 |
| Intercept | 436.79 | 1 | 436.798 | 555.997 | .000 |
| Stimulus News Type | 2.147 | 1 | 2.147 | 2.733 | .102 |
| Political Persp. | 4.95 | 4 | 1.238 | 1.575 | .188 |
| Stimulus News Type and Political Persp. | .774 | 4 | .193 | .246 | .911 |
| Error | 65.991 | 84 | .786 | | |
| Total | 838.861 | 94 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 73.825 | 93 | | | |

H1.4: There will be a significant difference in the believability of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's news consumption habits.

The researcher identified three kinds of participant news consumption, overall news, hard news, and comedy news. The researcher then divided H1.4 into three categories; overall news consumption (H1.4A), hard news consumption (H1.4B), and comedy news consumption (H1.4C).

H1.4A: There will be a significant difference in the believability of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's overall news consumption habits.

As seen in Table 12, there is no significant difference for believability based on the combination of stimuli news type and overall news consumption habits together. However, the

two-way ANOVA found that individually, both the type of news the participants were watching ($p = 0.044$), as well as participant overall news consumption habits ($p = 0.011$), did produce significant results. Individually, participants were more likely to believe hard news, regardless of their viewing habits. When the researcher looked at the viewing habits, in general, participants who watched more news also found the stimulus more believable. However, this was not a clear, direct relationship (see Table 11). These findings suggest that, while stimulus news type and overall news consumption habits individually affected believability, they did not when combined. There may be a statistical artifact here, as participants who consumed more hard news consumed less comedy news and those who consumed more comedy news consumed less hard news and cancelled each other's impact out for the overall news category when combined. Based on these results, H1.4A was rejected.

Table 11

Believability by Overall News Consumption Habits and News Type

| <u>News Type</u> | <u>Amount Watched</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Std. Deviation</u> | <u>N</u> |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Comedy News | Never | 2.19 | .89 | 7 |
| | Rarely | 2.83 | .82 | 25 |
| | Sometimes | 2.68 | .92 | 10 |
| | Often | 2.83 | .47 | 2 |
| | Always | 2.91 | .85 | 4 |
| | Total | 2.70 | .85 | 48 |
| Hard News | Never | 2.29 | .77 | 7 |
| | Rarely | 3.14 | .79 | 24 |
| | Sometimes | 2.75 | .87 | 10 |
| | Often | 3.83 | 1.65 | 2 |
| | Always | 3.93 | .99 | 5 |
| | Total | 3.05 | .95 | 48 |
| Total | Never | 2.24 | .81 | 14 |
| | Rarely | 2.98 | .82 | 49 |
| | Sometimes | 2.72 | .88 | 20 |
| | Often | 3.33 | 1.15 | 4 |
| | Always | 3.28 | 1.04 | 9 |
| | Total | 2.88 | .91 | 96 |

Note. Levene's F=.564 (df=9) Sig.=.823

Table 12

Factorial Analysis of Believability by Overall News Consumption Habits and News Type

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Type III Sum of Squares</u> | <u>Degrees of Freedom</u> | <u>Mean Square</u> | <u>F-Value</u> | <u>Sig.</u> |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Corrected Model | 15.411 ^a | 9 | 1.712 | 2.335 | .021 |
| Intercept | 428.216 | 1 | 428.216 | 583.988 | .000 |
| Stimulus News Type | 3.075 | 1 | 3.075 | 4.194 | .044 |
| Amount of Overall News Watched | 10.279 | 4 | 2.57 | 3.504 | .011 |
| Stimulus News Type and Amount of Overall News Watched | 2.039 | 4 | .510 | .695 | .597 |
| Error | 63.061 | 86 | .733 | | |
| Total | 873.889 | 96 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 78.471 | 95 | | | |

H1.4B: There will be a significant difference in the believability of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's hard news consumption habits.

There was no significant difference between the amount of hard news watched and stimulus news type together on believability. Based on these findings, this hypothesis was rejected. As seen in Table 14, for subjects who responded, stimulus news type alone did make a difference in believability ($p = 0.051$). In this case, comedy found a mean of 2.71 while hard news had a mean of 3.05 (see table 13). Unlike overall news consumption habits in H1.4A, hard news consumption habits did not produce a significant difference in believability.

Table 13

Believability by Hard News Consumption Habits and News Type

| <u>News Type</u> | <u>Amount Watched</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Std. Deviation</u> | <u>N</u> |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Comedy News | Never | 2.53 | .91 | 19 |
| | Rarely | 2.99 | .73 | 19 |
| | Sometimes | 2.26 | .92 | 19 |
| | Often | -- | -- | -- |
| | Always | 3.11 | 1.00 | 3 |
| | Total | 2.71 | .85 | 48 |
| Hard News | Never | 2.79 | 1.02 | 18 |
| | Rarely | 3.13 | .81 | 20 |
| | Sometimes | 3.21 | 1.02 | 7 |
| | Often | -- | -- | -- |
| | Always | 3.67 | 1.26 | 3 |
| | Total | 3.05 | .95 | 48 |
| Total | Never | 2.66 | .96 | 37 |
| | Rarely | 3.06 | .76 | 39 |
| | Sometimes | 2.74 | .99 | 14 |
| | Often | -- | -- | -- |
| | Always | 3.39 | 1.06 | 6 |
| | Total | 2.88 | .91 | 96 |

Note. Levene's F=.322, Sig. = .942

Table 14

Factorial Analysis of Believability by Hard News Consumption Habits and News Type

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Type III Sum of Squares</u> | <u>Degrees of Freedom</u> | <u>Mean Square</u> | <u>F-Value</u> | <u>Sig.</u> |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Corrected Model | 9.325 ^a | 7 | 1.332 | 1.695 | .120 |
| Intercept | 482.571 | 1 | 482.571 | 614.148 | .000 |
| Stimulus News Type | 3.083 | 1 | 3.083 | 3.083 | .051 |
| Amount of Hard News Watched | 4.844 | 3 | 1.615 | 2.055 | .112 |
| Stimulus News Type and Amount of Hard News Watched | 1.863 | 3 | .621 | .790 | .502 |
| Error | 69.147 | 88 | .786 | | |
| Total | 873.889 | 96 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 78.471 | 95 | | | |

H1.4C: There will be a significant difference in the believability of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's comedy news consumption habits.

As can be seen on Table 16, two-way ANOVA found no significant difference between watching more comedy news and stimulus news type together on believability. Based on these results, H1.4C was rejected. However, there was a significant difference based on participant consumption of comedy news only ($p = 0.002$). This was a direct relationship, where the more comedy news participants watched, the higher they scored on believability regardless of stimulus news type. This suggests that participants who watched more comedy news found the stimuli

more believable, however news type had no impact alone or in conjunction with the amount of comedy news watched

Table 15

Believability by Comedy News Consumption Habits and News Type

| <u>News Type</u> | <u>Amount Watched</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Std. Deviation</u> | <u>N</u> |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Comedy News | Never | 2.18 | .69 | 13 |
| | Rarely | 2.59 | .85 | 19 |
| | Sometimes | 3.28 | .72 | 12 |
| | Often | 3.39 | .09 | 3 |
| | Always | -- | -- | -- |
| | Total | 2.70 | .85 | 47 |
| Hard News | Never | 2.59 | .82 | 13 |
| | Rarely | 3.00 | .98 | 18 |
| | Sometimes | 3.25 | .87 | 12 |
| | Often | 3.50 | .6 | 3 |
| | Always | 4.00 | -- | 1 |
| | Total | 3.00 | .91 | 47 |
| Total | Never | 2.38 | .77 | 26 |
| | Rarely | 2.79 | .92 | 37 |
| | Sometimes | 3.26 | .78 | 24 |
| | Often | 3.44 | .39 | 5 |
| | Always | 4.00 | -- | 1 |
| | Total | 2.85 | .89 | 94 |

Note. Levene's F=.965, Sig. = .469

Table 16

Factorial Analysis of Believability by Comedy News Consumption Habits and News Type

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Type III Sum of Squares</u> | <u>Degrees of Freedom</u> | <u>Mean Square</u> | <u>F-Value</u> | <u>Sig.</u> |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Corrected Model | 12.014 ^a | 8 | 2.002 | 2.943 | .006 |
| Intercept | 272.958 | 1 | 272.958 | 401.328 | .000 |
| Stimulus News Type | .749 | 1 | .749 | 1.101 | .297 |
| Amount of Comedy News Watched | 13.034 | 4 | 3.258 | 4.791 | .002 |
| Stimulus News Type and Amount of Comedy News Watched | .883 | 3 | .294 | .433 | .730 |
| Error | 57.812 | 85 | .680 | | |
| Total | 838.81 | 94 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 73.825 | 93 | | | |

RQ2: Are there significant differences in information recall between comedy news and hard news among undergraduate student audiences?

The second research question focused on the overall difference in immediate recall of comedy versus hard news. Level of immediate recall was determined through four immediate recall tests totaling 19 questions administered after the believability surveys for each news segment. Percent correct was used as the measurement of recall.

H2.1: Information recall will be significantly higher for hard news sources than comedy news sources.

Table 17

Immediate Recall and News Type

| <u>Category</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> | <u>Std Error</u> | <u>F-Value</u> | <u>Sig.</u> |
|-----------------|----------|-------------|-----------|------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Comedy | 56 | 73% | .24 | .03 | .103 | .749 |
| Hard | 46 | 71% | .23 | .03 | | |
| Total | 102 | 72% | .23 | .02 | | |

Note. Levene's=.318 (df=1) Sig.=.574

H2.1 investigated the impact of the comedy and hard news frame on immediate recall. Because Levene's test was not significant, an F-test was used for the ANOVA. As can be seen in Table 17, the F-value showed no significant difference in recall between comedy and hard news. For hard news, the mean was 71%, compared to a mean of 73% for the comedy news. This suggests that, while stimulus news type did affect audience perceived believability (H1.1), it did not affect audience immediate recall. Contrary to earlier studies (Ziv, 1988; Nabi, et al., 2007), the subjects were able to recall a comparable amount of information regardless of stimulus news type. Based on these results, this hypothesis was rejected.

H2.2: There will be a significant difference in the immediate recall of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the political party identification of the subjects.

As in H2.1, there was also no significant difference in scores based on political party and news type, as seen in Table 19. The mean for democrats was 75%, the mean for the republicans was 71%, and the mean for the independents was 73% (see table 18). While democrats scored higher on believability (H1.2), they were also the highest on recall. The findings for republicans were also interesting because they had a higher immediate recall score for comedy news, though they scored higher on believability for hard news (H1.2). However, these findings were not

significant. Unlike with believability, there was no significant difference among political parties, and H2.2 was rejected.

Table 18

Immediate Recall by Political Party and News Type

| <u>News Type</u> | <u>Political Party</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Std. Deviation</u> | <u>N</u> |
|------------------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Comedy News | Democrat | 76% | .270 | 27 |
| | Republican | 79% | .190 | 10 |
| | Independent | 67% | .250 | 13 |
| | Total | 75% | .230 | 50 |
| Hard News | Democrat | 74% | .210 | 23 |
| | Republican | 64% | .300 | 9 |
| | Independent | 77% | .170 | 12 |
| | Total | 73% | .220 | 44 |
| Total | Democrat | 75% | .220 | 50 |
| | Republican | 72% | .260 | 19 |
| | Independent | 73% | .220 | 25 |
| | Total | 74% | .220 | 94 |

Note. Levene's = 1.378 (df=5) sig =.240

Table 19

Factorial Analysis of Immediate Recall by Political Party and News Type

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Type III Sum of Squares</u> | <u>Degrees of Freedom</u> | <u>Mean Square</u> | <u>F-Value</u> | <u>Sig.</u> |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Corrected Model | .170 ^a | 5 | .034 | .664 | .652 |
| Intercept | 42.774 | 1 | 42.774 | 837.339 | .000 |
| Stimulus News Type | .020 | 1 | .020 | .395 | .531 |
| Political Party | .020 | 2 | .010 | .164 | .824 |
| Stimulus News Type and Political Party | .142 | 2 | .071 | 1.392 | .254 |
| Error | 4.465 | 88 | .051 | | |
| Total | 56.067 | 94 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 4.665 | 93 | | | |

H2.3: There will be a significant difference in the immediate recall of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's political perspective.

Table 21 indicates that the two-way ANOVA found no significant difference in recall between political perspective and news type combined, as well as no significant relationships between any of the individual factors. This suggested that political perspective, like political party, does not affect immediate recall. Based on these results, H2.3 was rejected.

Table 20

Immediate Recall by Political Perspective and News Type

| <u>News Type</u> | <u>Political Persp.</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Std. Deviation</u> | <u>N</u> |
|------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Comedy News | Very Conservative | 75% | .210 | 2 |
| | Slightly Conservative | 70% | .370 | 7 |
| | Neutral | 67% | .240 | 12 |
| | Slightly Liberal | 78% | .180 | 23 |
| | Very Liberal | 84% | .180 | 6 |
| | Total | 75% | .230 | 50 |
| Hard News | Very Conservative | 83% | .240 | 2 |
| | Slightly Conservative | 65% | .320 | 6 |
| | Neutral | 69% | .220 | 12 |
| | Slightly Liberal | 77% | .190 | 19 |
| | Very Liberal | 69% | .280 | 5 |
| | Total | 73% | .220 | 44 |
| Total | Very Conservative | 79% | .190 | 4 |
| | Slightly Conservative | 68% | .330 | 13 |
| | Neutral | 68% | .220 | 24 |
| | Slightly Liberal | 78% | .180 | 42 |
| | Very Liberal | 77% | .230 | 11 |
| | Total | 74% | .220 | 94 |

Note. Levene's $F=1.599$ ($df=9$) $sig. = .129$

Table 21

Factorial Analysis of Immediate Recall by Political Perspective and News Type

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Type III Sum of Squares</u> | <u>Degrees of Freedom</u> | <u>Mean Square</u> | <u>F-Value</u> | <u>Sig.</u> |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Corrected Model | .281 ^a | 9 | .031 | .599 | .795 |
| Intercept | 28.122 | 1 | 28.122 | 538.882 | .000 |
| Stimulus News Type | .006 | 1 | .006 | .114 | .737 |
| Political Persp. | .197 | 4 | .049 | .944 | .448 |
| Stimulus News Type and Political Persp. | .074 | 4 | .018 | .354 | .840 |
| Error | 4.384 | 84 | .052 | | |
| Total | 56.067 | 94 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 4.665 | 93 | | | |

H2.4: There will be a significant difference in the immediate recall of comedy news source versus hard news sources based on the subject's comedy news consumption habits.

As with H1.4, H2.4 was divided into three sub-hypotheses, testing overall news consumption habits (H2.4A), hard news consumption habits (H2.4B), and comedy news consumption habits (H2.4C) for immediate recall.

H2.4A: There will be a significant difference in the immediate recall of comedy news source versus hard news sources based on the subject's overall news consumption habits.

The two-way ANOVA in Table 23 found no significant differences; the comedy news mean was 74% and the hard news mean was 73%. Based on these results, this hypothesis was

rejected. While there was not a statistically significant pattern, there was a tendency for participants (see table 22) who “never” watched the news to score the worst on immediate recall (62%), and those who “always” watched news to score higher (83%).

Table 22

Immediate Recall by Overall news Consumption Habits and News Type

| <u>News Type</u> | <u>Amount Watched</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Std. Deviation</u> | <u>N</u> |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Comedy | Never | 66% | .168 | 7 |
| | Rarely | 76% | .186 | 26 |
| | Sometimes | 74% | .279 | 11 |
| | Often | 72% | .393 | 2 |
| | Always | 78% | .378 | 5 |
| | Total | 74% | .228 | 51 |
| Hard | Never | 58% | .166 | 7 |
| | Rarely | 72% | .229 | 23 |
| | Sometimes | 76% | .238 | 9 |
| | Often | 88% | -- | 1 |
| | Always | 88% | .157 | 4 |
| | Total | 73% | .223 | 44 |
| Total | Never | 62% | .165 | 14 |
| | Rarely | 74% | .206 | 49 |
| | Sometimes | 75% | .255 | 20 |
| | Often | 78% | .294 | 3 |
| | Always | 83% | .290 | 9 |
| | Total | 74% | .225 | 95 |

Note. Levene’s F = 1.015 (df=9) Sig. = .434

Table 23

Factorial Analysis of Immediate Recall by Overall news Consumption and News Type

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Type III Sum of Squares</u> | <u>Degrees of Freedom</u> | <u>Mean Square</u> | <u>F-Value</u> | <u>Sig.</u> |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Corrected Model | .357 ^a | 9 | .040 | .767 | .647 |
| Intercept | 22.417 | 1 | 22.417 | 433.653 | .000 |
| Amount of Overall News Watched | .013 | 1 | .013 | .257 | .613 |
| Stimulus News Type | .289 | 4 | .072 | 1.399 | .241 |
| Amount of Overall News Watched and Stimulus News Type | .082 | 4 | .020 | .394 | .812 |
| Error | 4.294 | 85 | .052 | | |
| Total | 56.264 | 95 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 4.751 | 94 | | | |

H2.4B: There will be a significant difference in the immediate recall of comedy news source versus hard news sources based on the subject's hard news consumption habits.

The two-way ANOVA in Table 25 found no significant difference for participant hard news consumption and stimulus news type together on immediate recall ($p = 0.574$). Based on these results, H2.4B was rejected. However, a significant difference was found for amount of hard news watched on immediate recall ($p = 0.031$) but it was not a direct relationship. In general, participants who always watched hard news scored the highest (89%). This suggests that frequent watchers of hard news are better at immediate recall for both comedy and hard news.

Table 24

Immediate Recall by Hard News Consumption and News Type

| <u>News Type</u> | <u>Amount of Hard News Watched</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Std. Deviation</u> | <u>N</u> |
|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Comedy | Never | 74% | 0.180 | 19 |
| | Rarely | 79% | 0.187 | 21 |
| | Sometimes | 54% | 0.345 | 8 |
| | Often | -- | -- | -- |
| | Always | 93% | 0.058 | 3 |
| | Total | 74% | 0.228 | 51 |
| Hard | Never | 68% | 0.201 | 18 |
| | Rarely | 77% | 0.236 | 18 |
| | Sometimes | 68% | 0.286 | 5 |
| | Often | -- | -- | -- |
| | Always | 85% | 0.170 | 3 |
| | Total | 73% | 0.223 | 44 |
| Total | Never | 71% | 0.190 | 37 |
| | Rarely | 78% | 0.208 | 39 |
| | Sometimes | 59% | 0.319 | 13 |
| | Often | -- | -- | -- |
| | Always | 89% | 0.122 | 6 |
| | Total | 74% | 0.225 | 95 |

Note. Levene's F=1.087 (df=7) Sig.=.053

Table 25

Factorial Analysis of Immediate Recall by Hard News Consumption and News Type

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Type III Sum of Squares</u> | <u>Degrees of Freedom</u> | <u>Mean Square</u> | <u>F-Value</u> | <u>Sig.</u> |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Corrected Model | .616 ^a | 7 | 0.088 | 1.851 | 0.088 |
| Intercept | 29.856 | 1 | 29.856 | 628.142 | 0.000 |
| Stimulus News Type | 0.001 | 1 | 0.001 | 0.016 | 0.898 |
| Amount of Hard News Watched | 0.441 | 3 | 0.147 | 3.091 | 0.031 |
| Stimulus News Type and Amount of Hard News Watched | 0.095 | 3 | 0.032 | 0.668 | 0.574 |
| Error | 4.135 | 87 | 0.048 | | |
| Total | 56.264 | 95 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 4.751 | 94 | | | |

H2.4C: There will be a significant difference in the immediate recall of comedy news source versus hard news sources based on the subject's comedy news consumption habits.

There was no significant difference in amount of comedy news consumption and stimulus news type together on immediate recall, as seen on Table 27. Based on these results, this hypothesis was rejected. However, H2.4C did show a significant difference for participant comedy news consumption and immediate recall ($p = 0.003$). This was not a direct relationship, as the participant who identified as always watching comedy news scored 11%, while the participants who identified as watching comedy news often scored 89% (see table 26). It should be noted only one participant identified as always watching comedy news, and based on their score, the researcher believes this is an outlier.

Table 26

Immediate Recall by Comedy News Consumption and News Type

| <u>News Type</u> | <u>Amount of Comedy News Watched</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Std. Deviation</u> | <u>N</u> |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Comedy | Never | 69% | 0.210 | 13 |
| | Rarely | 83% | 0.134 | 20 |
| | Sometimes | 68% | 0.268 | 13 |
| | Often | 97% | 0.058 | 3 |
| | Always | 11% | | 1 |
| | Total | 75% | 0.227 | 50 |
| Hard | Never | 67% | 0.256 | 13 |
| | Rarely | 75% | 0.216 | 17 |
| | Sometimes | 73% | 0.206 | 11 |
| | Often | 81% | 0.231 | 3 |
| | Total | 73% | 0.223 | 44 |
| Total | Never | 68% | 0.230 | 26 |
| | Rarely | 79% | 0.178 | 37 |
| | Sometimes | 70% | 0.238 | 24 |
| | Often | 89% | 0.172 | 6 |
| | Always | 11% | | 1 |
| | Total | 94.00 | 94.000 | 94 |

Note. Levene's $F=1.776$ ($df=8$) $Sig.=.093$

Table 27

Factorial Analysis of Immediate Recall by Comedy News Consumption and News Type

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Type III Sum of Squares</u> | <u>Degrees of Freedom</u> | <u>Mean Square</u> | <u>F-Value</u> | <u>Sig.</u> |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Corrected Model | .864 ^a | 8 | 0.108 | 2.416 | 0.021 |
| Intercept | 12.428 | 1 | 12.428 | 277.951 | 0.000 |
| Stimulus News Type | 0.035 | 1 | 0.035 | 0.793 | 0.376 |
| Amount of Comedy News Watched | 0.763 | 4 | 0.191 | 4.264 | 0.003 |
| Stimulus News Type and Amount of Comedy News Watched | 0.084 | 3 | 0.028 | 0.630 | 0.598 |
| Error | 3.801 | 85 | 0.045 | | |
| Total | 56.067 | 94 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 4.665 | 93 | | | |

Conclusion

By analyzing data recorded from viewing the stimuli, the researcher discovered that the findings did not tend to support the hypotheses. In the case of RQ1, the researcher found that for H1.1, hard news was significantly more believable than comedy news. H1.2 found that there was a significant difference for political party only on overall believability but not party and news type combined. H1.4A found significant differences for stimulus news type on believability and for overall news consumption on believability but did not find a two-way difference of both stimulus news type and overall news consumption on believability. H1.4B found a significant difference for stimulus news type on believability, and H1.4C found a difference for amount of comedy news watched on believability.

For RQ2, there were no significant differences for immediate recall, or two-way relationships between news type and political party or political perspective. While H2.4B and H2.4C did find significant differences for hard news and comedy news consumption individually on immediate recall, there were no significant two-way differences with news consumption and stimulus news type. It could be interpreted that the combination of hard news and comedy news together, for overall news consumption, tends to cancel out discrete variability, which is why the researcher found differences on immediate recall for the subcategories (H2.4B & H2.4C) but not overall (H2.4A). A summary of the findings can be found in Table 28. These findings will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

Table 28

Hypothesis Breakdown

| <u>Hypothesis</u> | <u>Significance</u> | <u>Direction</u> |
|-------------------|---------------------|---|
| Believability | | |
| H1.1 | .035 | Hard news was rated more believable. This hypothesis was rejected. |
| H1.2 | N/A | No interaction found between news type and party on believability. This hypothesis was rejected. <i>Note: There was a significant difference between political party and overall believability (p = 0.012).</i> |
| H1.3 | N/A | No two-way difference between news type and perspective. This hypothesis was rejected. |
| H1.4A | N/A | No two-way difference between news type and overall news consumption together to believability <i>Note: There was a significant difference between stimulus news type only and believability (p = 0.011) and overall news consumption only and believability (p = 0.044).</i> This hypothesis was rejected. |

| | | |
|------------------|-----|---|
| H1.4B | N/A | No two-way difference between news type and hard news consumption together to believability. This hypothesis was rejected. <i>Note:</i> There was a difference for stimulus news type on believability ($p = 0.051$). |
| H1.4C | N/A | No two-way difference between news type and comedy news consumption combined to believability. This hypothesis was rejected. <i>Note:</i> There was a difference in believability based on comedy news consumption ($p = 0.002$). |
| Immediate Recall | | |
| H2.1 | N/A | No relationship between immediate recall and news type. |
| H2.2 | N/A | No relationship between news type and party to recall. This hypothesis was rejected. |
| H2.3 | N/A | No relationship between news type and perspective to recall. This hypothesis was rejected. |
| H2.4A | N/A | No two-way difference between stimulus news type and overall news consumption habits together to recall. This hypothesis was rejected. |
| H2.4B | N/A | No two-way difference between news type and hard news consumption together to immediate recall. This hypothesis was rejected. <i>Note:</i> There was a difference in immediate recall based on the amount of hard news watched ($p = 0.031$). |
| H2.4C | N/A | No two-way difference between news type and comedy news consumption together to immediate recall. This hypothesis was rejected. <i>Note:</i> There was a difference in immediate recall based on the amount of comedy news watched ($p = 0.003$). |

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Over the last 20 years, there has been a trend for audience trust in comedy news to increase (Pew Research Center, 2012; Knight Foundation, 2018). As comedy news grows in popularity and younger audiences enter voting age, it becomes more important to understand how comedy news programs compare to hard news. This study investigated audience perception and immediate recall of comedy versus hard news using framing theory. Framing theory suggests that the context, language, and style used in presenting information influences how the audience perceives and processes that information (Entman, 1993). By using framing theory to examine a potential difference in perceived believability and immediate recall in news with a comedy frame versus news with a hard news frame, the researcher hoped to discover if one frame was more successful at communicating information than the other.

Previous studies have found that comedy news may be more believable than hard news for younger audiences (Pew Research Center, 2012; Knight Foundation, 2018), can increase information learning (Ziv, 1988; Barsch & Schneider, 2014; Chattoo & Feldman, 2017), and may be more attractive to political novices (Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017). However, other studies have found that comedy news could lead to less scrutiny, lower levels of information learning, or audiences could dismiss the information entirely as it is in the form of a joke from a comedian (Cao & Brewer, 2006; Kim & Vishak, 2008; Young, 2004; Nabi et al., 2007).

Given these findings, the researcher wanted to determine the impact of the comedy news frame versus the hard news frame on perceived believability and immediate recall of news

segments. To determine the impact of framing on believability and recall, participants were asked to rate their believability and were tested on their immediate recall on four different news segments, consisting of two comedy news segments and two hard news segments. First, four issue items were selected to cover a variety of news topics. More detail on the four issue items can be found in Chapter Three. Then, four comedy news sources and four hard news sources were found for each issue item.

In this survey, a sample of participants was taken from a pool of 1,000 randomly selected undergraduates from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, a mid-sized institution in western Pennsylvania. Using an online survey, participants were shown four news segments on the four different issue items. For each participant, two of the news segments were from comedy news sources, and two of the news segments were from hard news sources. Immediately after watching each news segment, participants were given a three-question believability survey and immediate recall quiz. More information on the three-component believability scale can be found in Chapter Three. Over the course of the study, 92 participants completed the survey.

News Type and Believability

H1.1: Participants will find the comedy news sources significantly more believable than the hard news sources

Previous studies suggested that there would be a significant difference in the believability of comedy and hard news. Older studies found that hard news was considered more believable (Kim & Vishak, 2008; Nabi et al., 2007; Young, 2004), while newer research suggested that comedy news is becoming more believable for a younger audience (Pew Research Center, 2012; Knight Foundation, 2018). Because of the more recent findings, it was anticipated that participants would find the comedy news stimulus more believable than hard news (H1.1) This

current study found that undergraduate students studied rated hard news stimulus significantly more believable than comedy news stimulus, with a p-value of .035.

One reason for the disparity in these findings and those from prior research (Pew Research Center, 2012; Knight Foundation, 2018) could be that these earlier studies did not compare believability in comedy news and hard news, but instead were only looking specifically at increases in the believability of comedy news. While the trust in comedy news may be growing as suggested by these studies, this study suggests it is still not at the level of the believability for hard news.

In addition, the Pew Research Center (2012) study concluded comedy news was more trusted among younger audiences from 18 to 35 years of age. However, most of the participants in this study were 18 to 24 years of age. The age group that was 18 to 35 years old for the 2012 Pew study is now 25 to 42, outside of the range of nearly all the participants in this study. Also, while the Pew Research Center (2012) study used a broad random sample, this study focused specifically on undergraduate students. In addition, these earlier studies relied entirely on surveys, while this study gauged participant response based on their exposure to stimuli, which could have influenced the results.

In determining the effects of framing theory, there was a significant difference found in comedy news frames versus hard news frames (H1.1). However, it could also imply that, while there is a high level of believability in hard news, comedy news believability is increasing, which is consistent with previous studies. H1.1 did find that hard news was significantly more believable than the comedy news. This could be due to the audience discounting the information presented in comedic form (Nabi et al., 2007). It could also imply that, while there is a high level

of believability in hard news, comedy news believability appears to be increasing, which is consistent with previous studies.

News Type and Recall

H2.1: Information recall will be significantly higher for hard news sources than comedy news sources.

Prior research has found that audiences do not learn or retain information as well from comedy news sources (Holbrook & Hill, 2005; Kim & Vishak, 2008; Young, 2004). However, other studies have found that comedy can increase information learning (Barsch & Schneider, 2014; Chattoo & Feldman, 2017; Ziv, 1988). Further studies have found that audiences learn information from comedy news by accident (Cao & Brewer, 2006), or disregard factual information when presented by comedians in the form of a joke (Nabi et al., 2007). Because of this, it was hypothesized that participants would score higher on immediate recall for hard news stimulus than comedy news stimulus. This current study, however, found no significant difference between comedy news and hard news on immediate recall, with a p-value of 0.749.

While framing theory appeared to play a role with audience perception, it did not contribute to a significant difference in immediate recall (H2.1). This lack of significant findings disagreed with earlier findings that the hard news frame contributes to higher information recall (Holbrook & Hill, 2005; Kim & Vishak, 2008; Young, 2004). This suggests that, while comedy news has not surpassed hard news for higher immediate recall among younger audiences, there was no longer a significant difference in favor of hard news, a finding that is consistent with the more recent studies (Barsch & Schneider, 2014; Chattoo & Feldman, 2017). This might be indicative of a trend where the difference in audience recall of comedy news versus hard news is declining. Given the growing believability of comedy news (Pew Research Center, 2012;

Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017; Knight Foundation, 2018) this contradicts the older studies on news type and recall (Holbrook & Hill, 2005; Kim & Vishak, 2008; Young, 2004)

Political Party and Perspective

Several of the prior studies considered political involvement and identity when determining the perception and effects of comedy versus hard news (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014; Bennett, 2001; Kim & Vishak, 2008; Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017). Because of this, it was assumed that there would be significant differences in believability and recall of comedy versus hard news based on the subject's political party and affiliation (See H1.2, H1.3, H2.2, H2.3).

H1.2: There will be a significant difference in the believability of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the political party identification of the subjects.

While no significant differences were found between participant political party and stimulus news type together to believability (H1.2), there were significant findings for participant political party only to believability ($p = 0.012$). In general, democrats found the news segments the most believable (3.08), republicans fell in the middle (2.80), and independents found the news segments the least believable (2.43). A Tukey analysis showed there was only a significant difference between democrats and independents. This suggests that political party could serve as an indicator for audience believability in news in general, but not for comedy versus hard news.

H1.3: There will be a significant difference in the believability of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's political perspective

H2.2: There will be a significant difference in the immediate recall of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the political party identification of the subjects.

H2.3: There will be a significant difference in the immediate recall of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's political perspective.

This study found no significant difference between political perspective and news type on believability (H1.3). This study also found no significant difference for participant political party and news type on immediate recall (H2.2) and no significant difference for participant political perspective and news type on immediate recall (H2.3).

News Consumption Habits

H1.4: There will be a significant difference in the believability of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's news consumption habits.

This study found several interesting differences for stimulus news type and participant consumption habits on believability and immediate recall. For believability, H1.4A examined the differences of overall news consumption and news type together on believability and found no significant differences. However, when looking at the individual results, the researcher found a significant difference for overall news consumption on believability ($p = 0.011$) and for news type on believability ($p = 0.044$). This suggests that, individually, the news consumption habits and stimulant news type impacts believability. However, when these are combined, any effect is cancelled out. H1.4B found a nearly significant difference by news type on believability ($p = 0.051$), and H1.4C found a significant difference for comedy news consumption on believability ($p = 0.002$). Once again, when these findings were combined, the two groups offset each other.

H2.4: There will be a significant difference in the immediate recall of comedy news sources versus hard news sources based on the subject's news consumption habits.

H2.4A, H2.4B, and H2.4C investigated significant differences of stimulus news type and news consumption habits on immediate recall. H2.4A found no two-way difference for stimulus news type and overall consumption habits on immediate recall. H2.4B and H2.4C found that participants who watched more hard news ($p = 0.031$) and more comedy news ($p = 0.003$) showed increased immediate recall.

Discussion

In framing theory, the method used to communicate information affects the audience's perception of that information (Entman, 1993). By testing the effects of different frames (comedy news versus hard news) on audience perception and immediate recall for four news segments, there were significant findings for audience believability. Participants found hard news significantly more believable than comedy news. These results are contrary to recent findings of increased trust and believability in comedy news (Pew Research Center, 2012; Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017; Knight Foundation, 2018). These results suggest a more detailed look is needed, given the growing trust and believability in comedy news (Pew Research Center, 2012; Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017; Knight Foundation 2018).

One factor to consider here are the reactive effects of research (Buddenbaum & Novak, 2001). One version of this is the Hawthorne effect, where participants modify their behavior or answers to survey questions in response to the awareness of being observed (McCarney, Warner, Iliffe, Haselen, Griffin & Fisher, 2007). In an online experiment, this reactive effect can manifest in multiple ways, where the participant responds in a manner, they think the researcher is expecting. Essentially a Hawthorne-like effect for an online experiment (McCambridge,

Witton & Elbourne, 2014). It is possible that individuals were also responding based on the general perception that comedy news is less believable (Cao & Brewer, 2006; Kim & Vishak, 2008; Young, 2004; Nabi et al., 2007). The results of this study also could be explained by differences in population age group and experimental process.

When examining the effects of framing theory on immediate recall, the researcher found no significant difference in immediate recall based on news type. One explanation for this is that, while framing theory does seem to influence audience perception of media, it does not affect information learning in the form of immediate recall. This result seems to disagree with previous findings that the hard news frame produces increased information learning (Nabi, et al., 2007). While the comedy news stimulus did not produce significantly higher immediate recall scores in the case of this study, the lack of significantly higher scores for the hard news stimulus implies that comedy news produces a comparable level of recall as hard news in today's younger audience. This is not necessarily surprising, given that younger audiences are watching more comedy news than hard news (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Limitations

Several factors limited this study. First, the population sampled for this study was from a college campus and most of the participants were of senior status with a 3.00 or higher GPA. Only 92 participants completed the full survey, 24 less than the power analysis recommended. However, an additional 28 did responded to one or more of the stimuli. More participants might yield more conclusive results.

Second, the eight news segments were selected from a larger pool, but more videos could have been identified and included in the study. In addition, the news segments were edited for time in order to reduce participant drop-out rate. One of the restrictions of research is how much

each participant is willing to do. Because of this, each participant was asked to only watch four news segments at about two minutes each. Even with these efforts, about one third of the participants did not complete all elements of the online survey. In future research, this could be solved by having a larger sample size watch fewer news segments. The stimuli also featured more liberal-leaning comedians; a more equal balance might yield different findings.

Third, one of the issues with experiments is participant mortality (Buddenbaum & Novak, 2001). The amount of time required for the survey (over 10 minutes), may have become an issue for mortality. This can be seen as a number of respondents did not respond to all questions. Adjustments for this might be warranted in the future, such as fewer stimuli and a larger sample. Finally, there are also the common restriction limitations such as participant follow through and honesty.

Recommendations for Future Research

Findings of this study contradicted what some of the previous literature has suggested, as hard news was more believable than comedy news and there were no significant differences in recall between news types. Because of this, further research should be conducted on this topic. While H1.2 found a significant difference for participant political party on believability, there was no significant difference for participant political party and stimulus news type combined on believability. Further investigation of participant political party, political slant of the news broadcaster, and political charge of the news content would be valuable.

Hypothesis 1.4C found a significant difference for comedy news consumption on believability, and H2.4B and H2.4C found similar results for hard news and comedy news respectively on immediate recall scores. This study suggests that the key element might be the overall consumption level, not necessarily the type of news they are watching, that influences

believability and recall. Further study into how news type consumption relates to news believability and recall could be done exploring these elements with more detailed measurements.

While this study focused specifically on a younger audience, future research could utilize a broader sample to compare responses from different age groups to determine if older audience members have a different perception or recall of comedy versus hard news. In addition, expanding the demographic factors to include examples such as political involvement or engagement could be done.

Conclusion

Further research is recommended on the topic of framing theory and news consumption for comedy versus hard news, as significant findings were made in this study that were contrary to prior literature in Chapter Two. These results may be a product of the sample and stimulus selected but could also be due to the reactive effects of research, such as the Hawthorne effect. However, it could be that we are seeing a transition regarding believability and recall by news type and consumption habits. Hard news yielded increased believability score regardless of political party or perspective, and increased comedy news or hard news lead to higher overall immediate recall scores, contradicting predictions from previous studies.

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Appendix A

Email Message to Sample Incorporating Informed Consent

The following email would be sent to the sample asking them to participate in the survey.

I need your help with a research project for my Masters Thesis that seeks to measure the perceptions and recall of information from news sources.

Would you please respond to a brief survey where you are presented with four short news clips and asked about how you perceive and remember them? This survey will take about 10 to 15 minutes. Some content contains mature language and material.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. Individual responses will be kept anonymous and only summary information will be included in professional presentations. The demographic questions on the survey are general background questions and will not make it possible to identify individual respondents. There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study, nor are there any costs associated with your participation. Your participation in this survey could provide you with a better understanding of your possible news biases and an increased self-awareness of the issue of hard vs comedy news.

If at any time you wish to discontinue your participation in this survey, you can simply close your browser and your answers will be excluded from the study. If at any time during the course of this research new information is presented to the researcher that may influence your willingness to participate, you will be informed. You cannot request to be withdrawn from the study once you submit your response to Qualtrics given the anonymity of the data set. If you have any questions, please see the contact information below. If you choose to participate in this survey, please print a copy of this Informed Consent for your records.

Please click on this link to take the survey:

https://iup.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cvDLXwjNhXTIHQh

Thank you for your assistance.

Donald Winzer
Principal Investigator
d.l.winzer@iup.edu

Department of Communications Media
Stouffer Hall, Room 121
1175 Maple Street
Indiana, PA 15705-1058
Phone: 724-357-2492

Dr. Mark Piwinsky
Faculty Sponsor
mark.piwinsky@iup.edu
Department of Communications Media
Stouffer Hall, Room 121
1175 Maple Street
Indiana, PA 15705-1058
Phone: 724-357-2492

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724-357-7730).

Appendix B

Reminder Email Message Incorporating Informed Consent

The following email would be sent to the sample asking them to participate in the survey one week after the invitation email

Earlier this semester, you received an email asking for your assistance on my Masters Thesis research project that seeks to measure the perception and recall of information from news sources. If you have not yet been able to participate in the survey, I ask that you please do so at this time. The survey will take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Some content contains mature language and material.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. Individual responses will be kept anonymous and only summary information will be included in professional presentations. The demographic questions on the survey are general background questions and will not make it possible to identify individual respondents. There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study, nor are there any costs associated with your participation. Your participation in this survey could provide you with a better understanding of your possible news biases and an increased self-awareness of the issue of hard vs comedy news.

If at any time you wish to discontinue your participation in this survey, you can simply close your browser and your answers will be excluded from the study. If at any time during the course of this research new information is presented to the researcher that may influence your willingness to participate, you will be informed. You cannot request to be withdrawn from the study once you submit your response to Qualtrics given the anonymity of the data set. If you have any questions, please see the contact information below. If you choose to participate in this survey, please print a copy of this Informed Consent for your records.

Please click on this link to take the survey: **[Link Goes Here.](#)** Thank you for your assistance.

Donald Winzer
Principal Investigator
d.l.winzer@iup.edu
Department of Communications Media
Stouffer Hall, Room 121
1175 Maple Street
Indiana, PA 15705-1058
Phone: 724-357-2492

Dr. Mark Piwinsky
Faculty Sponsor
mark.piwinsky@iup.edu
Department of Communications Media
Stouffer Hall, Room 121 1175 Maple Street
Indiana, PA 15705-1058
Phone: 724-357-2492

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724-357-7730).

Appendix C

Summary of Issue Items

Equifax Hack

In July 2017, credit reporting agency Equifax was hacked and data from about 140 million Americans was stolen. The traditional news source for this story is NBC and the comedy news source is The Colbert Report. The comedy version has been edited for length. Hard news version link: <https://youtu.be/vD894mI7oqk>. Comedy news version link: <https://youtu.be/29mrKAJJS1o>.

El Chapo Trial

In 2018, the drug trafficker Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán went on trial in New York after the FBI convinced former associates to testify against him. The traditional news source for this story is PBS and the comedy news source is The Daily Show with Trevor Noah. Both the comedy and hard news versions have been edited for length. Hard news version link: <https://youtu.be/a7BYudni3Rg>. Comedy news version link: <https://streamable.com/p0lyc>.

Texas Plumber's Truck in Syria

In 2014, a Texas-based plumber's truck was found on the front lines of the Syrian civil war being used by ISIS fighters, with the plumber's information and logo still on the side of the truck. The comedy news source for this story is the Colbert Report with Stephen Colbert and the hard news source is CBS. Hard news version link: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/texas-plumber-i-didnt-sell-my-truck-to-isis/>. Comedy news version link: <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/iccity/the-colbert-report-texan-s-truck-in-syria>.

Green New Deal

In 2019, congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez proposed a resolution called the Green New Deal with the goal of reducing carbon emissions in the United States by 2030. The comedy news program selected for this story was Full Frontal with Samantha Bee and the hard news program was PBS News. Both the comedy and hard news versions have been edited for length. Hard news version link: <https://youtu.be/uKhjcsW2XI8>. Comedy news version link: <https://youtu.be/462y5UCU3JM>.

Appendix D

Debriefing and Acknowledgement Email to Subjects

Hello!

You are receiving this email because you participated in my research study for my Masters Thesis on news perception and recall. We would like to thank you for your assistance! Your participation greatly helped us in collecting important data needed for this study.

Second, we would like to inform you of the focus of this study. You may have noticed that two of the videos you watched were from comedy news sources and two of them were from traditional news sources. We wanted to determine if the different method of news communication (hard news versus comedy news) contributed to increased believability and greater information recall.

The results will be shared through a Masters Thesis, professional conferences, and publications and may help news producers better communicate with audiences. Thank you for your participation.

Thank you again for your participation. If you have any questions regarding this research, you may contact:

Donald Winzer
Principal Investigator
d.l.winzer@iup.edu
Department of Communications Media
Stouffer Hall, Room 121
1175 Maple Street
Indiana, PA 15705-1058
Phone: 724-357-2492

Dr. Mark Piwinsky
Faculty Sponsor
mark.piwinsky@iup.edu
Department of Communications Media
Stouffer Hall, Room 121 1175 Maple Street
Indiana, PA 15705-1058
Phone: 724-357-2492

Appendix E
Survey Instrument

Thesis Version A
Start of Block: Introduction and Informed Consent

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. Individual responses will be kept anonymous and only summary information will be included in professional presentations. The demographic questions on the survey are general background questions and will not make it possible to identify individual respondents. There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study, nor are there any costs associated with your participation. Your participation in this survey could provide you with a better understanding of your possible news biases and an increased self-awareness of the issue of hard vs comedy news.

If at any time you wish to discontinue your participation in this survey, you can simply close your browser and your answers will be excluded from the study. If at any time during the course of this research new information is presented to the researcher that may influence your willingness to participate, you will be informed. You cannot request to be withdrawn from the study once you submit your response to Qualtrics given the anonymity of the data set. If you have any questions, please see the contact information below. If you choose to participate in this survey, please print a copy of this Informed Consent for your records.

If you have any questions regarding this research, you may contact:

Donald Winzer
Principal Investigator
d.l.winzer@iup.edu
Department of Communications Media
Stouffer Hall, Room 121
1175 Maple Street
Indiana, PA 15705-1058
Phone: 724-357-2492

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724-357-7730).

- I consent to be part of this survey. (1)
- I do not consent to be part of this survey. (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Your participation in this study is voluntary. Individual responses will be anonymous and only s... = I do not consent to be part of this survey.
End of Block: Introduction and Informed Consent

Start of Block: Demographic Survey Opener

Please select your age.

- Under 18 (1)
- 18 - 24 (2)
- 25 - 34 (3)
- 35 - 44 (4)
- 45 or over (5)

Skip To: End of Survey If Please select your age. = Under 18

Please select your Cumulative GPA.

- 3.50 or above (1)
- 3.00-3.49 (2)
- 2.50-2.99 (3)
- 2.00-2.49 (4)
- Under 2.00 (5)

Please select the gender you most identify with.

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Other (3)

Please select your academic standing.

- Freshman (1)
- Sophomore (2)
- Junior (3)
- Senior (4)

End of Block: Demographic Survey Opener

Start of Block: Equifax Comedy

Please watch the following video before continuing.

End of Block: Equifax Comedy

Start of Block: Believably Questions

How legitimate do you think this information is?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

How legitimate do you think the news source is?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

How likely are you to share the information in the video?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

How effective is this style of presentation at helping you understand the issue?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

End of Block: Believably Questions

Start of Block: Equifax Recall Questions

What is the name of the company that was hacked?

- Ultrafacts (1)
- Equifax (2)
- Equatax (3)
- None of the above (4)

What does this company do?

- Credit Reporting Agency (1)
- Insurance Adjusting Agency (2)
- Ride Sharing Company (3)
- None of the above (4)

About how many people may have been affected by the hack?

- Over 140 million people (1)
- About 100 million people (2)
- Under 40 million people (3)
- None of the above (4)

What data was stolen?

- Names, Birthdays, Social Security Numbers (1)
- Internet Search History, IP Address (2)
- All of the above (3)
- None of the above (4)

When was the data stolen?

- May 2016 (1)
- July 2017 (2)
- December 2018 (3)
- None of the above (4)

What is the name of the former CEO?

- Rick Smith (1)
- John Schnatter (2)
- John Oliver (3)
- None of the above (4)

End of Block: Equifax Recall Questions

Start of Block: Chapo Comedy

Please watch the following video before continuing.

End of Block: Chapo Comedy

Start of Block: Believability Questions B

How legitimate do you think this information is?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

How legitimate do you think the news source is?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

How likely are you to share the information in the video?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

How effective is this style of presentation at helping you understand the issue?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

End of Block: Believability Questions B

Start of Block: Chapo Recall Q Comedy

Who is on trial?

- Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán (1)
- Pablo "El Huro" Escobar (2)
- Andrés "El Hombre" Obrador (3)
- None of the above (4)

What crime is he primarily accused of?

- Hacking (1)
- Drug trafficking (2)
- Political assassination (3)
- None of the above (4)

Where is the trial taking place?

- Washington, D.C. (1)
- El Paso, Texas (2)
- Brooklyn, New York (3)
- None of the above (4)

Which official did he allegedly bribe?

- The former Mexican President (1)
- The U.S. Secretary of State (2)
- The Judge of the trial (3)
- None of the above (4)

End of Block: Chapo Recall Q Comedy

Start of Block: Texas Plumber Hard

Please watch the following video before continuing.

End of Block: Texas Plumber Hard

Start of Block: Believability Questions C

How legitimate do you think this information is?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

How legitimate do you think the news source is?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

How likely are you to share the information in the video?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

How effective is this style of presentation at helping you understand the issue?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

End of Block: Believability Questions C

Start of Block: Texas Plumber Recall Questions Hard

Where was the truck discovered?

- Iraq (1)
- Syria (2)
- Iran (3)
- None of the above (4)

Which organization purchased the truck?

- ISIS (1)
- Al Qaeda (2)
- Al Jazeera (3)
- None of the above (4)

What is the name of the former owner of the truck?

- Mark Oberholtzer (1)
- Mike Shoemaker (2)
- Miles Hoffstader (3)
- None of the above (4)

What is the name of the plumbing business?

- Mike's Plumbing (1)
- Mark - 1 Plumbing (2)
- Mile's Number 1 Plumbing (3)
- None of the above (4)

End of Block: Texas Plumber Recall Questions Hard

Start of Block: Green New Deal Hard

Please watch the following video before continuing.

End of Block: Green New Deal Hard

How legitimate do you think this information is?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

How legitimate do you think the news source is?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

How likely are you to share the information in the video?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

How effective is this style of presentation at helping you understand the issue?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Very (4)
- Extremely (5)

End of Block: Believability Questions D

Start of Block: GND Recall Hard

What is the name of the legislative proposal?

- Eco New Deal (1)
- Green New Deal (2)
- Environmental Protection Act of 2019 (3)
- None of the above (4)

What is the name of the person who introduced it?

- Al Gore (1)
- Catherine Cortez Masto (2)
- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (3)
- None of the above (4)

What is the goal of the legislative proposal?

- Reduce carbon emissions (1)
- Increase tax subsidies for natural gas companies (2)
- Terraforming Mars (3)
- None of the above (4)

What kind of legislative proposal is this?

- A bill (1)
- A resolution (2)
- A law (3)
- None of the above (4)

What is the timeline of the proposal?

- Goals achieved by 2025 (1)
- Goals achieved by 2030 (2)
- Goals achieved by 2045 (3)
- None of the above (4)

End of Block: GND Recall Hard

Start of Block: Demographic Survey

How often do you watch the news?

- Never (1)
- A few times a month (2)
- Once a week (3)
- A few times a week (4)
- Every day (5)

How often do you watch traditional news such as NBC Nightly News, Fox, or CNN?

- Never (1)
- A few times a month (2)
- Once a week (3)
- A few times a week (4)
- Every day (5)

How often do you watch comedy news such as the Daily Show, This Week Tonight, Full Frontal?

- Never (1)
- A few times a month (2)
- Once a week (3)
- A few times a week (4)
- Every day (5)

What political party do most identify with?

- Democrat (1)
- Republican (2)
- Independent (3)

How would you rate your political views?

- Very Conservative (1)
- Slightly Conservative (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Slightly Liberal (4)
- Very Liberal (5)

End of Block: Demographic Survey

