ATTITUINAL RESEARCH AND SATIRE:
AN EXPLORATION OF
THE DAILY SHOW WITH JON STEWART
USING SOCIAL JUDGMENT THEORY
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Introduction

Jon Stewart takes the stage for another segment of *The Daily Show*. The show’s approach is the same: a parody of the day’s events paired with a scathing review of politicians and the media. Critics and researchers alike have cautioned that the program is providing our nation’s youth with a warped and cynical view of reality. Public attention and worry has grown as research provided some support for these claims (e.g. Baumgartner & Morris, 2006). This concern stems from models that describe the show’s audience as uncritical receivers of the show’s content, which uninhibitedly influences audience members’ perceptions. Others debunked this idea, describing the show’s audience as politically informed and critical receivers, which limits the show’s influence on its audience members (e.g. Brewer & Marquardt, 2007; Hoffman & Thompson, 2009). The influence is limited because the audience analyzes the show’s content and makes judgments based on the presented information, rather than just absorbing the content as presented. In this study, I argued that *The Daily Show*’s audience is composed of critical receivers and used theory to explore how this show may or may not influence viewers.

One theoretical model that requires a critical audience is social judgment theory. This theory privileges individual interpretation and individual involvement in the attitude change process. Past research has used social judgment theory to study attitude change in traditional persuasive contexts, such as political news commentary (Adelman, Stewart &
Hammond, 1975) and social norms campaigns (Smith, Atkin, Martell, Allen & Hembroff, 2006). This study seeks to broaden the theory’s application by examining social judgment theory in the political satire context. As a unique blend of humor and agenda, satire can be persuasive, but is not as direct as other forms of persuasion. This study posits that social judgment theory is an accurate model for the effects of satire in a critical audience.

Including a critical audience as part of an attitude change study in a mediated context was a departure from past research. Previous studies have utilized media effects models, which assume a passive audience, to describe attitude change. For instance, Baumgartner and Morris (2006) utilized principles from cultivation theory to show how a passive audience becomes more cynical after viewing content from political satire shows. This model of content nurturing effects has been the foundation for several other politically oriented studies (e.g. Cao & Brewer, 2008; Kim & Vishak, 2008; Moy, Xenos & Hess, 2005). Findings of all these studies have been mixed and contradictory. One possible reason for contradictory results is the false assumption that viewing the show cultivates these characteristics in the audience.

For this reason, I argue that the audiences of political satire shows are critical receivers of the content. In addition, this genre utilizes complex humor that the audience must interpret in order to comprehend the show. Humor, such as satire and parody, commonly appear on these programs, which requires a critical audience to interpret the jokes. Furthermore, the audience is politically active, participating in activities like voting, discussing political content, and campaigning. Individuals who participate in politics are generally more involved in the news environment and critical when receiving
content that may affect political decisions. These individuals would not passively view a political satire show. They would analyze the content.

Because the audiences of political satire shows are actively involved with and critical of the content, the media effects models that assume a passive audience are not viable options for this study. Instead, I utilized social judgment theory, a theory of persuasion that models attitude change for critical receivers. Because the individual’s choice is central to this theory, it more closely represents an audience member of a political satire show than a media effects theory that uses a passive receiver.

In order to limit the scope of this project, I chose *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* as the political satire show to examine. I selected this program because *The Daily Show* is more likely to joke about weighty political issues than other shows in the genre, such as *The Tonight Show* or *The Late Show*, which prefer to joke about politicians’ character quirks. *The Daily Show’s* jokes require more interpretive effort from the audience in order to comprehend the true meaning of the joke. More complicated jokes prompts an audience to be more critical, which is a fundamental argument of this study.

To explore these ideas, this study employed a pretest, posttest quasi-experimental design. Participants indicated their attitudes regarding the current tax system and job market. Then they viewed television clips from either *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* or CBS News. After this, participants specified their attitudes on the same topics in order to determine if attitude change occurred. The results provided partial support for the arguments underlying this study and revealed that social judgment theory may be an applicable model for attitude change in political comedy shows’ audiences.
Literature Review

Jon Stewart and *The Daily Show* prompted a fierce debate among scholars regarding the effects Stewart and his show may have on audience members. Hart and Hartelius (2007) accused Stewart of leading a nation astray through cynicism. Hariman (2007) defended Stewart as a satirist, rather than a cynic, who prompts the audience to critically analyze content on the show. Influencing both viewpoints is a characterization of the audience as well as Stewart himself. Hart, Hartelius and researchers like them view Stewart’s audience as uncritical receivers of the cynical content on Stewart’s show. An uncritical receiver is more likely to readily accept the content on Stewart’s show as fact, without outside research or analytical thought. In contrast, Hariman and researchers like him consider Stewart’s audience to be critical receivers of thought-provoking, satirical political commentary. This audience ponders the show’s messages and decides if the content is an accurate portrayal of the political world or mere comedy. I argue that the critical audience perspective is more appropriate when examining *The Daily Show*’s effects on its audience.

In order to explore how a critical audience is effected by satiric content, I utilize a model that also assumes the audience is composed of critical receivers. The media effects models largely use an uncritical audience approach. I propose that social judgment theory is a useful model for this context. Social judgment theory places the receiver and his/her
decisions at the center of the persuasion process. This receiver-centered model assumes a
critical receiver. I argue that social judgment theory is an appropriate model for the
satirical comedy of Jon Stewart. In this section, I first review the literature on political
comedy shows to provide a definition and characteristics of the genre. I then describe The
Daily Show with Jon Stewart and distinguish between critical and uncritical audiences.
Finally, I offer social judgment theory as a foundation for the study.

Political Comedy Shows

Late-night political comedy shows continue to draw attention, both in terms of a
growing audience and a growing body of research. The genre attracts a young audience.
Roughly one in four young adults ages 18-29 watches these satirical programs (Pew
Research Center, 2008). The audience continues to grow as well. From May 2010 to May
2011, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart grew by 19% in total viewership, to an average
total of 2.3 million viewers. The Colbert Report grew by 14% to an average of 1.56
million total viewers during the same time period (Comedy Central, 2011).

In addition to audience growth, research interest in political comedy shows has
increased. Topics have included general description of the genre, such as the audience
composition (e.g. Pew Research Center, 2008) and content of the shows (e.g. Brewer &
Marquardt, 2007; Fox, Koloen & Sahin, 2007). The most attention, however, has been on
how these shows impact their audiences. Researchers have examined the viewer’s
political engagement (Moy, Xenos & Hess, 2005), political participation (Cao & Brewer,
2008; Moy et al., 2005), political attention (Cao, 2010; Xenos & Becker, 2009),
campaign knowledge (Brewer & Cao, 2006), engagement in political discussions (Jones
& Baym, 2010; Moy et al., 2005), news consumption (Young & Tisinger, 2006),
knowledge acquisition (Kim & Vishak, 2008), and political cynicism (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Brewer & Marquardt, 2007). These researchers have also provided a thorough description of a political comedy show.

A political comedy show offers commentary on the political world through humor. Most of the shows are set up in a talk show or news broadcast format. Cao and Brewer (2008) described a political comedy show as “a television program that emphasizes humorous coverage of current issues and parodies of political figures” (p. 90). A key aspect of this genre is humor, specifically complex forms such as satire, irony and parody. Polk, Young, and Holbert (2009) discussed how sarcasm and irony allow these shows to present a satirical image of the world, letting ridicule become a parody that offers social criticism. The complex forms of humor engage the audience, prompting thorough processing.

This type of humor also engages the audience through familiarity. Jones and Baym (2010) stated that satire has become the language of this generation of young people much like idealism was the language of the Baby Boomers. By speaking their audience’s language, political comedy shows can engage the audience members in ways that the traditional news does not. If these political comedy shows are speaking their audience’s language, they may spark interest in the topics presented, as well as influence subsequent behaviors, such as political participation (Cao & Brewer, 2008; Moy et al., 2005) and knowledge acquisition (Kim & Vishak, 2008). Increased interest in political issues discussed on the shows also motivates thorough processing of the content.

In addition, by using advanced humor like satire and irony, the audience must understand the context of the message to truly comprehend it. Jones and Baym (2010)
stated that “the audience has to perform some relatively complex interpretive labor, connecting dots that often require an extensive set of competencies, both political and cultural, to negotiate” (p. 290). The additional thought processes required to fully understand the programs necessitate a critical audience, one that is involved with the program’s content as well as the larger world context. Even with a critical audience, concern has been growing about how exactly these programs influence their audiences, especially in terms of political participation. Further research is necessary to determine these effects.

The Daily Show

Researchers have distinguished The Daily Show with Jon Stewart (hereafter TDS), and its offshoot The Colbert Report, from other shows included in the political comedy genre, such as The Tonight Show with Jay Leno and The Late Show with David Letterman. Young (2004) found that TDS was more likely to joke about policy issues and news events than about the candidates. Other shows are more likely to joke about the candidate’s image issues rather than policy issues. Baym (2005) stated that TDS critiques the news media in order to highlight a variety of reporting flaws. Baym (2005) also confirmed that other political comedy shows focus on entertainment aspects and deride candidate and politician personality quirks more often. TDS has provided clearer commentary on issues and media presentation that other political comedy shows.

True to the genre, TDS regularly attracts a younger audience. Sixteen percent of all Americans and 26% of all 18-29 year olds regularly watch the show (Pew Research Center, 2007b). The audience of TDS and the larger late-night political comedy genre is predominantly a younger audience (Young & Tisinger, 2006). Given that this show is
popular among the under 30 demographic, understanding how the show impacts viewers is imperative as it brings greater comprehension of political participation behaviors, such as engaging in political discussions and voting. Political participation will be discussed further in a following section.

Jon Stewart hosts *TDS*, which is set up in a news broadcast format on Comedy Central. His humor offers a mocking depiction of both politics and the news media that is what critics call an antidote to the current divisive and hyperpartisan world (Bennett, 2007; Hariman, 2007; Jones & Baym, 2010). Even as a comedian, Stewart must balance that role with a well-respected journalist role. Americans named Jon Stewart the fourth most popular journalist in 2007 (Pew Research Center, 2007a). Because Stewart is seen as both a comedian and a journalist, Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2009) described Stewart as an interloper, someone who has a permanent place both in the traditional journalist world and in comedy circles, but chooses to emphasize one role over another at different times. Stewart also has the freedom to exist in both roles simultaneously.

Stewart’s dual role as a comedian and as a journalist can best be described through *TDS*. He characterized his show as a “reality-based look at news, trends, pop culture, current events, politics, sports and entertainment with an alternative point of view” (Comedy Partners, 2011, para. 2). Monday through Thursday Stewart and his “news team” present a parody of the day’s current topics, producing news stories and interviews. The news is “news like you’ve never seen it before – unburdened by objectivity, journalistic integrity, or even accuracy” (Comedy Partners, 2011, para.1). Stewart regularly uses sarcasm, satire, and parody on the program.

*TDS* is an example of what Baym (2005) called discursive integration, which is “a
way of speaking about, understanding, and acting within the world defined by the permeability of form and the fluidity of content” (p. 262). Discursive integration has occurred because genres like news, entertainment and politics are no longer distinct. The genres have merged together to create a new hybrid genre that mixes politics, news, and entertainment. How the audience interprets this integrated genre can be viewed through either a critical/active or uncritical/passive audience lens.

**Active vs. Passive Audience**

Scholars have traditionally labeled audiences of mediated content as critical/active or uncritical/passive audience members. Critical or active audience members evaluate and make judgments about the content, while uncritical or passive members accept and absorb the content without analyzing it. The genre of political comedy, and *TDS*, is considered an active genre because audience members must decode complex humor in order to fully comprehend the message (Jones & Baym, 2010). Baym (2005) characterized *TDS* as a parody of a news program. A parody is a “moment of criticism, one that employs exaggeration, often to the point of ludicrousness, to invite its audience to examine, evaluate, and re-situate the genre and its practices” (Baym, 2005, p. 269). This characterization of Stewart’s show and mocking humor demonstrates how he engages the audience in his commentary of the American world of politics and news. One line of research has attempted to explain whether humor leads people to discount a satiric message or to examine it—and its arguments—more closely. Young (2008) established that humorous messages generated more thoughts in a receiver than non-humorous messages. Research has supported the notion that humor promotes close examination of a
message, suggesting that audience members will search for more information to understand unfamiliar ideas (e.g. Kim & Vishak, 2008; Young & Tisinger, 2006).

Audience members also must interpret complex humor. Jones and Baym (2010) specified that irony and satire:

…demand a far more active process of engagement on the part of the audience than does the monological and literal modality of news. There, the audience either hears the news and remembers it—or not. With satire and irony, though, the audience first has to figure it out. You can never take Colbert, for example, at face value. If you’re going to get him, or get the joke, you have to read between the lines. To put it differently, the audience has to perform some relatively complex interpretive labor, connecting dots that often require an extensive set of competencies, both political and cultural, to negotiate. (p. 290)

As previously noted, audience members must understand political realities and cultural cues in order to comprehend the joke. This task of comprehension requires motivation and effort, which only an active audience will put forth.

*TDS* also engages its audience through a concept Warner (2007) termed political culture jamming. Political culture jamming occurs when a message hinders the branding power of separate political messages by calling the audience’s attention to problematic portions of the brand or image. This highlighting of negative aspects invites the audience to scrutinize what a political message is truly saying. The commentary provided by *TDS* helps the audience critically examine, and sometimes discount, the messages they receive from politicians and the news media. One example of political culture jamming is *TDS*’s segments entitled Indecision 2012. These segments criticize the news media’s focus on
the approval rankings of the candidates rather than on the issue stances of each presidential candidate during primaries and during the regular election cycle. These segments also draw attention to any political blunders that hinder the candidates’ image restoration strategies. Furthermore, by calling these segments “Indecision 2012,” *TDS* encourages the audience to believe that no true decision can be made regarding which candidate is the most suited to the presidential office.

In addition to concepts that suggest *TDS* has an active audience, evidence has been offered that shows the audience as more engaged in the content than a passive audience. The audience has various opportunities to interact with the show’s content. *TDS* maintains an online community through Comedy Central’s website that enables fans to comment on the content of the show and current events. This online community sometimes helps Stewart and the show’s staff develop the content for show segments. *TDS* also produced the Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear in October 2010, which approximately 215,000 fans attended (Comedy Partners, 2011). By having other outlets for audience members to use, *TDS* stimulates participation with the show’s content and enables discussions among audience members. The format of *TDS* and its additional audience contact points allow the audience to be active and to become involved with the messages produced on the show.

In contrast, a passive audience is thought to simply absorb the ideas in the program. This idea is at the foundation of many studies of *TDS*’s political effects (e.g. Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Brewer & Cao, 2008; Moy et al., 2005). While these studies portrayed the audience as engaged in the political world, no aspect of critical analysis of *TDS*’s content was present. The passive audience cannot describe *TDS*’s
As Jones and Baym (2010) noted, irony and satire require “some complex interpretive labor” to comprehend the message (p. 290). The audience cannot simply accept and absorb the messages from the program. They must decipher them in order to understand them. For example, in the September 12, 2011 “Transformer” segment, Jon Stewart introduces the American Jobs Act as the event all Americans were concerned with over the weekend. The audience must interpret this satirical comment in order to realize that most attention over the weekend was drawn to the ten-year anniversary of the 9/11 tragedies. In addition to interpreting the show’s content, TDS provides many opportunities to explore and analyze the content on the program with other audience members. The audience must be an active audience in order to understand the program.

**Political Involvement and Participation as an Indicator of an Active Audience**

Defining audience activity as examining and interpreting a message is only one piece of a truly active audience. An active audience is also involved in the content. One measure of content involvement for a political comedy show is political activity because much of the content on these shows is political. This behavioral measure indicates actions in which audience members are willing to participate that are related to the show’s content. The most common measure of political activity is voting. However, defining these terms as only voting provides an incomplete view. For example, when only using voting, the under 30 demographic appears less significant because they vote more infrequently than other groups. The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) noted that only 48% of all adults ages 18 to 34 voted in the 2008 presidential election, while over 60% of all adults ages 35 and older voted in the same election. However, this same under 30 demographic is more likely than those over 30 to participate in other behaviors that
demonstrate participation, most notably political discussions and campaigning (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In addition, it is important to focus on the attitude changes that occur in an individual’s younger years because these can guide subsequent political decisions later in life.

Defining political involvement and participation is difficult as these concepts have become intertwined. Eulau and Schneider (1956) noted that whereas involvement is generally thought to cause participation, involvement is actually a dimension of participation. The authors demonstrated how five concepts are all interrelated to form political participation. These concepts are competence, affect, identification, exposure, and participation. Competence refers to being aware of and attentive to political information. Affect includes a person’s level of intense emotional reaction to a political situation and a person’s strength of political identification. Identification refers to a person’s political identity and personal attachment to political issues. Exposure consists of interest in politics, knowledge of an issue and information seeking behaviors. Participation includes activities like voting, talking to others about politics, giving money to a campaign, attending political rallies, joining a political party, and belonging to other political clubs. Radical activities, like rallies and protests, are excluded. Political participation as action is supported by Salisbury (1975), who referred to traditional political participation as only the activities that citizens participate or enact that influence the selection or actions of government officials. Eulau and Schneider noted that these active participation measures are generally used as the only element of participation, but all elements, including involvement elements, are necessary to accurately operationalize this concept.
Other scholars have also viewed involvement as active participation. Judd, Krosnick and Milburn (1981) include campaign interest, national affairs interest, political conversations with others, writing letters to representatives, information seeking behaviors, and political knowledge as indicators of participation. Jones and Baym (2010) offered a similar united view of political participation: any behavior that allows a person to perform the duties of citizenship. This includes the traditional view mentioned by Salisbury (1975), as well as radical activities, face-to-face conversations, and electronic dialogue (through blogs, Facebook, Twitter, chat rooms, or other online media). All these behaviors are not possible without interest in and attention to political events, a form of political involvement. Discussing politics has been shown to aid traditional forms of participation (Beck, 2002; Scheufele, 2002). Political participation involves doing something, even something not usually viewed as a civic duty. Examples of these behaviors include political conversations and protesting. For this study, the expanded view of involvement as participation will be used. This concept will be referred to as participation. Political participation is an indicator of audience involvement. Generally, those who are actively involved in politics are also actively involved in the show (Cao & Brewer, 2008). Thus, political participation is a component of audience activity.

Much of the previous research in political participation has focused on how political satire shows affect the audience’s participation. Findings vary as to how TDS’s humor affects political participation. Moy et al. (2005) stated that political infotainment, which includes comedy shows and talk shows, can enhance participation for parts of the electorate. Baumgartner and Morris (2006) found that the cynical humor transferred to the audience, which led to increased negative views of the American political system and
decreased voting rates. Brewer and Marquardt (2007) conversely established that the increased cynicism encouraged audience members to think critically about the content of the show and engage in discussions about the content. These discussions can occur with others in person, on the phone or even in online communities. Through a discussion page, audience members can comment about the night’s show and current issues. Most recently and in contrast to Baumgartner and Morris’ (2006) findings, Hoffman and Thompson (2009) established positive correlations between viewing late-night comedy programs and internal political efficacy (the belief that one can understand and participate effectively in the political process) and between internal political efficacy and civic participation.

Although these studies are good to note, the focus of each has been on a passive audience receiving content from *TDS* and other political satire shows. The passive audience does not match characterizations of *TDS*’s general audience base. Thus, the question remains: how do active audiences process satiric political messages? To understand this question in a new light, this study employed social judgment theory, a theoretical perspective not yet pursued in this context.

**Social Judgment Theory**

Muzaffer Sherif, Carolyn Sherif, and their colleagues developed social judgment theory in the 1960s. Social judgment theory aims:

… to predict the degree of discrepancy between a communication and the person’s attitude that will arouse psychological discomfiture, to predict his reaction to the communication, and to predict how it will or will not affect his attitude. (Sherif & Sherif, 1967, p. 107-108)
Social judgment theory grew out of a critique about how attitudes had traditionally been measured. Sherif and Sherif (1967) stated that attitudes were previously represented as a mean score of acceptances and rejections shown on an interval or ratio scale. This way of depicting attitudes does not allow for rich description of the person’s stance. A single point cannot describe what portion of a problem a person rejects and what they will accept. This is especially relevant for complex issues, where a person might hold a range of stances on the topic. The single point combines moderate and extreme positions.

Before further discussion of the theory, it is necessary to define an attitude and attitude change. Sherif and Sherif (1967) maintain that an attitude is a person’s stance on an issue. It is learned, enduring, affective and identified through behaviors. Attitudes are unique to individuals. No two people will hold the exact same set of attitudes, even though they may share similar attitudes on a single issue. Alterations in an individual’s pattern of acceptance and rejection represents attitude change and can serve to strengthen or weaken the individual’s existing stance or help form a new position.

Granberg (1982) reviewed the research that developed social judgment theory. The theory involves a continuum of all available attitudes on a subject. Each individual has an anchor point, an individual’s most acceptable position, on this scale. The individual also has three latitudes, used as categories for stances on a given topic. The first is the latitude of acceptance, where the individual will agree to some degree with the statement presented. The second is the latitude of rejection, which includes all the stances the individual finds objectionable. The final one is the latitude of noncommitment, which includes all the positions an individual chooses not to have a stance on. Attitudes that fall here are not necessarily neutral. The individual chooses not to evaluate these positions.
The latitude of noncommitment links the latitudes of acceptance and rejection and may include the extreme positions on the issue.

All attitudes related to a given issue can be ordered on a continuum ranging in strength from one extreme to another. This continuum and an individual’s three latitudes are found through a process known as the ordered alternatives procedure. Participants are presented with a small number of alternatives, between seven and nine, and asked to identify positions with which they agree and disagree. Positions that the individual agrees with make up the latitude of acceptance; positions that the individual disagrees with constitute the latitude of rejection. Any positions not marked comprise the latitude of noncommitment (Granberg, 1982).

It is useful to examine an example of how social judgment theory models an attitude using the ordered alternatives procedure. Regarding the current tax system, positions can be ordered on a continuum from one extreme, complete acceptance of the system, to another, complete rejection of the system. These positions could be ordered like this:

1. I would change nothing about the current tax system.
2. The tax system is effective.
3. The tax system is slightly effective.
4. Although not as effective as it could be, the tax system is satisfactory.
5. The tax system needs minor changes.
6. The tax system needs several changes.
7. We need a completely new tax system.
An individual may agree with the first two positions, reject positions five through seven, and be noncommittal about stances three and four. By modeling the individual’s attitude this way, more description is gained than simply identifying the anchor point, or the most acceptable stance.

Social judgment theory also offers a way to model attitude change. Sherif and Hovland (1961) stated that attitude change occurs when an individual is presented with another person’s position and then makes a judgment about the position. Because the audience is making a judgment based on the message, the audience is actively involved in the attitude change process. Sherif and Sherif (1967) labeled two types of attitude change. The assimilation effect, a positive attitude change, happens when an individual’s attitude shifts closer to the offered position. A person is likely to assimilate when the message received falls in the latitude of acceptance. The contrast effect, a negative attitude change, occurs when the individual’s attitude shifts to further differentiate from the presented position. A contrast effect usually happens when a message received falls in the latitude of rejection. Attitude change is indicated by a shift in an individual’s latitude of acceptance or rejection, which may alter the latitude of noncommitment if a new stance is deemed as acceptable or condemnable.

Returning to the tax system example, the individual hears a news story about problems with the current tax system. The facts presented by the news story persuade the person to assimilate with the news story’s stance. Now the individual agrees with statements three through five, rejects statements one and two, and is noncommittal on statements six and seven. Positive attitude change, or assimilation, has occurred.
Inversely, the news story may not persuade the individual for a variety of reasons. Instead, the individual strengthens his/her stance. He/she now agrees only with the first statement, rejects statements four through seven, and is noncommittal on positions two and three. A contrast effect, or a negative attitude change, has occurred.

Sherif and Sherif (1967) offered two benefits of viewing attitudes in this way. First, individuals who agree on their anchor points usually have varying latitudes. By using latitudes to define an attitude, rather than a simple point, more description is offered. Second, the three latitudes are based on how involved the individual is with the topic, or how important the issue is to him/her. This concept is known as ego involvement.

Ego involvement shows how important the issue is to the individual, particularly when that issue is related to his/her self-concept (Granberg, 1982). High involvement with an issue narrows an individual’s latitude of noncommitment and widens the latitude of rejection. This happens because an individual has fewer positions that he/she is willing to accept and many more he/she will reject. The individual has now judged several positions that used to fall in the latitude of noncommitment (Sherif, 1967b). However, the latitude of acceptance remains relatively unchanged. Individuals solidify their beliefs in their accepted positions when they are involved with an issue and include more stances in the latitude of rejection (Granberg, 1982). Individuals who are involved in the issue focus on differences between themselves and the source, which ultimately causes these individuals to reject the message (Sherif, 1967b). Ego involvement leads to behaviors that are more consistent with an individual’s attitudes. It can also lead to selective perception,
when an individual ignores information contradictory to his/her attitude (Sherif & Sherif, 1956).

On the other hand, an individual with low ego involvement is more likely to have equal latitudes of acceptance, noncommitment, and rejection. He/she is more likely to have a moderate anchor point. Low ego involvement indicates that an individual can be more easily persuaded to assimilate than if he/she were highly involved in the issue. These individuals focus more on the similarities between themselves and the source of a message (Sherif, 1967b). In summary, high ego involvement creates more firmly held attitudes than low ego involvement.

Ego involvement also affects attitude change. When an individual is involved with a topic, he/she is less likely to assimilate with positions that contradict his/her own, especially for extreme positions or ones creating more dissonance. In other words, when an issue is important to a person, he/she actively processes information and actively maintains a strict attitude. When an individual has low ego involvement with an issue, he/she is more likely to assimilate with the source (Granberg, 1982). Sherif and Sherif (1967) concluded that assimilation is inversely related to ego involvement. When a reference group that opposes the source’s stance is involved, the individual holds true to the group’s attitude and is less likely to assimilate with the source’s stance (Sherif & Sherif, 1956).

When examining ego involvement as it relates to the tax system example, an individual with high ego involvement would have a small latitude of acceptance and be less likely to assimilate. This individual is like the one described in the contrast effect. A high level of ego involvement with this issue could be derived from experience with
paying little taxes, a keen interest in and knowledge about the tax system or a social
group that also believes the tax system is effective. The low ego involvement individual
is likely to have equal latitudes and be more likely to assimilate. This individual is like
the one described as assimilating with the news story. A low level of ego involvement
may stem from a view that the tax system is irrelevant, a lack of interest in the tax system
or a lack of knowledge about the tax system.

Beyond ego involvement, Granberg (1982) noted three important concepts related
to social judgment theory. The first concept is ambiguity, which occurs when
communication lacks structure or detail and can be interpreted in multiple ways.
Ambiguity necessitates that an individual use his/her frame of reference to understand an
issue. The frame of reference includes an individual’s previous experience with the issue
or previously received messages from the source. The frame of reference allows an
individual to recall or form an attitude. In addition, the presence of ambiguity makes an
individual more susceptible to assimilation effects (Sherif, 1967b). This occurs because
the individual is trying to make sense of the message in order to place it in one of the
his/her three latitudes. Granberg (1982) stated that for persuasive messages, ambiguity
permits the message to function enthymematically. By allowing the individual to fill in a
portion of the argument, the message has more persuasive appeal. The individual is also
likely to use information with which he/she agrees to fill in the gaps in the argument.
This makes the message appear closer to the individual’s anchor point, which also
courages assimilation effects. Without ambiguity, an individual is less likely to have
his/her attitude altered by the message.
The second concept is discrepancy, which refers to the distance between a speaker’s position and the audience’s position. Both actual and perceived differences are taken into account (Granberg, 1982). Recall the goal of social judgment theory is to predict how discrepancy between a message and an individual’s attitude leads to attitude change (Sherif & Sherif, 1967). One effect of discrepancy lies in assimilation and contrast effects. Because of the difference, or lack of difference, between an individual’s attitude and a message, the individual shifts his/her attitude further from, or closer to, the presented stance (Granberg, 1982).

The third concept is perceived credibility of the source. The source of the message is key to how the message is received. When the audience identifies with the source through group membership, credibility or other means, audience members are likely to agree with the source’s message and assimilate with it. If the source is perceived as different from the individual, the contrast effect is likely to occur (Granberg, 1982).

Sherif and Hovland (1961) note that the context and the individual’s prior experience are important elements as well. An individual’s judgments will vary based on what else is happening, as well as if he/she judges the stance to be relevant later on. Prior experience with the topic affects the three latitudes. Extensive experience leads to well-established attitudes and a greater chance of a contrast effect, while little experience leads to more ambiguity and more assimilation. These two factors play into ego involvement. However, not every issue that is familiar will also be a high ego involvement issue for an individual. Free choice is still central to the theory.

Now that social judgment theory has been explained, it is necessary to examine how the theory is currently being used. The theory has served as a foundation for
numerous persuasion studies. Adelman, Stewart and Hammond (1975) stated social judgment theory provides a framework for understanding political policy debates and offers a solution for resolving them. Their study showed that social judgment theory is an appropriate model to understand varying attitudes. Another study conducted by Smith et al. (2006) used social judgment theory as a way to study the effectiveness of a social norms campaign. They found that messages that target a region close to the latitude of noncommitment but still lie in the latitude of acceptance are the most believable messages for a campaign. This could be useful to understand how TDS messages may influence audience members. Finally, Robinson, Raup-Krieger, Burke, Weber and Oesterling (2008) found that patient satisfaction following a doctor’s visit was most strongly associated with patient satisfaction before the visit. This means that the context and previously held attitude are extremely important when identifying an attitude following the stimulus (i.e., the doctor’s visit). Close attention must be paid to identifying an individual’s past when trying to identify his/her attitude following exposure to a message. For this study, identifying participants’ prior knowledge of an issue will be important and highly relevant for determining the participants’ attitudes following the stimulus (i.e., a clip from either TDS or CBS News).

Although social judgment theory has not been used in the context of political comedy shows or even comedy, a connection from its interpersonal persuasion roots can be drawn. Social judgment theory assumes an active audience, which is consistent with characterizations of TDS’s audience. Generally, the audience members have an established attitude before receiving a message. According to Sherif (1967a), attitudes are learned from a person’s environment. Based on experience with different topics, a person
can establish an attitude and an anchor point in any of the three latitudes. If the person has no experience with the topic, the attitude is assumed to be in the latitude of noncommitment. After receiving a message, the audience then makes a judgment based on the content, which may result in an attitude change. This theory focuses on how a short-term decision can have enduring effects. A second aspect of an active audience is found in how individuals process TDS. As previously discussed, active processing of the satire and parody are required to understand fully TDS’s content. This active processing closely mirrors the active message processing assumed for audiences of traditional persuasive messages. In addition, the ambiguity inherent in complex forms of humor allows audience members to add their own experiences, making the message more persuasive.

Social judgment theory is well established as a theory of persuasion. By showing that it is appropriate in humorous contexts, the theory’s utility will expand. The study also aims to establish audience type, whether active or passive, as an important element to consider. An active audience has not been considered in many previous studies of political comedy shows’ effects on political participation. Because social judgment theory assumes an active audience, this theory is useful for the context. This is a more appropriate theoretical framework than those that assume a passive audience. Now that a theoretical foundation has been established, connections between the theory and the political comedy context can be drawn.

**Theoretical Connections**

As previously noted, social judgment theory describes an attitude in three latitudes: acceptance, noncommitment and rejection. Similarly, the satirical messages on
TDS can be described using the same latitudes. These latitudes for the message vary among receivers, much like attitudinal latitudes vary among individuals who receive a persuasive message. Jon Stewart strives to get the majority of the audience to accept his commentary, or to have it fall within their latitude of acceptance.

Adding ego involvement to this conceptualization, an audience member who has a high level of ego involvement with the topic of the satirical message may not accept the message if Stewart’s stance is not within his/her latitude of acceptance. This would produce a contrast effect, prompting the audience member to distinguish his/herself from the source of the message. On the other hand, an audience member may readily accept Stewart’s stance if it falls within the latitude of acceptance. This would produce an assimilation effect, bringing the individual closer to Stewart’s stance. An individual with low ego involvement is more likely to assimilate with Stewart’s stance than an individual who disagrees with Stewart and is highly involved with the topic.

TDS provides a parody of politics, news media and society. These messages closely mimic social judgment theory’s persuasive roots. Satirical messages are attempts by the comedian to persuade the audience to accept the critique. These messages also fall into the three latitudes, which are unique for each audience member. It is more likely that audience members would be involved with these issues and have prior knowledge of them because the audience of TDS is an active audience. Conceptually, a message that falls within an audience member’s latitude of acceptance would be accepted and promote assimilation. A message that falls within an audience member’s latitude of rejection would produce a contrast effect. A previous, firmly held attitude by the audience members would likely be similar to the attitude held after watching a show. However,
further research is needed to see if these expectations hold true after viewing a political satire. In addition, it is important to explore how satirical messages that fall within the latitude of noncommitment impact attitude change.

**Avoiding Critiques**

Because social judgment theory is the foundation for this study, it is useful to examine critiques of social judgment theory, so that they may be avoided in this study. Gaske (1983) argued that ego involvement is not defined precisely by social judgment theory. He offered that ego involvement is derived from identification with a reference group based on a value system. He also asserted that ego involvement cannot be adequately measured without understanding a person’s value system first.

Johnson and Eagly (1989) also critiqued social judgment theory’s model of ego involvement as opposite of the dual process models of persuasion. These models posit that when an individual is involved with an issue, he/she considers the arguments more carefully and the message is generally more persuasive, whereas social judgment theory conceptualizes involvement as hindering persuasion. Johnson and Eagly (1989) suggested in their meta-analysis that there may be three types of involvement: value-relevant, outcome-relevant, and impression-relevant. Value-relevant involvement refers to an individual’s enduring values that make up his/her self-concept. Outcome-relevant involvement deals with an individual’s ability to achieve a desired result. Impression-relevant involvement relates to how an individual’s choice will be perceived by those he/she deems important.

Park, Levine, Kingsley-Westerman, Orfgen and Foregger (2007) tested value-relevant and outcome-relevant involvement to reconcile the opposing views of
involvement in social judgment theory and dual process models. The researchers proposed that in dual process theories, high outcome-relevant involvement is positively correlated with attitude change. They also hypothesize that in social judgment theory, high value-relevant involvement is negatively correlated with attitude change. Although based in theory and previous research, these hypotheses were not supported.

These researchers (Gaske, 1983; Johnson & Eagly, 1989; Park et al., 2007) all addressed the clarity of social judgment theory’s ego involvement and attempted to explain why the theory proposes a different model of involvement than the dual process models of persuasion. Although Park et al.’s explanation was not supported, previous findings have supported both models’ notions of involvement. Until researchers can reliably falsify one model or establish in which contexts one is more explanatory than the other, both can be deemed acceptable as a foundation for a study. For this project, great care was taken to define involvement and measure involvement accurately within the survey instruments. In addition, a semantic differential scale was used to define ego involvement. This allowed for more description of a participant’s ego involvement than another type of scale (Diab, 1965c).

Another critique of social judgment theory is that the theory has not been measured well (Gaske, 1983). To address this critique, two ways of depicting attitudes were used in the survey instruments. This allowed results to be compared between two methods, allowing a best practice to be determined.

This chapter reviewed current research in relevant fields and offered theoretical connections to the present project. To explore the attitude change processes related specifically to this new, satirical context, I posed the following research questions:
RQ1: Does attitude change differ between people who watch a political comedy show and those who watch a traditional news show?

RQ2: How does attitude change differ between people who watch a political comedy show and those who watch a traditional news show?

To understand social judgment theory’s utility in this context, I posed the following research question:

RQ3: What is the relationship between attitude change, ego involvement and audience activity within each of these viewing contexts?

If shown to be an accurate model, social judgment theory’s utility will expand to a new context. By explaining the TDS’s audience’s attitude change processes, greater description is added to existing literature.
Method

This study utilized social judgment theory as a model for exploring attitude change effects in two contexts, TDS and traditional news media. In order to explore the research questions, participants reported their attitudes on the current tax system and the current job market, as well as their ego involvement prior to and after viewing segments from either TDS or CBS News. This section outlines the study methodology, including study procedures, selection of show segments and scales.

Study Design

This study applied a pretest, posttest design with quasi-equivalent groups (Frey, Botan and Kreps, 2000). To avoid test sensitization associated with a pretest, posttest design, participants took the pretest several days before the posttest. The amount of time varied by participant, depending on when participants completed the pretest and were scheduled to complete the posttest.

Participants were recruited from public speaking and political science classes at a large midwestern university. One announcement was made in each course, as arranged with the instructor. In addition, a recruitment email was sent campus wide. Frey et al. (2000) recommend at least thirty participants per group to guarantee enough power for statistical analysis. Ninety-seven participants completed the study, of whom 50 were in TDS condition and 47 were in the CBS News condition. This was a volunteer sample.
Participants chose to take part in the study. Participants were at least eighteen years old. Only participants who completed the entire study were included in the analysis. Participants were not limited based on any other characteristic.

Each participant completed the online survey and pretest (hosted on www.surveygizmo.com) indicating his/her willingness and availability to participate in the study as well as pre-stimulus attitudes, ego involvement and political activity measures (see Appendix A). Answers from this survey allowed the investigator to schedule participants to view the persuasion stimulus (i.e., TDS or CBS News). Groups of between one and ten participants arrived at a location on campus to complete the data collection procedures.

When all participants for the session arrived, participants watched a selection of clips, which were accessed online and projected on a screen. The treatment group viewed clips from TDS, while the comparison group viewed clips from CBS News’s YouTube channel. This channel stores clips of CBS newscasts, as well as some content created only for the online channel. These clips are examples of the traditional persuasive environment. Both the TDS and CBS News clips covered similar topics. Links to these clips are included in Appendix B. After viewing the material, the researcher distributed the posttest instrument for the participants to complete (see Appendix C). Participants wrote their name on this instrument so that participant responses could be matched. When finished, participants placed their posttest in an envelope before handing it to the researcher. Because participant names were collected in order to match each pretest to the correct posttest, all data collected was confidential. To insure confidentiality, all identifying information was removed from the database after all responses were entered
into the electronic database. In addition, paper copies of the posttests were shredded after responses were entered and checked. To bolster confidentiality, no code key matching participant names with their responses was created.

After all participants finished the survey, the researcher debriefed the participants regarding the use of deception. In order to avoid the Hawthorne effect, the true purpose of the study was disguised in the initial consent form. Instead of specifying that the study examined attitude change, participants were told the study focused on perceptions. After the debriefing, participants chose to be included in the data set by hand their envelop to the researcher or keeping it. By not submitting the posttest, participants withdrew their consent and were removed from the study.

As participants left the room, they had an opportunity to be included in the study incentives. Participants signed an incentives list that was kept separate from all surveys. Two incentives were offered. Those participants recruited from a class earned extra credit, as arranged with the instructor. Participants were also entered in a drawing for a $30 iTunes gift card. If a participant wished to be entered in this drawing, he/she provided his/her name and email address to be contacted if he/she won the incentive. Participants could qualify for both incentives. After the incentives were awarded, paper copies of the incentive lists were destroyed.

Prior to beginning data collection, the study was piloted in one section of public speaking that was not included in the recruitment announcements. In the pilot test, 25 undergraduate students were given the option to participate. The instructor emailed the pretest to interested students to complete. In class, the researcher conducted the second portion of the study. The pilot test allowed the researcher to determine suitability of the
clips as well as to establish a method to match pretest and posttest information. Students who participated in both parts of the study were awarded five extra credit points in the course.

Selection and Content of TDS and CBS News Segments

The segments of TDS and CBS News focused on the American Jobs Act and the tax increase for the top tax bracket as ways to help the economy recover. These examples relate to the larger issues of the current tax system and state of the job market. These two issues were chosen because they are currently relevant issues. In addition, the issues were chosen because they drew a wide range of opinions.

TDS clips are located on The Daily Show’s website. Although two segments were shown, four clips were viewed due to how the segments were uploaded on the website. The segments are set up to first report, much like a news story, the events on which the piece will be based. Then, Stewart offers his commentary, often as a parody of the situation. Those assigned to TDS condition watched two segments: “Moneybrawl” and “Transformer.”

First, participants watched “Moneybrawl,” a segment that uses parody to examine President Obama’s proposed tax increase on millionaires. Stewart satirically portrays the plan as the ultimate solution for America’s deficit reduction plan. He then highlights Obama’s illustration of the plan as simple math, something that Americans are known to despise and a subject many fail in school. He mocks the Republican’s rejection of the new tax using John Fleming, owner of several Subway sandwich restaurants, who needs $200,000 a year to feed his family. Stewart ends with a plea to save the millionaires
through a parody of ASPCA’s In the Arms of an Angel commercial. The segment claims that changes in America’s tax system are necessary.

Then, participants watched “Transformer,” a segment that examines the American Jobs Act. Stewart presents this proposal as an uninspiring piece of legislation that cannot address the current state of the job market because it is coming too late. Stewart also highlights Obama’s repetition of “pass this jobs bill” as a statement that will not change the fact that partisanship will stall its progress. Finally, Stewart presents the humorous solution of creating a campaign-based economy to create jobs. The unemployed can be hired to stand behind campaigning politicians for campaign events. In addition, party conventions and political advertising will generate billions of dollars for the economy. The segment claims that the job market is in poor condition and needs assistance.

The CBS News segments are located in the CBS News YouTube channel. The segments are taken from multiple CBS News shows. Participants assigned to this condition viewed four news stories. These were similar to TDS’s segment format. For each issue, the first clip was a news piece to establish background information for the issue and the second clip was a commentator’s opinion. For the tax system issue, participants watched a CBS Early Show clip about the proposed tax increase for the top tax bracket, known as the Buffet Rule. This was named for Warren Buffet, who stated that millionaires should pay a greater percentage of their income in taxes. Then, participants viewed former presidential candidate Steve Forbes’ unfavorable commentary on the proposed tax. For the job market issue, participants watched a CBS Evening News clip that reports specific provisions of the bill. Then, participants viewed California Rep.
Maxine Water’s opinion of the American Jobs Act, which specifically focused on how the bill addresses needs of the African-American community.

**Scales**

Scales for this project are modeled after past research. Both the pretest and the posttest included attitudinal and ego involvement measures. Past research has presented two methods for modeling attitudes. Sherif and Sherif (1967) and Diab (1965a, 1965b) developed the ordered alternatives approach. Possible attitudes were arranged as a continuum for a specific topic from one positive evaluation extreme to a negative evaluation extreme. Participants indicated stances that they agreed with, stances that they disagreed with, possessed no stance on, and the most acceptable position. This process allowed researchers to identify a participant’s latitudes on a given issue. Ego involvement was conceptualized as the degree of commitment to the most acceptable stance.

However, a second way to identify attitudes has been used. Diab (1967) discussed semantic differential scales as a superior method for studies using social judgment theory. By using multiple pairs of adjectives to identify an individual’s stance on an issue, more depth and description of that stance is allowed than simple agreement or disagreement with a stance. This depth and detail allows a latitude to be described, rather than simply identified. In the semantic differential method, pairs of descriptors prompt participants to evaluate many facets of an issue (Diab, 1965c). Using participants’ rankings for each pair, researchers can distinguish between individuals who rank a single stance as most acceptable. Both participants could agree with one statement, but one may rate the argument as weak and passive, while the other who agrees with the point rates the argument as strong and active (Diab, 1967). Researchers can also identify aspects of an
issue with which participants most agree. In this method, ego involvement relates to the intensity of participant responses in relation to each pair of descriptors.

McLaughlin and Sharman (1972) supported Diab’s suggestions for the semantic differential method and added that the order alternatives approach suffers from unequal intervals between points and the ceiling effect. By not establishing equal intervals, ordinal data is collected instead of interval data. This limits the comparisons made between points, as well as the conclusions drawn from the data. McLaughlin and Sharman (1972) define the ceiling effect as the point in the ordered alternatives when the offered stances are no longer seen as viable options because of the extreme nature of the position. This also occurs when the stance no long relates to the issue presented. For example, the statement “executing murderers by torture is fair punishment” may not an acceptable stance because of its extreme nature. This position could also be measuring commitment to human rights rather than acceptable punishments for murderers.

Both of the previously described methods for measuring attitudes were used in this study. By maintaining the traditional user identified latitudes from a continuum, individuals process each stance and evaluate it based on their values (Diab, 1965c). Robinson et al. (2008) used a continuum to identify participants’ latitudes regarding patient care. By including the semantic differential elements, individuals are allowed to more quickly answer each question and provide more description of their attitudes. Diab (1965c) found that semantic differential scales required less conscious control and helped minimize social desirability bias. Smith et al. (2006) used this approach to measure latitudes for a social norms campaign. Because current research has used both methods to model participant attitudes, both methods were used in this study. Both scales were
created to represent the issues present in the clips of *TDS* and CBS News that participants watched.

The pretest instrument had four parts: an attitude portion, an ego involvement scale, an audience activity part and demographic information. The attitude scales were developed based on content from *TDS* and CBS News in September 2011. These segments discussed a tax increase on millionaires and the current state of the job market. The ego involvement measure was created to reflect the importance of each topic to the participant.

To measure audience activity, I included a political behavior scale and items regarding *TDS* viewing behavior. The political behavior scale was a modified version of Verba and Nie’s 1972 instrument. The scale contained four dimensions: voting, campaign activity, contacting public officials and cooperative activities. The scale used in the pretest instrument was modified from the original telephone format to a paper form. The introduction to each question was removed for brevity. In addition, the questions about current national elections were altered to include the most recent election years. The questions about cooperative activities were omitted because they were unclear. These items could be inferred to be about school-related group projects rather than organized political activities. Because this project recruited college students who may not have been old enough to vote in these elections, the options “not old enough at the time” and “not registered at the time” were included for voting questions. Finally, a question regarding the participant’s voting registration status was included. To also measure audience activity, questions measuring experience with and participation in the *TDS* show were included. These items asked how often participants watch *The Daily Show*, how often
participants discuss *The Daily Show* and how often participants use the online discussion board for *The Daily Show*.

The posttest instrument was similar to the pretest instrument. The posttest used the same attitude and ego involvement items. This allowed attitude change to be measured. In addition, a measure of source credibility was also included. This was constructed using a semantic differential scale with five pairs of descriptors. Tormala and Clarkson (2008) used a similar scale. Finally, five semantic differential items were included to measure the perceived humor of the segments.

This chapter overviewed the study’s methodology. By collecting participants’ attitudes prior to and after viewing the selected clips, differences in attitude change between *TDS* and CBS News audience members can be drawn. Through determining audience members’ ego involvement and activity measures, comparisons between active and passive audiences can be made. Results of this project add to our understanding of attitude change.
Results

A total of 156 participants completed the pretest and were contacted by the researcher to complete the second portion of the project. Of these 156 participants, 97 completed the posttest, yielding a 62% completion rate. Of the final 97 participants, 50 viewed *The Daily Show* clips and 47 viewed CBS News segments. The study findings are presented in four parts: participant description, scale reliability, attitude change with ancillary analysis, and relationships among attitude change, ego involvement and audience activity.

**Participant Description**

Participants were all affiliated with the university from which they were recruited. A majority (n = 59, 61%) of the participants were freshman, 18 (19%) were sophomores, nine (10%) were juniors, five (5%) were seniors, four (4%) were graduate students and one (1%) was a faculty member. One (1%) participant did not provide this information. Sixty-eight (70%) participants were female and 29 (30%) were male. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 55 and the average participant age was 20.07 (SD = 4.99, median = 19, mode = 19). Thirty-nine (40%) participants identified as Republicans, 23 (23%) identified as Democrats, 28 (30%) identified as Independents, and 7 (7%) identified as other. Other responses included “moderate,” “conservative,” “non-citizen,” “American” and “no identification.”
To determine audience activity, I collected data using Verba and Nie’s 1972 political participation instrument, which measured political activity, and three additional items, which measured involvement with TDS. The mean sum score for participants on this scale was 3.11 (SD = 2.61, median = 2, mode = 2) and scores ranged from 0 to 11. Most participants were not very involved in politics. Forty-nine (51%) participants were currently registered to vote, 35 (36%) intend to register, and 13 (13%) do not intend to register. In the 2008 presidential election, 12 (12%) participants voted, 28 (29%) did not vote and 57 (59%) were either not old enough to vote or not registered at the time. In the 2010 congressional election, 21 (22%) participants voted, 41 (42%) did not vote and 35 (36%) were either not old enough to vote or not registered at the time. In regards to local elections, 13 (13%) participants always voted, 20 (21%) sometimes voted, 15 (16%) rarely voted, and 49 (50%) never voted. During election cycles, five (5%) often tried to convince others how to vote, 29 (30%) sometimes tried to convince others, 22 (23%) rarely tried to convince others, and 41 (42%) never tried to convince others. Two (2%) worked for a political party or candidate in some elections, 12 (12%) worked in a few elections, and 83 (86%) never worked for a political party or candidate. Nineteen (20%) participants have attended a political meeting or rally in the past four years, while 78 (80%) have not. Eight (8%) participants have donated money to a political campaign in the past four years, while 89 (92%) have not. Twenty-one (22%) participants are members of a political organization, while 76 (78%) are not. Twenty-seven (28%) participants have contacted a local representative to initiate a policy change, while 70 (72%) have not. Twenty-two (23%) participants have contacted a state or national representative to initiate a policy change, while 75 (77%) have not.
The second measure of audience activity examined involvement with *TDS*. The mean sum score for participants was 1.74 (SD = 2.15, median = 1, mode = 0) and scores ranged from 0 to 9. Overall, participants were not very involved with *TDS*. Three (3%) participants watch every show, five (5%) watch a few shows each week, 19 (20%) watch a few shows each month, 21 (22%) watch a few shows each year, and 49 (50%) have never seen the show. Five (5%) participants discuss *TDS* very often, three (3%) discuss *TDS* often, ten (10%) sometimes discuss *TDS*, 25 (26%) rarely discuss *TDS*, and 54 (56%) never discuss *TDS*. Two (2%) sometimes use *TDS*’s online discussion board, five (5%) rarely use it, and 90 (93%) never use it.

Before viewing either set of clips, participants reported an average attitude score of 28.58 (SD = 6.98, median = 28, mode = 29) for the tax system issue and an average attitude score of 23.75 (SD = 7.87, median = 23, mode = 23) for the job market issue. Participants also reported average ego involvement scores of 25.69 (SD = 5.71, median = 26, mode = 22) for the tax system issue and 29.56 (SD = 6.39, median = 29, mode = 27) for the job market issue. The average statement selected as most agreeable for the tax system issue was 4.94 (SD = 1.19, median = 5, mode = 6), which reflects the anchor “Although not as effective as it could be, the tax system is satisfactory.” The average statement selected as most agreeable for the job market issue was 4.30 (SD = 1.51, median = 5, mode = 5), which reflects the anchor “It is neither easy nor difficult to become employed.”

After viewing the clips, participants’ average attitude scores were 26.12 (SD = 6.67, median = 25, mode = 24) for the tax system issue and 21.44 (SD = 6.72, median = 21, mode = 26) for the job market issue. Participants’ ego involvement after viewing the
clips was 27.58 (SD = 5.57, median = 28, mode = 27) for the tax system issue and 29.16 (SD = 5.37, median = 28, mode = 27) for the job market issue. The average statement selected as most agreeable for the tax system issue was 5.32 (SD = 1.07, median = 6, mode = 6), which reflects the anchor “The tax system needs minor changes.” The average statement selected as most agreeable for the job market issue was 5.04 (SD = 1.64, median = 5, mode = 5), which reflects the anchor “Becoming employed is somewhat difficult.”

**Scale Reliabilities**

Because most scales in this study were created for this project, reliability tests were run for both the pretest and posttest scales. The semantic differential items related to participants’ attitudes about the tax system exhibited high internal consistency for both the pretest ($\alpha = .77$) and posttest ($\alpha = .75$). To achieve this reliability score, the item that examined if participants thought the current tax system favored the poor was omitted because the item appeared to incorrectly measure favorable/unfavorable attitudes and decreased overall reliability of the scale. The semantic differential items related to participants’ attitudes regarding the job market also showed high internal consistency for both the pretest ($\alpha = .86$) and the posttest ($\alpha = .81$). This reliability score does not include two items. Items regarding government intervention and changing the job market through legislation were omitted as these items also negatively impacted the scale’s reliability scores.

The semantic differential items for ego involvement for both the pretest and posttest exhibited less internal consistency than the attitude measures. The items related to participants’ ego involvement in the tax system had an $\alpha = .70$ for the pretest and an $\alpha$
= .68 for the posttest. The items regarding participants’ ego involvement in the job market had an $\alpha = .76$ for the pretest and an $\alpha = .58$ for the posttest. No items were omitted from these measures. In the posttest, both measures for source credibility and humor showed high internal consistency, $\alpha = .83$ and $\alpha = .91$, respectively.

**Differences in Attitude Change Between TDS and CBS News**

To explore RQ1 and RQ2, the ordered alternatives approach and the semantic differential approach measured whether and how attitude change differs between participants who viewed TDS or CBS News. In the ordered alternatives approach, attitude change occurred when participants reported a different statement that they most agreed with during the posttest and the pretest. This method follows the approach employed by Sherif and Hovland (1961). For those who watched TDS, the degree of change for the tax system issue ranged from a negative attitude change of five degrees (-5) to a positive attitude change of two degrees (2). A negative number indicates that the participant viewed the tax system more unfavorably, a zero means there was no attitude change, and a positive number indicates that the participant viewed the tax system more favorably. The average degree of attitude change was -0.91 (SD = 1.75, median = -1, mode = -1) or a change toward the unfavorable end of the scale by one degree. For the job market issue, the range of change for the most agreed with statement was a negative attitude change of three degrees (-3) to a positive attitude change of two degrees (2). The mean number of statements changed was -0.48 (SD = 1.48, median = 0, mode = 0) or a half degree change to be more unfavorable. For those who watched CBS, similar trends appeared. For the tax issue, the average degree of attitude change was -1.21 (SD = 1.89, median = -1, mode = -1) or a shift by one and a quarter degrees to be more unfavorable. For the job market
issue, the mean number of statements changed was -0.93 (SD = 1.80, median = 0, mode = 0) or a change of one degree to be more unfavorable. There was no statistical difference in attitude change between participants who watched TDS or CBS News for either issue when using change scores obtained through the ordered alternatives approach. Change for the tax system issue was not significant, \( t(72) = .716, p = .476 \). Change for the job market issue was also not significant, \( t(65) = 1.060, p = .293 \). Table 1 of Appendix D reports these findings.

For the ordered alternatives approach, attitude change is also determined by calculating the difference in the number of statements each participant agreed, disagreed or had no stance on between the pretest and posttest. Independent t-tests were run to see if the attitude change varied between the TDS group and the CBS group. This method follows Sherif and Hovland (1961) and Diab (1965a). Table 2 in Appendix D summarizes these results. No significant differences existed between the groups based on the number of agree, disagree and no stance statements that changed. For the tax system issue, no significant differences existed for change in the number of agrees, \( t(95) = .420, p = .675 \), number of disagrees, \( t(95) = -.851, p = .397 \), and number of no stance statements, \( t(95) = .378, p = .707 \). For the job market issue, no significant differences were found for change in the number of agrees, \( t(95) = .223, p = .824 \), number of disagrees, \( t(95) = -.565, p = .573 \), and number of no stance statements, \( t(95) = .337, p = .737 \). Thus, using the ordered alternatives approach I was not able to measure a difference in attitude change between the TDS and the CBS News groups.

Attitude change was also investigated using semantic differential items. Overall, attitudes shifted to be more unfavorable of both the current tax system and the job
market. Similar to the ordered alternatives approach, no significant differences exist between the degree of attitude change for either issue and whether participants viewed *TDS* and CBS News. Findings are reported in Table 3 of Appendix D. For the tax system issue, the average degree of change for those who watched *TDS* was -2.02 (SD = 7.47) and the average degree of change for those who watched CBS News was -2.91 (SD = 5.39). This difference was not significant, \( t(95) = .673, p = .503 \). For the job market issue, the average degree of change for those who watched *TDS* was -1.48 (SD = 5.41) and the average degree of change for those who watched *TDS* was -3.19 (SD = 6.50). This difference was not significant, \( t(95) = 1.413, p = .161 \).

However, when attitude change was examined using dependent t-tests, a significant difference existed between participants who watched *TDS* and those who watched CBS News. These results are summarized in Table 4 of Appendix D. A significant difference was found for the CBS News group on both issues, but not for *TDS* group. The mean attitude score for the tax system issue before viewing CBS News was 28.15 (SD = 6.54) and after viewing was 25.23 (SD = 4.74). This decrease was significant, \( t(46) = 3.706, p = .001 \). The mean attitude score for the job market issue before viewing CBS News was 24.04 (SD = 7.50) and after was 21.21 (SD = 6.51). This difference was significant, \( t(46) = 3.37, p = .002 \). For those who watched *TDS*, attitude change was not significant \( (t(49) = 1.912, p = .062 \) for taxes and \( t(49) = 1.934, p = .059 \) for jobs). The mean attitude scores for the *TDS* condition on taxes were 28.98 (SD = 7.41) before viewing and 26.96 (SD = 8.03) after viewing. The mean attitude scores for the *TDS* condition on jobs were 23.14 (SD = 8.23) before viewing and 21.66 (SD = 6.97) after viewing. Using the semantic differential approach, mixed results occurred.
Across both conditions, attitudes shifted to be usually less favorable views of each issue. There were no significant differences in attitude change between participants who viewed TDS or CBS News when using the ordered alternatives approach. Only the semantic differential measurement obtained statistically significant differences between pretest and posttest attitude scores for those viewing the CBS News segments.

**Ancillary Analysis of Attitude Change**

In order to confirm that the study replicated previous methods, I conducted an ancillary analysis of attitude change. Because the overall attitude change trends using the ordered alternatives approach exhibited a negative shift and differences between the TDS and CBS News groups could not clearly be supported, this analysis contains all participant responses. This analysis employs the analysis as developed by Sherif and Hovland (1961) and Diab (1965a).

Participants were classified based on their most agreed with position. Positions 1, 2, 6 and 7 were considered extreme positions, while positions 3, 4 and 5 were considered moderate positions. This was done for each issue, as well as for the pretest and posttest information. In addition, the number of statements each participant agreed, disagreed or had no stance on were counted. Independent t-tests were run to see if participants with extreme attitudes versus those with moderate attitudes differed on the number of agree, disagree and no stance statements reported. Findings are reported in Tables 5 and 6 of Appendix D. For the tax system issue during the pretest, extreme participants (μ = 2.57, SD = 1.40) disagreed with more statements than moderate participants (μ = 1.80, SD = 1.24). This difference was significant, t(95) = 2.873; p = .005. For the tax system issue during the posttest, significant differences existed between extreme participants and
moderate participants for both the number of agrees and the number of disagrees.

Extreme participants ($\mu = 2.60, \text{SD} = .95$) agreed with fewer statements than moderate participants ($\mu = 3.03, \text{SD} = .80$), $t(72) = -2.04, p = .045$. Extreme participants ($\mu = 3.23, \text{SD} = 1.44$) disagreed with more statements than moderate participants ($\mu = 2.55, \text{SD} = 1.21$), $t(72) = 2.150, p = .035$. Results for the tax issue mirror trends cited by Sherif and Hovland (1961). Extreme participants generally indicate more statements with which they agree or disagree with than moderate participants. Moderate participants select more statements as no stances than extreme participants.

Using this method of counting statements, no significant differences were found in the job market issue for the pretest. For the job market during the posttest, significant differences existed between extreme participants and moderate participants for both the number of agrees and the number of no stances. Extreme participants ($\mu = 3.62, \text{SD} = .90$) agreed with more statements than moderate participants ($\mu = 2.78, \text{SD} = 1.06$), $t(65) = 3.326, p = .001$. Extreme participants ($\mu = .77, \text{SD} = .71$) had fewer statements marked as “no stance” than moderate participants ($\mu = 1.39, \text{SD} = 1.28$), $t(65) = -2.256, p = .027$. Again, the posttest results for the tax system issue replicate the trends found by Sherif and Hovland (1961).

Using the ordered alternatives approach with the most agreed upon statement to determine attitude change, the degree of change was significant only for the job market issue, $t(66) = -3.632, p = .001$. The average statement selected as the most agreeable before viewing the content was 4.30 (SD = 1.51), which reflects the anchor “It is neither easy nor difficult to become employed.” After viewing the content, the average statement
selected was 5.04 (SD = 1.64), which reflects the anchor “Becoming employed is somewhat difficult.” No significant difference existed for the tax system issue.

**Differences in Ego Involvement**

No significant differences were found between conditions in participants’ reported ego involvement in the pretest or the posttest. Results are summarized in Table 7 in Appendix D. For the tax system issue, the TDS group reported a mean ego involvement score of 25.04 (SD = 6.24) before viewing and a mean of 27.24 (SD = 6.54) after viewing. For the tax system issue, the CBS group reported a mean ego involvement score of 26.38 (SD = 5.04) before viewing and a mean of 27.94 (SD = 4.34) after viewing. These differences between the groups were not significant, $t(95) = -1.160, \ p = .249$ for the pretest and $t(95) = -0.613, \ p = .541$ for the posttest. For the job market issue, participants in the TDS condition reported a mean ego involvement score of 29.86 (SD = 7.38) before viewing and a mean of 28.95 (SD = 5.24) after viewing. For the job market issue, participants in the CBS News condition reported a mean ego involvement score of 29.23 (SD = 5.21) before viewing and a mean of 29.36 (SD = 5.24) after viewing. These differences between the groups were not significant, $t(95) = .480, \ p = .632$ for the pretest and $t(94) = -.366, \ p = .716$ for the posttest.

Given that no significant differences in ego involvement existed between the TDS and CBS News groups, the whole sample can be examined as one unit. Results are reported in Table 8 of Appendix D. Participants became more involved with the tax system issue after watching either content. Participants reported a mean ego involvement score of 25.69 (SD = 5.71) before watching the content and a mean involvement score of 27.58 (SD = 5.57) after. This difference is significant, $t(96) = -3.66, \ p < .001$. No
significant differences existed for the job market issue, $t(96) = .563, p = .574$.

Participants’ mean ego involvement score for the job market issue was 29.49 (SD = 6.39) before watching the content and a mean ego involvement score of 29.16 (SD = 5.37) after viewing. Overall, participants reported higher ego involvement for the job market than the tax system. This difference in ego involvement likely occurred because of the sample. Given that most of the participants (99%) were college students, finding a job upon graduation would be more relevant than paying taxes.

**Attitude Change, Ego Involvement and Audience Activity**

In order to explore RQ3 that asked how attitude change, ego involvement and audience activity relate, Pearson’s product moment correlations were run for both the TDS and CBS News conditions. These relationships are discussed by condition. Table 9 in Appendix D summarizes these relationships for both groups.

For TDS, three correlations existed for attitude change. Change in the most agreed with statement for the tax system was positively related to change in the most agreed with statement for the job market issue, $r = .647, p < .001$. This shows that the degree of change was similar for participants on both issues. Change in the semantic differential items regarding the tax system issue was positively related to change in the semantic differential items regarding the job market issue, $r = .354, p = .012$. This also shows that the degree of change was similar for participants on both issues. These correlations are expected. In addition, change in the most agreed with statement for the tax system issue is negatively related to participants’ political activity, $r = -462, p = .008$. As political activity increases, favorable attitudes toward the tax system tend to decrease.
For *TDS*, there was one correlation for ego involvement. Participants’ reported ego involvement with the tax system issue after viewing *TDS* was positively related to participants’ reported ego involvement with the job market issue after viewing *TDS*, \( r = .532, p < .001 \). This suggests that ego involvement for both issues is related.

For *TDS*, two correlations existed for audience activity. Participants’ political activity was positively related to both ego involvement in the tax system issue (\( r = .379, p = .007 \)) and ego involvement in the job market issue (\( r = .323, p = .024 \)). As political participation increased, ego involvement increased. Inversely, as ego involvement decreased, political participation decreased. In addition, participants’ reported *TDS* activity was positively related to participants’ views of Jon Stewart’s credibility, \( r = .340, p = .017 \). Participants who are more involved with *TDS* also view Stewart as more credible.

One final correlation noted for *TDS* involves the credibility and humor measures. Participants’ view of *TDS*’s credibility was positively related to participants’ view of humor incorporated into *TDS*, \( r = .337, p = .018 \). If participants rated Stewart as credible, they also rated him as humorous.

Several correlations for *TDS* are mirrored in CBS News. In regards to attitude change, change in the most agreed with statement for the tax system was positively related to change in the most agreed with statement for the job market issue, \( r = .602, p < .001 \). This showed that the degree of change was similar for participants on both issues. Change in the semantic differential items regarding the tax system issue was positively related to change in the semantic differential items regarding the job market issue, \( r = .570, p < .001 \). This also indicated that the degree of change was similar for participants.
on both issues. There were no relationships between attitude change for either issue and political activity.

Much like TDS, participants’ reported ego involvement with the tax system issue after viewing CBS News was positively related to participants’ reported ego involvement with the job market issue after viewing CBS News, \( r = .397, p = .006 \). This relationship indicated that the measures of ego involvement for both issues are related.

As with TDS, in the CBS News group, participants reported the same relationship between political activity and ego involvement for the job market issue. Participants’ political activity is positively related to ego involvement in the job market issue, \( r = .323, p = .027 \). This relationship demonstrates that participants’ political activity may be related to the job market issue. This also shows a supported trend that political activity and ego involvement increase or decrease together. However, unlike in the TDS condition, political involvement was not related to ego involvement in the tax issue. In addition, no relationship existed between TDS activity and CBS News credibility.

One interesting relationship existed for the CBS News group. Participants’ views of CBS News’ credibility are negatively related to participants’ views of the CBS News’ humorousness, \( r = -.503, p < .001 \). This relationship shows that participants viewed the CBS content as credible but not humorous.
Discussion

This project examined attitude change in audience members of a political comedy show and a traditional news environment in order to explore whether social judgment theory’s model of attitude change is useful for measuring and understanding persuasion in both contexts. Audience activity was presented as a central component of this model. The results of this quasi-experiment highlighted important differences between the two conditions and relationships between aspects of social judgment theory. In addition, credibility of the source and humor may be factors in the attitude change reported by participants in the TDS condition.

This chapter discusses the results of the project. Specifically, the results demonstrate some support for using social judgment theory as a model for understanding attitude change in audience members of a political comedy show. Participants in both the TDS and CBS News conditions reported similar degrees of attitude change. This trend was present in both the ordered alternatives approach and the semantic differential method of measurement. Participants’ levels of ego involvement were positively related to attitude change, which confirms theoretical predictions. Ego involvement was also associated with audience activity. This relationship offers some support for including behavioral measures in the model. Political activity was also shown to be an important factor when considering participants’ attitude change. Each finding is discussed in detail.
Application of Social Judgment Theory

Social judgment theory served as the theoretical foundation for this project. Before examining the results to determine if the theory was an appropriate model, a short review is necessary. Social judgment theory explains how attitudes shift after receiving a message. By utilizing latitudes, the theory allows more detailed description of audience attitudes, especially in relation to complex issues (Sherif & Sherif, 1967).

Attitude change occurs when individuals receive a message and judge the content. When audience members agree with the source of the message and shift their attitudes closer to the source’s stance, a positive attitude change or assimilation has occurred. Inversely, when audience members disagree with the source and shift their attitudes further from the source’s position, a negative attitude change or contrast effect change has occurred (Sherif & Hovland, 1961).

These attitude changes are influenced by ego involvement. Individuals with high ego involvement usually have narrow latitudes of noncommitment and wide latitudes of rejection. They are more likely to reject a source’s message, producing a contrast effect. Individuals with low ego involvement generally report equal latitudes of acceptance, noncommitment and rejection. They are more likely to assimilate with a source’s stance. The attitude change reported by audience members is usually a small change, regardless of direction. In addition, ambiguity promotes positive attitude change or assimilation because audience members clarify the message with their own knowledge and experience, which makes it more persuasive (Granberg, 1982). Because the attitude change process is initiated when the audience members judge the content of the message, social judgment theory assumes an active audience. This overview of social judgment
theory serves as the basis for the discussion of attitude change, ego involvement and political activity results of this project.

**Attitude change.**

In social judgment theory, attitude change occurs after an individual receives a message. The change is usually a small shift. This small change occurred for both the TDS and CBS News conditions. Participant attitudes usually shifted by a small degree to a more unfavorable stance of either the tax system or the job market issue. Participants may have become more informed after watching the segments. When an individual is presented with new information, he/she may shift his/her attitude. The overall trend of a negative attitude change is likely due to the negative news shared in both of the TDS and CBS News segments.

For this project, attitude change was measured through the ordered alternatives approach, based on Sherif and Hovland’s (1961) method and the semantic differential method, modeled after Diab (1965c). This was done to compare attitude change between a satirical and a traditional persuasive context. Differences in attitude change were only detected for the CBS News condition when using the semantic differential approach. The semantic differential approach is meant to provide more detail regarding participants’ attitudes than the ordered alternatives approach (Diab, 1965c) and thus was able to better measure the relatively small degree of attitude change that occurred right after viewing the stimuli. This difference for the CBS News viewers could be because the CBS News segments clearly informed participants about details related to the tax system or the job market. TDS requires the audience to decipher the content in order to comprehend it. If
the audience did not put forth the effort to understand the segment, it is unlikely that significant attitude change would occur.

Despite differences in significant results, both methods were valid ways to measure attitude change. Each method exhibited statistically significant negative attitude change when calculated for the entire dataset. The ordered alternatives approach provided a clear method with which to classify participants’ attitudes as moderate or extreme. However, this approach rarely yielded clear, unbroken latitudes as described by social judgment theory. This could be because each statement activated multiple attitudes held by the audience or because of the ceiling effect, which occurs when participants view one of the extreme alternatives as improbable and an invalid option. The ceiling effect skews the results of this approach because not all alternatives are acceptable to some participants.

The semantic differential method provided more description of the details of each issue that participants agreed or disagreed with. It also allowed for moderate participants, classified as such in the ordered alternatives approach, to better describe their position on each issue. However, this approach yielded conflicting results.

Both methods of measurement for attitude change yielded positive correlations for each issue in both the TDS and CBS News conditions. This shows that attitude change for the tax system and the job market issues are related for participants. In addition, participants reported a similar change for both issues, regardless of condition. This attitude change could be prompted by the negative image of both the tax system and the job market presented by the clips for both TDS and CBS News. This negative information generally prompted a negative attitude change.
Ego involvement.

A factor, according to social judgment theory, that influences attitude change is ego involvement. Ego involvement influences individuals’ latitudes and acceptance of new stances. Those with high ego involvement are more difficult to persuade to accept a contrasting stance than those with low ego involvement. Overall, participants reported average ego involvement scores in the upper possible range of each issue, indicating a high level of ego involvement with both issues. Also, participants’ reported ego involvement after watching the content for the tax system and the job market was positively related. These measures of ego involvement may be related because the two issues are also related for participants. This correlation may also be representing a part of the larger measure of political engagement because ego involvement is one aspect of this measure. While political activity information was collected for this project, this measure represents only one aspect of engagement, which includes political attention, information seeking and political efficacy, the belief that participants have the ability and chance to alter the world. Further research is needed to clarify this correlation.

In addition, participants in both conditions reported increased ego involvement with the tax system issue after watching the content. This is likely due to the nature of the content. Both the TDS and CBS News clips focused on the proposed “millionaire tax” for Americans who earn over one million dollars. Given that the idea of taxing millionaires likely has no personal connection for many participants in the study, many participants may view this as a valid proposition. This new view would shift participants’ attitudes to be more unfavorable of the current tax system in order to show that they approve this proposed “millionaire tax.” In addition, these clips may have informed the audience of a
new aspect of the tax system. Given new information, participants may have grown more involved with this issue.

There was no significant change in ego involvement for either group for the job market issue. This likely occurred because participants reported high initial ego involvement with this issue, leaving little room for increased ego involvement after watching the content. High initial ego involvement with the job market was expected because participants were mostly (99%) college students. These students are likely concerned with becoming employed upon graduation and thus would report high levels of ego involvement.

Because ego involvement factors into attitude change, it is necessary to note how participants’ ego involvement may have influenced the previously noted attitude changes. High levels of ego involvement, such as those reported here, decrease the chances that the audience members may accept an alternative point of view. Assimilation will occur only if the stance falls within the latitude of acceptance. A contrast effect, which serves to strengthen existing beliefs as a way to differentiate an individual from a source’s contrary stance, is more likely. In this project, it is likely both occurred in both conditions. On average, participants reported unfavorable stances for both issues. Given that the content of both conditions presented an unfavorable view, it is likely that participants assimilated. In addition, those who held a favorable view about the issue likely contrasted themselves from the segments’ unfavorable position.

**Political audience activity.**

Although ego involvement is the only aspect of audience participation noted in social judgment theory, I argued that other audience activity measures also influence
attitude change. Political activity is a behavior resulting from involvement with an issue. Because political issues were examined, it was also necessary to account for political activity. In addition, audience members can become involved in the content they are consuming. For this reason, involvement with TDS was also included as an indicator of activity. This assumption was not supported, as no relationships existed between TDS involvement and ego involvement.

Political activity and ego involvement were related. Ego involvement after viewing the clips was found to be positively correlated with political activity in both conditions. For the TDS condition, positive correlations with political activity existed for ego involvement with both the tax and job issues. For the CBS News group, political activity was related only to ego involvement with the job market issue. The lack of a significant relationship for the CBS News group’s ego involvement with the tax system and political activity likely is due to the nature of the sample. As 99% of the participants were college students, these individuals may not be as concerned with the tax system because it likely does not directly affect many of them. Participants could pay little to no income tax from a minimum wage part-time job that they work while attending college. However, this relationship between ego involvement for the tax system issue and political activity was significant for the TDS group. Participants in the TDS condition may have become more involved with the tax system issue than those in the CBS News condition because the TDS content was more engaging. Jon Stewart’s humor requires an audience to critically examine his jokes in order to understand the segment, whereas news content, meant as a strictly informative presentation, requires less audience engagement and motivation to comprehend. It was also expected that ego involvement was positively
related to political activity. If an individual cares deeply about an issue (has high ego involvement with it), the person would also act based on their stance. Given that the issues used in the study were political, political activity is one form of action participants could take.

Because ego involvement and political activity were related, political activity may also be a factor that influences attitude change. Political activity was negatively related to change in participants’ most agreed position for the tax system issue for the TDS group. As political activity increases, attitudes toward the tax system shift to become less favorable. This correlation was the only significant relationship between both conditions and on both issues for attitude change and political activity. Political activity is generally a result of dissatisfaction with the status quo. Dissatisfaction in this scale is represented by a shift towards a more unfavorable attitude. Increased political activity would not be expected for an individual who is satisfied with the current system because political activity to initiate a change would not be necessary.

Audience activity, both in terms of political activity and TDS activity was expected to be related to attitude change. One reason for the lack of association may be due to the overall low activity levels reported by participants. For both the political activity and TDS activity scales, average scores existed in the lower quarter of the possible range. The political activity scale had a possible range of 0 to 14. However, the mean score for participants on this scale was 3.11 and participant scores ranged from 0 to 11. Similarly, TDS activity scale had a possible range of 0 to 12, but the mean score for participants was 1.74 and participant scores ranged from 0 to 9. Participants reported activity scores inconsistent with the argument presented in the literature review. Low
scores on these behavioral measures may indicate that inspiring activity, political or otherwise, is very difficult, even if the audience is involved with the issue.

**Use of social judgment theory.**

Overall, the social judgment theory model received some support in the political comedy show context. Participants reported similar attitude change in both the TDS and CBS News conditions, which represent the larger genres of a political comedy show and a traditional persuasive environment, respectively. Average attitude change shifted to be more negative for both issues in both conditions. In addition, significant differences between conditions existed in the semantic differential method of attitude change measurement. Because differences between the conditions cannot be verified, the model receives some support. To aid the claim that social judgment theory is applicable, an ancillary analysis of attitude change was conducted. This analysis verified the methods used by Sherif and Hovland (1961) to first describe social judgment theory.

In addition, both ego involvement and political activity were related to attitude change. The relationship between ego involvement and attitude change confirms the relationship described by social judgment theory. The addition of political activity provides support for clarified definitions of involvement that include behavior aspects. However, only one significant relationship between political activity and attitude change existed.

**Credibility of the Source**

The credibility of the source was an interesting factor in the attitude change process. Three correlations existed in relation to credibility of the source. For the CBS News group, credibility was inversely related to humor. This is an expected correlation.
Generally, a news program is thought of as providing credible information without using humor to do so. In addition, the TDS group viewed Jon Stewart as credible and humorous. This is also an expected correlation. This matches characterizations of Stewart and his show found in the literature (e.g. Baym, 2005; Jones & Baym, 2010).

In the TDS condition, a correlation existed between Stewart’s credibility and participant activity with TDS. Participants who regularly watch the show (have a high involvement with TDS) might do so because they view Stewart as a credible source of information. Participants may view Stewart as a credible source of information because he offers an alternative perspective on the news. This alternative perspective could be highly desired by audience members because they distrust traditional news outlets. Stewart is also not a full member of the news media, which could cause some participants to view him as separated from the biased reports of some news media sources.

This correlation between Stewart’s credibility and participant activity with TDS may also indicate the existence of a parasocial relationship, which is a one-sided interpersonal relationship that forms between an audience member and a television character. According to Berger and Calabrese (1975), a parasocial relationship develops from attraction to the character and exposure to the television program. The parasocial relationship begins when an audience member is attracted to a character for a variety of reasons, including perceived similarity to the audience member and physical attractiveness. Horton and Wohl (1956) argued that this bond strengthens as the audience member continues to watch the show. The audience member perceives that he/she shares experiences with the character through the show. These shared experiences multiply as the audience member continues to watch the program. Rubin and McHugh (1987) found
that parasocial relationships develop much like an interpersonal relationship, even to the point that the audience member acts as if the character is a close friend.

In order to form a parasocial relationship, Robin and McHugh (1987) asserted that an active audience is required. This audience chooses characters and television programs that fulfill its needs. The involvement in selecting the program predisposes the audience members to form a parasocial relationship because they are already actively engaged in the program. Because Jon Stewart’s audience is described as active in the literature, this audience may form parasocial relationships with Stewart.

Limitations and Future Directions

The constructed scales presented some challenges to data collection and analysis. In the posttest, several participants did not indicate which statement in the ordered alternatives approach with which they most agreed. This direction was highlighted on the posttest, but was not followed. Twenty-three participants (24%) did not answer this question for the tax system issue and 30 (31%) did not answer this question for the job market issue. In the future, I recommend separating this question so most participants will answer it. In addition, party ideology (ranging from very liberal to very conservative) was not collected. Party ideology could have provided more detail when classifying participants, especially those who self-identified as independents.

Five sample characteristics may have altered the results of the study. Because participants were recruited from a university, generalizability was hindered. Participants from a university environment do not represent the entire population. Given that most (99%) of participants were students, the job market issue was more relevant to them than it might be to those who are not students. This study should be replicated using a pool of
participants from the entire population. Also, participants volunteered to complete the study. As a volunteer sample, participants may have had personal interest in and motivation to complete the study beyond what would be present in the population. This limits the generalizability of the results.

The sample size also limited data analysis. Sample size was limited based on the time line for data collection. In order to complete the project, all data were collected in two weeks from a volunteer population. Because of the sample size, calculations were limited. Many of the tests could not be controlled by condition (i.e. party affiliation) because with few participants in each category, I lacked statistical power. This limitation occurred most frequently when the data set was divided based on which show participants watched.

Of the initial 156 participants, only 97 completed the study, yielding an attrition rate of 38% (n = 59). Although some attrition was expected due to the nature of the project, the amount of attrition could be linked to the volunteer sample. Volunteer participants may have decided that completing the project was going to involve more time than they were willing to commit. In addition, the amount of time between completing the pretest and receiving a scheduling assignment for the posttest may have prompted some participants to leave the study.

Participants were also relatively passive audience members, rather than the active participant presented in the literature review. For both the political activity and TDS activity scales, average scores existed in the lower quarter of the range. In order to truly examine if audience activity is a factor in attitude change, more high activity participants should be recruited. By recruiting high activity participants, social judgment theory can
be further explored as a relevant model for attitude change for those participants who viewed *TDS*. In addition, all measures of attitude change should be controlled based on if the audience contained high or low activity members. Controlling for audience activity will allow further description of how social judgment theory applies to this context.

Five possible methodological issues may have impacted the results of this study. The treatment, watching less than twenty minutes of content, was a small change stimulus. A 20-minute segment viewed once, instead of multiple times, may not have been strong enough to prompt substantial attitude change. In addition, the sleeper effect may be at play in this study. As noted in many attitude change studies (e.g. Diab, 1965b; Granberg, 1982), attitude change is often not readily apparent immediately after the treatment. Instead, attitude change may appear later.

In addition, this study used quasi-equivalent groups. Random assignment was not used because I needed to consider participants’ schedules when arranging groups, making random assignment an impossible option. Also, this project lacked a control group. Without a control group, attitude change cannot be contributed solely to watching content from *TDS* or CBS News. Having a control group would show if attitude change resulted from the treatment or the natural maturation of participants. Finally, ecological validity may have been compromised. Participants viewed the clips in a meeting room or a classroom setting. Under normal conditions, most participants would be likely to watch *TDS* or CBS News on a television in a living room or via the Internet on their personal computer. In addition, participants would likely watch these shows by themselves or with acquaintances, friends or family members rather than with strangers. The environment used allowed more researcher control of the content participants viewed but limited the
naturalness of the setting. These five methodological issues should be addressed in future projects.

To further explore how social judgment theory applies to a political comedy context, I wish to further explore the audience activity element. The behavior measure as an indicator of audience involvement needs further development. Although instilling behavior is a persuasive goal that can be difficult to accomplish, using behavior-based involvement measure may provide a more descriptive picture of participant involvement than ego involvement. Although participants in this project reported high ego involvement, they also reported relatively low political participation. Describing how the most politically active citizens respond to satirical messages will provide a better understanding of how shows like *TDS* may impact the active portion of the electorate.

**Conclusion**

Through this project, some support has been shown for social judgment theory as a relevant model for political comedy shows. Jon Stewart and *TDS* requires participants to decipher humor in order to understand the show. Because of the necessity of comprehension, it is possible that attitude change behaved similarly to that of a traditional persuasive environment. Although further research is needed, social judgment theory may be applicable in this new context. This allows researchers to understand attitude change effects through a new model.

In addition, audience activity received some support as a key element of this model. By adding elements of audience activity to social judgment theory’s ego involvement, further clarification of attitude change results can be offered. By including political activity, highly involved participants can be divided into two categories: those
who believe strongly about an issue (high ego involvement) and those who act upon their beliefs (high ego involvement and political activity). By classifying participants as such, researchers can better understand citizens who are deeply involved in advocating for policy change.

Finally, a possible parasocial relationship between participants and Jon Stewart may exist. Participants who are involved with *TDS* also view Jon Stewart as a credible figure. This relationship may explain why Stewart’s audience utilizes many ways to participate in the show, from watching to taking part in the online discussion to attendance at October 2010’s Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear. Through understanding what prompts audience members to become involved with a television program to the point that they rearrange their lives to be able to participate in it on a variety of levels, researchers can further explain the power such parasocial relationships can have.
References


Appendix A: Availability Survey and Pretest Instrument

**Study Title**  Attitudinal Research and Satire

**Study Purpose and Rationale**
The purpose of this research project is to examine perceptions of audience members who view satiric content.

**Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**
To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be age 18 or older and willing to participate in both parts of the research project.

**Participation Procedures and Duration**
For this project, you will be asked to complete this online survey regarding your availability to participate in the second part of the research project. In addition, you will be asked to provide your perceptions of the tax system and the American job market. This survey will take approximately twenty minutes. Within a week of completing this survey, the researcher will contact you with a time and location to meet to complete the second part of the research project.

For the second part, you will participate in a research session on Ball State’s campus. Other participants will be present for this portion. You will be asked to arrive promptly to a designated location on Ball State’s campus. You will watch four clips from a television program and then complete a follow-up survey to complete. This process will last approximately 45 minutes.

In exchange for your participation, you may receive extra credit in the class you were recruited from. You also can be entered in a drawing for one $30 iTunes gift card.

**Data Confidentiality**
All data will be confidential. You will be assigned an identification number to be used for the entire study. No names or identification numbers will appear in publication.

**Storage of Data**
Paper data will be stored in a locked desk drawer in the researcher’s office for one year and will then be shredded. The data will also be entered into a software program and stored on the researcher’s password-protected computer for three years and then deleted. Only members of the research team will have access to the data.

**Potential Risks or Discomforts**
There are no anticipated discomforts associated with this study.

**Who to Contact Should You Experience Any Negative Effects from Participating in this Study**
Counseling services are available to you through the Counseling Center at Ball State University (765-285-1376) if you develop uncomfortable feelings during your participation in this research project. You will be responsible for the costs of any care that is provided [note: Ball State students may have some or all of these services provided to them at no cost]. It is understood that in the unlikely event that treatment is necessary as a result of your participation in this research project that Ball State University, its agents and employees will assume whatever responsibility is required by law.

**Benefits**
One benefit you may gain from participating in this study may be a greater interest in the political news environment.

**Voluntary Participation**
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

**IRB Contact Information**
For questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, 765-285-5070 or irb@bsu.edu.

For questions about the research study, please contact the principle investigator.

**Researcher Contact Information**
Principal Investigator: Marie Hoffman, Graduate Student Communication Studies Ball State University Muncie, IN 47306 Telephone: (765) 285-1900 Email: mehoffman@bsu.edu
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Carolyn Shue Communication Studies Ball State University Muncie, IN 47306 Telephone: (765) 285-1962 Email: ckshue@bsu.edu

Please read the following statement carefully:

By beginning this survey, I agree to participate in this research project entitled, “Attitudinal Research and Satire.” I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on above) in this study. By clicking continue, I give my consent to be contacted to participate in the second portion of this research project.
Please indicate when you will be available for one hour to complete the second portion of the research project. Include all the times you are available and willing to participate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Mon. 1/23</th>
<th>Tues. 1/24</th>
<th>Wed. 1/25</th>
<th>Thurs. 1/26</th>
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<th>Wed. 2/1</th>
<th>Thurs. 2/2</th>
<th>Fri. 2/3</th>
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<tr>
<td>1:00 – 2:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:00 – 3:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>3:00 – 4:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>4:00 – 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>5:00 – 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>6:00 – 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:00 – 8:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:00 – 9:00 p.m.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Name: ___________________________
Email: ___________________________

By clicking submit, I understand that I agree to be contacted about participating in a one hour-long research project. The researcher will contact me within one week of completing this survey.
Individuals form attitudes on many subjects. Below are two topics on which many people hold attitudes. For each set of statements, indicate which statements you agree with, those you disagree with and those you neither agree nor disagree with. In the blank beside each statement, write the following letters based on your beliefs:

A: you agree with the statement
D: you disagree with the statement
NS: you neither agree nor disagree with the statement

Current tax system

____ I would change nothing about the current tax system.
____ The tax system is effective.
____ The tax system is slightly effective.
____ Although not as effective as it could be, the tax system is satisfactory.
____ The tax system needs minor changes.
____ The tax system needs several changes.
____ We need a completely new tax system.

Current job market

____ There is still plenty of available jobs; competition is not an issue.
____ There is a moderate amount of jobs available.
____ There are a few jobs available.
____ It is neither easy nor difficult to become employed.
____ Becoming employed is somewhat difficult.
____ Becoming employed is extremely difficult.
____ Because there are not many jobs, the government needs to create jobs.

Please indicate the statement you most agree with.

Current tax system

____ I would change nothing about the current tax system.
____ The tax system is effective.
____ The tax system is slightly effective.
____ Although not as effective as it could be, the tax system is satisfactory.
____ The tax system needs minor changes.
____ The tax system needs several changes.
____ We need a completely new tax system.

Current job market

____ There is still plenty of available jobs; competition is not an issue.
____ There is a moderate amount of jobs available.
____ There are a few jobs available.
____ It is neither easy nor difficult to become employed.
____ Becoming employed is somewhat difficult.
____ Becoming employed is extremely difficult.
____ Because there are not many jobs, the government needs to create jobs.
Please circle the number that indicates your stance on each issue as it relates to each pair of descriptors.

Current tax system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unfair</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Unsuitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ineffective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contains loopholes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Does not contain loopholes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favors rich</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Does not favor anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favors poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Does not favor anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs altering</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Does not need altering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Clearly understandable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important issue in America</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Not an important issue in America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current job market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noncompetitive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many jobs available</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Few jobs available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to become employed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Hard to become employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs government intervention</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Does not need government intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot be changed by legislation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Can be changed by legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important issue in America</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Not an important issue in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stagnant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Flourishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You have just completed several questions that allowed you to present your attitude on two separate issues. In the following section you will be asked to rank how strongly you hold these attitudes.

Current tax system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loosely held</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Firmly held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would actively campaign to change current state of the tax system</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Would not actively campaign to change current state of the tax system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would discuss attitude with others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Would not discuss attitude with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important to me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Important to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relates to my value system</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Does not relate to my values system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in the tax system</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Changes in the tax system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because attitudes influence our actions, the following section asks questions regarding your political behavior. Please check one response to each question.

1. Are you registered to vote?
   ____ Yes
   ____ Intend to register
   ____ Do not intend to register

2. Did you vote in the 2008 presidential election?
   ____ Yes
   ____ No
   ____ Not old enough at the time
   ____ Not registered at the time

3. Did you vote in the 2010 congressional election?
   ____ Yes
   ____ No
   ____ Not old enough at the time
   ____ Not registered at the time

4. How often do you vote in local elections?
   ____ Always
   ____ Sometimes
   ____ Rarely
   ____ Never

5. During elections, do you ever try to show people why they should vote for one of the parties or candidates?
   ____ Often
   ____ Sometimes
   ____ Rarely
   ____ Never
6. Have you ever done work for one of the parties or candidates?
   ____ In most elections
   ____ In some elections
   ____ In a few elections
   ____ Never

7. In the past three or four years, have you attended any political meetings or rallies?
   ____ Yes
   ____ No

8. In the past three or four years, have you contributed money to a political party or candidate or to any other political cause?
   ____ Yes
   ____ No

9. Are you a member of a political group?
   ____ Yes
   ____ No

10. Have you ever personally gone to see, or spoken to, or written to some member of local government or some other person of influence in the community about some needs or problems?
    ____ Yes
    ____ No

11. What about some representatives or government officials outside of the local community—on the county, state, or national level? Have you ever contacted or written to such a person on some need or problem?
    ____ Yes
    ____ No

12. How often do you watch *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*?
    ____ I watch every show
    ____ I watch a few shows each week
    ____ I watch a few shows each month
    ____ I watch a few shows each year
    ____ I have never seen the show

13. How often do you discuss *The Daily Show*?
    ____ Very often
    ____ Often
    ____ Sometimes
    ____ Rarely
    ____ Never

14. How often do you participate in the online discussion board on *The Daily Show* website?
    ____ Very often
    ____ Often
    ____ Sometimes
    ____ Rarely
    ____ Never
Please circle one response to each question:

I am: Male Female
I am a: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate Student Faculty Staff
I consider myself a(n): Republican Democrat Independent Other: ______________________________

Please write in your age in years. Age: _______

Thank you for your initial responses. The researcher will contact you within one week to complete the second portion of the study.
Appendix B: Video Clips

*The Daily Show* clips (listed in viewing order):


Total viewing time: 19:10
CBS News clips (listed in viewing order):


Total viewing time: 12:06
Appendix C: Posttest Instrument

Name: _____________________________________

You just watched selected clips from a television show. Please rate this content on the following items. Circle the number that best indicates your stance.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trustworthy</th>
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<th>Untrustworthy</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Not funny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believable</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Unbelievable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not entertaining</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Entertaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not credible</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Credible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amusing</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Not amusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Unreliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Hilarious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comical</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Not comical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individuals form attitudes on many subjects. Below are two topics on which many people hold attitudes. For each set of statements, indicate which statements you agree with, those you disagree with, and those you neither agree nor disagree with. In the blank beside each statement, write the following letters based on your beliefs:

A: you agree with the statement
D: you disagree with the statement
NS: you neither agree nor disagree with the statement

In addition, place an asterisk (*) beside the statement that most closely represents your beliefs.

Current tax system:

____ I would change nothing about the current tax system.
____ The tax system is effective.
____ The tax system is slightly effective.
____ Although not as effective as it could be, the tax system is satisfactory.
____ The tax system needs minor changes.
____ The tax system needs several changes.
____ We need a completely new tax system.

Current job market:

____ There are still plenty of available jobs; competition is not an issue.
____ There is a moderate amount of jobs available.
____ There are a few jobs available.
____ It is neither easy nor difficult to become employed.
____ Becoming employed is somewhat difficult.
____ Becoming employed is extremely difficult.
Because there are not many jobs, the government needs to create jobs.

Please circle the number that indicates your stance on each issue as it relates to each pair of descriptors.

Current tax system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current tax system</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfair</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Unsuitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Ineffective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contains loopholes</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Does not contain loopholes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favors rich</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Does not favor anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favors poor</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Does not favor anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs altering</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Does not need altering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusing</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Clearly understandable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important issue in America</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Not an important issue in America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current job market:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current job market</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncompetitive</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many jobs available</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Few jobs available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to become employed</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Hard to become employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs government intervention</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Does not need government intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot be changed by legislation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Can be changed by legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important issue in America</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Not an important issue in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stagnant</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Flourishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You have just completed several questions that allowed you to present your attitude on two separate issues. In the following section you will be asked to rank how strongly you hold these attitudes.

Current tax system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current tax system</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loosely held</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Firmly held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would actively campaign to change current state of the tax system</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Would not actively campaign to change current state of the tax system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would discuss attitude with others</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Would not discuss attitude with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important to me</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Important to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relates to my value system</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Does not relate to my values system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in the tax system do not affect me</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Changes in the tax system directly affect me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current job market:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loosely held</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</th>
<th>Firmly held</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would actively campaign to change current state of the job market</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Would not actively campaign to change current state of the job market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would discuss attitude with others</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Would not discuss attitude with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important to me</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Important to me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relates to my value system</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Does not relate to my values system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government interventions in the job market do not affect me</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Government interventions in the job market affect me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for your responses and your participation in this research project. Please place this survey in the envelop provided and wait for further instructions from the researcher.
## Appendix D: Results Tables

### Table 1

Differences Between Groups: Ordered Alternatives Approach Participants’ Most Agreed with Position Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Agreed With Position Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax System</td>
<td>$t(72) = .716, p = .476$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Market</td>
<td>$t(65) = 1.060, p = .293$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2

Differences Between Groups for Change in Number of Statements (Ordered Alternatives Approach)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tax System Issue</th>
<th>Job Market Issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Agrees</td>
<td>$t(95) = .420, p = .675$</td>
<td>$t(95) = .223, p = .824$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Disagrees</td>
<td>$t(95) = -.851, p = .397$</td>
<td>$t(95) = -.565, p = .573$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of No Stance Statements</td>
<td>$t(95) = .378, p = .707$</td>
<td>$t(95) = .337, p = .737$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3

Semantic Differential Method for Measuring Attitude Change – Independent t-tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Difference in Attitude Change Between TDS and CBS News conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax System</td>
<td>$t(95) = .673, p = .503$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Market</td>
<td>$t(95) = 1.413, p = .161$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4

Semantic Differential Method for Measuring Attitude Change – Dependent t-tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Daily Show</th>
<th>CBS News</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax System</td>
<td>$t(49) = 1.912, p = .062$</td>
<td>$t(46) = 3.706, p = .001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Market</td>
<td>$t(49) = 1.934, p = .059$</td>
<td>$t(46) = 3.37, p = .002$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

Differences Between Moderate and Extreme Participants – Tax System Issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Differences Between Moderate and Extreme Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Agrees (Pre)</td>
<td>$t(95) = -0.798, p = 0.427$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Disagrees (Pre)</td>
<td>$t(95) = 2.873, p = 0.005$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of No Stance Statements (Pre)</td>
<td>$t(95) = -1.633, p = 0.106$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Agrees (Post)</td>
<td>$t(72) = -2.04, p = 0.045$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Disagrees (Post)</td>
<td>$t(72) = 2.150, p = 0.035$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of No Stance Statements (Post)</td>
<td>$t(72) = -0.988, p = 0.326$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

Differences Between Moderate and Extreme Participants – Job Market Issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Differences Between Moderate and Extreme Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Agrees (Pre)</td>
<td>$t(95) = -0.921, p = 0.359$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Disagrees (Pre)</td>
<td>$t(95) = 0.073, p = 0.942$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of No Stance Statements (Pre)</td>
<td>$t(95) = 0.637, p = 0.526$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Agrees (Post)</td>
<td>$t(65) = 3.326, p = 0.001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Disagrees (Post)</td>
<td>$t(65) = -0.668, p = 0.506$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of No Stance Statements (Post)</td>
<td>$t(65) = -2.256, p = 0.027$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7

Differences Between Groups: Ego Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Differences Between Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax System Ego Involvement (Pre)</td>
<td>$t(95) = -1.160, p = .249$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Market Ego Involvement (Pre)</td>
<td>$t(95) = 0.480, p = .632$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax System Ego Involvement (Post)</td>
<td>$t(95) = -0.613, p = .541$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Market Ego Involvement (Post)</td>
<td>$t(94) = -0.366, p = .716$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8

Change in Reported Ego Involvement Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ego Involvement Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax System Issue</td>
<td>$t(96) = -3.66, p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Market Issue</td>
<td>$t(96) = 0.563, p = .574$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9

Correlations by Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Daily Show</th>
<th>CBS News</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in tax system most agreed with position – Change in job market most agreed position</td>
<td>$r = .647$</td>
<td>$r = .602$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic differential tax system change score – Semantic differential job market change score</td>
<td>$r = .354$</td>
<td>$r = .570$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p = .012$</td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in tax system most agreed with position – Political activity</td>
<td>$r = -.462$</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p = .008$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax system ego involvement (after) – Job market ego involvement (after)</td>
<td>$r = .532$</td>
<td>$r = .397$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
<td>$p = .006$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political activity – Tax system ego involvement</td>
<td>$r = .379$</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p = .007$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political activity – Job market ego involvement</td>
<td>$r = .323$</td>
<td>$r = .323$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p = .024$</td>
<td>$p = .027$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDS activity – Source’s credibility</td>
<td>$r = .340$</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p = .017$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source’s credibility – Segment’s humor</td>
<td>$r = .337$</td>
<td>$r = -.503$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p = .018$</td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>