

**Selecting Serious or Satirical, Supporting or Stirring News?**

**Selective Exposure to Partisan versus Mockery Online News Videos**

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## **Selecting Serious or Satirical, Supporting or Stirring News?**

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#### Abstract

The present investigation combines cognitive dissonance theory with entertainment-education frameworks to study selection and effects of news. Selective exposure to satirical and partisan news was examined with online clips to test hypotheses on overcoming resistance to persuasive messages. An experiment ( $n = 146$ ) presented news choices, varied in stance (conservative vs. liberal) and format (serious partisan news vs. satirical news). Results show political interest fosters selection of serious partisan news. Clips with partisan alignment were more frequently selected; only for the satire news clips, Democrats did not exhibit such confirmation bias. Selecting satire news affected internal political efficacy, and selecting online news clips induced attitude reinforcement according to message stance.

### **Selecting Serious or Satirical, Supporting or Stirring Messages?**

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Numerous current media embed political messages in entertainment formats (see Holbert, 2005, for an overview). Ranging from soft news to fictional drama about politics, from satire news to political references in late night comedy, a wide variety of shows and messages convey political information and views while seemingly appealing first and foremost to entertainment needs along the lines of amusement and emotional involvement. Scholars have expressed hopes that embedding political information into entertaining formats can help to involve otherwise unengaged citizens more in the political process (e.g., Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005). At the same time, political polarization among citizens causes concerns and is said to partially result from selective exposure to mediated messages on political matters, which is fostered by the internet (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). Political messages embedded in entertainment may permeate such confirmation bias that is widely demonstrated for traditional political messages.

The current study will tackle this proposition, based on theoretical lens that merges cognitive dissonance theory with the entertainment-education framework. In the following, we review the scholarly discussion of political entertainment, before introducing both entertainment-education and cognitive dissonance theory. Hypotheses derived from these perspectives will be examined in an investigation on selective exposure to serious partisan news and satirical news, presented through an online video site featuring clips on three different political issues. It is the first study to observe media users' selections of serious and satirical news when accessible simultaneously; thus it reflects real-life media choice environments—with plenty of TV and online channels—in which entertainment and informative messages compete for attention (Prior, 2007). Additionally, it is also the first study to examine the confirmation bias with online videos.

### **Political Entertainment**

There is wide consensus among scholars that political values and information are commonly featured in formats that are traditionally associated with entertainment—fictional movies, fictional TV series, as well as entertainment show events (e.g., Holbert, 2005). This phenomenon may be a cause either for hope or concern—on the one hand, such political information embedded in entertainment could serve as a gateway and trigger greater interest in political topics and discourse among otherwise disengaged or alienated segments of the electorate (e.g., Bartsch & Schneider, 2014; Feldman & Young, 2008; Xenos & Becker, 2009). On the other hand, it may contribute to trivialization of political topics as a matter of amusement or peripheral importance, or possibly increase alienation and cynicism (Balmas, 2014; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Guggenheim, Kwak, & Campbell, 2011). There is consensus, however, that such political entertainment is not without effects. It has been shown to affect political knowledge (e.g., Young, 2004), as well as political attitudes (e.g., Mutz & Nir, 2010).

Specifically, the wide popularity of satire news (e.g., Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley, & Matsa, 2014) has garnered much scholarly attention: Viewers acquire political information from watching these shows (e.g. Hardy, Gottfried, Winneg, & Jamieson, 2014) and may benefit in their internal political efficacy (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Becker, 2011), thus assess their own ability to understand and influence politics more positively. Both these outcomes are highly desirable in terms of fostering political engagement, which underlines satire news exposure's societal relevance and importance for communication science. Thus, the present study examines selection and effects of satire news, including impacts on attitudes and internal political efficacy.

“Satire is such an amorphous genre [...] no two scholars define it in the same words” (Feinberg, 1967, p. 18). Political entertainment scholars also noted that it is difficult to define

(Holbert, Tchernev, Walther, Esralew, & Benski, 2013). In simple terms, satire is an “artistic form, chiefly literary and dramatic, in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, [...] irony, parody, [...] sometimes with an intent to inspire social reform” (Satire, 2016). For political entertainment, scholars have juxtaposed political satire with traditional forms of political messages such as opinion-editorials or fact-oriented news (e.g., Boukes, Boomgaarden, Moorman, & de Vreese, 2015; Holbert et al., 2013), and have further differentiated it into juvenalian satire with harsh attacks, versus horatian satire with gentler humor and wit. Everyday satire, however, will often come as a mix of harsher and gentler ridicule. The present work will use an empirically based conceptualization in which recipients categorize messages as fitting ‘satire’ (see method section).

### **Overcoming Resistance Through Entertainment Contexts**

The branch of political communication that focuses on political entertainment is a flourishing research field—interestingly, it appears related to the recent surge in research about entertainment-education in health communication (de Graaf, Sanders, & Hoeken, 2016). In these persuasive efforts, health information is embedded in entertaining, often narrative contexts to reach audience segments that otherwise avoid health education messages. The hope is that the entertainment context will veil the persuasive intent of the health communication and thus reduce recipients’ reactance (Kreuter, Green, Cappella, Slater, Wise, Storey, et al., 2007). Similarly, political messages embedded in entertainment may reach recipients who do not attend to political content otherwise or who resent its persuasive purpose (see also Boukes et al., 2015; Holbert et al., 2013). Along these lines, Nabi, Moyer-Gusé, and Byrne (2007) argued that humorous social commentary in late-night shows might be processed with less scrutiny, yet it might also be more easily discounted. Accordingly, entertaining and humorous political messages might permeate

more easily than traditional political messages with a serious tone, which are widely shown to be subject to a confirmation bias. Hence, embedding persuasion messages into entertainment might make them far more effective because recipients will be less likely to suspect and guard against such persuasion (Dal Cin, Zanna, & Fong, 2004), regardless of the context of health or politics.

Yet intriguing differences between the domains of health and political communication should be noted: While there is little debate that persuasive messages promoting healthier behaviors are beneficial to the individual and society as a whole, no such normative consensus exists in the realm of political persuasive messages. Unlike health information, political persuasive communication is typically partisan in nature or campaigns for a particular policy that has not reached consensus in the electorate, so entertainment-education in the political context is akin to what critics might call entertainment-propaganda. Then again, political persuasion that aims to increase political knowledge, deliberation, and engagement pursues outcomes generally deemed positive. An additional difference between persuasion in the health versus in the political context is that the former pertains to personal decisions, behaviors, and even longevity outlooks, whereas the latter pertains to holding ‘correct’ and socially acceptable opinions with societal but less personal implications. Hence, health messages may generally be more likely to hit ‘close to home’ whereas political messages are not as deeply personal and instead public affairs matters. This difference could result in different selection and processing patterns for health and political messages, respectively, which in turn shape entertainment-embedded persuasion effects. Additionally, political satire in particular may be rather implicit in its meaning and thus open to interpretations that suit the recipients (Holbert, 2005; LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam, 2009).

Regardless of what persuasive outcome a political message embedded in entertainment pursues, there may be much to be learned from the research on health entertainment-education.

To assess hopes that political messages might reach the electorate better when interjected in entertainment, it is worthwhile to inspect what health entertainment-education research has found. For this purpose, we draw on a review of this work by de Graaf et al. (2016): It is remarkable that none of the narrative persuasion studies considered what has been prominently discussed as a key advantage of entertainment-education—that is its ability to overcome recipients' avoidance of messages that challenge existing attitudes and behaviors and that are easily identified as persuasive in nature (Dal Cin et al., 2004). The related empirical work has consistently used forced-exposure experimental designs, which cannot capture whether entertainment messages can overcome avoidance better than non-entertainment messages. Given this gap in the literature, the present work will examine both the selection and subsequent persuasive effects of messages embedded in entertainment versus non-entertainment formats.

Additionally, only a limited set of research (per de Graaf et al.'s review of 42 studies, Table 2) allows inferences on whether persuasive claims are indeed more effective when embedded in entertainment. This set of 18 studies provided control groups with roughly the same claims (through advocacy, evidence-based or educational messages) that experimental groups received through some narrative. The clear majority of this set of studies found equivalent results for experimental and control groups, suggesting that the entertainment context did not render the messages more persuasive. On the other hand, many reviewed studies (13) did not provide control groups with the same claims in a non-entertaining context and thus cannot shed light on whether embedding persuasion in entertainment is a superior approach—it is not surprising then that experimental groups in these studies were generally more influenced than so-called control groups, which were not even presented with the claims and naturally scored lower on targeted outcomes. And even though the evidence so far does not suggest that entertainment-embedded

persuasion is more effective, prior work neglected what theorists believe to be the key strength of entertainment-education—overcoming avoidance of the persuasive messages in the first place.

### **Selective Exposure to Political Information**

The goal of overcoming avoidance of certain messages actually has a long tradition, both in health and political communication research. Going back to Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance, which has been applied to both contexts, it has long been argued that recipients prefer messages that align with their pre-existing attitudes while avoiding attitude-challenging content. Although this proposition was not consistently supported in earlier political communication research (see Donsbach, 2009, for a review), recent work has yielded consensus on such confirmation bias (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015). Moreover, the increased ease of message selection in the internet era is thought to allow recipients to block out counterattitudinal messages even more effectively (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008), for instance, via social media (Messing & Westwood, 2014) and automated filtering algorithms (Pariser, 2011). This trend raises concerns for a functional democracy, which is based on an informed, deliberate citizenry.

In light of these concerns of increasingly biased information exposure in the internet era, the ability to embed political messages into entertainment contexts may give reason to hope to engage citizens more with counterattitudinal views, for a more balanced opinion formation and greater discourse in society. In other words, can entertainment contexts overcome the confirmation bias that has been consistently demonstrated for traditional political messages? Only a few studies have considered what may motivate viewers to attend to political entertainment formats. For instance, Young (2013) applied a uses-and-gratifications perspective to explore why college students choose or avoid to watch satire news shows. While not exactly pertaining to motivations, Holbert et al. (2013) found political TV satire viewing correlated to



exposure to satirical sitcoms, exposure to liberal cable news programming, and affinity for political humor. Only one study so far speaks explicitly to the question of whether media users are more likely to choose counterattitudinal political messages if they are presented as entertaining: Stroud and Muddiman (2013) proposed that it can both be argued that satirical news will foster greater confirmation bias and that serious news will foster greater confirmation bias. They conducted an experiment with college students who were exposed to a website with either eight serious news texts or eight satirical news texts. In both the serious news condition and the satirical news condition, the participants saw two articles on four topics—health care, immigration, the political parties, and the economy—such that there was a conservative-leaning message and a liberal-leaning message for each topic. The results showed that participants in the serious news condition chose more counterattitudinal articles than those in the satirical news condition, 1.85 on average compared to 1.24. Hence, they concluded that a greater confirmation bias was evident when media users were choosing from satire news.

### **Current Investigation**

The discussion above marries entertainment-education frameworks with cognitive dissonance theory, to aid with increasing interest in political information and exposure to attitude-challenging messages. Next, hypotheses will be derived and tested empirically. Our investigation will allow participants to selectively attend to messages that are presented as entertaining ‘satire’ or informative ‘news’ (to examine selections) while keeping content that is actually presented as comparable as possible (to examine effects). It will shed light on whether political messages ‘framed’ as entertainment attract recipients with low political interest (as proposed, for example, by Baum, 2002). It has been argued that political entertainment could

serve as a ‘gateway’ to engage segments of society that are otherwise politically unengaged (e.g., Xenos & Becker, 2009). The first hypothesis serves to test this proposition:

H1: Compared to recipients with higher political interest, recipients with low political interest select satirical news more frequently.

The present study also extends work on selective exposure to political information by examining selections on an online video site—a context that has not been specifically studied before—through the following hypothesis:

H2: Online news clips with a political stance that aligns with media users’ partisanship are more frequently selected (confirmation bias).

Yet at the heart of the present research is the question of whether political messages permeate the confirmation bias differently when embedded in entertainment, compared to the widely demonstrated for confirmation bias for traditional political messages. To address this issue, the present study extends the research on selective exposure to satirical messages, specifically the investigation by Stroud and Muddiman on the question “Does selective exposure to satirical news differ from selective exposure to serious news?” (2013, p. 273). Their work used *text* stimuli, whereas the current study has participants choose from video clips (based on text leads) because political entertainment appears to be predominantly consumed via audiovisual stimuli (although prominent satire magazines and websites exist). Satire news shows and late-night comedy are at the forefront of the scholarly discussion of political entertainment and attract large television audiences. To mimic the great ease with which media users can now select messages online, the study presents audiovisual stimuli through an online video site.

In line with Stroud and Muddiman (2013), we also follow an approach used earlier by Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng (2009) in which opposite-stance messages were offered for

selection, such that message choices could be categorized as either attitude-consistent or counterattitudinal per preexposure attitude measures. A crucial contrast to Stroud and Muddiman (2013) is the fact that the present study offered both partisan and satirical news *simultaneously* as choices. Stroud and Muddiman (2013) varied serious versus satirical news as a between-subjects factor and presented half of their participants a ‘serious news’ website and the other half with a ‘satirical news’ website. In contrast, the current experiment conceptualizes the choice between serious partisan news and satirical news as a within-subjects factor by making both ‘news’ and ‘satire’ options available *at the same time*. After all, media users in everyday situations can freely pick from shows like “The Daily Show” and the like on the one hand, and from a variety of news sources—some partisan—on the other *simultaneously*. Additionally, the present work examines impacts of selective exposure on political attitudes and political efficacy, while Stroud and Muddiman (2013) only looked at political tolerance toward other partisans.

Theory and related empirical evidence on whether selective exposure to satirical news differs from selective exposure to serious news derive contradictory predictions. On the one hand, satire sources can be considered low-credibility sources that make counterattitudinal messages appear easily refuted, resulting in a reduced confirmation bias per Lowin’s (1967) approach-avoidance model. This model, however, has not found much empirical support (e.g., Westerwick, Kleinman, & Knobloch-Westerwick, 2013, Knobloch-Westerwick, Mothes, Johnson, Westerwick, & Donsbach, 2015). Additionally, models from entertainment-education (e.g., Kreuter et al., 2007; Slater & Rouner, 2002) suggest that attitude-challenging messages, which would otherwise be avoided, instigate less reactance if framed as entertainment. Further, some empirical work has found that satire viewers of opposite stances perceive the same satirical message as supporting their views (LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam, 2009), indicating that satire

may be ambiguous enough to please any political preference. Hence, several theoretical perspectives and empirical work suggest that satirical news messages which challenge recipients' views will be avoided less than serious news messages.

On the other hand, Stroud and Muddiman (2013) found in their study with serious and satirical news texts that participants chose more counterattitudinal messages in the serious news context than in the satire news context, while attitude-consistent choices showed no difference. As satire can be particularly hostile (Holbert et al., 2013), recipients might be even more conscientious in avoiding attitude-challenging materials that are satirical. Further, messages that humiliate a liked person or group should be found less amusing (e.g., Zillmann & Cantor, 1972).

In light of the conflicting theoretical perspectives and evidence, we will test competing hypotheses on whether the confirmation bias is strong for informational or entertaining contexts:

H3a: The confirmation bias postulated in H2 is more pronounced for serious partisan news clips than for satirical news clips.

H3b: The confirmation bias postulated in H2 is more pronounced for satirical news clips than for serious partisan news clips.

Beyond selective exposure, we will also examine subsequent effects by testing H4 and H5 outlined below. For the purpose of studying message effects, much care will be taken to make the satirical news and serious news messages—beyond the targeted experimental differentiation—as equivalent as possible. This approach will avoid issues with unequivocal control conditions that the narrative persuasion research faces, as discussed above.

In light of the discussion of whether political news and satire news in particular help or hinder broader political views such as political cynicism and alienation (e.g., Guggenheim, Kwak, & Campbell, 2011), the present investigation will examine whether internal political

efficacy is affected by selecting and viewing satirical news. Scholars studying political entertainment have taken particular interest in internal political efficacy (e.g., Becker, 2014) because it is a key factor in political engagement and behavior (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Several studies (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Becker, 2011) found satire news exposure positively related to internal political efficacy. Hence, H4 postulates such impact for selective exposure.

H4: Selective exposure to satirical news increases internal political efficacy.

Lastly, while several investigations have demonstrated that selective exposure along the lines of a confirmation bias strengthens preexisting views (e.g., Knobloch-Westerwick, 2012), research on user-generated satire online video impacts on attitudes has not shown such impacts (Rill & Cardiel, 2013). Hence, the current study tests again whether attitude shifts may occur from exposure to serious partisan news and satire news presented in online clips.

H5: Selective exposure to (a) serious partisan and (b) satirical online news clips reinforces political attitudes.

## **Method**

### **Overview**

A lab experiment with 146 participants served to test the hypotheses, while stimuli were pretested with 102 participants. In the main experiment, after baseline measures about political attitudes and efficacy and a short distractor task, participants were presented with an online video site. In total, they were shown three overview pages on which they could choose to watch videos. Each overview page provided eight selections of news videos on a single topic (climate change, gun control, or immigration), with four presented as serious partisan news clips and four as satirical news clips. For the topics of gun control and climate change, participants made an initial choice, watched a corresponding video clip, and then returned to the results page to make a

second choice. They then completed this process for the second topic (either gun control or climate change), and finally were presented with a last overview page with eight video choices for the topic of immigration, where only an initial choice is made without a corresponding video. After this, the participant completed a series of posttest and demographic questions.

### **Participants**

One hundred forty-six participants were recruited from undergraduate communication courses at a large Midwestern university and received either course credit or extra credit for participation in the main experiment. Two thirds of the participants were female (67.1%) and were predominantly aged between 18 and 25 ( $M = 21.05$ ,  $SD = 2.99$ ). A separate sample of 102 students served to pretest the stimuli content, in return for extra credit, and had a similar demographic makeup of gender (62.7% female) and age ( $M = 21.75$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ).

### **Procedure**

The main experiment was conducted as a computerized lab session and was presented in four separate parts—the baseline questionnaire on attitudes, then a distracter task, the selective exposure task framed as research on “Navigation and Evaluation of Video Clip Site Result Pages”, and finally post-exposure measures. This setup served to veil the purpose of the research to avoid demand characteristics. Participants were seated in cubicles with a laptop and headphones. After general verbal instructions, participants took the computerized session.

First, baseline attitudes measures about the target topics (climate change, gun control, and immigration) were presented along with five distracter topics. Participants next indicated their attitude importance and certainty for each topic and completed political efficacy items.

Second, in the distracter task, participants evaluated nine black-and-white patterns that were allegedly considered for website designs.

Third, participants read a short instructional page before beginning the selective exposure task. Participants were presented with an overview page from a video clips webpage (see Figure 1 for an example screen shot) and instructed to select the video which seemed most interesting to them. The overview page depicted eight leads for either climate change or gun control, with both the topic and the arrangement of the eight leads randomly generated to eliminate order effects. Upon making a selection, they were taken to a page which played the corresponding video. Participants watched the video in its entirety, or until they wished to proceed (their time on the page was unobtrusively tracked), and were able to rate the video (from one to 10 stars). Afterwards, they returned to the list of videos available from an overview page where their first choice was marked as ‘watched’ and were able to make a second choice. Participants were informed after their second selection that they had reached a time limit for that portion and were taken to the next overview page (the topic out of climate change and gun control not yet presented) without a second video. Here, they repeated the same procedure (made an initial choice, watched the corresponding video, made a second choice without video exposure) and were finally asked to choose from an overview page of videos on immigration. With this final choice, three different topics were included, aiding with the breadth of message topics and increasing the possible range in the key dependent measures (zero to five). However, to avoid participant fatigue, they did not actually watch a video on immigration and were informed they had reached a time limit. At this point, the selective exposure task was completed.

In the fourth part, participants completed another set of questions on political attitudes on the issues and their political efficacy. Additional measures pertained to media consumption, attitudes towards news and political satire, general interest in politics, and demographics including partisanship. Lastly, they were thanked for their participation.

### **Experimental Manipulation**

**Stimuli pretest.** Stimuli pretest procedure and measures are presented in Appendix A.

**Video leads and source cues.** In the main experiment, for each of the three topics (gun control, climate change, and immigration) online news video selections were made from an overview page with eight choices (see example in Figure 1), which included two leads for each of four categories: conservative partisan news, conservative satire news, liberal partisan news, and liberal satire news. Thus, the video choices were presented as either serious partisan news or satirical news, and as either having a conservative or a liberal stance. On the overview page, each available video clip was identified as either ‘news’ or ‘satire’ along with a serious partisan news source cue or a satire news cue. The ideological stance of each video was not explicitly mentioned; instead, it was indicated by a source cue and a lead (see appendices for stimuli pretest details, specifically Appendices B and C).

**Video captions and source cues.** The video stimuli were created for the climate change and gun control topics using publically available footage from C-SPAN. Thus, similar to popular satire formats, actual news footage was used; the ridiculing commentary was incorporated in news ticker style, in line with actual visual TV news satire show elements (Baym & Jones, 2013). In the serious news version, these video captions featured news-style texts. To keep the length of the research session manageable while avoiding respondent fatigue, the third topic of immigration did not actually feature video materials; instead, after making an alleged choice, respondents received a message that time limitation would not allow them to watch the video.

For climate change, a roundtable broadcast on July 6, 2014 was utilized which involved a moderator-led discussion between spokespeople for both a liberal and conservative group (C-SPAN, 2014a). This roundtable discussion was edited down to a 2:32 minute video, ensuring



equal time dedicated to both spokespeople. For gun control, two separate interviews were edited together into a single video clip with break cuts, similar in style to clip sequences used in both satirical news-style programs and serious partisan news shows. These clips were taken from interviews with a gun control activist and gun rights activist both broadcast during 2014, on July 2 (C-SPAN, 2014c) and December 13 (C-SPAN, 2014b), respectively. These were edited down for time and equal time devoted to each pundit, and packed together into a 2:59 minute video.

These two baseline videos were then manipulated to create four versions of each that corresponded with the four categories of stimuli available: conservative serious news, conservative satire news, liberal serious news, and liberal satire news. This manipulation used a “lower third” graphic on screen (see screen shot in Figure 2) with a source logo shown throughout. For the satire news versions, the source logos were either “Mock the Week” or “The Spoof,” for partisan news versions, the logos were either “Fox News” or “MSNBC,” aligned with the targeted political stance of the clip and the associated lead, such that the “Fox News” logo appeared with the conservative clip and the “MSNBC” logo appeared in the liberal clip.

Further, video captions (see Appendix D) served to present the clip as a serious news clip or as a satirical news clip, either leaning conservative or leaning liberal. Captions for these four categories were developed by the research team and pretested (see appendices for details). The captions were displayed to the right of the logo sequentially, and during each video, a full-screen title card also appeared which included the source logo and the lead which was selected from the overview page. The appearance of captions was linked to the content of the underlying video clip, such that humorous captions which disparaged specific individuals in the clip appear in tandem with their on-screen presence. Display times of the title card and the captions were uniform between videos on the same topic, such that the first caption appeared and disappeared

at the same timestamp in each gun control video, as did the second caption, and so on. This resulted in eight videos for each topic which were identical with one another but for our specific manipulations (there were two videos for each condition by topic, differing only because the title card text referred to the caption which the participant selected on the overview).

### Measures in Main Study

**Partisanship.** Partisanship was captured at the end of the session, along with demographics: (1) “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?” If neither *Republican* nor *Democrat* was picked, the next question was (2) “Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?” with a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = *closer to Republican Party* to 7 = *closer to Democrat Party*; participants with scores below 4 were categorized as Republican-leaning while those with scores above 4 as Democrat-leaning. For all Republican and Republican-leaning participants ( $n = 61$ , 42%), partisanship was coded -1. For all Democrat or Democrat-leaning participants ( $n = 70$ , 48%), partisanship was coded 1. Ultimately, 15 participants (10%) could not be categorized, as they picked ‘4’ on question (2) and were thus placed into a neutral category (coded 0).

**Selective exposure.** The five clip choices each individual participant made were recorded and categorized for measures of selective exposure to (a) liberal partisan news (26% of the choices, or  $M = 1.30$  of the five individual selections,  $SD = 1.02$ ), (b) conservative partisan news (27% of the choices, or  $M = 1.36$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ), (c) liberal satire news (22% of the choices,  $M = 1.12$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ), and (d) conservative satire news (25%, or  $M = 1.23$ ,  $SD = .85$ ).

Further measures were derived as follows: Consonant partisan news exposure was equivalent to (a) for Democrat-leaning participants and equivalent to (b) for Republican-leaning

participants; and vice versa for dissonant partisan news. Then consonant satire news exposure was equivalent to (c) for Democrat-leaning participants and equivalent to (d) for Republican-leaning participant, and vice versa for dissonant satire news.

**Political attitudes.** Respondents were asked to provide their attitudes towards a list of issues on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly oppose*, 7 = *strongly support*) before and after the selective exposure task. Attitude measures regarding the three target topics (climate change; gun control; immigration) were embedded in five distractor topics. The target items were *governmental measures to combat climate change*, *decrease gun control*, and *deport illegal immigrants*. To derive a condensed attitude measure, two of the items were reverse-coded to always have higher scores indicate a more liberal attitude and then all pre-selective exposure attitude measures were collapsed, and so were the post-selective exposure measures (see descriptives in Table 1).

**Internal political efficacy.** Four items ascertained internal political efficacy (adopted from Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991) on an 11-point scale, with 0 = *strongly disagree* and 10 = *strongly agree*, both prior to and following the selective exposure task. Thus, two condensed internal political efficacy measures were collected, one for internal efficacy *before* and another for internal efficacy *after* the selective exposure task (descriptives reported in Table 1).

**Clip ratings.** After viewing a clip, participants rated it on a 10-star scale, similar to giving feedback on many popular websites (e.g., IMDB.COM uses 10 star ratings). On average, the gun control clip received  $M = 5.5$  stars ( $SD = 2.2$ ) and the climate change clip received  $M = 5.47$  stars ( $SD = 2.2$ ), which plausibly suggests that the stimuli quality was convincing. The satire versions received average ratings close to the mid-point of the scale (for gun control  $M = 5.3$ ,  $SD = 2.2$ ; for climate change  $M = 4.9$ ,  $SD = 2.1$ ), attesting to their convincing appeal.

## Results

### Selective Exposure

**Partisan news vs. satire news.** The first hypothesis suggested that, compared to recipients with higher political interest, recipients with low political interest select satirical news more frequently. An ANOVA with the number of times serious partisan news clips and the number of times satire news clips were selected as repeated measures examined H1. It also controlled for partisanship (Democrat-leaning, Republican-leaning, or neutral), political interest, and biological sex of the participants. Participants tended to select serious news more often,  $M = 2.66$  ( $SD = 1.21$ ), than satire news,  $M = 2.34$  ( $SD = 1.21$ ),  $F(1, 139) = 3.62$ ,  $p = .059$ ,  $\eta^2 = .025$ . In line with H1, lower political interest led to picking satire news clips more frequently,  $F(1, 139) = 5.28$ ,  $p = .023$ ,  $\eta^2 = .037$ ,  $B = -.10$ . No other effects in this analysis were significant.

**Confirmation bias.** Regarding H2 about a general confirmation bias, an ANOVA with number of conservative versus liberal choices as repeated measures and partisanship (Republican- vs. Democrat-leaning) as between-group factor was conducted. An interaction emerged between message stance and partisanship,  $F(1, 129) = 14.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ : Republican-leaning participants picked more conservative clips,  $M = 2.97$  ( $SD = 1.08$ ), than liberal clips,  $M = 2.03$  ( $SD = 1.08$ ), which was significantly different ( $p = .001$ ) per subsequent test with Sidak correction. Democrat-leaning participants picked fewer conservative clips,  $M = 2.23$  ( $SD = 1.14$ ) than liberal clips,  $M = 2.77$  ( $SD = 1.14$ ), which differed at  $p = .044$ . Thus H2 was supported.

**Confirmation bias for partisan vs. satire news.** The third hypothesis pertained to two competing suggestions: The confirmation bias will be either more pronounced for serious partisan news clips than for satirical news clips (H3a) or, to the contrary, more pronounced for satirical news clips than for serious partisan news clips (H3b). To test H3, the ANOVA model above was extended with a within-subjects factor for partisan vs. satire news, such that now four

different selective exposure measures were included: (a) liberal partisan news, (b) conservative partisan news, (c) liberal satire news, and (d) conservative satire news. Further, political interest was included as a covariate. This analysis showed again the impact of political interest on selection of partisan vs. satire news through an interaction between the within-subjects factor for format and the covariate,  $F(1, 128) = 4.67, p = .033, \eta^2 = .035$ , per H1. It also revealed a confirmation bias per H2 through an interaction between partisanship and message stance,  $F(1, 128) = 14.48, p < .001, \eta^2 = .102$ . The three-way interaction between partisanship, message stance, and message format fell short of significance,  $p = .103$ . Subsequent tests with Sidak correction showed that the partisans differed in choosing conservative partisan news, with Republican-leaning picking them more frequently than Democrat-leaning participants ( $M = 1.66, SD = 1.05$ , vs.  $M = 1.13, SD = 1.03, p = .004$ ); when choosing liberal partisan news, the partisans differed with Democrat-leaning picking them more frequently than Republican-leaning participants ( $M = 1.57, SD = 1.15$ , vs.  $M = 1.06, SD = .81, p = .005$ ). Further, Republican-leaning participants exhibited a confirmation bias both when choosing from serious news (by picking conservative partisan news,  $M = 1.67, SD = 1.05$ , more often than liberal partisan news,  $M = 1.07, SD = .81, p = .007$ ) and when choosing from satire news (by picking conservative satire news,  $M = 1.31, SD = .87$ , more often than liberal satire news,  $M = .97, SD = .91, p = .045$ ). However, Democrat-leaning participants had only a significant confirmation bias when choosing from serious partisan news, by picking liberal partisan news more than conservative partisan news ( $M = 1.57, SD 1.15$ , vs.  $M = 1.13, SD = 1.03, p = .028$ ). Their satire news choices had no significant confirmation bias,  $p = .530$ . Hence, although the findings speak more for H3a than for the competing hypothesis H3b, the related three-way interaction fell short of significance.

### **Political Efficacy Shift**

Regarding H4 that selective exposure to satirical news increases internal political efficacy, a regression analysis utilized the post-selective exposure internal efficacy measure as criterion while using the selections of conservative and liberal satire clips as predictors while controlling for biological sex, political interest, partisanship, and baseline efficacy. It yielded that both the liberal satirical news selections ( $\beta = .079, p = .007$ ) and conservative satirical news selections ( $\beta = -.081, p = .007$ ) influenced efficacy, albeit in opposite ways, while the control variables partisanship ( $\beta = -.066, p = .023$ ), political interest ( $\beta = .113, p = .003$ ) and, of course, baseline internal political efficacy ( $\beta = .855, p < .001$ ) were also significant influences. Hence, H4 did not find straightforward support, because internal political efficacy was influenced differently by different-stances satire.

### **Attitude Reinforcement**

Regarding H5, it was examined whether the use of the online video site with serious and satirical news had impacts on political attitudes. Mediation analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) were conducted to assess whether the pre-exposure attitudes were reinforced through the video clips chosen. The pre-exposure attitudes, averaged across the three target topics, served as the predictor variable (X), with higher scores indicating more liberal views. The post-exposure attitudes, again averaged across topics, served as the dependent variable (Y) with higher scores indicating more liberal views, while controlling for biological sex and political interest. The first mediation analysis differentiated exposure by both stance and format for the mediating variables but did not find any significant mediation effects that would speak to H5a and H5b specifically. However, when combining all selected liberal-leaning video clips (M1) and all satire clips (M2) across all topics to serve as two mediators, interesting insights emerged. The more liberal the pre-exposure attitudes were, the more liberal-stance videos were selected,  $\text{coeff.} = .18$  ( $S.E. =$

.07),  $p = .010$ . In turn, the more liberal-stance videos were selected, the more the post-exposure attitudes tended toward a more liberal attitude,  $\text{coeff.} = .13$  ( $S.E. = .07$ ), but this impact was only marginally significant,  $p = .076$ . Most importantly, this analysis demonstrated that selective exposure reinforced attitudes: A significant indirect effect of pre-exposure attitude via liberal news video selections on post-exposure attitudes emerged, with a point estimate at .023 and a confidence interval .003 to .066. The only other significant effect emerged because the pre-exposure attitudes had, of course, a significant direct effect on the post-exposure attitudes,  $\text{coeff.} = .77$  ( $S.E. = .06$ ),  $p < .001$ . The number of satire choices had no impact on attitudes. These findings suggest that, in line with H5, political messages uniformly influenced attitudes. This pattern applied regardless of (serious or satirical) format.

### **Discussion**

With satirical presentations of current news being widely popular, especially among younger audiences, it is relevant to examine how satire news is selected by and influences viewers, in comparison to serious partisan news. After all, how individuals learn about current public affairs very much shapes societal and political discourse. Satire news, as a form of embedding political information into entertaining formats, may serve as a gateway to engage individuals who are otherwise agnostic about politics more with the political process. Importantly, satire recipients might even engage more with counterattitudinal views and broaden their understandings of political issues. However, the downside may be that satire news is undermining people's sense of being able to influence politics and causing viewers to become more cynical about it, therefore adding to the polarization of attitudes in the electorate.

Specific hypotheses related to these concerns were derived from cognitive dissonance theory and entertainment-education frameworks. H1 was supported because participants with

lower political interest picked satire news more often than people with greater interest in politics. Hence, satire news could potentially serve as a gateway of engaging more citizens in the political discourse—it does not merely attract those who are already very involved with politics. For future research, it will be of great interest to observe actual subsequent choices *after* news satire viewing—does such exposure then channel people actually into following up with related traditional news reports, into consuming more public affairs news, or do they possibly end up attending more traditional entertainment or soft news? For H2 on a confirmation bias in online news selections, clear support emerged—hence, the rather robust evidence on Festinger’s (1957) classic proposition that people prefer messages that support preexisting views was extended here to the context of selecting news videos online, although it should be noted that participants chose the videos based on brief text leads, while anticipating to see the related video.

At the heart of our investigation were the two competing hypotheses H3a and H3b on whether the confirmation bias is weaker or stronger in a satire context. Some indication emerged in favor of H3a—that the confirmation bias is weaker for satirical news—because Democrat-leaning participants did not discriminate between conservative and liberal satire news clips. But the related interaction fell short of significance ( $p = .10$ ), thus we do not have a clear basis for accepting H3a and rejecting H3b. It should be noted that findings from an above-mentioned study by Stroud and Muddiman (2013) diverged from the presently found indication, as their data showed that people selecting from serious news did not show a confirmation bias (in contrast to numerous studies that found a confirmation bias in news exposure, see review by Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015) while people selecting from satire news did. Possibly, when their participants were asked about political tolerance before that news text selection task, they were alerted to pursue a more balanced news diet. For the present experiment, the following



interpretation is offered for why Democrat-leaning participants did not shy away from counterattitudinal satire while Republican-leaning participants did: The recent prominent satirical news shows (such as “The Daily Show”) generally attracted a more liberal audience (Mitchell et al., 2014) and may thus cater more toward liberal attitudes, which can lead Democrat-leaning recipients to think that they will not encounter much counterattitudinal material whenever they turn to satire. Republican-leaning recipients, on the other hand, may not generally find much attitude-consistent satire and, as a result, scrutinize and discriminate more when it comes to satire news choices. As a result, Democrat-leaning recipients may also discount satire content more easily (Nabi et al., 2007) and thus discriminate less between attitude-consistent and -challenging satire.

When addressing H4 regarding impacts of selective exposure to satire news on internal political efficacy, significant effects emerged, but they were more complicated than anticipated. Liberal satire news exposure fostered internal efficacy, whereas conservative satire news exposure undermined it. With conservatism emphasizing traditional values and authorities, critiques of leading figures in politics may create a sense of low efficacy among conservative-leaning media users, while the opposite might occur for the liberal-minded. Further research is needed to explore this idea of differential impacts of satire exposure depending on ideological preference. Lastly, analysis regarding H5 did not show differential attitudinal impacts but both serious partisan news exposure and satire news exposure bolstered existing views without detectable differentiation by format.

Some strengths and limitations of the present study should be outlined: By considering and actually observing selectivity, it extends an important angle in political entertainment research that only Stroud and Muddiman (2013) took thus far. Indeed, a major contribution is the

observation of selections of entertainment-embedded versus traditional persuasive messages that were both accessible at the same time. Even though many scholars (Dal Cin et al., 2004; Slater & Rouner, 2002) argued that entertainment can overcome avoidance of persuasive messages more effectively than non-entertainment formats, no empirical work in health or political communication research has actually examined this proposition to our knowledge. The related hypothesis H3a, however, did not receive solid support—general superiority of entertainment-framed persuasion due to overcoming avoidance cannot be inferred from the present evidence. Alongside the lack of effectiveness that forced-exposure designs in narrative persuasion research yielded (discussed above per de Graaf et al.'s (2016) review), this observation unfortunately undermines the high hopes for entertainment-based persuasion (e.g., Kreuter et al., 2007).

But further research is needed, in light of the current's work limitations: Only a small set of messages could be utilized, which means they cannot represent the vast diversity of political satire that comes in many shapes (e.g., print or audiovisual, horation or juvenalian satire, etc.) or disentangle impacts of different satire types. Our experimental stimuli were constructed for clean variation of political stance and serious vs. satirical news, which is pivotal for testing hypotheses on exposure effects. This approach aligns with many audiovisual satire programs that add commentary, occasionally subversive text (e.g. "The Colbert Report's" The Word feature), to regular news footage. It is one style utilized in this "amorphous genre" (Feinberg, 1967, p. 18). Future research should consider whether these results hold up for other satirical formats (e.g. presenter-based commentary). Further, recipients could not avoid political messages entirely—future research could include non-political options to choose from. But the study used three topics, which is preferable to the common focus on just one topic serving as context of researching political ridicule. Additionally, as many studies in this line of research, the present

work relies on a student sample and has not examined delayed effects regarding how long attitudinal or efficacy impacts last or ultimately affect actual behavior. Future work should extend to more diverse samples and capture persuasion processes in more nuanced fashion, e.g. by looking at absorption, funniness perceptions, etc. (Boukes et al., 2015) as mediators and at delayed measures beyond short-term impacts. For instance, it is possible that the more disparaging the humor, the more recipients may engage in downward social comparison (Wills, 1981) with political actors and derive greater political efficacy.

Some ideas pursued in the present work may go well beyond political communication and satire contexts. The use of humor may generally foster recipients' efficacy, possibly through downward social comparison. Humor may generally help any message to stand out from the clutter of messages that compete for attention and encourage recipients to engage more with messages that might challenge their views than they otherwise would (Eisend, 2009). We are not aware of any research that has rigorously tested whether the addition of humor makes it more likely that a message will be attended to, so there is room for extending our research approach to commercials, public service announcements, fictional entertainment, etc.

What is the bottom line of the present evidence? Satire news matters. It matters for political attitudes and their extremity—and may indeed contribute to polarization. It matters for people's internal political efficacy, which subsequently shapes their engagement and interest in politics and the political discourse. Media users utilize satire news as well as serious news selectively, mostly bolstering preexisting views—while the confirmation bias certainly applies to online videos on serious partisan news, it might be weakened for some recipients when they choose from satire news. And there is hope that political entertainment gets those involved who are otherwise agnostic regarding politics and boosts their political efficacy. No kidding!

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Table 1:

*Descriptive Statistics of Measures in Main Experiment*

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Political Attitudes Before Selective Exposure</b>			
Climate change	5.01	1.58	-
Gun control	3.12	1.77	-
Immigration	3.88	1.57	-
Condensed Attitudes (3 items above, 2 reversed)	4.92	1.37	.73
<b>Political Attitudes After Selective Exposure</b>			
Climate Change	4.90	1.49	-
Gun Control	3.45	1.89	-
Immigration	3.68	1.58	-
Condensed Attitudes (3 items above, 2 reversed)	4.67	1.43	.75
<b>Internal Political Efficacy</b>			
Before Selective Exposure	5.86	2.20	.86
After Selective Exposure	5.87	2.19	.90

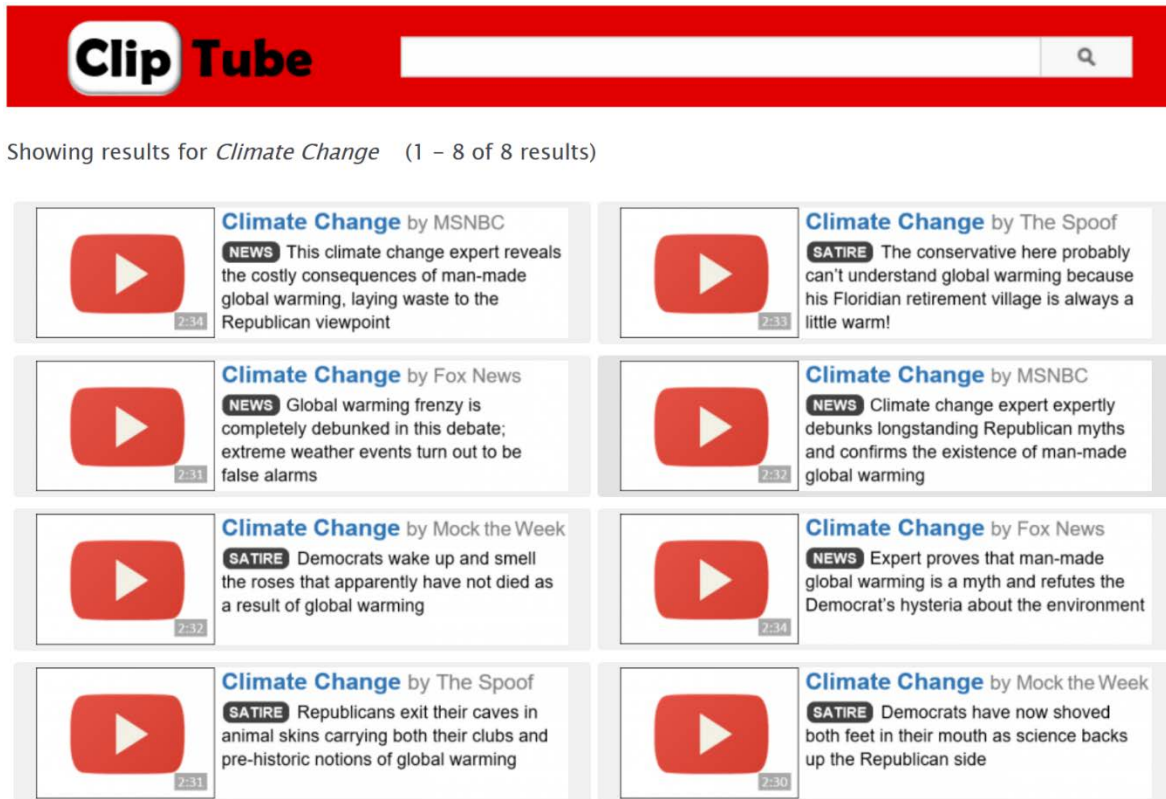


Figure 1: Example Screenshot of Overview Page with Video Clip Search Results



Figure 2: Example Screenshot of Satire News Clip

## Appendix A

### Procedure and Measures of Stimuli Pretest

Pretest participants ( $n = 102$ ) were presented with sources: Fox News and MSNBC were included as conservative and liberal news sources respectively. As potential satire sources, Mock The Week and The Spoof were included in the pretest to gauge their suitability as the satire source. The sources were rated for stance (1 = *aligns with Republican views*; 9 = *aligns with Democrat views*) and fit with both news programs and satirical news shows (1 = *does not fit at all*; 9 = *fits extremely well*). To derive a condensed measure for news-vs.-satire fit, the score for news fit was subtracted from the score for the satire fit. Half of the pretest participants saw the source cues as they appeared on the overview pages (without lead texts), the other half saw the source cues as they appeared in the video materials (without captions). The results of the source cues pretest are reported in Appendix B. As evident from these results, the serious partisan news sources and the satire sources were well differentiated; satirical sources were generally perceived as more Democrat leaning in both the overview display and the video display. The political stance of Fox News and MSNBC was clearly differentiated.

Participants who took part in the pretest were first presented with ten random leads out of a total of sixty (five captions were created for all four condition, across the three topics), so as to reduce participant fatigue. Each lead was inspected by at least 19 participants, who were asked to rate each on a series of 9-point semantic differentials focusing on political stance (1 = *aligns with Republican views*; 9 = *aligns with Democrat views*) and fit with both news programs and satirical news shows (1 = *does not fit at all*; 9 = *fits extremely well*). To derive a condensed measure for news-vs.-satire fit, the score for news fit was subtracted from the score for the satire fit. Results for the ultimately selected leads differentiated as desired (detailed in Appendix C).

Next, the participants repeated this line of questioning on a randomly selected series of captions. After watching one of the two untreated video clips (either climate change or gun control), participants were presented with a number of still images of the video stimuli. After responding to questions for each of a subset of captions – eleven out of 61 captions for climate change, or seven out of 41 gun control captions – the participant next watched the other untreated video, and responded to captions for that second topic. Participants again rated the captions regarding stance (1 = *aligns with Republican views*; 9 = *aligns with Democrat views*) and fit with both news programs and satirical news shows (1 = *does not fit at all*; 9 = *fits extremely well*). To derive a condensed measure for news-vs.-satire fit, the score for news fit was subtracted from the score for the satire fit. The results for the ultimately selected leads differentiated as desired and are reported in Appendix D.

Appendix B  
Source Cue Ratings

Table B1  
Source Cue Ratings (*M*, *SD* in parentheses)

	Stance	Fit News vs. Satire
<b>Overview Page Cues (<i>N</i> = 51)</b>		
Serious Partisan News Liberal: MSNBC	5.75 <sup>a</sup> (2.05)	-1.68 <sup>a</sup> (3.06)
Serious Partisan News Conservative: Fox News	3.25 <sup>b</sup> (2.33)	-.59 <sup>a</sup> (3.79)
Satirical News: The Spoof	5.18 <sup>a</sup> (1.37)	1.88 <sup>b</sup> (2.94)
Satirical News: Mock the Week	5.00 <sup>a</sup> (1.65)	1.64 <sup>b</sup> (3.00)
<b>Video Cues (<i>N</i> = 51)</b>		
Serious Partisan News Liberal: MSNBC	5.82 <sup>a</sup> (2.00)	-2.71 <sup>a</sup> (3.23)
Serious Partisan News Conservative: Fox News	2.94 <sup>b</sup> (1.39)	-2.39 <sup>a</sup> (3.60)
Satirical News: The Spoof	4.96 <sup>c</sup> (1.41)	2.71 <sup>b</sup> (3.52)
Satirical News: Mock the Week	5.08 <sup>ac</sup> (1.58)	2.28 <sup>b</sup> (3.22)

*Note.* Means in a column with different superscripts differ at  $p < .05$ , multiple comparisons with Sidak correction.

## Appendix C

## Video Lead Ratings

Table C1

Ratings of Video Selection Leads on Climate Change (*M*, *SD* in parentheses, *n* per cell >18)

	Stance	Fit News vs. Satire
<b>Liberal Serious Partisan News</b>		
Climate change expert expertly debunks longstanding Republican myths and confirms the existence of man-made global warming.	6.69 <sup>a</sup> (2.60)	-1.50 <sup>a</sup> (2.53)
This climate change expert reveals the costly consequences of man-made global warming, laying waste to the Republican viewpoint.	6.06 <sup>a</sup> (2.69)	-0.94 <sup>a</sup> (2.46)
<b>Conservative Serious Partisan News</b>		
Global warming frenzy is completely debunked in this debate; extreme weather events turn out to be false alarms.	3.41 <sup>b</sup> (2.06)	-0.29 <sup>a</sup> (2.62)
Expert proves that man-made global warming is a myth and refutes the Democrat's hysteria about the environment.	3.88 <sup>b</sup> (1.96)	-0.13 <sup>a</sup> (3.12)
<b>Liberal Satire News</b>		
Republicans exit their caves in animal skins carrying both their clubs and pre-historic notions of global warming.	6.38 <sup>a</sup> (2.75)	1.81 <sup>b</sup> (2.93)
The conservative here probably can't understand global warming because his Floridian retirement village is always a little warm!	6.13 <sup>a</sup> (2.58)	1.94 <sup>b</sup> (2.67)
<b>Conservative Satire News</b>		
Democrats wake up and smell the roses that apparently have not died as a result of global warming.	3.63 <sup>b</sup> (2.17)	1.95 <sup>b</sup> (2.61)
Democrats have now shoved both feet in their mouth as science backs up the Republican side.	3.12 <sup>b</sup> (2.18)	1.59 <sup>b</sup> (3.95)

*Note.* Means in a column with different superscripts differ at  $p < .05$  in one-sided  $t$  tests.

Data for gun control and immigration leads available on request.

Table C2

Ratings of Video Selection Leads on Gun Control (*M*, *SD* in parentheses, *n* per cell >18)

	Stance	Fit News vs. Satire
<b>Liberal Serious Partisan News</b>		
Liberal expert presents the truth about the widespread support for gun control and dispels misleading conservative myths.	6.06 <sup>a</sup> (1.80)	-0.67 <sup>a</sup> (1.81)
The ignorant conservative viewpoint on gun control gets exposed in this clip; gun control support is winning nationally.	6.44 <sup>a</sup> (2.43)	-0.72 <sup>a</sup> (3.41)
<b>Conservative Serious Partisan News</b>		
Republican expert points out the simple truth that people need to be able to defend themselves with guns.	3.59 <sup>b</sup> (2.00)	-1.18 <sup>a</sup> (1.55)
Arguments that support the right to bear arms are foreign in the Democratic agenda. See their short-sightedness exposed.	3.53 <sup>b</sup> (2.12)	-1.53 <sup>a</sup> (2.85)
<b>Liberal Satire News</b>		
Republicans try and join the debate table to discuss gun-related tragedies, but struggle to move carrying 10 guns.	5.95 <sup>a</sup> (2.20)	1.21 <sup>b</sup> (2.80)
Gun violence clearly is not as much of a priority to Republicans as their tanning salons and their chin-tucks.	6.61 <sup>a</sup> (1.97)	2.28 <sup>b</sup> (2.89)
<b>Conservative Satire News</b>		
Jon Stewart doesn't want guns in this country because he feels protected... In the safety of his luxury condo. Hypocrite!	3.82 <sup>b</sup> (2.24)	2.29 <sup>b</sup> (2.97)
Obama's antics are more the reason we need guns in this country... to protect ourselves from his crackpot supporters!!!	3.28 <sup>b</sup> (1.84)	1.61 <sup>b</sup> (3.09)

*Note.* Means in a column with different superscripts differ at  $p < .05$  in one-sided *t* tests.



Table C3

Ratings of Video Selection Leads on Immigration (*M*, *SD* in parentheses, *n* per cell >18)

	Stance	Fit News vs. Satire
<b>Liberal Serious Partisan News</b>		
Democrats show their heart for immigrants struggling to make their way in this great country of opportunity.	6.58 <sup>a</sup> (2.71)	-.95 <sup>a</sup> (2.12)
Legalizing immigrants helps the economy by having workers documented, and able to support rather than drain our economy.	5.94 <sup>a</sup> (2.07)	-1.39 <sup>a</sup> (2.25)
<b>Conservative Serious Partisan News</b>		
Pundit explains how immigration reform will lead to a higher probability of terrorism in this country.	3.82 <sup>b</sup> (1.88)	-.76 <sup>a</sup> (3.67)
Watch this expose of the real issues fueling immigration crackdowns. How free entry actually hurts our children, economy.	3.83 <sup>b</sup> (2.09)	-1.28 <sup>a</sup> (2.78)
<b>Liberal Satire News</b>		
Republicans are hungry for blood when it comes to immigration, confirming our belief that they are in fact vampires.	6.11 <sup>a</sup> (2.88)	2.63 <sup>b</sup> (3.00)
Conservatives don't want immigrants crossing the border because Mexican cuisine isn't nearly sophisticated enough... or expensive enough!	6.06 <sup>a</sup> (2.39)	2.28 <sup>b</sup> (2.74)
<b>Conservative Satire News</b>		
Democrats don't see the threat immigration poses to American jobs because their own jobs are only threatened by stupidity.	3.53 <sup>b</sup> (2.37)	1.35 <sup>b</sup> (2.62)
Democrats continually give credence to the idea that they should be deported along with the illegal immigrants.	3.59 <sup>b</sup> (2.21)	2.24 <sup>b</sup> (3.15)

*Note.* Means in a column with different superscripts differ at  $p < .05$  in one-sided *t* tests.

## Appendix D

## Video Caption Ratings

Table D1

Ratings of Video Captions on Climate Change (*M*, *SD* in parentheses, *n* per cell >18)

	Stance	Fit News vs. Satire
<b>Liberal Serious Partisan News</b>		
Rare species are disappearing at alarming rates due to climate	6.11 <sup>a</sup> (2.08)	-1.00 <sup>a</sup> (2.22)
EPA: Current levels of CO2 are unacceptable	5.78 <sup>a</sup> (1.73)	-2.11 <sup>a</sup> (3.25)
Extreme blizzards caused by climate change threaten east coast	5.67 <sup>a</sup> (1.46)	-1.94 <sup>a</sup> (2.69)
Weiss: "Corporations deny climate change to protect own interests"	6.06 <sup>a</sup> (2.01)	-1.44 <sup>a</sup> (3.24)
<b>Conservative Serious Partisan News</b>		
Democrats blocked Keystone pipeline costing tax payers billions in gas prices	2.50 <sup>b</sup> (2.00)	-2.50 <sup>a</sup> (2.48)
Despite warming claims, US expects another record-low winter	3.67 <sup>b</sup> (1.91)	-2.33 <sup>a</sup> (2.68)
New Democrat energy plans severely hurt small business	3.00 <sup>b</sup> (1.57)	-1.61 <sup>a</sup> (2.79)
Environmental laws costs taxpayers \$500 a year each	3.16 <sup>b</sup> (2.09)	-2.89 <sup>a</sup> (2.85)
<b>Liberal Satire News</b>		
Also, no trend in his suit: Where's FLOTUS's fashion tips?	5.42 <sup>a</sup> (1.71)	3.21 <sup>b</sup> (3.47)
Does this old fart even know what we are talking about?	5.50 <sup>a</sup> (1.98)	3.39 <sup>b</sup> (3.27)
Do you think his elvish ears help him detect trends?	5.72 <sup>a</sup> (1.41)	2.56 <sup>b</sup> (3.38)
Do nerds even know what inflation means?	5.56 <sup>a</sup> (1.29)	4.06 <sup>b</sup> (3.56)
<b>Conservative Satire News</b>		
Is climate change to blame for your hair loss?	4.28 <sup>b</sup> (2.08)	3.00 <sup>b</sup> (3.33)
Yes! Please take my hard earned money for "expected" damage	3.84 <sup>b</sup> (2.29)	1.74 <sup>b</sup> (2.68)
The ocean is warming? Good, the Pacific is a bit chilly	4.11 <sup>b</sup> (1.78)	2.61 <sup>b</sup> (3.58)
Did your hair melt like the glaciers? Oh, is that not global warming?	4.28 <sup>b</sup> (2.02)	2.56 <sup>b</sup> (3.49)

*Note.* Means in a column with different superscripts differ at  $p < .05$  in one-sided  $t$  tests, attesting to successful manipulations. Further significant differences existed within sets, e.g., captions categorized as conservative differed in extremity of stance.

Table D2

Ratings of Video Captions on Gun Control (*M*, *SD* in parentheses, *n* per cell >18)

	Stance	Fit News vs. Satire
<b>Liberal Serious Partisan News</b>		
Gun ownership proven to increase gun-related deaths across America	5.94 <sup>a</sup> (2.52)	-3.38 <sup>a</sup> (3.40)
US: More school shootings than rest of world combined	5.72 <sup>a</sup> (1.74)	-3.28 <sup>a</sup> (3.08)
Aurora & Newtown: Compelling evidence for gun control	6.06 <sup>a</sup> (1.92)	-2.35 <sup>a</sup> (3.43)
More guns never the answer to keeping our children safe	6.67 <sup>a</sup> (1.88)	-1.89 <sup>a</sup> (3.07)
<b>Conservative Serious Partisan News</b>		
American patriots need to protect our 2nd amendment right	3.39 <sup>b</sup> (2.17)	-2.28 <sup>a</sup> (2.34)
Gun control unconstitutional, laws violate our basic rights	3.83 <sup>b</sup> (2.41)	-2.17 <sup>a</sup> (2.71)
Guns are, and will always be an undeniable constitutional right	2.78 <sup>b</sup> (2.13)	-1.67 <sup>a</sup> (2.70)
Guns proven to protect families in home invasions	3.71 <sup>b</sup> (1.99)	-1.12 <sup>a</sup> (3.16)
<b>Liberal Satire News</b>		
Give everyone <u>more</u> guns: Sure, <u>that's</u> the answer!	5.50 <sup>a</sup> (2.75)	1.06 <sup>b</sup> (3.06)
Outside-school shootings aren't school shootings? Oh please!	6.06 <sup>a</sup> (1.51)	2.11 <sup>b</sup> (2.76)
Keep talking NRA: Soon you'll answer to Michelle Obama's guns!!	5.39 <sup>a</sup> (1.88)	2.22 <sup>b</sup> (2.62)
What doesn't work is that 60s haircut, buddy	5.29 <sup>a</sup> (2.02)	3.47 <sup>b</sup> (3.08)
<b>Conservative Satire News</b>		
Democrats want to take away right to protect loved ones	2.67 <sup>b</sup> (2.20)	0.50 <sup>b</sup> (3.17)
Liberals trying to disarm trustworthy Americans? Perfect!	3.38 <sup>b</sup> (1.78)	0.75 <sup>b</sup> (2.41)
D.C.: Homosexual pot smokers try to ban guns - shocker!!	3.33 <sup>b</sup> (1.78)	2.28 <sup>b</sup> (3.16)
Gun control a winning issue like Obama - what could go wrong?!	3.11 <sup>b</sup> (2.06)	2.33 <sup>b</sup> (2.91)

*Note.* Means in a column with different superscripts differ at  $p < .05$  in one-sided  $t$  tests, attesting to successful manipulations. Further significant differences existed, e.g., captions within the set for conservative-leaning satire differed significantly in level of fit with satire but they all fit satire significantly better than the captions in the news captions sets.