

The Affective Effect of Late-Night Humor: The Indirect Influence of Late-Night Comedy Consumption on Political Engagement through Emotions

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Communication)
in The University of Michigan
2012

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Acknowledgements

I remember telling my parents that I was leaving my home country to start a new journey. My mother expressed her concern that I would be going alone, and I remember that I comforted her by saying that I would not travel this long journey alone. Truly I had a good deal of luck meeting all those individuals whose wisdom, support, and encouragement made my journey possible.

First, I would like to thank Dr. Michael W. Traugott, chair of my doctoral committee. His leadership, professionalism, and continued optimism have made him an ideal mentor. Dr. Traugott patiently worked with me as I drafted and redrafted every chapter of this dissertation. He has trained me as a social science researcher by teaching me research methods as well as careful and creative thinking, all of which have been vital to my project.

Special thanks are extended to my committee members, Professor Nojin Kwak, Professor Nicholas A. Valentino, and Professor W. Russell Neuman. I am especially grateful that Dr. Kwak allowed me to use his data and taught me practical skills in data collection and manuscript writing. Dr. Valentino has given me sharp and fair criticism about this project and has always offered clear answers to my questions since I took his course in my first year at the University of Michigan. Dr. Neuman helped me draw a

broader theoretical picture of my study, and his friendly personality and big smile helped me along the way.

My colleagues have become a part of my life and their friendship has been an invaluable gift that extends well beyond any academic pursuits, although it makes these academic pursuits so much more meaningful: Seung Mo Jang, Dr. Yongjin Park, Dr. Sunghee Joo, Ying Qian, Dr. Marko M. Skoric, a few among so many other wonderful friends and colleagues.

I was fortunate to receive financial support in the form of research grants provided by the Marsh Center for the Study of Journalistic Performance and the Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan. Without these sources and without the generous and constant support of the Communication Studies Department, this dissertation would not have been possible.

My family has been an integral part of this process. Special thanks to my father, Dr. Soochang Lee, my mother, Kwangja Paek, my father-in-law, Yongku Kim, and my mother-in-law, Myungjin Kang; they were always there for me—praying, encouraging, and cajoling. I would also like to thank other family members who have been influential in my graduate studies: my sisters, Seungyoun, Jooyoun, and Jungeun; my brothers-in-laws, Dr. Charles Jeong, Dr. Sunghwan Cho, and Hyungjoong Kim; my sister-in-law, Soyoun Kim; and my grandmother, Taeim Yoon. More than anyone else, I would like to acknowledge my wife, Hwamin Kim, who expressed unconditional love for me and an abiding faith in me. She has been an unwavering source of spiritual support, and I shall always be thankful for all of the love and support she has provided.

Besides my hometown, I have not lived anywhere else as long as these past nine years in Ann Arbor. This city has been a remarkable place of transformation for me and has granted me unforgettable memories of encountering God, while I have been surrounded by so many amazing people from all walks of life. I thank my brothers and sisters at Ann Arbor Hope Church for their support, perspective, and encouragement. Rev. Hunsuk Bae, Dr. Caleb H. Kim, Dr. Jaegang Kim, Dr. Daniel Pak, and Joe C. Cho have been invaluable sources of insight. Most of all, this dissertation should be dedicated to God. I am grateful for God's provision of joys, challenges, and grace for growth, for only through God's grace and blessings has this pursuit been possible.

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Abstract

The research in this dissertation explores the complex communication processes whereby late-night comedy viewing can produce significant indirect effects on citizen engagement in political life. To this end, the present study introduces a theoretical framework, which synthesizes Affective Intelligence theory, the Orientation-Stimulus-Orientation-Response (O-S-O-R) approach, and the Communication Mediation Model. Specifically, three indirect effects models are proposed and tested across two different research designs: an online experiment and a mail survey. The main findings include the following. First, late-night comedy viewing can promote citizens' political engagement indirectly by eliciting their anger and worry. Second, consuming satirical humor can mobilize discursive activities for citizens by provoking their negative emotions. Third, more frequent discussion, the expanded size of a discussion network, and greater engagement in online communication activities can mediate and reinforce the mobilizing effects of late-night comedy viewing. Finally, the mediating effects of negative emotions and heterogeneous discussion are conditional upon education, such that exposure to late-night comedy can encourage political participation of well-educated individuals, while the same experiences from satirical humor can demobilize less savvy counterparts. The current research effort provides a range of insights to explore the role

of newly emerging media genres that are presumably of less enlightening value and yet are more emotionally amusing and provocative. Primarily, these findings contribute to our understanding of various mediation models anchored in the O-S-O-R framework. By incorporating emotion as a viable mediator (the second O) between the reception of message (S) and its ensuing response (R), the proposed indirect effects models enlarge the scope of the mediation model, while capturing the dynamic intervening mechanisms above and beyond more conventional cognitive accounts. Further by introducing education as a first O, the current research fully exploits the O-S-O-R framework in assessing the impact of political entertainment. Moreover, investigating multiple facets of interpersonal discussion harboring distinct implications for participatory democracy extends the purview of mediators that might be employed in the Communication Mediation Model.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Contemporary changes in news content provision and audience behavior have led many to wonder whether mass publics will become more or less responsible democratic citizens in the future. As young audiences are turning away from broadcast news or print journalism, traditional news companies are challenged by dwindling advertising revenues and increased production costs (Jones, 2010). Concurrently, with new media technologies such as blogs and search engine portals, citizens are questioning the top-down, gatekeeper role of news media. Instead, citizens seem to desire a more active role in the determining what is news and who is permitted to make it. Particularly noteworthy in this trend has been the decline of conventional news sources paired with the rise of soft news and infotainment (see, for example, Guthrie, 2010). Thus, there is a good theoretical argument to believe that the latter, to some extent at least, fills the gap left by the former.

Nevertheless, critics doubt that political information delivered in the form of entertainment could constructively influence a citizen's political attitudes, knowledge, and behavior. As Graber (2008) aptly points out, such a disregard of entertainment as a source of political information is akin to the Western tradition of thought that tends to

polarize reason and emotion: Passion is seen as irrational. However, recent research has demonstrated that emotion is not antithetical to, but could in fact yield beneficial effects, for an individual's knowledge and decision-making (see Neuman, Marcus, Crigler, & MacKuen, 2007b for an extensive review). If so, infotainment harbors the potential to empower democracy. After all, political information no longer has to be dull, ponderous, and full of dry and less captivating information; it could be fun and enjoyable when it is presented in a more approachable format.

Motivated by this direction, an array of studies has examined the political consequences of entertainment journalism; specific effects include public attention to politics (Baum, 2002, 2003b), political knowledge (Baum, 2003a; Prior, 2003), public opinion formation (Baum, 2003b, 2005; Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005b; Young, 2004), and political participation (Moy & Gastil, 2006). Although scholars have sometimes had difficulty agreeing on how to define soft news, there is agreement on a few fundamental characteristics. Soft news tends to be personality driven, focuses on sensationalism and drama rather than facts, and conveys less public affairs information to its audience than hard news (Delli Carpini & Williams, 2001). Nonetheless, findings regarding the effect of soft news on political attitude and behavior have been mixed. Many argued that soft news threatens the integrity of the democratic process by overemphasizing trivial events, downplaying significant public affairs issues, and oversimplifying the complex reality of these issues (Fallows, 1996; Kalb, 2001). For instance, Hollander (2005) found that exposure to entertainment-based talk programs artificially inflated viewers' perceptions of their own political knowledge.

However, Baum (2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2005) challenged this notion, arguing that soft news creates a more knowledgeable citizenry by educating an inattentive public that would not otherwise follow traditional hard news. His research indicated that politically inattentive citizens gather valuable information as an “incidental by-product” of exposure to soft news, especially regarding significant foreign policy events (Baum, 2003b, p. 30). Thus, watching entertainment-based programming can contribute to political learning. Baum (2005) also demonstrated that exposure to presidential candidates’ appearances on entertainment-based talk shows in the 2000 campaign influenced the evaluation of those candidates, particularly among less knowledgeable viewers. His findings illustrated that those who are only passively interested in politics are more likely to warm up to presidential candidates from the opposition party when they see those candidates on entertainment-based talk shows.

Typology of Soft News

These inconsistent results may reflect conceptual and operational ambiguity in the definition of soft news, given that studies exploring the effects of entertainment-oriented programs have not reached an agreement on the operational definition of soft news (Kwak, Wang, & Guggenheim, 2004). Accordingly, the next step should be to examine the distinct and unique characteristics in various formats of soft news—e.g., daytime talk shows (*Oprah*, *The View*), evening news magazines (*20/20*, *60 Minutes*), late-night comedy programs (*The Late Show with David Letterman*, *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*), and morning news shows (*The Today Show*, *Good Morning America*) (Baym, 2005).

Indeed, studies highlighted distinct features that may underlie diverse forms of soft news. For instance, content analyses of late-night comedy revealed that the tone of framing politicians and public affairs in these shows is predominantly negative (e.g., Niven, Lichter, & Amundson, 2003; Pfau, Moy, Radler, & Bridgeman, 1998; Young, 2004). On the other hand, Benoit, McHale, Hansen, Pier, and McGuire (2003) pointed out that candidates have more opportunities to control their interviews on daytime talk shows such as *Oprah* than they do over the jokes and parodies featured in late night comedy such as *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. Therefore, day time talk shows are far more likely to present their interview subjects in a favorable light. In addition, daytime talk shows tend to take more of a human interest approach to entertainment, whereas late-night talk shows, especially in the monologue segments of the programs, are more humor oriented (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006).

While acknowledging diverse formats of soft news programs, the current research centers on the effects of more politically oriented entertainment programs, with a particular emphasis on late-night comedy shows. Specifically, the present study seeks to examine the effects of political stories laced with ridicule. Accordingly, late-night comedy is rather narrowly defined as those programs belonging to the political satire genre (e.g., *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report*), while excluding standard nighttime talk shows (e.g., *The Late Show with David Letterman* and *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*). These programs use satire to convey a coherent political message. Compton and Pfau (2009) highlighted three key elements in late-night political content: late-night comedian monologues, political parodies, and candidate appearances. Based on their content, we can expect that late-night comedy will have far

more in common with other satiric outlets than they do with shows that happen to air in the late evening (Caufield, 2008).

Overarching Goals of the Dissertation

Despite the narrower, more precise definition of the genre and the increasing focus of scholarship, the influence of late-night comedy is a subject of considerable scholarly debate, one that mainly lies between two schools of thought—those contending that late-night comedy has a harmful or null effect on citizens and those pointing to their salutary or constructive role in actually revitalizing democracy. The current research strives to bridge this gap in the existing literature by exploring the more complex communication processes whereby late-night comedy viewing can produce significant indirect effects on citizen engagement in political life. With the advancement of such indirect effects models of late-night comedy, I seek to address the following two interrelated questions:

1. What are the impacts of entertainment journalism on political engagement?
2. How do the impacts of entertainment-oriented programs on citizen attitudes and behaviors differ from those derived from more conventional news sources?

In searching for the answers, I pursue the methodological triangulation of blending experimental and survey research. First, manipulating the exposure to late-night comedy in an experiment will permit us to examine under a controlled setting the precise causal effects of consuming humor on citizen attitude and behavior. Then, employing a secondary analysis of a national survey will assess as to whether the observed associations are generalizable to the real-world setting. By integrating the results attained from the experiment and the survey, I seek to uncover the precise causal

mechanisms through which late-night comedy affects democracy and also examine whether the observed cause-effect processes are generalizable to an actual real-world setting.

The Organization of the Dissertation

To capture the impacts of entertainment journalism more thoroughly and precisely, I propose three specific indirect effects models: indirect effects of late-night comedy exposure to political participation through emotions (Chapter 3), indirect effects of late-night comedy exposure to interpersonal talk through emotions (Chapter 4), and indirect effects of late-night comedy exposure on political participation through interpersonal talk (Chapter 5).

In Chapter 2, I start by reviewing the extant literature that examines the potential impacts of late-night comedy on political attitudes, knowledge, and behavior. Previous research has hardly been in agreement. Some studies suggest late-night comedy exposure leads to enhancement in some indicators of healthy functioning democracy, such as political interest and participation. Others point to detrimental effects in so much as it could produce negative attitudes such as cynicism about the electoral system as well as about political candidates.

In Chapter 3, I introduce a novel affective mediation model by synthesizing Affective Intelligence theory (Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000) and the Orientation-Stimulus-Orientation-Response (O-S-O-R) framework (Markus & Zajonc, 1985; J. M. McLeod, Kosicki, & McLeod, 1994). Beyond the long-established mediating role of attitudinal and cognitive factors found in traditional media research, emotion is advanced

as a viable second O that is situated between the reception of more amusing and provocative messages and the resulting political outcomes. In Chapter 4, I investigate the impacts of late-night comedy on citizen engagement in interpersonal talk, while extending the already well-established research tradition that examines the link between mass media and interpersonal communication. In Chapter 5, I apply the Communication Mediation Model (J. M. McLeod et al., 2001; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001) to examine the process wherein the act of consuming satirical humor works in concert with interpersonal discussion to spur political participation. Chapter 6 integrates the results of these research efforts and seeks to identify particular causal mechanisms that account for the effects of satirical humor programs on democracy. Specifically, the indirect paths through which late-night comedy shows influence citizens' political engagement are juxtaposed with the parallel causal processes for traditional news sources.

The concluding chapter highlights the implications of major findings in the current research in light of existing communication theories. In closing, this final chapter discusses the limitations of the current study and sets forth avenues for future research.

Chapter 2

Filling the Gap in the Extant Literature on Late-Night Comedy

History tells us candidates' appearances on entertainment shows exerted considerable influence on the electorate. For example, Richard Nixon's piano solo on *The Jack Parr Show* in 1993 and Bill Clinton's playing of the saxophone at *The Arsenio Hall Show* in 1992 attracted significant media attention and boosted their popularity. More recently, the genre's considerable political clout was well displayed when President Obama appeared on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* on October 27, 2010—the first by an incumbent president. In addition, many construed the Comedy Central's "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear" prior the 2010 midterm election as an important catalyst for political mobilization, although the hosts of the event, Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, insisted that it was not meant to be a political rally (Gold & Steffen, 2010). Further, Seth Meyers' and Stephen Colbert's appearances at various White House Correspondents dinners and Jon Stewart's infamous interview on CNN's political debate program *Crossfire* during the 2004 presidential campaign (Morreale, 2009) have given late-night comedy a prominence in modern political discourse that is truly novel.

Motivated by the rise of political entertainment, a growing body of literature has considered the potential for late-night comedy to influence public attentiveness,

knowledge, and participation. Nevertheless, the influence of late-night comedy is a subject of considerable scholarly debate, mainly between two schools of thought—those contending that late-night comedy has a harmful or null effect and those pointing to the salutary role in revitalizing democracy. In general, findings of previous studies fall into three broad categories—attitudinal, behavioral, and informational—of political consequences that may accompany the consumption of late-night humor, each of which has been the topic of much controversy.

Attitudinal Effects of Late-Night Comedy

Numerous observers have investigated a wide variety of effects, ranging from public attention (Cao, 2010; Feldman & Young, 2008), to evaluative attitudes (Compton & Pfau, 2009; Moy et al., 2005b; Young, 2004, 2006), to efficacy and cynicism (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Cao & Brewer, 2008; Guggenheim, Kwak, & Campbell, 2011; Hoffman & Thomson, 2009; Holbert, Lambe, Dudo, & Carlton, 2007; Kwak et al., 2004). The results of these studies, however, have been mixed: watching late-night comedy shows was associated with both positive and negative ramifications.

Baumgartner and Morris (2006) found that viewing *The Daily Show*'s ridicule of 2004 presidential candidates George W. Bush and John Kerry depressed both candidates' images, led viewers to feel more cynical about government and the news media, and decreased external political efficacy. Other work, however, suggests these shows may increase internal efficacy—i.e., the confidence in one's own ability to understand and participate in politics (Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991). Thus, although Baumgartner and Morris's (2006) subjects showed less external efficacy—operationalized as distrust in

government institutions—from viewing *The Daily Show*, they seemed to feel more competent in their ability to do something about it. Building upon this study, Hoffman and Thomson (2009) demonstrated that late-night comedy viewing among adolescents predicted a significant increase of internal efficacy with no comparable relationship with cynicism.

On the other hand, Compton and Pfau (2009) argued that distinct content in late-night comedy programs—e.g., monologues, political parodies, and candidate appearances—could produce divergent attitudinal effects. Specifically, they hypothesized that monologue and political parodies, given negative portrayals, would have detrimental effects on feelings and attitudes toward candidates and their images, whereas candidate appearances can enhance feelings and attitudes toward candidates. However, some findings countered their initial predictions. It was observed that not only candidate appearances but satirical jokes about candidates could also enhance perceptions of their competence and character. Compton and Pfau (2009) reasoned that viewing of these programs could lead citizens to feel closer to them because those who are ridiculed look more approachable. The positive influence of satirical jokes may be due to the fact that they are frequently accompanied by coverage of issues in the form of a news summary (Feldman & Young, 2008). In fact, the range of topics covered by late-night comedy is quite substantial, incorporating those policies concerning Iraq, media ownership, same sex marriage, environment, tax, and crime (Jones, 2005). Brewer and Marquardt (2007) contend these issue frames could strengthen citizens' faith in their ability to make sense of the political world.

Conversely, Compton and Pfau (2009) found that monologues derogated feelings

toward candidates, and candidate appearances bolstered attitudes, attitude confidence, and perceptions of candidate competence, character, and sociability. Harmful effects may transpire, given that monologues often feature sharp political barbs (Davis & Owen, 1998) and focus on candidate image over issues (Niven et al., 2003). The results of their study are consistent with Jamieson and Waldman's (2003) argument that late-night comedy exposure can undermine the image of the candidate targeted. Similarly, Guggenheim et al. (2011) observed that consuming satirical humor may further aggravate distrust in politicians, particularly among those who use newspaper less frequently. All in all, these results are decidedly mixed. A more comprehensive theoretical approach is needed in order to understand the mechanisms that may underlie late night comedy's effects on mass political attitude and behavior.

Informational Effects of Late-Night Comedy

Many (Brewer & Cao, 2008; Brewer & Marquardt, 2007; Fox, Koloen, & Sahin, 2007; Jones, 2010) believe that late-night comedy shows contain a considerable amount of substantive information sufficient for audiences to make sense of the political world. Content analyses reveal that soft news programs, especially late-night comedy shows, regularly tackle politics on substantive issues in an information-rich format. For example, soft news programs contained considerable coverage of U.S. policy crises in the 1990s (Baum, 2003b), and *The Daily Show* and *Saturday Night Live* usually present humor in the format of a newscast (e.g., *Saturday Night Live's* Weekend Update) or an elaborate parody of a political debate (e.g., *Saturday Night's* widely publicized parodies) (Jones, 2005). Further, recent studies (Brewer & Marquardt, 2007; Fox et al., 2007)

demonstrated that Stewart's parody in *The Daily Show* was as substantive as the broadcast news programs and election stories were longer than those from network news. Hence, late-night comedy may be better understood as an alternative form of journalism rather than "fake" news or pure entertainment because it can provide audiences with information sufficient for them to make sense of the political world (e.g., Baym, 2005; Brewer & Marquardt, 2007; Jones, 2005).

Given the amount of political information in this programming, optimists (Brewer & Cao, 2008; Graber, 2008; Hollander, 2005) maintain that greater use of late-night comedy should be associated with at least some forms of public affairs knowledge. There is some survey evidence to suggest viewers themselves believe this is the case. In 2000, the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press reported that 47 percent of people under thirty years old were "informed at least occasionally" about the campaign or candidates by late night talk shows (13 percent regularly and 34 percent sometimes). In 2004, the Pew Research Center repeated this survey, this time asking respondents if they "learned something" from comedy shows. Twenty-one percent of people under the age of thirty reported learning something from programs such as *Saturday Night Live* and *The Daily Show* (roughly the same number who learned something from the Internet). As the Pew study notes, "for Americans under 30, these comedy shows are now mentioned almost as frequently as newspapers and evening network news programs as regular sources for election news." Furthermore, the report exclaims, "one out of every two young people (50%) say they at least sometimes learn about the campaign from comedy shows, nearly twice the rate among people age 30-49 (27%) and four times the rate among people 50 and older." In 2007, the Pew Research Center further reveals that

audiences of late-night comedy shows are consistently in the highest-knowledge group, along with newspaper web sites. Of course, just because people believe they have learned from soft news does not make it so.

More sophisticated survey analyses find correlations between knowledge and exposure to soft news. A campaign knowledge test conducted on more than 19,000 citizens in the summer and fall of 2004 by the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey indicated that soft news viewers knew more facts than non-viewers. The survey reported that "viewers of late-night comedy programs, especially *The Daily Show*, are more likely to know the issue positions and backgrounds of presidential candidates than people who do not watch late-night comedy," noting that *The Daily Show* viewers "have higher campaign knowledge than national news viewers and newspaper readers." The survey concludes, "traditional journalists have been voicing increasing concern that if young people are receiving political information from late-night comedy shows like *The Daily Show*, they may not be adequately informed on the issues of the day. The data suggest that these fears may be unwarranted. However, the survey also points out, "these findings do not show that *The Daily Show* is itself responsible for the higher knowledge among its viewers."¹

Others more closely examined the causal link between late-night comedy watching and political knowledge, while documenting that viewing politically oriented entertainment programming is associated with at least some forms of learning about the political world. For example, Hollander (2005) concluded that "young people are capable of gleaning at least modest amounts of campaign information from such content, but how competent it leaves them to participate in a meaningful manner remains an open

¹ <http://www.naes04.org>

question” (p. 412). Focusing on political comedy in the context of political campaigns, Brewer and Cao (2006) demonstrated that exposure to appearances by candidates in the 2004 Democratic presidential primary on late-night comedy programs was significantly related to increased factual knowledge about the candidates and familiarity with contextual information about the race. Similarly, Pfau, Houston, and Semmler (2007) found evidence of a positive relationship between exposure to late-night comedy programs and political expertise in the early phases of the 2004 campaign season. These studies illustrate that in addition to entertaining viewers, political comedy also appears to play a role in helping some individuals learn about the political world.

Two mechanisms originally proposed by Baum (2003b) have been exploited to explain this positive link between late-night comedy and knowledge. First, building on low-information rationality theories, Baum (2003b) posits that soft news consumers gain information about political stories as an “incidental by-product of seeking entertainment” (p. 269). Given the amount of political information embedded in late-night comedy and a citizen’s ability to extract minimally sufficient information, viewers should be able to assimilate some form of public affairs knowledge, which can range from facts about the game of politics, to sociopolitical issues like global warming or education, to fresh insight into the crucial issues of the campaign (Graber, 2008).

Second, Baum (2003b) stresses that there is a tendency among at least some soft news consumers to use soft news as a ‘gateway’ to obtaining more information on a topic of interest through hard news. Research evidence suggests that viewing late-night comedy is positively associated with traditional news consumption (Feldman & Young, 2008). In their focus group study, Rottinghaus, Bird, Ridout, and Self (2008) note that

consuming *The Daily Show* leads numerous young viewers to seek out other “harder” sources of news. Late-night comedy may serve as segues to traditional news by providing a simpler context to understand political issues or understanding humor may demand further information seeking (Caufield, 2008; Feldman & Young, 2008). Indeed, empirical findings endorsed the ‘gateway’ hypothesis that consuming late-night humor facilitates subsequent attention to information in traditional news sources, which could educate viewers about politics. For instance, Young and Tisinger (2006) found that watching late-night comedy television is associated with other forms of news exposure, including local and national television news. These authors also found that an increase in perceived learning from late-night comedy television was associated with an increase in learning from other forms of television news. While affirming the causal structure of gateway effects, Xenos and Becker (2009) showed that exposure to the issue in comedic format stimulated attentiveness to that issue in subsequent media consumption, which ultimately resulted in greater uptake of political information from conventional news sources. As such, there is little reason to believe that viewing late-night comedy is replacing consumption of traditional news. Instead, the former could be an impetus for the latter.

Nevertheless, a multitude of scholars disagree with the positive enlightening role. Above all, people consume soft news programs primarily to be entertained rather than to be informed (Prior, 2003). These programs are not designed expressly to inform their audiences. Jon Stewart, arguably the most well-known figure in this genre, casts doubt on the idea that young audiences could gain knowledge from his program, simply

because he never purports to provide enough information.² Further, critics have consistently stressed the lack of substance in late-night comedy programs (Niven et al., 2003; Young, 2004). For instance, Niven et al. (2003), having analyzed the contents of political jokes in late-night comedy programs, demonstrate that the nature of humor in this genre is less issue-oriented, with more jokes geared toward personal subjects and foibles of political leaders.

Building upon these criticisms, many have questioned causal inference that consumption of humor leads to factual knowledge (J. M. McLeod et al., 1996; Pfau, Cho, & Chong, 2001; Prior, 2003). Parkin, Bos, and Doom (2003) have even discovered deleterious effects of watching late-night comedy on political learning. Young (2008) suggests political comedy may undermine knowledge because so much cognitive effort is needed for audiences to make sense of a joke that tends to hinder learning from late-night humor. More recently, Baek and Wojcieszak (2009) have observed that the relationship of late-night comedy with political knowledge is positive only for low difficulty items with little corresponding link to the recognition of complicated issues. All in all, findings in the field are equivocal about the role of late-night comedy in a fully functioning democracy.

Others consider possible uneven effects of late-night comedy viewing on citizens' learning about politics. Given the increasing variety of channels individuals can choose from, Prior (2007) predicted an increase in the knowledge gap between apolitical citizens and those who are interested in politics. He suggested increasing media choice would enable apathetic citizens to opt out of traditional news into entertainment programs, whereas those who are politically savvy continue to rely on

² C-Span Newhouse School Forum with Ken Auletta from the *New Yorker*, Oct. 14, 2004.

traditional news for political information. Those with greater skills and resources are more likely to gain from late-night comedy since understanding humor itself requires a certain level of knowledge (Landreville, Holbert, & LaMarre, 2010; Young & Tisinger, 2006), and this might further lends plausibility to the widening knowledge gaps.

Supporting this view, Cao (2008b) maintained that the positive relationship between exposure to political comedy shows and political knowledge is stronger among people with high education than among those with lower education.

On the other hand, the ‘gateway’ hypothesis counters the alleged antithetical relationship between hard and soft information sources. Rottinghaus et al. (2008) observed that young viewers who are normally apathetic find the news featured in late-night comedy simple and easy-to-understand, whereas hard news remains largely dull and unappealing. Moreover, Cao (2008a) demonstrated that the effect of *The Daily Show* on political knowledge is more pronounced among those who infrequently consume traditional news, whereas those who tune into conventional news programs on a regular basis remain hardly affected. Although an interaction between late-night comedy and political sophistication is not of primary interest in her study, results strongly imply that late-night comedy could be a knowledge leveler if it affords greater opportunities to those who are otherwise politically inattentive. If late-night comedy is particularly effective in educating those who rarely consume traditional news, while it has less strong influence among those who are attentive, the gap between these two groups could diminish.

Echoing this view, Xenos and Becker (2009) demonstrated that those comedy viewers who are less politically interested could acquire information more easily to the extent they subsequently encounter additional information from traditional news media.

Further complicating our understanding of political comedy's contribution to the knowledge gap, Hollander (2005) discovered a curvilinear effect of viewing late-night television on political learning, such that those who watch a moderate amount tend to recall the most campaign information, while those who watched either low or high amounts tend to recall less. In short, it is not clear whether consuming satirical humor produces greater benefits among politically savvy individuals or less sophisticated counterparts.

Behavioral Effects of Late-Night Comedy

Finally, scores of studies attended to the effects of late-night comedy on participatory behaviors. Some observers (Baumgartner, 2008; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Kwak et al., 2004) argued that consuming satirical humor could undermine political participation. For example, Baumgartner and Morris (2006) suggested that exposure to political comedy programs such as *The Daily Show* “may dampen participation...by contributing to a sense of political alienation from the political process” (pp. 362-363). As noted earlier, the authors found that humor consumption was associated with increased cynicism and low levels of external efficacy, which could depress political participation. Further, Baumgartner (2008) contended that overexposure to comedic frames available online could produce similar negative behavioral consequences, given that viewing an online clip that highlight the absurdities of the political world tended to lower subjects' trust in the media and political institutions.

Nevertheless, Baumgartner and Morris (2006) also found that exposure to *The Daily Show* boosted internal efficacy—i.e., the confidence in one's own competence to

understand and participate in politics. The authors attributed this finding to (a) the way in which *The Daily Show* simplifies politics, in order to present it in an entertaining manner, which may lead viewers to perceive politics as being less complicated than it actually is, and (b) the way in which the show may validate viewers' faith in their ability to understand politics when they get the show's jokes. Indeed, studies have indicated that internal political efficacy can encourage political participation (Finkel & Muller, 1998). Moreover, Shingles (1981) and Pollock (1983) found that internal political efficacy fostered participation in both conventional and unconventional political activities even among citizens with relatively little trust in the political system. Thus, exposure to political comedy shows could increase political participation by fostering internal efficacy

In line with this reasoning, Cao and Brewer (2008) stressed that negative information embedded in late-night humor could motivate viewers to participate in politics by triggering anxiety about the current political situation and future political outcomes as if negative political campaigns would stimulate political participation (see e.g., Finkel & Geer, 1998; Geer, 2006; Martin, 2004). In addition, the authors noted that exposure to political comedy shows could propel political participation by building an imagined community among viewers and making politics more enjoyable. Mutz (1998) found that the use of mass media could induce perceptions of collective experience or collective opinion. Such shared experience or opinion may, in turn, facilitate collective action among the public (Pasek, Kenski, Romer, & Jamieson, 2006). Thus, political comedy shows may increase political participation by promoting common experiences and opinions among viewers. Cao and Brewer (2008) also suspected that

such programs usually present politics in an entertaining manner, which may lead viewers to think that politics is enjoyable, thereby stimulating political participation.

In support of the hypothesized constructive role, studies have demonstrated substantial empirical evidence that exposure to late-night comedy could prompt individual's mobilization to participate in politics (Cao & Brewer, 2008; Dorman, 2007; Hoffman & Thomson, 2009). Based on their reasoning above, Cao and Brewer (2008) showed that exposure to political comedy shows was positively associated with two of the three time-based activities: attending a campaign event and joining an organization. Though the relationship between exposure and contacting an elected official was positive, it was not significant. The authors attributed this relatively weaker link to cynicism likely produced by watching late-night humor that could discourage citizens' intent to contact public officials. Similarly, Young (2007) observed that not only is exposure to *The Daily Show* not exerting a detrimental impact on health democratic behaviors and characteristics, but that audiences of these programs are often more participatory, efficacious, and engaged in politics than people who don't watch the show.

In sum, the issue of whether late-night comedy viewing encourages political participation waits for a verdict, with some studies documenting that exposure to late-night comedy could foster individual's mobilization to participate in politics (Cao & Brewer, 2008; Dorman, 2007; Hoffman & Thomson, 2009) and others casting doubt on the positive motivating role of late-night comedy (Baumgartner, 2008; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Kwak et al., 2004).

Toward a Comprehensive Model of Late-Night Comedy

Extensive literature review above suggests that previous studies produced highly incongruent results pertaining to the role of late-night comedy in revitalizing democracy. There could be several reasons for the inconsistency in findings. First, as Kwak et al. (2004) acknowledged, the context in which each study was conducted was different, and this could trigger incompatible consequences. For instance, data collections took place in different administrations and within completely different economic and political contexts. Many of the differences in findings may therefore simply reflect dissimilar circumstances. Also, studies have employed various research designs to investigate the potential implications of consuming late-night humor. Although most studies relied on cross-sectional surveys, others exploited alternative methods including experiments (Baumgartner, 2008; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006), focus groups (Rottinghaus et al., 2008), and content analyses (Fox et al., 2007; Niven et al., 2003). Another related point inquires about the samples exploited in studies and the resulting scope of implications—i.e., whether findings are generalizable to the general population, or inferences were confined within the American youth (e.g., Baumgartner, 2008; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Hoffman & Thomson, 2009).

The last point, most relevant for the purpose of this study, is that inconsistent findings may have highlighted the shortcomings of a direct effect model, suggesting that the influence of late-night comedy would not directly result from the reception *per se*, but instead, consequences are more or less indirect via some intervening mechanisms. As some scholars (Holbert, 2005a; J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999) rightly argued, failure to examine appropriate indirect relationships could lead us to underestimate the

influence of an information outlet. Moreover, Hayes and his colleagues (2009; Hayes, Preacher, & Myers, 2011) presented statistical evidence of indirect relationships even in the absence of a detectable direct association. Accordingly, these authors warned that the failure to investigate indirect effects due to the absence of direct influence could result in the omission of important mediating mechanisms by which the reception of information produces outcomes.

For communication scholars, it becomes particularly important to unravel the mechanisms whereby media might produce attitudinal, informational, and behavioral consequences, and how those effects occur. J. M. McLeod and Reeves (1980), among others, have called for more research aimed at uncovering the mechanisms of media effects. That is, *how* or by what means do media effects occur? The inability of direct effects models to account for the lack of a strong relationship between exposure and response led mass communication scholars to reconsider their basic approach. Instead of looking for direct effects between exposure and response, mass communication researchers, inspired by information processing research, started to explore indirect effects models. Indirect effects models assume that relationships between variables are often mediated by other variables. Numerous studies of media effects have followed this line of research. For instance, in the case of learning from the media, studies have shown that exposure and recall are mediated by a consumer's cognitive processes involving attention, depth of processing, or informational utility (Eveland, 2001; Jensen, 2011). In addition, mounting evidence has documented the indirect effects of some media messages on political and civic engagement via the conduit of interpersonal discussion (e.g., Cho et al., 2009; Shah, Cho, Eveland, & Kwak, 2005; Shah et al., 2007;

Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001).

This study adopts the indirect effects approach and contests the simplistic position arguing either that late-night comedy programs are the culprits reducing participation or instead that these shows are the important catalysts enriching engagement in political discourse. Most previous studies reviewed earlier have assessed the direct impact of late-night comedy viewing on political participation, relying solely on the reception as the psychological mechanism underlying the effects (cf. Hoffman & Thomson, 2009). While this approach is useful for identifying the overall contribution that consuming late-night humor makes to citizen participation, it leaves unexamined the communication processes through which political comedy operates within the complex communication environment. Indeed, late-night comedy exposure is not an isolated experience. Rather, it is closely associated with how citizens use news media and discuss politics. Thus, previous theories of late-night comedy effects do not fully account for the process through which political comedy is related to participation. As a consequence, work in this area remains hampered by an overreliance on direct effect models, when media influence is often contextually dependent and largely mediated through diverse cognitive, attitudinal, and affective factors as well as other communicative activities including interpersonal conversation and news consumption. Hence, this study purports to explore more complex communication processes whereby late-night comedy viewing could produce significant effects on citizens' engagement in political life by testing some feasible indirect effects models.

Chapter 3

Affective Mediation Model

This chapter introduces a novel affective mediation model from the pivotal Orientation-Stimulus-Orientation-Response (O-S-O-R) framework (Markus & Zajonc, 1985; J. M. McLeod et al., 1994) in order to more fully theorize and assess the effects of late-night comedy in a participatory democracy. Beyond the long-established mediating role of cognitive factors in traditional media research, emotion is advanced as a viable second O situated between the reception of more amusing and provocative messages and the resulting political outcomes. While combining the results from an online experiment and a mail survey, this chapter tests the proposition that late-night comedy viewing could promote citizens' engagement in political life indirectly by eliciting their emotional responses.

The O-S-O-R Model and Mediators between Media Use and Political Participation

The introduction of the O-S-O-R model complements the shortcomings entrenched in the simple stimulus-response (S-R) perspectives of direct and monolithic media effects (Cho et al., 2009). The model was originally proposed by psychologists (Markus & Zajonc, 1985) and was later reinterpreted in political communication as a

remedy to overly simplified direct effect models. The first O refers to an individual's preexisting characteristics that could alter the effect of the stimuli, and the second O represents intervening orientations—i.e., “what is likely to happen between the reception of message and the response of the audience member” (J. M. McLeod et al., 1994, pp. 146-147). Specifically, the second O signifies an array of mediating orientations, explaining how audiences respond to or process the received information (Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, & Nisbet, 2004).

In accounting for media messages' effects on political participation, many envisioned socioeconomic status (mainly education) as the most critical first O determining the level of engagement, given its influence on news media use, efficacy, and political knowledge (Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001; J. M. McLeod et al., 1996; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). Aside from socioeconomic status, research has found that gender and age are significantly associated with political participation (Jung, Kim, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2011).

On the other hand, the conventional O-S-O-R approach has considered numerous cognitive and attitudinal factors that could serve as the second O supplying citizens with incentives for mobilization. In fact, the tradition has rather strictly confined the role of the second O to some cognitive and attitudinal outcomes of news media use that could spur political participation (D. M. McLeod, Kosicki, & McLeod, 2002). For instance, J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy (1999) argued that media use exert influence on political participation indirectly by increasing levels of knowledge and efficacy. Echoing this view, Scheufele et al. (2004) maintained that the second O predicting political participation includes factors such as knowledge, efficacy, and trust. J. M.

McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy (1999) suggested political interest as a primary driver, the first O triggering the reception of stimuli, but it could also be viewed as a significant second O—i.e., a direct consequence of the reception that could subsequently stimulate behavioral response. In support of this proposition, Boulianne (2011) demonstrated based on panel data that political interest was not only an antecedent to media use but also an immediate consequence. Further analyses endorsed the mediating effect of political interest between news exposure and participatory behavior (see also, David, 2009; Shah et al., 2005; Shah & Scheufele, 2006; Xenos & Moy, 2007).

Indeed, considerable empirical findings have accumulated to substantiate the mediating role of cognitive and attitudinal factors. First, scores of scholars have assessed the relationships of media use with efficacy (Delli Carpini, 2004; Kenski & Stroud, 2006), knowledge (Chaffee, Zhao, & Leshner, 1994; Hoffman & Thomson, 2009; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002), and interest (Guo & Moy, 1998; Livingstone & Markham, 2008). Second, political scientists demonstrated that these cognitive components are among the most fundamental predictors of political participation. Most notably, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) considered various resources and skills such as interest in political interest, efficacy, and information that could predispose citizens to engage in politics. Numerous studies have concluded political interest is a mobilizing force (Fife-Schaw & Breakwell, 1990; Jeffres, Atkin, & Neuendorf, 2002), efficacy (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Livingstone & Markham, 2008; Pomper & Sernekos, 1991), and knowledge (Conway, Wyckoff, Feldbaum, & Ahern, 1981; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; J. M. McLeod et al., 1996; Ragsdale & Rusk, 1995; Verba et al., 1995). Finally, evidence supported the mediation of cognitive and

attitudinal factors between the reception of information and political outcomes (Boulianne, 2011; Finkel & Geer, 1998; Geer, 2006; Jung et al., 2011; J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Scheufele, Nisbet, & Brossard, 2003). The consumption of traditional news can impact political participation indirectly by increasing political knowledge (Cho & McLeod, 2007; de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002; Scheufele et al., 2004; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001). Political knowledge is an essential antecedent of participation in that political information increases the likelihood that individuals vote, because it could provide cues regarding where, how, and for whom they vote for (Verba et al., 1995) or it may highlight differences between candidates, thereby stimulating campaign interests (Palfrey & Poole, 1987). In addition, knowing basic facts about politics helps individuals at least to orient themselves in the political world, to connect issues with offices and public officials with issues (Popkin, 1994), and further to formulate their political preferences (Zaller, 1992).

Nevertheless, it seems much less likely that we will observe equivalent effects of political humor via cognitive and attitudinal variables. The effects of late-night comedy watching on cognitive and attitudinal factors are inconsistent, as reviewed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, one study (Hoffman & Thomson, 2009) investigating the indirect effects of late-night comedy yielded puzzling results concerning the cognitive and attitudinal mediation of exposure on participation. While the relationship between humor viewing and civic participation among adolescents was mediated by internal efficacy, the hypothesized indirect effect via cynicism was insignificant. Their study is an important scholarly endeavor to examine mechanisms that intervene between late-night comedy watching and participatory behavior. However, the mediating routes they

assessed did not seem to fully account for the communication environment wherein the indirect effects of late-night comedy occur. Notwithstanding their results, there is a good theoretical as well as instrumental reason to believe that cynicism matters in this causal structure. Instrumentally, the lack of mediation by cynicism may reflect its high collinearity with efficacy (i.e., the more efficacious, the less cynical, and *vice versa*) in their multiple mediator model. Theoretically, it is not difficult to imagine that exposure to late-night comedy fosters cynicism (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Guggenheim et al., 2011), which in turn dampens citizens' willingness to participate (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Crotty & Jacobson, 1980; Dennis & Webster, 1975). If so, the indirect effects via internal efficacy and cynicism may tend to cancel each other out. Consequently, with the previous mediating framework, we are less likely to disentangle the unique contribution of late-night comedy in a participatory democracy.

Limitations of cognitive accounts in assessing the indirect effects of late-night comedy on political participation warrant a search for a hitherto unexamined intermediary mechanism. Accordingly, this chapter advances a variant of an O-S-O-R model for theorizing and investigating *how* or *by what* mechanisms (J. M. McLeod & Reeves, 1980) late-night comedy influences political participation. In this model, an individual's emotional state is introduced as a vital mediator between the reception of political humor and behavioral outcomes (i.e., the second O). To submit this indirect effect model, the following section will explore the role and structure of emotions, followed by the discussion on the motivational role of emotions based on the affective intelligence theory (Marcus et al., 2000). Then, in the ensuing section, accounts will be given as to why exposure to late-night comedy is believed to hold a tie to a viewer's

emotional experiences.

Conceptualizing the Role and Structure of Emotions

In their seminal piece, Verba et al. (1995) developed an explanatory model of political participation that hinges on three factors. That is,

“They can’t” suggests a paucity of necessary *resources*—time to take part, money to contribute to campaign and other political causes, and skills to use time and money effectively. “They don’t want to” focuses attention on the absence of political *engagement*—little interest in politics or little concern with public issues, a belief that activity can make little or no difference, little or no knowledge about the political process, or other priorities. “Nobody asked” implies isolation from the networks of *recruitment* through which citizens are mobilized to politics. (p. 16, italics in the original)

They called each of three factors *resources*, *motivation*, and *recruitment*, respectively. The *resource* factor stresses the importance of assets like money, time, and civic skills that individuals possess. The *motivational* factor encompasses more comprehensive factors such as individual’s interest, political socialization, fulfillment of righteous obligation, and interpersonal network. The authors believe that network *recruitment* is instrumental in shaping and cultivating the skills and resources for civic participation. Though not directly addressed in the original work, Brader and Corrigan (2006) suggested that emotions are chiefly *motivational* forces promoting individual’s attention, thought, and action (Lazarus, 1991; Zajonc, 1998). Supporting this view, Collins (1990) proposed that the more intense short-term or dramatic emotions, such as fear, anger, and joy are tantamount to spikes superimposed on a tonic or baseline level of emotional energy that is characteristic for the person. Furthermore, historical insights suggest that political revolts or social movements in the street or institutions have been

triggered by a citizen's anger about the political or economic system and high hope for a better life. In short, emotions can supply energy with which to undertake actions, and empirical evidence generally supports the role of emotions in *motivating* political behavior (e.g., Brader, 2006; Marcus et al., 2000; Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, & Hutchings, 2011).

However, scholars disagree on the structure of emotions. Neuman, Marcus, Crigler, and MacKuen (2007a) identified three most commonly employed models of the affect system: (a) a bipolar-unidimensional model, which arrays emotional states along a single bipolar dimension of positivity and negativity; (b) a circumplex-multidimensional model, which extends the valence models into multidimensional spaces; and (c) a discrete model—sometimes a simple list with little structure, sometimes a complicated structured model of emotional responses, according to the appraisals of diverse conditions.

Bipolar-Unidimensional Model

The bipolar model, a traditional simple structure model, holds that emotion is, in most circumstances, unidimensional and bipolar. One of the underlying premises suggests that positive and negative emotions are mutually exclusive—i.e., as an individual's negative emotion increases, positive emotion decreases. Accordingly, when a person has a happy feeling about a situation and/or an object, he or she cannot have an unhappy feeling about it at the same time. Various types of emotions can be projected onto a one-dimension vector, with positive (or pleasant) emotion at one end, negative (or unpleasant) emotion at the other end, and neutral emotion in the middle. Tradition and common sense have assumed bipolarity in emotions. For example,

researchers who incorporate emotion as a predictor or dependent variable in their research often measure affective feelings in terms of bipolar dimension—e.g., pairs such as pleasure and pain, happy and sad, tension and relaxation, depression and elation, or positive and negative in general (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994). Feeling thermometers are the most well published application of the bipolarity model of emotion, which assess feelings elicited by candidates and by groups, parties, organizations, and economic classes (Marcus, 1988).

Circumplex-Multidimensional Model

A multitude of observers now see that the structure of emotions could be parsimoniously summarized by two orthogonal “positive” and “negative” affective dimensions (Abelson, Kinder, Peters, & Fiske, 1982; Marcus et al., 2000; Rudolph, Gangl, & Stevens, 2000; Russell, 1980). In the earlier version of the two dimension model, the space was described by a bipolar “valence (i.e., pleasant-unpleasant)” dimension that is orthogonal to a bipolar “arousal (i.e., activation-deactivation)” dimension (Russell, 1980). Later, Watson and colleagues (1988; 1999) turned these two dimensional valence-arousal axes forty-five degrees to form two orthogonal “positive” and “negative” emotion dimensions, each of which now runs from low to high arousal. According to this multidimensional scheme, positive and negative emotions can occur independently of each other, with enthusiasm and anxiety falling at the high arousal endpoints of the “positive” and “negative” emotion dimensions, respectively (Marcus et al., 2000).

While relying on evidence in neuroscience, Gray (1987, 1990) suggests that the

positive (approach) and negative (avoidance) response of organisms might have distinct roots in physiological systems reflecting different foci in the brain. The independence of the positive and negative emotions tended to show the operation of two broad, evolutionary adaptive motivational systems that mediate the goal-directed approach and withdrawal behaviors. The withdrawal system was called the *behavioral inhibition system*, while the approach system was dubbed the *behavioral activation system* (Carver, 2004). The former referred to a “stop, look, and listen system” redirecting attention toward the environmental stimuli, especially novel and unfamiliar circumstances that could potentially signal danger. The *behavioral inhibition system* also promotes a vigilant scanning of the environment for potential threats and motivates the organism to move cautiously until safety is assured. In contrast, *the behavioral activation system* provides active feedback on our ongoing behavior and directs organisms toward situations and experiences that could yield pleasure and reward. Adopting these two emotion systems, Marcus et al. (2000) proposed the *surveillance* system serving as a warning against unusual and/or threatening circumstances, and the *disposition* system, which functions to manage learned behavior, and preexisting habits and predispositions.

Discrete Model

The discrete model decries the simplicity and parsimony embedded in the two dimensional models summarized above, and assumes that specific emotions (e.g., fear, anger, hope, and pride) hold distinguishing characteristics and roles. Furthermore, the model highlights a risk that when discrete emotions fall on certain regions of circumplex or on a bipolar continuum, qualitatively different emotions can appear as if the same.

For instance, fear, anger, and disappointment may share identical moods and fall in identical places in the circumplex or bipolar structure, yet emerge from different situations and have different behavioral consequences. As Lazarus (1991) noted, emotions in the same dimension are the products of different generating conditions, and further, they are experienced differently under different conditions. Echoing this concern, Kinder (1994) maintained that an aggregation of emotional responses “obliterated the more nuanced and revealing results produced by taking up the emotions one by one” (p. 296).

Many supporters of the discrete emotion model share the cognitive appraisal theory that stresses the preceding role of cognition in yielding distinct emotions (Abelson et al., 1982; Kinder, 1994; Lazarus, 1991; Mutz, 1998; Roseman, 1984; Roseman, Abelson, & Ewing, 1986). Lazarus (1991) defined appraisal as “a continuing evaluation of the significance of what is happening for one’s personal well-being” (p. 144) and assumes that the appraisal of a situation—e.g., whether it is goal satisfying or frustrating—determines a specific emotion produced. For instance, the loss of something valuable leads to sadness, while the introduction of injustice, injury, or obstacle may engender anger (Brader, 2006). Similarly, Roseman (1984) argued that “*it is interpretation of events rather than the events per se that determine which emotions will be felt*” (p. 14, italics in the original). Thus, the appraisal theory of discrete emotion focuses on cognitive antecedents of emotions. One of the premises of the theory is that different emotions arise from distinct social situations.

Affective Intelligence and Political Participation

Among those models conceptualizing the structure of emotions, the present study mainly relies on the two factor (negative and positive) model, although subtle distinctions across various discrete emotions are recognized as the cognitive appraisal theory suggests. The reason for this approach is twofold. First, the primary goal of the current research revolves around whether emotions mediate between late-night comedy consumption and participation above and beyond cognitive and attitudinal accounts, and therefore, discussing every nuance of each emotion type is beyond the scope of this study. Second, many students of political psychology have demonstrated that the structure of emotions could be parsimoniously summarized by two affective dimensions (e.g., Marcus et al., 2000; Rudolph et al., 2000; Russell, 1980; Watson et al., 1988; Watson et al., 1999).

The most prevailing two factor model was proposed by the affective intelligence theory (Marcus et al., 2000), which articulated the processes whereby emotions promote citizens' participatory behaviors. Drawing on Gray's (1987, 1990) work in neuroscience, Marcus et al. (2000) contended that both positive and negative emotions could boost political participation. Positive emotions, which are likely when goals are fulfilled, tend to reinforce existing behaviors (the *disposition* system). On the other hand, negative emotions experienced when individuals encounter unfamiliar, threatening stimuli are likely to disrupt normal patterns of behavior and prompt novel forms activities to address the source of a threat (the *surveillance* system).

Indeed, a large body of empirical evidence has accumulated to support the theory, while demonstrating that both negative and positive emotions can encourage political participation. Anxiety has been shown to stimulate interest in electoral politics (Rudolph et al., 2000), and further to promote attention to news and participatory

behaviors beyond voting (Marcus et al., 2000). Evidence also illustrated that fear and worry can induce citizens to contact political candidates and public officials (Brader, 2006; Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2004). Building upon the constructive role of emotions, Martin (2004) argued that negative advertising can encourage political participation by triggering anxiety within the public. In addition, literature supported the motivational role of positive emotions. As reviewed earlier, Gray (1987, 1990) initially conceptualized that only positive emotions were linked to *the behavioral activation system*, which governs an individual's tendency to take action. For example, Marcus et al. (2000) found that enthusiasm predicted higher levels of political interest and participation. Similarly, Brader (2006) observed that enthusiasm appeals elicited the desire to participate in the election campaign to the extent those cues satisfied individuals' existing goals and predispositions. While comparing the motivational roles of positive and negative emotions, the author further posited that the impact of the former was broader and more general, whereas the influence of the latter was more concentrated and confined to specific activities. More recently, Valentino and his colleagues (2011) demonstrated that both negative (anger more than worry) and positive emotions explained substantial variance in participation above and beyond more conventional accounts of political mobilization including individual orientations and cognitive resources.

Late-Night Comedy and Emotions

Late-night comedy shows not only ridicule the arrogance, ineptitude, and foibles of public officials and political candidates, but they also harshly lambast, albeit

humorously, the artifice and fakery of parties, institutions, programs, and policies (Caufield, 2008; Holbert, 2005b; Jones, 2005). Furthermore, content analyses of political comedy shows (Duerst, Koloen, & Peterson, 2001; Hess, 2001; Niven et al., 2003; Young, 2004) find that most jokes are directed at the personal characteristics of public figures rather than the issues. Indeed, many agree that the tone of late-night humor is decidedly aggressive and critical; politicians are often caricatured by their most obtrusive faults, and the system is typically portrayed to be incompetent (Compton & Pfau, 2009; Duerst et al., 2001; Hess, 2001; Jamieson & Waldman, 2003; Moy & Pfau, 2000; Niven et al., 2003; Sarver, 2004; Young, 2004). These biased depictions of the public discourse could taint the viewer's evaluations of public officials and government institutions.

Past research on the traditional media had well established that negatively framed political cues and character-based campaigns could result in cynicism and distrust among the public (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Patterson, 1994; Valentino, Beckmann, & Buhr, 2001). While expecting late-night comedy to possess a similar effect, Baumgartner and Morris (2006) argued frequent viewers of late-night comedy tended to report more negative perceptions of political candidates as well as less faith in the electoral system. The authors conclude that these programs could exert detrimental effects on a healthy democracy by stirring political cynicism among viewers. Late-night humor runs the risk of creating a negative reaction among viewers while leaving them feeling detached (J. Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009).

However, as reviewed earlier in the previous chapter, a multitude of research findings challenged the deleterious effect of late-night comedy on a citizen's perception

and attitude toward public figures and the political system (Cao & Brewer, 2008; Dorman, 2007; Feldman & Young, 2008; Rottinghaus et al., 2008; Young, 2004; Young & Tisinger, 2006). For instance, Compton and Pfau (2009) show that not only candidate appearances on late-night talk shows but satirical jokes about candidates could also enhance perceptions of their competence and character, and viewing the programs can lead citizens to feel closer to them because those who are ridiculed look more approachable. In addition, coverage of issues frequently accompany the jokes targeted at the personal characteristics in the form of a news summary (Feldman & Young, 2008). In fact, the range of topics covered by late-night comedy is quite substantial, incorporating those policies concerning Iraq, media ownership, gay marriage, environment, tax, and crime (Jones, 2005). As Brewer and Marquardt (2007) contend, these issue frames could strengthen citizens' faith in their ability to make sense of the political world.

The aggressive tone in late night comedy may thus lead to consequences conceptually distinct from cynicism and may prove beneficial for functioning democracy (Brewer & Marquardt, 2007; Jones, 2010; Morreale, 2009). Rather than merely emphasizing the failings of the public discourse, late-night comedy utilizes satirical wit and humor to highlight the unmistakably visible gap “between vice and virtue, between good and bad, between what man *is*, and what he *ought to be*” (Young & Tisinger, 2006). Talk show hosts first rebuke politicians, elections, and the political process as a whole, yet they also encourage the viewers' confidence that they can rectify perceived social ills by signaling “disappointed idealism” (Jones, 2005, p. 121). The combination of criticism and idealism embedded in late-night comedy may introduce what Schutz (1977)

has called the “positive negativity” of political humor.

Perhaps contrary to what critics of late-night humor maintain, political satire may not produce cynicism. Cynicism toward the political system refers to a lack of confidence in and a feeling of distrust toward the political system (Dennis & Webster, 1975). Cappella and Jamieson (1997) suggest that the center of political cynicism is the absence of trust in political actors, to whom the primary goal is their self-interest and the common interest is secondary at best or is utilized only for a political advantage. Cynicism represents a cognitive state that is essentially closed to new information. Echoing this perspective, Crotty and Jacobson (1980) observe that cynical citizens have essentially given up on the political process, viewing it as irrelevant to their lives.

On the other hand, studies have demonstrated that late-night comedy could stimulate political interest (Cao & Brewer, 2008; Dorman, 2007; Young, 2004) and further prompt citizens to obtain more information from hard news sources (Feldman & Young, 2008; Rottinghaus et al., 2008; Young & Tisinger, 2006). If so, viewers’ attitude when they encounter satirical attacks in late-night humor may be something more like skepticism, which many consider a boon to democracy (Brewer & Marquardt, 2007). Indeed, skepticism is characterized by an openness to additional information, and skeptical citizens may seek information to confirm or disconfirm the veracity of previously received messages (Austin & Pinkleton, 1995; Wilkins, 2000).

While sarcastic humor appears to create cynical attitudes toward politics among viewers, one could logically postulate that findings advocating the causal link between late-night comedy and cynicism (e.g., Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Compton & Pfau, 2009) may instead point to the late-night comedy’s contribution to the viewer’s critical

perspective toward politics, not necessarily the cynicism. Morreale (2009) maintains that while cynicism seems to be a plausible response, late-night comedy well blends comedic wit with incisive social criticism not only to combat cynicism but to teach the skills of critical reasoning and assessment that are essential to participatory democracy. Similarly, Jones (2010) contends that satire and humorous criticism inherent in late-night comedy would rather invite a firm insistence that politics and public affairs indeed matter and both deserve our primary concern. In short, late-night comedy with its mischievous but penetrating criticism is thought to produce critical, though not cynical, viewers.

Viewed in this light, consuming incisive criticism in late-night humor may invite viewers' affective responses. Bennett (2007) characterized soft news, including late-night comedy, as being more immediate and emotional. Along this line, Jones (2010) contended that late-night comedy provides programming that fulfills numerous emotional needs, feelings, and desires in citizen-viewers, including pride, anger, retribution, superiority, joy, celebration, playfulness, and belonging. Jon Stewart, arguably the most well-known host in the genre, represents an individual who is angry about the contradiction between official pronouncements and his common sense (Douglas, 2003). As Cao and Brewer (2008) aptly pointed out, caricatures and innuendos embedded in late-night humor may elicit anxiety about politics, which could serve as a consequential impetus for greater mobilization. After all, sarcasm contained in late-night comedy is well positioned to summon up affective responses that could engage viewers with substantive meanings of politics on an emotional level, and it could yield "healthy" negative emotions.

Essentially, exposure to late-night comedy may trigger negative emotional reactions toward the current political situation and possible future outcomes. Scholars concur that high levels of cynicism detract citizens from public discourse and dampen an individual's motivation to participate (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Crotty & Jacobson, 1980; Dennis & Webster, 1975). In contrast, students of political psychology have consistently demonstrated that negative emotions such as anxiety and anger can prompt individuals to participate in politics (Brader, 2006; Marcus et al., 2000). If audience members feel angry or worried as a result of watching, late-night comedy possesses the potential to stimulate political participation.

On the other hand, the relationship between comedy viewing and positive emotion is less clear. On the plus side, certain attributes of political humor prompt us to believe that frequent viewing of late-night comedy can draw positive emotional resonances from audiences. For example, these comedy shows usually present politics in an amusing manner that provides audiences with the pleasure of watching (Cao & Brewer, 2008). It can also mean that these shows are more effective at engaging viewers and urging them to consider significant issues, rather than diverting and distracting from them (Baym, 2005). In addition, satirists are adept at translating negative emotions such as anger and resentment into great impulses for positive change (J. Gray et al., 2009). The presentation of substantive issues in an amusing manner could create a sense of assurance among viewers that they could correct malfunctions of society and produce better political prospects, thereby promoting more positive emotional states.

Nevertheless, the evidence discussed herein clearly demonstrates that the tone of satirical humor is predominantly negative. Furthermore, the norm of negativity bias

suggests that negative information as compared to its positive counterpart tends to be more salient and influential (Johnson-Cartee & Copland, 1991; Rozin & Royzman, 2001) and commands more attentive and thoughtful processing (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). After reviewing extensive literature, Taylor (1991) concluded that negative stimuli that are potentially threatening and harmful evoke greater emotional reactions than positive events. Moreover, it has been shown that even a well-balanced combination of negative and positive information yields the biased appraisal leaning toward a more negative perception (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1997; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Rozin & Royzman, 2001). It can be inferred from this premise that, although late-night comedy features negative as well as positive information, viewers are more likely to assimilate negative components rather excessively, giving greater weight to appreciably negative criticisms embedded in satirical humor. In fact, research in political communication consistently supports the asymmetrical influence of negative information on an individual's attitude and behavior (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; de Vreese, Boomgaarden, & Semetko, 2011; Holbrook, Krosnick, Visser, Gardner, & Cacioppo, 2001; Lau, 1985; Soroka, 2006). Furthermore, previous studies indicated that political media content is more likely to elicit negative emotions than positive responses (Chang, 2001; Cho et al., 2003). All in all, the negative tone of humor whose impact might be accelerated by negativity bias renders it difficult to make an explicit prediction about the role of late-night comedy, despite some encouraging components, in evoking positive emotion.

Conditional Indirect Effects of Late-Night Comedy

Discussion thus far has focused on the S (late-night comedy viewing) - O (emotion) - R (political participation) causal chain, while leaving out the first O. According to J. M. McLeod et al. (1994), the first O denotes “the set of structural, cultural, cognitive, and motivational characteristics the audience brings to the reception situation that affect the impact of the message” (p. 146). Thus, the first O includes individual factors such as political sophistication and partisanship that could, in due course, *moderate* the influence of the stimulus. In the context of the current research, a handful of studies noted that the effects of satirical humor may hinge upon political sophistication. However, findings have been inconsistent, with some arguing that the constructive role of political entertainment is more pronounced among sophisticates (Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005a; Young, 2008), while others speak to the stronger influence among those who are less savvy (Baum, 2003a; Landreville, Holbert, & LaMarre, 2008). Furthermore, little is known about how this conditional relationship occurs.

Recent findings in political psychology indicating that the mobilizing influence of negative emotion is contingent upon political sophistication (Brader, 2006; Rudolph et al., 2000; Valentino et al., 2011; Valentino, Gregorowicz, & Groenendyk, 2007) may help us identify the mechanism by which individual expertise moderates the effect of consuming late-night humor. Briefly, these studies found the mobilizing role of negative emotion is unevenly concentrated among those who are high in their civic skills and resources. When this possible interaction between negative emotion and expertise in accounting for political engagement is combined with insights about the direct linkage between late-night comedy watching and negative emotion, we can posit a conditional indirect (or moderated mediation) relationship. That is, the indirect effect of late-night comedy

viewing on political participation via the conduit of negative emotion is conditional upon political expertise such that the benefits of consuming satirical humor through angry and worried responses are more pronounced among those who are highly sophisticated.

Disentangling Distinct Negative Emotional Responses

As reviewed earlier, the discrete emotion model proposes that specificity of emotions accounts for distinguishable characteristics and roles. In particular, proponents of the cognitive appraisal theory (e.g., Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Smith & Kirby, 2001; Tiedens & Linton., 2001) have been arguing that anger and anxiety (or worry), though not mutually exclusive but closely intertwined, differ in their origins and consequences. Hence, research on emotion differentiates between two forms of negative emotions, suggesting that anger and fear represent discrete affective states stemming from dissimilar appraisals of *certainty* about and *control* over an external threat (Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007; Lerner & Keltner, 2001; MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, & Marcus, 2010; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985).

From this perspective, anger occurs when individuals are certain about the cause of a threat. It provides the perceived control over a jeopardizing event. On the other hand, anxious and worried responses are more likely when the source of a threatening situation seem unfamiliar and uncontrollable. It may logically follow that anger and anxiety entertain multifaceted behavioral ramifications, with the former producing an aggressive threat-coping approach behavior and the latter leading to a passive risk-avoiding behavior (Carver, 2004; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Mackie & Smith, 2003; Weiner, 2006). While bolstering this line of reasoning, a handful of

studies demonstrated that anger rather than anxiety is more likely to promote vigorous engagement in political activities (Huddy et al., 2007; Valentino et al., 2011; Weber, 2007). For instance, Valentino et al. (2011) observed that anger is more powerful than fear in mobilizing participation and that the latter motivates “easier” and more immediate modes of mobilization, whereas the former boosts “harder” and more costly participatory activities. Similarly, Weber (2007) has validated with both the experimental and survey results that negative emotions do not produce uniform effects on political participation. He demonstrated that anger provokes an individual’s campaign interest, consequently attaching a greater importance to the act of voting relative to other negative emotions.

Further extending the discrete approach to emotion, Dunlop, Wakefield, and Kashima (2008) suggested that identical emotions could produce diverse consequences depending on the referent of emotions—i.e., who or what the emotion is about or refers to. For instance, an emotional reaction arising from the relevance to one’s self (e.g., “I am angry about the way economy affects me”) is very different from an affective response that is directed to a message-implied issue (e.g., “I am angry about the current state of economy”). Dunlop et al. (2008) proposed three classes of emotions that are conceptually distinguished by the referent, message-referent (emotional response to the message itself), plot-referent (response to the target implied by the plot), and self-referent (response to the self), and maintained that self-referent emotion could trigger an individual’s behavior most directly and effectively by increasing perceived personal risk. In support of this proposition, Houser-Marko and Sheldon (2006) showed that the “self-as-doer” construct in a message augmented its influence on an individual’s behavior.

However, not all types of self-referent emotions seem to motivate action to the

same degree. In fact, some evidence suggests that negative emotions may yield more passive responses unless the assurance of efficacy accompanies the appeals (Rogers, 1975; Witte & Allen, 2000). Meanwhile, fear and worry tend to be associated with lower degrees of efficacy due to the lack of confidence in individual control and certainty over an external threat (Gamson, 1968; Valentino et al., 2007; Weber, 2007). In this case, self-referencing may not enhance the motivational role of fear and worry; instead, it may augment the avoiding tendency already inherent in these emotions. Perhaps, when self-referencing triggered by fear or worry raises the perception of risk in the absence of efficacy, individuals may find a distasteful situation more burdensome and subsequently seek to avoid it (see also, Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991; Heatherton, Striepe, & Wittenberg, 1998; Sherman & Cohen, 2002). Thus, although it can be argued that self-referent anger could boost political participation more than plot-referent or message-referent emotions, it is less clear that self-referencing of fear or worry could play an equivalent role in extending the mobilizing effects of these negative emotions. In short, the present study acknowledges the differences embedded in discrete emotions the effects of which may also hinge upon diverse referents of emotions.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Late-night comedy is marked by a coupling of attack and judgment with play and laughter (Jones, 2010). A dark picture of current public affairs is well balanced with the optimism that ordinary citizens could fix broken pieces of society. Thus, notwithstanding the paucity of empirical evidence, late-night comedy appears to be able to provoke negative emotions (e.g., anger, worry) given the widespread criticism in

political satire. On the other hand, the presentation of substantive issues in an amusing and accessible fashion may elicit positive emotions (e.g., enthusiasm, hope). However, overwhelmingly negative tone of humor and the principle of negativity bias (Baumeister et al., 2001; Rozin & Royzman, 2001; Taylor, 1991) raise doubts about the role of late-night comedy in evoking positive emotions. In fact, evidence in political communication (e.g., Lau, 1985) also supports the asymmetrical influence of negative information. Furthermore, previous studies indicated that political media content tends to elicit negative emotions more strongly than positive responses (Chang, 2001; Cho et al., 2003). Thus, the following hypothesis and research question are proposed.

Hypothesis 3.1 (H3.1): Late-night comedy viewing will be positively associated with negative emotions.

Research Question 3.1 (RQ3.1): Does late-night comedy viewing predict positive emotions?

Affective intelligence theory has underscored the effects of two significant emotional dimensions in spurring citizens' participatory behaviors (Marcus et al., 2000). Indeed, a good deal of scholarly evidence indicates that both negative and positive emotions could encourage political mobilization (Brader, 2006; Brader & Corrigan, 2006; Brader et al., 2004; Rudolph et al., 2000; Valentino et al., 2011).

Hypothesis 3.2a (H3.2a): Negative emotions will predict a higher level of political participation.

Hypothesis 3.2b (H3.2b): Positive emotions will predict a higher level of political participation.

A synthesis of literature from the O-S-O-R approach to examine indirect

influence of media use (Markus & Zajonc, 1985; J. M. McLeod et al., 1994; J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999), research on the contents of political humor, and political psychology enables us to propose an affective mediation model which inquires about the mediating role of emotion (the second O) between the viewers' consumption of the late-night comedy programs (S) and their participatory behaviors (R). Implied in this model is that late-night comedy programs may fall short of providing citizens with cognitive skills and resources facilitating their political participation, as critics argue. However, late-night comedy could draw ample emotional experiences among frequent viewers, which could in turn spur their greater engagement in various political activities. Specifically, it is arguable that late-night comedy could draw negative emotions among frequent viewers, which could in turn spur their greater engagement in various political activities. Meanwhile, the mediating effects of positive emotions remain less clear, primarily due to the lack of our confidence in the link between late-night comedy viewing and positive emotions.

Hypothesis 3.3 (H3.3): Negative emotions will positively mediate the effect of late-night comedy exposure on political participation.

Research Question 3.2 (RQ3.2): Do positive emotions mediate the effect of late-night comedy exposure on political participation?

As J. M. McLeod et al. (1994) noted, a range of individual differences can moderate the influence of the stimulus (i.e., first O). Hence, not all audience members are equally likely to benefit from the indirect causal chain of late-night comedy. Particularly, given the well-substantiated interplay between negative emotions and expertise in explaining political participation (Brader, 2006; Rudolph et al., 2000;

Valentino et al., 2011; Valentino et al., 2007), political sophistication can be viewed as a first O the audience bring to the reception of satirical humor that could enhance the constructive influence of late-night comedy viewing. It would mean that political satire is more effective for more sophisticated respondents since they are much more likely to quickly understand Stewart's or Colbert's inside jokes and backhanded jabs at candidates. Specifically, it is hypothesized that the indirect effect of late-night comedy viewing through negative emotion is conditional upon the audience member's level of education.³

Hypothesis 3.4 (H3.4): The indirect effect of late-night comedy viewing on political participation through negative emotions will be conditional upon education such that the effect is stronger for those who are highly educated.

The cognitive appraisal approach identifies distinct causes and effects of anger and worry and suggests that the former is more motivational compared to the latter because of the improved sense of certainty and control over a threatening situation (Huddy et al., 2007; Lerner & Keltner, 2001; MacKuen et al., 2010; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Synthesizing the implications from research on the referencing of emotions (Dunlop et al., 2008), it seems reasonable to expect that self-referent anger can produce the greatest mobilizing influence, whereas self-referencing of worry may even decrease political behavior. However, empirical evidence supporting this claim is sparse. In addition, little research has investigated the specific type of negative emotion (e.g., anger or worry) and the particular referent of emotion (e.g., self, message, or plot) that late-

³ Of course, others propose alternative operationalization of political sophistication such as ideology, interest, and knowledge (for review, see Krosnick, 1990). Yet reasons for employing education as a measure of sophistication are twofold. First, J. M. McLeod et al. (1994) emphasized the role of education as a first O augmenting the message influence in their original O-S-O-R framework. Second, education affords more advanced cognitive capacity (Rosenberg, 1988), which is key to processing and understanding political humor (Young, 2008).

night comedy viewing delivers to audiences. Accordingly, the following research questions are posed to assess the mediating effects of discrete negative emotions between the stimulus and the response.

Research Question 3.3a (RQ3.3a): Which discrete negative emotion more likely follows the consumption of late-night humor?

Research Question 3.3b (RQ3.3b): Which discrete negative emotion has a greater mobilizing potential?

Research Question 3.3c (RQ3.3c): Which discrete negative emotion mediates more strongly the relation between exposure to late-night comedy and political participation?

Methods

The design of this study is twofold: an experiment and a survey. First, manipulating the exposure to late-night comedy in an experiment will permit us to examine under a controlled setting the precise causal effects of consuming humor on emotions and political participation. Then, employing a secondary analysis of a national survey (Principal Investigator: Dr. Nojin Kwak at the University of Michigan) will assess whether the observed associations are generalizable to the real-world setting. Eventually, integrating the results from the experiment and the survey will uncover the causal structure of the relationships among the core variables of the affective mediation model embedded in our mundane life.

Study 1: The Online Experiment

Participants

The experimental data came from an online experiment conducted in February 2011. Participants were recruited from a census representative panel maintained by the research firm *Qualtrics*. The company draws a panel using the stratified quota sampling method. In exchange for participating in studies, panelists receive cash value rewards that are credited to their online accounts. A total of 2,301 adult citizens aged 18 and older were randomly selected from their panel and were invited via email to participate in an online study; 861 members agreed to participate, and 768 individuals successfully completed the study. This represents a cooperation rate of 33.4%.

Procedure

Those who agreed to participate were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: late-night comedy, television hard news, or a control. Upon reading a brief description of the study and signing the informed consent form, participants were asked for demographic information. They were then directed to the page showing a video clip. The first group ($n = 256$) viewed a short video clip from *The Daily Show* comprising several segments concerning the government's bailout of big companies. The second group ($n = 254$) was exposed to a compiled video from *NBC Nightly News*; this clip also featured selected coverage of the government's bailout of big companies. To maintain a control across the conditions, the hard news and late-night comedy clips were of equal length and focus; both clips lasted approximately four minutes and featured the Congress' hearing of Timothy Geithner (Treasury Secretary) testifying about the bailout. The

most notable difference was the tone of coverage; the late-night comedy clip was humorous and sarcastic as Jon Stewart, in typical form, entertained and provoked audiences, whereas the hard news clip remained serious in tone. The third group ($n = 258$) viewed a clip about a Disney Resort in Orlando; this served as a control, providing a baseline comparison for the effects of late-night comedy viewing. Once participants finished viewing the video clips, they all completed the same questionnaire measuring their emotions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions regarding the economy.

Measures

Political Participation

Participation measures in the experiment tapped the respondents' behavioral intention rather than actual behavior due to the difficulty of measuring the latter in a controlled setting. Specifically, respondents were asked about their intent to participate in three forms of political activities: attending a political meeting, rally, or speech; contacting a public official or a political party; and displaying a bumper sticker or yard sign on a political issue (see Appendix for question wording). The Respondents reported the likelihood of engagement in each type of activity on a 7-point scale, ranging from *Extremely unlikely* to *Extremely likely*. The responses were averaged to form an index of political participation ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.74$, $\alpha = .88$).

Emotional Responses

In order to measure emotional responses, respondents were asked to express their

anger, worry, and excitement about the government's bailout of big companies. Using Dunlop, Wakefield, and Kashima's (2008) suggestion that three broad classes of emotional responses yield distinct behavioral consequences, each type of emotion was differentiated further by message-, plot-, or self-referent emotions, thereby constituting a total of nine emotion variables. Respondents were asked to report how strongly they felt the corresponding emotion on a 7-point scale, ranging from *not at all* to *extremely*. The present study adopts the view shared by many students of political psychology (e.g., Abelson et al., 1982; Marcus et al., 2000; Rudolph et al., 2000; Russell, 1980; Watson et al., 1988; Watson et al., 1999) that the structure of emotions could be parsimoniously summarized by two affective dimensions—negative and positive—each of which now runs from low to high arousal. Accordingly, an index of “negative” emotion was created by averaging responses on the three items measuring different classes of anger and the three parallel measures of worry ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 1.61$, $\alpha = .96$). Responses on the message-, plot-, and self-referent enthusiasm items were averaged to form an index of “positive” emotion ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 1.52$, $\alpha = .97$).

Demographics

Descriptive statistics for the demographic information are as follows: age ($M = 47.27$, $SD = 14.13$); gender (51% female); household income (Median: \$35,000-\$59,999); education (Median: ‘some college or associate degrees’); and party affiliation (34% Republican, 36% Democrat). The effectiveness of the random assignment was assessed by comparing the three groups on these demographic variables. One-way ANOVA results indicated that there were no significant between-group differences on

these demographic measures (all p s > .46). Chi-square tests on age, gender, household income, education, and party affiliation showed no significant association between demographic measures and group (all p s > .36).

Cognitive and Attitudinal Factors

The experiment incorporated cognitive and attitudinal variables that could also mediate between late-night comedy exposure and political participation. An index of internal efficacy was created by averaging responses on three items measured on a 7-point scale ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.36$, $\alpha = .75$). Political interest was measured with a single item asking respondents to report on a 7-point scale to what extent they were interested in politics ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 1.80$). The experiment did not include any knowledge measures. Instead, an index for the willingness to learn was used as a proxy for political knowledge. This index was created by averaging responses on three items measured on a 7-point scale ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.23$, $\alpha = .81$). Finally, an index of cynicism was created by averaging responses on four items measured on a 7-point scale ($M = 5.31$, $SD = 1.03$, $\alpha = .73$).

Results

Manipulation Check

To investigate if participants perceived the intended discrepancies in the tone of coverage, manipulation check items were included in the questionnaire asking about their overall impression of the video clip. In particular, participants were asked to report on a

7-point scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: The clip was “sarcastic”, “funny”, and “concerning.” A one-way ANOVA on the mean scores of the clip being “sarcastic” found significant between-group differences, $F(2, 765) = 464.18, p < .001, \eta^2 = .55$. Scheffe post-hoc tests demonstrated that participants indeed perceived the late-night comedy clip ($M = 5.60, SD = 1.45$) as being significantly more sarcastic compared the control ($M = 1.81, SD = 1.21$) and hard news ($M = 2.88, SD = 1.66$) clips (all $ps < .001$). Likewise, a one-way ANOVA showed significant between-group differences in the degree to which participants perceived the clip as “funny”, $F(2, 765) = 299.80, p < .001, \eta^2 = .44$. Scheffe post-hoc tests indicated that participants exposed to late-night comedy scored a higher mean score ($M = 5.13, SD = 1.71$) compared to the hard news ($M = 1.87, SD = 1.28$) and control ($M = 3.07, SD = 1.54$) groups (all $ps < .001$). On the other hand, participations in the hard news condition reported the highest mean score on the item assessing how “concerning” the clip was ($M = 5.69, SD = 1.16$), followed by the late-night comedy clip ($M = 5.25, SD = 1.28$), and the control condition showed the lowest rating ($M = 3.14, SD = 1.84$), $F(2, 765) = 216.77, p < .001, \eta^2 = .36$. Scheffe post-hoc tests showed that the difference between the hard news and late-night conditions comedy as well as the difference between the late-night comedy and control groups were highly significant (all $ps < .001$). Taken together, these results suggest that both late-night comedy viewing and hard news exposure raised concerns, but participants clearly perceived the discrepancies in the tone of coverage.

Direct Effects of Late-Night Comedy on Emotions

The indices of negative emotion and positive emotions were subject to one-way ANOVAs to assess the results concerning H3.1 and RQ3.1. Significant between-group differences in the degrees of negative emotions, $F(2, 765) = 6.37, p < .01, \eta^2 = .02$, support H3.1, while clearly illustrating that exposure to late-night comedy provoked participants' negative emotion. Specifically, post-hoc Scheffe tests revealed that the late-night comedy group ($M = 5.35, SD = 1.48$) reported a higher level of negative emotions than the control group ($M = 4.85, SD = 1.70$), $p < .001$, although the comparison with the television news group was not significant ($M = 5.08, SD = 1.59$), $p = n.s.$ Meanwhile, little was observed for the link between consuming late-night humor and positive emotions (RQ3.1), when manipulation failed to produce significant between-group contrasts in the level of positive emotion, $F(2, 765) = 1.28, p = n.s., \eta^2 = .00$, with the late-night comedy group ($M = 2.17, SD = 1.52$) yielding little difference than the television news ($M = 2.15, SD = 1.45$) and control ($M = 2.35, SD = 1.58$) groups. On the other hand, post-hoc Scheffe tests on the differences of the television news and control groups suggest that exposure to hard news did not prompt the respondents to feel negative about the government's bailout of big companies nor did it alter the level of positive emotions (all $ps = n.s.$).

Effects of Emotions on Participation

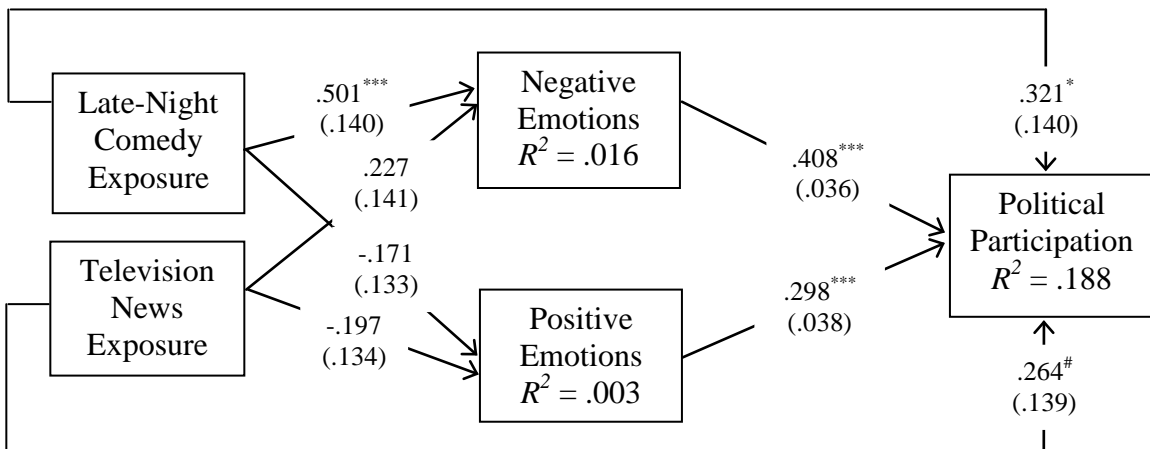
The effects of emotions on political participation (H3.2a and H3.2b) were assessed by regressing the index of political participation on the scales of negative and positive emotion, controlling for the independent variable (i.e., the late-night comedy group dummy and the hard news group dummy). Findings support the mobilizing role

played by negative emotions (H3.2a: $b = .408$, $SE = .036$, $p < .001$) and positive emotions (H3.2b: $b = .298$, $SE = .038$, $p < .001$).

Mediating Effects of Emotions

The current chapter asked whether emotions significantly mediate the influence of late-night comedy viewing on political participation. In order to assess such mediating effects, Baron and Kenny (1986) suggested that the following conditions must hold: (a) the independent variable must significantly affect the mediator; (b) the mediator must significantly affect the dependent variable, controlling for the independent variable; (c) the independent variable must significantly affect the dependent variable; and (c') if all these conditions hold, then the effect of the independent variable must be significantly reduced when the mediator is controlled for.

Figure 3.1. Mediation model of media exposure, emotions, and political participation (Experiment, $N = 768$)



Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses. Estimates were calculated using Preacher and Hayes' (2008) indirect SPSS macro.

$\# p < .10$; $* p < .05$; $** p < .01$; $*** p < .001$

Preacher and Hayes' (2008) indirect SPSS macro allows for testing of these mediating effects by first regressing respective mediators (negative emotions and positive emotions) on the independent variables (late-night comedy exposure dummy and television news exposure dummy) and, subsequently by regressing the dependent variable (political participation) on the mediators controlling for the independent variables. The computed regression coefficients and corresponding standard errors are reported in Figure 3.1.⁴

Preliminary analyses based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach indicate that late-night comedy viewing did not yield an indirect mobilizing effect through positive emotions. Confirming the direct relationships discussed above, Figure 3.1 shows that exposure to late-night comedy failed to produce a significant change in the index of positive emotions—i.e., the (a) condition above, although the latter was positively associated with political participation—i.e., the (b) condition above. In contrast, findings advocate the significant mediation by negative emotions. First, the significant effect of late-night comedy exposure on negative emotions presents support for the (a) condition, while confirming the ANOVA results above. Additionally, negative emotions predicted greater intent to participate, thereby supporting the (b) condition. Moreover, as summarized in Table 3.1, the significant total effects of late-night comedy exposure—i.e., the (c) condition above—became insignificant after accounting for the

⁴ For a categorical independent variable with k categories, Preacher and Hayes (2008) recommend to construct $k-1$ dummy variables and then run analyses $k-1$ times. With each run, make one dummy variable the independent variable and the other one(s) the covariate(s). Since the independent variable of the present study had three categories (late-night comedy, hard news, and control), I created two dummy variables (late-night dummy and hard news dummy) and ran an analysis twice. The first test (independent variable: late-night dummy; covariate: hard news dummy) captured the indirect effect of late-night comedy viewing on political participation relative to the control condition, whereas the second run (independent: hard-news dummy; covariate: late-night dummy) estimated the indirect effect of hard news exposure as compared to the same baseline.

indirect influence via emotional responses—i.e., the (c') condition above (from .475 to .321).

In regard to assessing mediation, Hayes (2009) criticized Baron and Kenny's (1986) causal-steps approach because it requires running several regression analyses, can be inconsistent, and often is not powerful enough to detect indirect effects. For more rigorous testing of mediating effects, the current study employed the Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) and the bootstrap analysis (Hayes, 2009). As the data in Table 3.1 show, the Sobel test bolstered the indirect effects of late-night comedy exposure on political participation through viewers' affective responses. The Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) examines mediation more directly by computing the product of the direct effect from some independent variable to its mediator, and from that mediator to the dependent variable, which is then compared to the normal-theory standard error. However, the distribution is often skewed, so this test is also not ideal.

Table 3.1. Mediation of the association between late-night comedy exposure and political participation through emotions (Experiment, $N = 768$)

	Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects			Formal Tests of Indirect Effects	
	Total	Direct	Indirect	Sobel z	CI
Late-night comedy exposure	.475 ^{***} (.153)	.321 [*] (.140)	.154 [*] (.068)	2.265	.031 to .293
Television news exposure	.298 [#] (.153)	.264 [#] (.139)	.034 (.128)	.266	-.088 to .170

Note. CIs are bias-corrected and -accelerated 95% confidence interval (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

[#] $p < .10$; ^{*} $p < .05$; ^{**} $p < .01$; ^{***} $p < .001$

For the statistical analysis of mediating effects, Hayes (2009) recommends the use of bootstrapping (i.e., nonparametric resampling of the observed dataset) and the

interpretation of resulting confidence intervals beyond the Sobel test, which assumes normality that is often violated in the sampling distribution of indirect effects.

Following his suggestion, the bias-corrected 95% confidence interval estimating the indirect influence of late-night comedy exposure on political participation via emotional responses was computed based on the bootstrapping of 5,000 samples. The confidence interval did not include 0, further bolstering confidence in the idea that late-night comedy viewing can indirectly spur political participation by eliciting viewers' emotional experiences.

Meanwhile, findings based on the tests of indirect effects demonstrated that the relationship between traditional media use and participation was weakly mediated by emotions (Table 3.1). As illustrated in Figure 3.1, this lack of indirect effects from television news exposure onto political participation via emotions was mainly due to the absence of the relationships between the independent variable and the mediators. Instead, television news viewing produced a considerable direct effect on participation ($b = .264, SE = .139, p < .10$), and it is not significantly different from the direct mobilizing influence of late-night comedy ($b = .321, SE = .140, p < .05$).⁵

To examine respective indirect paths through negative emotions and positive emotions, the point estimates and corresponding confidence intervals were estimated separately, and the results are summarized in Table 3.2. In regard to H3.3, the Sobel test and the bootstrap confidence interval clearly indicated that the influence of late-night comedy on political participation was significantly mediated by negative emotions. Yet,

⁵ Contrasting the effect of late-night comedy with the hard news influence was achieved by running an additional analysis where the late-night dummy is the independent variable and the control dummy is the covariate, and findings show that the difference between late-night comedy and television news in their direct effects on participation (i.e., $b = .321$ as compared to $b = .264$) was not statistically significant ($b = .057, SE = .140, p = n.s.$).

little is shown regarding RQ3.2 for the mediating effect of positive emotions between late-night comedy viewing and participation. Further, the results confirmed that the relationship between traditional media use and participation was weakly mediated by either emotion type

Table 3.2. Specific indirect effect of media exposure on political participation through negative emotion and positive emotion (Experiment, $N = 768$)

Specific Indirect Effect	Point Estimate	Boot SE	Sobel z	CI
L → NE → P	.205***	.061	3.361	.089 to .329
L → PE → P	-.051	.041	-.444	-.133 to .030
T → NE → P	.092 [#]	.060	1.533	-.024 to .215
T → PE → P	-.059 [#]	.041	-1.439	-.141 to .019

Note. L: late-night comedy exposure; T: television news exposure; NE: negative emotions; PE: positive emotions; P: political participation; CIs are bias-corrected and -accelerated 95% confidence intervals (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

[#] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Accounting for Rival Explanations: Cognitive and Attitudinal Factors.

As noted earlier, most conventional indirect effect models advance cognitive and attitudinal factors as mediators (second O) between the stimuli (S) and some behavioral responses (R). In order to account for possible cognitive mechanisms, an additional model incorporated cognitive and attitudinal variables such as internal efficacy, political interest, and willingness to learn (as a proxy for political knowledge) whose mediating roles have been frequently examined (J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Scheufele et al., 2004). This model also examined the mediating influence of cynicism between exposure to late-night comedy and participation, as suggested by some scholars (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Hoffman & Thomson, 2009). Findings based on the bootstrapping of 5,000 samples show that the indirect effects via negative emotions

survived the possible mediating effects of cognitive and attitudinal factors ($b = .150$, *Boot SE* = .046, *CI* = .066 to .248). In fact, none of these measures yielded a comparable mediating effect (internal efficacy: $b = -.001$, *Boot SE* = .044, *CI* = -.085 to .087; political interest: $b = .024$, *Boot SE* = .037, *CI* = -.045 to .103; willingness to learn: $b = .015$, *Boot SE* = .020, *CI* = -.022 to .060, and cynicism: $b = -.002$, *Boot SE* = .007, *CI* = -.030 to .006). Hence, the results clearly indicate that negative emotions mediated the effects of exposure to late-night comedy on political participation above and beyond conventional cognitive accounts.

Conditional Indirect Effect

The current section investigates the conditional indirect effect proposed by H3.4. Estimates were calculated using the Mplus code corresponding to Model 3 of the moderated mediation analysis technique recommended by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007). Technically, this assessment comprises two regression models. The mediator model predicts negative emotions (the mediator of interest) from late-night comedy exposure (the independent variable) controlling for television news exposure, while the dependent variable model predicts political participation (the dependent variable) from negative and positive emotions (the mediators) and the interaction between negative emotion and education (the mediator of interest * the moderator) controlling for late-night comedy exposure and television news exposure.

The interaction term between negative emotions and education (the indicator of political sophistication) tests the hypothesized conditional indirect effect. The results support H3.4, demonstrating that education significantly moderated the indirect effect of

late-night comedy viewing on participation through negative emotions ($b = .136$, $SE = .049$, $p < .01$). Table 3.3 summarizes the degree of conditional indirect effect at specific levels of education. Findings illustrate that the indirect effect of late-night comedy viewing via the conduit of negative emotion becomes stronger as the level of education increases. Further, the CI that contains 0 for those who have “some high school or less” implies that the reception of satirical humor may have no mobilizing effect among them through an indirect path of negative emotion. Taken together, the moderated mediation analysis indicated that political sophisticates tend to derive greater participatory benefits from late-night comedy viewing via the indirect path of negative emotions.

Table 3.3. Conditional indirect effect of late-night comedy exposure on political participation through negative emotion at specific levels of education (Experiment, $N = 768$)

Education	Point Estimate	Boot SE	CI
Some high school or less	.087	.059	-.006 to .230
High school diploma	.155	.053	.067 to .278
Some college or associate degree	.223	.067	.102 to .362
Post-graduate education	.291	.091	.129 to .486

Note. Estimates are calculated using the Mplus code provided by Preacher et al. (2007, Model 3) based on the bootstrapping of 5,000 samples. CIs are bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals. The output displays the conditional indirect effect at four levels of education: Some high school or less ($n = 53$); High school diploma ($n = 158$); Some college or associate degree ($n = 391$); and Post-graduate education ($n = 166$)

Unfolding Discrete Negative Emotions

The current chapter posed a series of research questions concerning discrete negative emotions. In order to test these questions, each of the nine component variables representing discrete emotions was regressed on late-night comedy exposure

while controlling for hard news exposure. The political participation index was then regressed on those nine discrete emotion measures while controlling for the late-night comedy and hard news dummy variables. To mitigate issues of multicollinearity, the model was trimmed by removing paths that were far from significant ($p \geq .10$). Then, the modification indices (above 5) were used to improve the model. The results of this multiple mediator model were assessed using Mplus. Table 3.4 reports computed regression coefficients in conjunction with corresponding standard errors.

The findings regarding RQ3.3a show that late-night comedy viewing was a stronger predictor of anger than worry. In particular, it elicited message-referent anger (.540) more powerfully compared to the other six negative emotion elements. The relationships between discrete negative emotions and participation (RQ3.3b) suggest that only self-referent anger and message-referent worry exerted significant influence on stimulating respondents' likelihood of political activities. Interestingly, plot-referent anger without self-referencing predicted an even lower level of participatory intent, although the relationship was not significant. On the other hand, self-referencing of worry seemed to reduce its mobilizing effect as it failed to yield a considerable mobilizing effect, whereas the comparable association for message-referent worry was highly significant. Taken together, these findings regarding RQ3.3c highlight the key source of mediation, demonstrating that late-night comedy viewing powerfully elicited respondents' self-referent anger, which subsequently predicted a higher level of political participation. In order to assess individual indirect effects, point estimates were computed separately for discrete emotions, and corresponding bias-corrected and -accelerated 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were calculated based on the bootstrapping of

5,000 samples. As shown in Table 3.4, the results suggested that only self-referent anger exerted a significant mediating effect between exposure to late-night comedy and the likelihood of political participation.

Table 3.4. Effects of late-night comedy exposure on political participation through discrete emotions (Experiment, $N = 768$)

Mediators	Direct Effects		Indirect Effects	
	IV on Mediator	Mediator on DV	Point Estimate	Bootstrap CI
Message-Referent Anger	.540 ^{***} (.126)			
Plot-Referent Anger	.397 ^{**} (.118)	-.107 (.067)	-.043 (.029)	-.118 to .002
Self-Referent Anger	.496 ^{***} (.129)	.213 ^{***} (.056)	.106 ^{**} (.039)	.045 to .204
Message-Referent Worry	.170 (.135)	.263 ^{***} (.049)	.045 (.037)	-.021 to .131
Plot-Referent Worry	.283 [*] (.129)			
Self-Referent Worry	.339 [*] (.135)			
Plot-Referent Enthusiasm		.262 ^{***} (.037)		

Note. Estimates were calculated using Mplus; The best fitting model was identified by removing all the paths that were far from significant ($p \geq .10$) and then, the modification indices (above 5) were used to improve the model. Overall, this model fits the data well, with a chi-square value of 8.109 with 6 degrees of freedom. Other goodness-of-fit indices also provide evidence of the adequacy of the model ($p = .230$; RMSEA = .021, 90% CI for RMSEA = .000 to .055; SRMR = .014, CFI = 1.000, and TLI = .997); Unstandardized coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses; IV: Late-night comedy exposure; DV: Political participation; Direct effect of IV on DV after controlling for mediators: $b = .359$, $SE = .142$, $p < .05$; R^2 for the DV model = .197; Though not shown here, analyses controlled for message-referent enthusiasm, self-referent enthusiasm, and hard news exposure, ; CIs are bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

$p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Study 2: The Mail Survey

Sample

The survey data came from a national mail survey conducted immediately following the 2006 mid-term elections. The research firm *Synovate* collected the data. A large body of individuals was contacted via mail and asked to indicate the willingness to participate in mail, telephone, or online surveys; individuals who were interested were asked to provide basic demographic information. A balanced sample was then drawn from among more than 500,000 people who agreed to participate in the pre-recruited “mail panel.” In order to ensure representativeness, the sample was drawn to reflect demographic distributions within the five U.S. Census designations of household income, population density, panel member’s age, gender, and region. By relying on this stratified quota sampling method, approximately 2,000 mail survey respondents were selected. Overall, 777 individuals responded, representing a response rate of 38.9%. This sampling method largely differs from more conventional probability sample procedures yet produced highly comparable data (Putnam & Yonish, 1999).

Measures

Political Participation

Respondents were asked about their frequency of involvement in four types of political activities: attending a political meeting, rally, or speech; contacting a public official or a political party; circulating a petition for a candidate or issue; and working on behalf of a social group or cause (see Appendix for question wording). Responses were

recorded on an 8-point scale (ranging from *never in the last 2 months* to *every day*) and were averaged to form an index of political participation ($M = 1.33$, $SD = .70$, $\alpha = .80$).

Emotional Responses

Respondents were asked to report their emotional responses toward the two major parties using four types of emotions for each party: anger, worry, hope, and excitement. Respondents were asked to report the extent to which they agreed with each emotion item on a 6-point scale (ranging from *definitely disagree* to *definitely agree*). An index of “negative” emotion was formed by averaging “angry” and “worried” responses toward the two parties ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.01$, $\alpha = .38$). Likewise, “hopeful” and “excited” responses toward the two parties were averaged to create a measure of “positive” emotion ($M = 3.02$, $SD = .78$, $\alpha = .20$). Combining responses toward the two parties in a single index resulted in low reliability figures, but this is an appropriate option to measure general emotions across targets (Valentino et al., 2011), and this technique is standard in research on emotion (Marcus et al., 2000; Rudolph et al., 2000).⁶

Late-Night Comedy Viewing

Respondents were asked to report how often they viewed *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report* on a 5-point scale (*never, once in a while, sometimes, often, or regularly*). The responses on these two items were averaged to form an index of late-night comedy viewing ($M = 1.33$, $SD = .76$, $\alpha = .85$).

⁶ In the experiment section of the current research, emotions were measured without reference to a specific party and we believe that it is a superior practice to capture emotional responses following stimuli as opposed to affective assessments of political parties.

Conventional News Use

The model incorporated measures of conventional news uses. To measure television news exposure, respondents were asked to indicate how often they viewed nightly national news and local television news on the same 5-point scale as the previous measure. Responses on these two items were averaged to form an index ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.26$, $\alpha = .79$). One item measured on the same 5-point scale measured daily newspaper use ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.42$).

Control Variables

The analyses controlled for a host of demographic variables, including age ($M = 51.86$, $SD = 13.25$), gender (46% female), race (75% white), household income (median: \$55,000), and education (median: “some college or associate degree”). The model also controlled for party affiliation (33% Republican, 31% Democrat) and political interest measured on a 6-point scale ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.71$). In addition, the model incorporated political interest, knowledge, and internal efficacy that could also explain variance in media use, emotional responses, and interpersonal talk. Political interest was measured by asking respondents to report on a 6-point scale to what extent they were interested in politics ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.71$). For the measure of political knowledge, we counted the number of correct answers to four questions asked about current public affairs ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.43$, $KR-20 = .75$). An index of internal efficacy was created by averaging responses on two items measured on a 6-point scale ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.22$, $\alpha = .60$).

Results

Model Specification and Modification

A path model was specified using AMOS. Before fitting the model to the data, all variables in the model were residualized for the previously discussed control variables to avoid any confounding results (see Table 3.5).⁷ The analyses were then conducted with the covariance matrix of unstandardized error terms obtained from this residualization procedure. To identify the best fitting model, a saturated model was assessed with all structural paths freed up to be estimated. As suggested by standard refinement approaches of structural equation models (Bollen, 1989; Kline, 2005), the model was then trimmed by removing non-significant paths ($p \geq .05$). This modification process generates a more parsimonious and better fitting model without substantially changing the theorized relationships.⁷

Model Fit

Figure 3.2 presents unstandardized coefficients from the path model of media uses, emotions, and political participation. Overall, this model fits the data well, with a chi-square value of 1.30 with 3 degrees of freedom. Other goodness-of-fit indices also provide evidence of the adequacy of the model ($p = .73$; RMSEA = .00, 90% CI for RMSEA = .00 to .05; GFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.99; and NFI = 0.96).

⁷ The different analytical approaches in the two research designs reflect distinct foci. The purpose of the experiment was to examine, in a controlled setting, every detailed consequence of manipulation. To this end, it seems more reasonable to look at all the possible causal links including those failing to reach statistical significance. The exploited macro by Preacher and Hayes (2008) allows for more exhaustive assessments of causal paths. Meanwhile, the goal of the survey revolves around identifying mundane relationships among media use, emotions, and political engagement. AMOS enabled us to remove insignificant paths that may suggest null relationships in the real world and investigate whether the proposed model as a whole fits the data well.

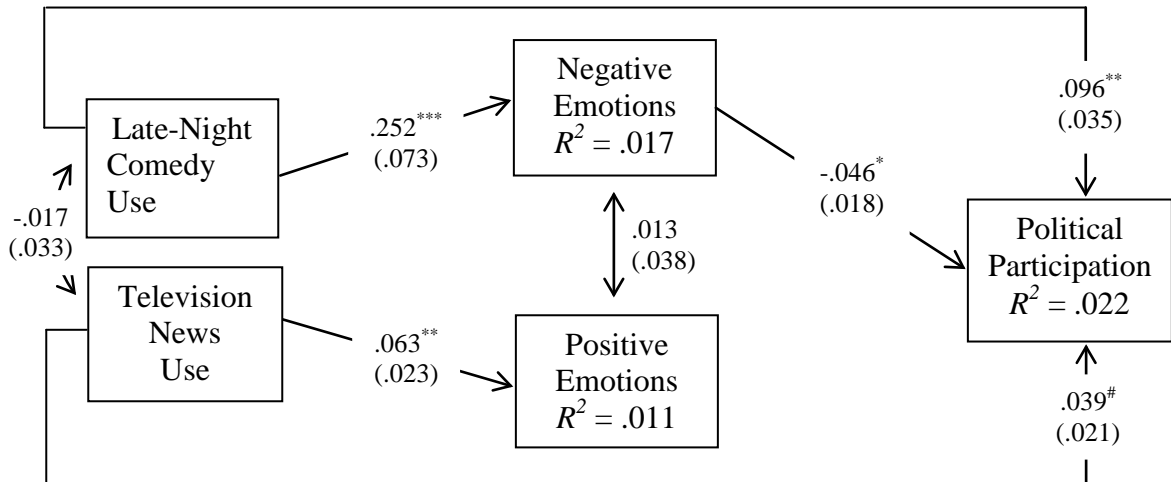
Table 3.5. Results from regressing exogenous and endogenous variables of the path model on control variables (Survey, $N = 777$)

	Political Participation	Negative Emotions	Positive Emotions	Late-Night Comedy Use	Television News Use	Newspaper Use
Age	.003* (.002)	-.011** (.004)	.000 (.002)	-.006** (.002)	.015*** (.004)	.014*** (.004)
Gender (female=1)	.051 (.053)	.031 (.109)	.161** (.058)	.003 (.057)	.299** (.095)	.057** (.110)
Race (White=1)	-.118# (.066)	-.154 (.133)	-.037 (.070)	.133# (.071)	-.277* (.117)	-.228 (.134)
Household income	-.001 (.001)	-.000 (.001)	-.001 (.001)	-.001# (.001)	.001 (.001)	.001# (.001)
Education	.016 (.027)	.001 (.056)	-.060* (.030)	.109*** (.029)	-.142** (.049)	-.008 (.055)
Party ID (Dem=high)	-.017 (.023)	.558*** (.046)	.072** (.024)	.125*** (.024)	.065 (.040)	.088# (.046)
Internal efficacy	.107*** (.026)	.039 (.054)	.176*** (.029)	.054# (.028)	-.004 (.047)	.026 (.054)
Political knowledge	.040# (.022)	.189*** (.046)	-.016 (.024)	.021 (.024)	.080* (.040)	.168*** (.046)
Political interest	.069*** (.019)	-.012 (.040)	.005 (.021)	.040# (.021)	.036 (.035)	-.046 (.040)
R ² (%)	13.3	20.2	9.4	9.0	7.3	6.0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients calculated by SPSS are reported along with corresponding standard errors in parentheses.

$p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 3.2. Path model of media uses, emotions, and political participation
(Survey, $N = 777$)



Note. Unstandardized path coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses. Estimates were calculated by AMOS based on the Maximum Likelihood Estimation method. The effects of demographics (age, gender, race, household income, education, and party affiliation) and cognitive variables (internal efficacy, political interest and knowledge) on endogenous and exogenous variables have been residualized. Newspaper use was in the initial model, but it was excluded from the final model because it failed to produce a significant path.
$p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Direct Relationships between Late-Night Comedy and Emotions

The relationships observed from the survey also support H3.1, illustrating that exposure to late-night comedy is associated with viewers' negative emotions ($b = .252$, $SE = .073$, $p < .001$). This implies that frequent viewers of late-night comedy programs are more likely to feel angry and worried toward both parties. However, findings of the survey show that exposure to late-night comedy is not tied to respondents' positive emotions (RQ3.1). On the other hand, the consumption of television news is related to positive emotions ($b = .063$, $SE = .023$, $p < .01$).

Relationships between Emotions and Participation

Findings concerning H3.2a suggest that negative emotions predicted lower levels of political participation ($b = -.046$, $SE = .018$, $p < .05$), while positive emotions failed to produce a comparable relationship (H3.2b). At first glance, these findings seem to counter the mobilizing role of negative emotions discovered in the experiment. However, as implied in H3.4, negative emotions may interact with civic skills such as internal efficacy and education to produce uneven outcomes in different segments of the public, and the observed inverse relationship may exist only among those who are less educated. Such interactions will be examined later.

Mediating Effects of Emotions

The pattern of the relationships examined above presents support for the proposed indirect effect of late-night comedy consumption on political participation via the conduit of negative emotions (H3.3), whereas little data show the mediating influence of positive emotions (RQ3.2). Assessments based on the Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach indicate that late-night comedy consumption was little associated with positive emotions—i.e., the (a) condition, which did not predict a significant change in the degree of political participation—i.e., the (b) condition. In contrast, findings support the significant mediation role of negative emotions. First, the significant relationship between late-night comedy consumption and negative emotions presents support for the (a) condition, while the latter's meaningful link to political participation bolsters the (b) condition.

Table 3.6. Mediation of the association between late-night comedy consumption and political participation through emotions (Survey, $N = 777$)

	Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects			Formal Tests of Indirect Effects	
	Total	Direct	Indirect	Sobel z	CI
Late-night comedy consumption	.084* (.034)	.096** (.035)	-.012* (.006)	2.000	-.025 to -.003
Television news use	.039* (.021)	.039* (.021)	—	—	—

Note. CIs are bias-corrected 95% confidence interval (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

$p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Interestingly, Table 3.6 reports that the significant total effects of late-night comedy consumption—i.e., the (c) condition—became even stronger after accounting for the indirect influence via negative emotions—i.e., the (c') condition (from .084 to .096); the results that appear to contradict the mediating role of negative emotion according to Baron and Kenny (1986). However, a closer examination reveals that these results mainly arise from the thwarting indirect influence via negative emotions and the mobilizing direct effect that are operating in opposite directions. In theory, the direct effect and indirect effect might be equal in size, but they could work in opposite directions. In this case, these two paths can cancel each other out, thereby leaving the total effect close to zero, while both direct and indirect effects remain significant. In line with this notion, many (e.g., Hayes, 2009; Hayes et al., 2011; MacKinnon, Krull, & Lockwood, 2000; Shrout & Bolger, 2002) now advise that researchers should not impose Baron and Kenny's (1986) causal steps concerning the direct relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable—i.e., (c) and (c') conditions—prior to the assessments of the indirect effects through mediators.

Parallel to analytical approaches employed in the experiment, the investigation incorporated the Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) and the bootstrap analysis (Hayes, 2009) for more powerful testing of indirect effects. As presented in Table 3.6, the Sobel test supports the significant indirect influence of late-night comedy consumption on political participation through negative emotions ($p < .05$). Moreover, the confidence interval based on the bootstrapping of 5,000 samples presents support for H3.3, while illustrating that late-night comedy was significantly associated with political participation indirectly by viewers' negative emotions toward the two major parties.

By contrast, television news use was not tied to participation indirectly via the conduit of emotions (see Table 3.6). Instead, as was shown in Figure 3.2, frequent viewing of television news showed a marginally significant direct relationship with a higher level of political participation ($b = .039$, $SE = .021$, $p < .10$). Bootstrapping suggests that this direct association ($CI = .000$ to $.080$) may not significantly differ from the corresponding direct relationship for late-night comedy ($b = .096$, $SE = .035$, $CI = .028$ to $.166$), since the two estimated confidence intervals overlap.

Conditional Indirect Relationships

H3.4 posited that the indirect relationship between late-night comedy consumption and political participation via negative emotions is conditional upon an individual's education. Hayes (2009) suggests that we could investigate such interactions "by estimating a mediating model in two or more groups and then compare models in which equality constraints are imposed or relaxed across groups on one or more of the effects defining the indirect and direct effects" (p. 416). Accordingly, the

path model observed in the full sample was estimated within three levels of education. All the structural paths were imposed to be equal across groups, with only the path from negative emotions to political participation freed up to be estimated.

The results showed the direct relationship between negative emotions and participation was conditional upon education such that the inverse relationship among those with low education ($b = -.102$, $Boot SE = .028$, $CI = -.156$ to $-.045$) became insignificant within the mean group ($b = -.026$, $Boot SE = .026$, $CI = -.077$ to $.025$) and the sign turned positive, though insignificant, among those who were highly educated ($b = .010$, $Boot SE = .055$, $CI = -.099$ to $.114$). Further supporting the conditional relationship between negative emotions and participation, chi-square tests of nested models revealed that the low education group was marked by an association that is marginally different from the high education group ($\chi^2 = 3.32$, $df = 1$, $p < .10$) and significantly different than the mean group ($\chi^2 = 3.94$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$).

Table 3.7. Conditional indirect effect of late-night comedy viewing on political participation through negative emotion at specific levels of education (Survey, $N = 777$)

Education	Point Estimate	<i>Boot SE</i>	CI
Low	-.026	.011	-.051 to -.009
Mean	-.007	.007	-.024 to .005
High	.002	.014	-.026 to .032

Note. Estimates were calculated using AMOS based on the bootstrapping of 5,000 samples. CIs are bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals. The output displays the conditional indirect effect at the following three levels of education: the mean, one standard deviation lower than the mean, and one standard deviation higher than the mean. Consequently, the low group refers to those who have “high school education or less” (1 – 3), the mean group consists of those who attained “college education” (4 – 5), and the high group includes those who received “post-graduate education” (6).

Table 3.7 summarizes the point estimates of conditional indirect associations and 95% biased-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) based on the bootstrapping of 5,000

samples. Results support H3.4 with the mediating effects of anger and worry positively moderated by education such that the inverse indirect relationship via the conduit of negative emotions exists only among those with low education. The corresponding indirect association for the mean group became insignificant and turned positive for the high education group. In short, findings illustrate that the indirect inverse associations between late-night comedy consumption and political participation via negative emotions are confined among those who were poorly educated.

Discussion

The results of this study presented substantial support for the proposed affective mediation model, specifically highlighting the mediating effect of negative emotions between exposure to late-night comedy and political participation. In the experiment, negative emotions mediated and reinforced the effects of exposure to late-night comedy on the respondents' intent for future political activities (H3.3), with the manipulation of humor provoking their anger and worry (H3.1) and the stimulated negative emotions subsequently predicting a higher level of participation (H3.2a). On the other hand, findings of the survey demonstrate that frequent use of late-night comedy was associated with a higher level of negative emotions (H3.1), which in turn, was tied to decreased participation (H3.2a). Thus, negative emotions seemed to play an attenuating mediating role between consuming satirical humor and participating in politics (H3.3). In both designs, the affective mediation model added little to assessing the effects of traditional news media. Nowhere did consuming conventional news yield an equivalent indirect

linkage via emotions. Instead, the intersection of results from the experiment and the survey revealed that television news use was directly associated with an increase in political participation no less strongly than late-night comedy viewing.

Besides the main hypotheses, the current chapter posed a series of research questions inquiring about possible distinct causes and effects of discrete negative emotions. First, the findings suggest that late-night comedy viewing elicited message-referent anger most powerfully (RQ3.3a). Second, self-referent anger and message-referent worry exerted considerable influence on stimulating respondents' likelihood of political activities (RQ3.3b). Finally, the findings highlight the key source of mediation, demonstrating that only self-referent anger significantly mediated the association between late-night comedy viewing and political participation (RQ3.3b).

Overall, these results lend credence to the subtle differences embedded in discrete emotions while highlighting the peculiar characteristics and roles of anger and worry, which have drawn a great deal of scholarly attention especially from the proponents of the cognitive appraisal theory (e.g., Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Smith & Kirby, 2001; Tiedens & Linton., 2001). Furthermore, the analysis endorses the perspective that the identical emotion could yield distinctive consequences depending who or what the emotion concerns (Dunlop et al., 2008). In a nutshell, the results suggest that anger seems to play a greater motivational role, mediating the relation between exposure to late-night comedy and political participation (Huddy et al., 2007; Valentino et al., 2011; Weber, 2007), and further that self-referencing tends to boost the mobilizing effect of anger (Dunlop et al., 2008), whereas it could augment the inherent avoidance tendency of worry (Heatherton & Baumeister,

1991; Heatherton et al., 1998; Sherman & Cohen, 2002).

It is worth noting that findings from the two study designs seem at odds with each other concerning the mediating effects of negative emotions. The implications of these inconsistent results are twofold. First, analyses of conditional indirect effects could fill the gap in ostensibly conflicting findings. In both the experiment and survey, the mediating effects of negative emotions were positively moderated by education (H3.4). In particular, the evaluation of conditional indirect effects in the survey indicates that the observed inverse association between late-night comedy consumption and political participation via the conduit of negative emotions existed only among poorly educated citizens, whereas the equivalent assessment in the experiment shows that highly educated citizens tend to derive unevenly greater motivational benefits from negative emotions stirred by satirical humor. Taken together, analyses of conditional indirect effects suggest that education moderates the mediating relationships such that exposure to late-night comedy can encourage the participatory intent of well-educated individuals rather excessively by provoking negative emotions, while the same emotional experiences from satirical humor can disproportionately demobilize poorly educated counterparts. These results bolster the idea that those with greater skills and resources are more likely to extract benefits from political satire since understanding humor itself requires a certain level of expertise (Moy et al., 2005a; Young, 2008; Young & Tisinger, 2006). Hence, findings may highlight a caveat against unduly optimistic views to the extent that late-night comedy viewing could widen the participation gap between haves and have-nots.

The second implication of inconsistent results may refer to inherent differences

in short-term and long-term effect models. As Valentino et al. (2011) aptly contend, the role of emotions in participatory democracy is circumscribed, being inherently short-term motivational. The causal relationships observed in the experiment tend to capture this short-term nature. Although an additional analysis ruled out alternative cognitive accounts, it is still plausible that emotions, in the long run, can influence an individual's more stable cognitive attitudes by stimulating his/her attention and thought (Lazarus, 1999; Zajonc, 1998). In light of the survey results, it could well be that provoked negative emotions, when accumulated over time without any positive feedback, could result in increased cynicism, and the observed inverse indirect association between consuming humor and participating in politics, via the conduit of negative emotions, may reflect this long-term joint working of emotion and cognition. However, the cross-sectional nature of the survey makes it difficult to assess the sequential (or perhaps reciprocal) relation. Future studies should employ a time-series survey design (e.g., panel survey) that investigates the long-term interrelatedness between emotions and other cognitive measures that could intervene between the reception and the final outcome.

Incorporating a time-based study will also improve our understanding about the temporal precedence between comedy exposure, emotions and participation. For instance, it is arguable that those who are angry and worried about politics tend to watch highly critical satire programs in the first place. Further, there might be a reciprocal relationship between humor consumption and emotional responses. Motivated by the similar concern, Schemer (in press) recently examined the reciprocal relationship between the reception of media content (particularly political advertisements) and affective response. His analysis of a panel data revealed that the effect of reception on

response is stronger than the influence of the latter on the former, supporting the temporal sequence conceptualized in this study (see also Cho et al., 2003). Moreover, random assignment in the experiment ruled out the confounding effect of the participants' frequency of late-night comedy watching prior to their participation in the study. That is, since random assignment ensured that the participants' pre-consumption of political humor was constant across conditions, any posterior effects should reflect the immediate consequence of manipulation beyond the audiences' habitual media uses. Nevertheless, given that the consequence of media use can also determine the selection of and attention to specific media content in the real world (Slater, 2007), emotion is not just a result of exposure to late-night comedy shows, but also an important antecedent to the selection of and attention to these programs, thereby creating a reinforcing spiral effect. The current design leaves this mutually reinforcing process unexamined. Carefully designed longitudinal modeling with repeated measures of both reception and response would help us identify and capture this snowballing effect.

Another related issue pertains to the temporal order between emotion and participation, since emotion and intent to participate were measured simultaneously even in the experiment. One possibility is that exposure to late-night comedy drives changes in both, thereby making the observed link between emotions and participation spurious. However, this alternative explanation for the relationship is less likely, given that a post-hoc examination of correlations revealed that the measure of negative emotion and the participation index were strongly correlated ($r = .301, p < .001$), even when the manipulation condition was held constant (i.e., within the late-night comedy group). Another more serious confounding issue is the prospect of reverse causal direction. It is

likely that manipulating the tone in the experiment immediately triggered emotions and then, respondents' intent to participate was likely to follow. However, over an extended time period, emotions might also become the effects of participation. For instance, steadfast participation in an election may boost emotions about it (Valentino et al., 2011), or participation may reinforce prior emotional states (Bem, 1972). Exploiting a time-bound experimental study (e.g., pretest-posttest design) will enable us to address these reverse and reciprocal orders that may be inherent in the real-life relationships.

As with the overall design, measures employed in the current research are not without limitations. In particular, more can be done to improve the measures of positive emotions. In both the experiment and survey, positive emotions failed to produce significant mediating effects (RQ3.2). In the experiment, late-night comedy watching did little to influence positive emotions (RQ3.1), whereas in the survey, positive emotions were not attached to participation (H3.2b). In a way, little role of positive emotions is consistent with prior work illustrating that positive emotions are less powerful than negative ones (e.g., Coleman & Wu, 2010; Miller, 2007; Petty & Wegener, 1998). Further, these results may reflect predominantly negative tone of humor and the principle of negativity bias that individuals tend to pay greater attention to negative and threatening information (Baumeister et al., 2001; Rozin & Royzman, 2001; Taylor, 1991). However, the absence of mediating effects and inconsistent results may be attributable to weak operationalization of the measures. The positive emotion index in the experiment was measured by enthusiasm about the government's policy, whereas the corresponding scale in the survey summarized respondents' hopeful and excited responses toward the two major parties. Thus, the types as well as the references of positive emotions

exploited in the two study designs differ, and these inconsistencies may have produced confounding results. Although subtle distinctive consequences among different types of positive emotions have received much less scholarly attention, future study can contribute by employing a greater number of positive emotion items while specifying their respective causes and effects.

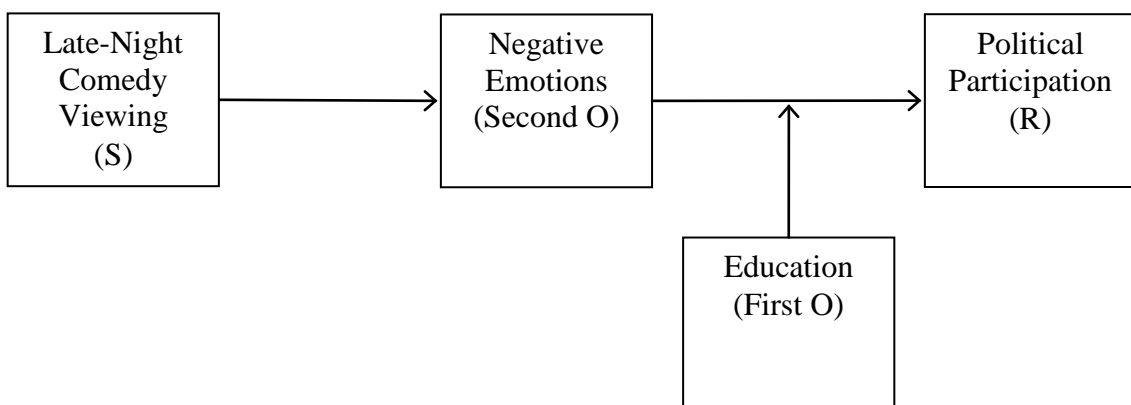
Conclusion

Findings of this study primarily contribute to our understanding of various mediation models anchored in the O-S-O-R framework. By incorporating emotions as a viable mediator (the second O) between the reception of message (S) and ensuing response (R), the proposed affective mediation model extended the scope of the mediation model, while capturing the dynamic intervening mechanisms above and beyond more conventional cognitive accounts. Further, the present chapter introduced education as a first O and showed that the mobilizing effect of late-night comedy viewing was conditional upon political sophistication. Taken together, the advanced model fully exploited the O-S-O-R framework in assessing the impact of political entertainment by introducing the following causal chain: education (first O) - late-night comedy viewing (S) - negative emotion (second O) - political participation (R) (see Figure 3.3).

However, the purpose of introducing the affective mediation model is neither to gainsay nor to downplay the merit of prevailing mediation models based on cognitive and attitudinal elements (e.g., J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Scheufele et al., 2004). Rather, it should be understood as a meaningful addition, while expanding the current area of the O-S-O-R framework. As observed earlier, this affective mediation model

did little in accounting for the processes wherein traditional news media produce attitudinal and behavioral consequences. Though looking at a different criterion measure than political participation, Y. M. Kim and Vishak (2008) find that conventional news media tend to influence policy evaluations by offering factual knowledge to the audiences, whereas late-night comedy promotes a processing style based on overall affective impressions. Hence, the well-established cognitive mediation models appear more suitable for assessing the indirect effects of traditional news media.

Figure 3.3. Summary of the affective mediation model based on the O-S-O-R framework



Although the value and breadth of the applicability of the model is a topic for future research, the affective mediation model is particularly useful for analyzing the effects of new media channels the cognitive processes of which have been seriously challenged. For instance, critics of soft news have consistently criticized late-night comedy programs for insufficient substance (e.g., Niven et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the results based on the proposed affective mediation model suggested that the lack of substance in late-night humor should not be equated with its inability to motivate the active citizenry since humor and satire are able to grab viewers' attention by offering

them rich emotional experiences. Supporting this view, Jones (2010) contended that late-night comedy shows, though falling short of fulfilling the goals of the informed electorate, could invigorate the participatory souls of citizens while inviting viewers to talk and play with their affective qualities inherent in sarcastic humor. Moreover, the affective mediation model resonates well with a recent finding that frequent use of citizen-oriented journalism predicts a higher level of political participation without producing a meaningful link to knowledge (Kaufhold, Valenzuela, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2010). Thus, the theorized mediation model should provide a range of insights to explore the role of newly emerging media that are presumably of less enlightening value yet are more emotionally amusing and provocative.

Chapter 4

Talking about What Provokes Us

Since the introduction of the concept of a “two-step flow” (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) of media influence via interpersonal communication, scholars have been exploring the theoretical underpinnings of the role of mass media in stimulating discussion among citizens. For example, the agenda-setting framework (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) suggested that the news media could raise the importance of an issue, placing it on the public and personal agenda, thereby triggering discussion among citizens. On a somewhat different note, uses and gratification research (Greenberg, 1975) identified an individual’s motivation to exploit the content of mass media to collect information fit for use in arguments or conversations with others.

Indeed, mounting research supports the idea that news media provide a resource for political discussion and create opportunities for exposure to conflicting viewpoints, encouraging political talk that might not otherwise occur (Mutz, 2002; Mutz & Martin, 2001). For instance, J. Kim, Wyatt, and Katz (1999) observed that both newspaper reading and television watching could increase the amount of political talk, while Jones (2005) indicated that attention to content in various media was a significant predictor of interpersonal discussion of politics. Moreover, Pan, Shen, Paek, and Sun (2006) found

that during a time period near an election, even the use of less politically oriented programs could prompt higher levels of talk about public affairs due to the media's elevated focus on election coverage.

Nevertheless, late-night comedy is not often considered to be a critical component of deliberative democracy, primarily due to its nature as entertainment programming. Although some scholars (e.g., Landreville et al., 2010; Moy et al., 2005a) have examined the link between political entertainment and discussion, little is known about the processes wherein consuming humor can promote interpersonal talk about politics. In fact, late-night comedy shows may be insufficiently substantive, as critics of soft news maintain (e.g., J. M. McLeod et al., 1996; Parkin et al., 2003; Pfau et al., 2001; Prior, 2003; Young, 2008), yet the scarcity of information may not hinder viewers' deliberate behaviors as suggested by the theory and practices of low-information rationality (e.g., Lupia, 1994; Popkin, 1994; Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991). Motivated by this direction, the present chapter explores the likelihood that late-night comedy, albeit less enlightening, could spur a citizen's engagement in interpersonal talk indirectly by eliciting emotions. Briefly, it will be argued that emotions mediate and reinforce the association between late-night comedy viewing and engagement in interpersonal talk about politics.

Conceptualizing Interpersonal Talk

Normative political theorists (e.g., Barber, 1984; Bryce, 1973; Dewey, 1927; Fishkin, 1992; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1989; Manin, 1987) envisioned interpersonal talk as a vital component of rational political discourse that enhances the

legitimacy and accountability of the government, while yielding a more responsible and informed citizenry. These scholars conceptualize interpersonal talk as a formal deliberation practice, where each participant is respected and the process is fair, public, and reasonable (Burkhalter, Gastil, & Kelshaw, 2004), which has been shown to facilitate schema integration (Gastil & Dillard, 1999), structure attitudes and opinions (Fishkin, 1996, 1999), generate more equitable distribution of resources (Sulkin & Simon, 2001), promote consensus and smooth conflict resolution, and encourage tolerance (Price, Cappella, & Nir, 2002). Further highlighting the deliberative nature of interpersonal talk, Benhabib (1996) notes, “when presenting their point of view and position to others, individuals must support them *by articulating good reasons* in a public context to their co-deliberators. This process of articulating good reasons in public forces the individual to think of what would count as a good reason for all others involved” (pp. 71–72, italics in original). As Southwell and Yzer (2007) suggest, political conversation is a reasoned and consequential behavior, particularly when it is viewed as a part of the larger campaign communication process, where information is reconsidered, elaborated, and clarified.

While some scholars (e.g., Schudson, 1997) distinguish between formal deliberation and casual talk, and contend that the latter is not conducive to the enrichment of a democratic society, many believe the constructive role of discussion is not limited to a formal deliberation discourse (e.g., Cottle & Rai, 2006; J. Kim et al., 1999; Pan et al., 2006; Walsh, 2004; Wyatt, Katz, & Kim, 2000). Instead, the relevant forms of interpersonal communication can subsume everyday conversations including casual talk, informal deliberation, and spirited argumentation (Wyatt et al., 2000) or impasse, petty

gripping, and political jokes (Walsh, 2004), as long as the conversations are voluntary and without specific purpose or predetermined agenda (J. Kim et al., 1999). Such ordinary conversations are no less important for a functioning democracy, in that these occurrences provide a social context for formal discussion to occur (Pan et al., 2006), while enhancing citizens' opinion quality (J. Kim et al., 1999) and facilitating rational voting decisions (Richey, 2008) by encouraging them to organize and articulate their thoughts (Eveland, 2004). In addition, informal political talk is a key impetus for creating social networks and maintaining social trust (Putnam, 2000), which can further contribute to resolving racial conflicts among citizens (Walsh, 2004). Indeed, previous literature clearly indicates that engagement in interpersonal talk affords an array of opportunities to promote rational political discourse, whether it refers to formal deliberation processes or casual conversations among family, friends, and co-workers. Hence, the present study adopts the view that conceptualizes an individual's talk as constituting a crucial part of a reasoning process (Cho et al., 2009).

While recognizing these merits, theories have identified a multitude of structural features embedded in interpersonal talk that may have distinct implications for more enlightened political practices (for a review, see Eveland & Hively, 2009; Kwak, Williams, Wang, & Lee, 2005). The most commonly investigated aspects of talk include discussion frequency, network size, heterogeneity of discussion, and online interaction. First, scores of studies stress the significant role of discussion frequency in increasing citizens' political knowledge (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Eveland & Thomson, 2006; Holbert, Benoit, Hansen, & Wen, 2002; Kwak et al., 2005; J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). Further, discussion frequency contributes to opinion quality

(J. Kim et al., 1999), cognitive complexity (J. M. McLeod et al., 2001), identity (Walsh, 2004), and efficacy (Scheufele et al., 2003), and it could also promote an individual's representation of the public's interests in a formal deliberative process (Pan et al., 2006).

The size of a discussion network—i.e., “the number of people with whom an individual discusses politics” (Eveland & Hively, 2009, p. 206)—is yet another important structural aspect of interpersonal communication that may prove beneficial for rational public discourse. The importance of network size was acknowledged as early as Granovetter's (1973) idea of weak ties, which posited that expanded discussion networks permit a broader span of independent information sources. The diversity and richness of information inherent in a larger discussion network should prompt individuals to acquire various resources and skills, and individuals with larger networks are more likely to interact with political experts (Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998). Further, conversing with larger number of people may provide increased opportunities to communicate with “marginals” who could serve as important sources of novel information (Weimann, 1982). Indeed, previous literature suggests that a larger network can facilitate more informed and rational citizenry (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Huckfeldt, Mendez, & Osborn, 2004; Kwak et al., 2005; Moy & Gastil, 2006).

In addition, we may assess the potential values of interpersonal communication in light of the extent to which individuals are engaged in heterogeneous discussion.⁸ MacKuen (1990), for instance, differentiated an interaction among those who hold noncongruent opinions from a conversation with others harboring similar views, and

⁸ Eveland and Hively (2009) succinctly summarized the inconsistencies in past literatures surrounding the conceptualization and operationalization of network heterogeneity. The current study attends to the most commonly employed conceptual and operational definition of heterogeneous discussion—i.e., level of discussion with other individuals holding dissimilar views than self (E. Kim, Scheufele, & Han, 2011; Kwak et al., 2005; Mutz, 2002, 2006; Scheufele et al., 2004).

argued that only the former fulfills the soul of deliberative democracy while enabling a bona fide exchange of ideas. Although the influence of heterogeneous discussion on political participation is a topic for much scholarly debate (for a review, see Eveland & Hively, 2009; Kwak et al., 2005; Mutz, 2002, 2006; Scheufele et al., 2004), conversing with non-likeminded people could yield other profitable outcomes such as careful processing of information (J. M. McLeod & Becker, 1974), enhanced cognitive activity (Levine & Russo, 1995), understanding and tolerance of oppositional views (Duchesne & Haegel, 2010; Mutz, 2002, 2006), refinement of own issue positions (MacKuen, 1990; J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, Moy, et al., 1999; Scheufele et al., 2003), awareness of public opinion (Huckfeldt, Beck, Dalton, & Levine, 1995), discernment of ideologically distinct ideas (Price et al., 2002), and political learning (Gastil, Black, & Moscovitz, 2008; Scheufele et al., 2004).

Online interaction via web-based communication technologies such as e-mail, instant messaging, electronic bulletin boards, and online chats has further expanded the scope of political talk among citizens (Price & Cappella, 2002). Various modes of communication about politics via the Internet permit citizens to share their views, while exposing them to alternative perspectives, thereby facilitating rational arguments. By reducing time and costs, these forms of online interaction about public issues have extended the scope of positive implications from offline discussion (Ho & McLeod, 2008; Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2002; Shah et al., 2007; Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). More specifically, Min (2007) demonstrated that online deliberation played no less significant role than an offline counterpart in boosting individuals' issue knowledge and political efficacy. As Berger (2009) argued, rewards from online interaction may even

outweigh the merits of offline talk, given that the textual nature underlying the former communication method tended to produce a more attentive and goal-oriented exchange of ideas.

Emotion as a Mediator between Late-Night Comedy Viewing and Interpersonal Talk

Critics of late-night comedy often comment on its lack of substance. Null findings concerning the hypothesized causal relationship between soft news and political knowledge (e.g., J. M. McLeod et al., 1996; Parkin et al., 2003; Pfau et al., 2001; Prior, 2003; Young, 2008) have discounted its role as an alternative source of hard information. According to this rather pessimistic view, late-night comedy programs may be insufficiently substantive, thereby making them unable to enlighten viewers and prompt interpersonal discussion often encapsulated by thoughtful and rational deliberation (Cho et al., 2009). Although numerous observers have underscored the critical value of political knowledge for the production of a responsive electorate (e.g., Junn, 1991; Williams & Edy, 1999), the deficiency of hard knowledge among citizens has become conventional wisdom (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; Converse, 1964), and its level has been further declining (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Nonetheless, political knowledge constitutes only one ingredient for rehabilitating democracy, and it does not, in and of itself, refer to an ideal democratic citizen (Richey, 2008). Furthermore, Neuman (1986) argues that the democracy in America is working fine although its electorate seems hardly enlightened.

As such, the democratic principle of an informed citizenry has been challenged

by proponents of low-information rationality (e.g., Lupia, 1994; Popkin, 1994; Sniderman et al., 1991) both theoretically and empirically, who have demonstrated that even poorly informed citizens are capable of sophisticated political thought and rational behavior in so much as informational shortcuts and heuristics are available. For example, Lupia (1994) found that relatively ignorant voters could emulate the behavior of well-informed counterparts as the former, while relying on information shortcuts, were able to cast their votes maximizing their own interests. An inference from the theories and practices of low-information rationality is that late-night comedy could promote viewers' deliberative behaviors anchored in reasoning to the extent that the consumption of humor endows them with informational shortcuts and heuristics. Baum and Jamison (2006) advocated the role of soft news in low-information rationality when their study demonstrated that those who watch daytime talk shows featuring candidates were more likely to vote correctly since the programs offer them opportunities to learn about the candidates' beliefs.

In this chapter, emotion is proposed as a viable mediating mechanism of low-information rationality, suggesting that that late-night comedy can trigger political talk among citizens indirectly by stimulating their emotional responses, although programs of this genre *per se* may be insufficiently substantive. Traditionally, however, Western thought has discounted the role of emotion in political discourse, which is reflected as early as in Plato's (1974) "cave" where human beings constantly struggle to overcome their emotional desires and march into the realm of reasoning. Democratic ideals stipulate that emotion poses a serious threat to cool and reasoned discussion because the theory suggests that emotional individuals are less likely to reach rational decisions (Janis,

1982; Janis & Mann, 1977). Being emotional about politics is often equated with distraction, distortion, extremity, and irrationality. Marcus et al. (2000) have identified four pathologies that could buttress the zero-sum relationship between emotion and reason: (a) the displacement pathology, which posits that emotional states stymie or displace calm reasoning; (b) the distraction pathology, which presumes that emotional symbols distract attention away from relevant considerations; (c) the intransient pathology, which leads us to expect that emotionally charged individuals are unwilling to compromise or to update their views according to new waves of information; (d) the self-absorption pathology, which presupposes that emotional individuals are self-oriented and pay scant attention to collective interests. Again, these pathologies rest on the idea that emotion is detrimental to rational calculation. While dismissing emotion in the public sphere, Western tradition has exclusively focused on cognition, and this emphasis has led to what Tomkins (1981) called “cognitive imperialism,” the tendency to reduce all mental states to the cognitive processing of information. Consequently, this view of democratic theory has warned against the perils of human passion and applauded emotion-free reasoning (Marcus, 2003).

Nevertheless, the hypothesized oppositional relationship has been seriously challenged by more recent work in political psychology which came to acknowledge that emotional experiences do not exist outside of or in opposition to the reasoning process, but are a critical component required to invoke reasoning (e.g., Abelson et al., 1982; Brader, 2006; Isbell & Ottati, 2002; Kinder, 1994; Marcus et al., 2000). Marcus et al. (2000) observe that emotions enhance citizen rationality in so much as they could motivate citizens to reconsider their political judgments. In particular, anxiety

encourages individuals' more effortful processing of information, while reducing their reliance on habits and predispositions. Others believe that emotion is an integral part of political attitudes and behavior. For instance, Abelson et al. (1982) demonstrated that individuals' feelings toward the candidates were strongly associated with candidate preferences. In a similar vein, Kinder (1994) observed that emotions help individuals to consolidate their political views and further, such emotional responses are traceable in systematic ways to variations in social location, involvement in public affairs, and development of a political outlook, findings that suggest emotions are not irrational eruptions. On a somewhat different note, Brader (2006) shows that emotional appeals are more effective among those who are interested and knowledgeable about politics.

Dealing specifically with functions of emotion in the low-information rationality research, Sniderman et al. (1991) contend that emotion—when appropriately arranged—could facilitate the efficiency of reasoning. Especially, these scholars introduce what they called the “likability” heuristic and observe that citizens estimated with an astounding accuracy the issue positions of a particular group with two types of feelings: (1) their own feelings about the issues and (2) feelings about the group. All in all, these studies lend credence to the renewed conceptualization of emotion as a cognitively rich tool for reasoned calculation and deliberation (Marcus, 2003). Although little agreement has yet been reached regarding the temporal order and priority between emotion and cognition (see Lazarus, 1999; Zajonc, 1984 for the debate on the topic), mounting evidence indicates that emotion is not divorced from political cognition and is certainly not antithetical to it.

Reviewing these studies should help us situate the role of emotion in an indirect

effect model of late-night comedy. In particular, emotion is proposed as a viable mediating mechanism of low-information rationality, suggesting that late-night comedy can indirectly promote a reasoning process that encompasses interpersonal talk (see, e.g., Cho et al., 2009) by eliciting viewers' emotional responses, although programs of this genre *per se* may be insufficiently substantive. In support of this view, Y. M. Kim and Vishak (2008) demonstrated that exposure to late-night comedy facilitates citizens' political judgments based on overall affective assessments, although little hard knowledge might be retained from viewing. In fact, the significance of emotions in media processes and effects has been recognized, and some evidence demonstrates that emotional experiences from media use, in turn, produce significant consequences in citizens' behavior and attitudes (Cho et al., 2003; Nabi & Wirth, 2008). That studies of political behavior and attitudes in recent years (Marcus et al., 2000) have consistently demonstrated the working of emotions may highlight the significance of this inquiry into indirect effects of late-night humor on political discussion via the conduit of emotions. Moreover, some observers (e.g., Hwang, Pan, & Sun, 2008; Kelly & Edwards, 1992) point to the intervening role of emotion between the reception of media content and the resulting discursive activities, such as individuals' discussion and expressions of their opinions.

Building upon these ideas, the current study inquires about the mediating role of emotion in translating the influence of late-night comedy into an individual's deliberation. In the preceding chapter, it was shown that exposure to late-night comedy could promote viewers' emotions. The subsequent section explores the relationship between emotion and interpersonal talk. These two suggested causal links, when conjoined, should

present strong support for the hypothesized mediating role of emotion between exposure to late-night comedy and interpersonal talk about politics.

Emotion and Interpersonal Talk

Several scholars have investigated the causal linkage between an individual's emotion and deliberative behavior. Rosenberg (2007) asserted that deliberative democracy requires not only citizens' cognitive capacity, but also conditions that could stimulate their emotional attachment. Pfau (2007) contended that emotions—particularly fear and fear appeals—could positively influence political debate and deliberation. As he has recognized, Aristotle's political theory laid the framework for the reinforcing relationship between emotion and deliberation; in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle (as cited in Pfau, 2007) emphasized the civic utility of emotions in deliberative democracy. While reviewing Gordon's (1980) essay on fear, Pfau (2007) suggested “propositional” fear, which normally involves cognition and attitude, needs to be distinguished from a state of fear that is “primitive” and “instinctive.” He further argued that, although the latter may lead to irrational and counterproductive action, the former could constitute a series of rational and strategic responses to danger that could initiate political debate and deliberations. Accordingly, there seems to be a distinction between spontaneous, panic-stricken “action done out of fear” and deliberative, reasoning-driven “fear-motivated action” as in “I flee from a dog out of fear” or “I could stand and stare at it for fear that the dog would otherwise bite me” (Pfau, 2007, p. 219). Likewise, fear about an unwanted policy or candidate could motivate a citizen to be engaged in a series of political debates and deliberation in order to preclude the

distasteful consequence. The present study recognizes the civic utility of emotions suggested by philosophers as early as Aristotle, and of particular interest is the role of negative emotions (e.g., fear and worry) in deliberative democracy.

Recent studies (e.g., Heath, Bell, & Steinberg, 2001; Hwang et al., 2008; Luminet, Bouts, Delie, Manstead, & Rimé, 2000) have more closely examined the direct linkage between negative emotion and interpersonal talk, although not in political contexts. While acknowledging the stress-affiliation relationship that negative emotional states such as fear and distress tend to elicit affiliation with others (see, for example, Cottrell & Epley, 1977; Schachter, 1959; Shaver & Klinnert, 1982), Luminet et al. (2000) have observed in their experiments that participants who were assigned to the intense emotional condition were more likely to converse about their experience than those who were exposed to the mild or non-emotional stories. In a similar vein, Heath et al. (2001) attended to the emotional selection hypothesis, positing that stories would propagate if they evoke strong emotions; findings from their studies indicated that people were more likely to pass along the stories that elicited higher levels of negative emotions (e.g., disgust, anger, and sadness). In addition, Hwang et al. (2008) demonstrated that media indignation (i.e., a specific type of negative emotion toward media bias) is associated with an increase in a citizen's discursive activities, such as expressing one's criticisms of the media, voicing one's own views, and discussing one's opinions with others. Taken together, these findings speak to the pervasiveness of interpersonal talk across negative emotional states.

The constructive role of emotion is not confined to anxiety and anger; positive emotion, could also contribute to deliberative democracy. It could be that, unless

individuals possess a prospect of a bright future, they may opt to remain silent even if they are uneasy about the current state of public affairs. In this regard, it is worth quoting a passage from *Rhetoric* (as cited in Pfau, 2007, p. 224): “[For fear to continue,] there must be some hope of being saved from the cause of agony. And there is a sign of this: fear makes people inclined to deliberation, while no one deliberates about hopeless things.” Implied here is that positive emotion such as excitement and hope may also function as a catalyst for political talk. Supporting this view, Heath et al. (2001) demonstrated that citizens were more likely to share their experience with others when stories evoked positive emotional states (e.g., interest and amazement). Similarly, Luminet et al. (2000) observed that stories eliciting positive emotion encouraged social sharing among citizens no less strongly than the stimuli eliciting negative emotion. Murphy, Frank, Moran, and Patnoe-Woodley (2011) recently found that those who are experiencing positive emotion were more likely to talk to others in order to maintain their affective state. As such, Hafstad and Aaro (1997) demonstrated that both positive and negative affective responses increased the likelihood of discussion and debate with others.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Although some observers found that late-night comedy viewing was associated with the elevated inclination of political talk (e.g., Landreville et al., 2010; Moy et al., 2005a), little is known about the processes wherein late-night comedy viewing encourages interpersonal talk about politics. Motivated by this gap in the extant literature, the current research proposes an indirect effect model specifically suggesting

that consuming satirical humor promotes interpersonal discussion via the conduit of emotional experiences.

Indeed, a clear reason exists to expect that emotion is a vital component for a citizen's engagement in interpersonal talk about politics. Political scientists (e.g., Pfau, 2007; Rosenberg, 2007) have recognized that emotion, whether negative or positive, can exert considerable influence on an individual's cognitive and deliberative behavior. In addition, the prediction that emotions propel an individual's tendency to undertake interpersonal talk has received a good deal of empirical support from the literature on the social sharing of emotions (e.g., Heath et al., 2001; Luminet et al., 2000; Rimé, Philippot, Boca, & Mesquita, 1992). Furthermore, studies showed that the intensity of emotion increased the amount of conversation (Rimé, Mesquita, Boca, & Philippot, 1991) and the number of people with whom an individual shared their experiences (Christophe & Rimé, 1997). Hence, we should expect positive relationships between emotional responses and various features of interpersonal talk.

Hypothesis 4.1a (H4.1a): Negative emotions will predict greater engagement in interpersonal political talk.

Hypothesis 4.1b (H4.1b): Positive emotions will predict greater engagement in interpersonal political talk.

Although critics of late-night comedy stressed the lack of substantive issues (e.g., Niven et al., 2003), some observers found the link between consuming satirical humor and engaging in interpersonal talk (e.g., J. Gray et al., 2009; Landreville et al., 2010; Moy et al., 2005a). Moreover, Jones (2010) observed that followers of late-night comedy programs continued their deliberative behaviors with strangers or virtual acquaintances

they encounter in cyberspace, the results suggesting that frequent use of political satire may yield the higher level of online interaction, while enlarging the size of a discussion network. Furthermore, a larger discussion network, by and large loosely connected (i.e., weak ties), may refer to the greater diversity and richness of information (Granovetter, 1973; Huckfeldt et al., 1995). Thus, individuals engaged in more frequent talk within a larger discussion network should imply the increasing likelihood of exposure to a multiplicity of viewpoints. Then, exposure to late-night comedy should add to opportunities for heterogeneous discussion. In short, consuming late-night humor could boost various structural aspects of interpersonal talk, thereby producing more deliberate and rational citizenry.

The literature on low-information rationality (e.g., Lupia, 1994; Popkin, 1994; Sniderman et al., 1991) in conjunction with studies highlighting the significance of emotion in a reasoning process (Brader, 2006; Isbell & Ottati, 2002; Marcus et al., 2000) suggest that consuming political satire (often emotionally arousing) could promote a deliberate and rational behavior even with a limited amount of information. Given the association between late-night comedy viewing and negative emotions demonstrated in the preceding chapter, an indirect effect model of political humor could be proposed wherein negative emotions play a significant mediating role transmitting the influence of provocative information into political deliberation. However, we remain less clear about the mediating effect of positive emotions, primarily due to the lack of our confidence in the link between late-night comedy viewing and positive emotions.

Hypothesis 4.2 (H4.2): Negative emotions will positively mediate the relationship between late-night comedy viewing and engagement in interpersonal talk about politics.

Research Question 4.1 (RQ4.1): Do positive emotions will mediate the relationship between late-night comedy viewing and engagement in interpersonal talk about politics?

Methods

Hypotheses were tested using the data from the online experiment and the mail survey that were introduced in the preceding chapter. First, manipulating participants' exposure to late-night comedy in an experiment permitted us to examine, in a controlled setting, the precise causal effects of consuming humor on emotions and interpersonal talk. Then, by replicating the results in a national survey, it was assessed whether the observed associations are generalizable to the real-world setting. Ultimately, combining the results from the experiment and the survey uncovered the causal structure of the relationships among late-night comedy exposure, emotional responses, and various structural features of interpersonal talk.

Study 1: The Online Experiment

Measures

Interpersonal Talk

The present study employs multiple structural features of interpersonal talk. As in the participation index, talk measures in the experiment captured discursive intention in the future instead of actual behavior. To measure discussion frequency, respondents

were asked to report on a 7-point scale (ranging from *extremely unlikely* to *extremely likely*) their likelihood to engage in a conversation about the government's bailout with three groups of individuals—namely, neighbors, friends, and family. Responses were averaged to form an index ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.71$, $\alpha = .92$). In addition, the experiment incorporates the level of online interaction by measuring the respondents' inclination to take part in three types of communicative activities via web-based technologies on the same 7-point scale above. The three activities were (1) reading or posting a comment about the government's bailout of big companies, (2) discussing the bailout online with people over email, in chat rooms, using message boards, forums or instant messaging services, and (3) forwarding any emails, audio, or video concerning the bailout.

Responses were averaged to form a composite index ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.79$, $\alpha = .89$).

In order to operationalize heterogeneous discussion, participants were first asked about their opinion pertaining to the expansion of the government's stimulus plan. Then, participants reported on a 7-point scale (ranging from *extremely unlikely* to *extremely likely*) their inclination to discuss the issue with four hypothetical types of individuals: a friend supporting the expansion of the stimulus plan; a stranger supporting it; a friend opposing the expansion; or a stranger opposing it. For those who supported the expansion ($n = 384$), the level of heterogeneous discussion was computed by averaging their responses to indicate the likelihood of discussions with a friend or a stranger who opposed it ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 1.54$, $\alpha = .83$). For the participants who opposed the expansion ($n = 253$), the degree of heterogeneity summarized their intents to converse with a friend or a stranger who supported it ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.65$, $\alpha = .82$). For the participants who neither supported nor opposed it ($n = 131$), the tendencies to discuss

with all four groups of discussants were averaged to indicate discussion heterogeneity ($M = 3.68, SD = 1.21, \alpha = .93$). Since there should be intrinsically no between-group overlap, the scores from these three groups of differing opinions were merged into a single variable to constitute an index of heterogeneous discussion ($M = 4.28, SD = 1.55$).

Emotional Responses

The statistical model in this chapter incorporates two independent indices of emotional responses that were exploited in the preceding chapter: the ‘negative’ emotion index ($M = 5.09, SD = 1.61, \alpha = .96$) and the ‘positive’ emotion index ($M = 2.23, SD = 1.52, \alpha = .97$).

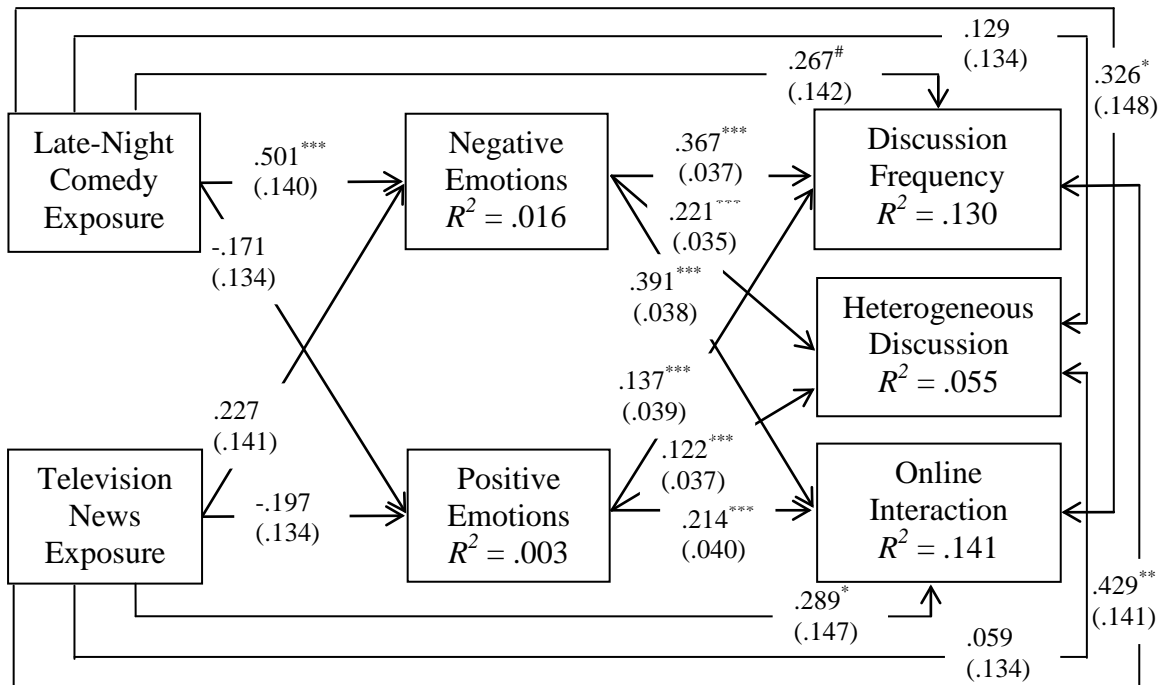
Results

Effects of Emotions on Interpersonal Talk

The effects of emotions on interpersonal talk (H4.1a H4.1b) were assessed by regressing each measure of talk on the indices of negative and positive emotions, controlling for the independent variable (i.e., the late-night comedy group dummy and the hard news group dummy). Findings reveal the significant role of both negative and positive emotions in motivating interpersonal talk. Negative emotions predicted greater likelihood of frequent discussion ($b = .367, SE = .037, p < .001$), more willingness to discuss with those holding heterogeneous opinions ($b = .221, SE = .035, p < .001$), and increased intent to engage in online discursive activities ($b = .391, SE = .038, p < .001$). In addition, positive emotions raised the levels of three structural features of interpersonal

talk: discussion frequency ($b = .137, SE = .039, p < .001$), heterogeneous discussion ($b = .122, SE = .037, p < .001$), and online interaction ($b = .214, SE = .040, p < .001$), respectively.

Figure 4.1. Mediation model of media exposure, emotions, and interpersonal talk in experiment (Experiment, $N = 768$)



Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses. Estimates were calculated using Preacher and Hayes' (2008) indirect SPSS macro.

$^{\#} p < .10$; $* p < .05$; $** p < .01$; $*** p < .001$

Mediating Effects of Emotions

Preacher and Hayes' (2008) indirect SPSS macro allows for the statistical assessment of the mediating effects of emotions (H4.2 and RQ4.1) by first regressing respective mediators (negative emotions and positive emotions) on the independent variables (late-night comedy exposure dummy and television news exposure dummy) and,

subsequently by regressing individual dependent variables (structural features of interpersonal talk) on the mediators controlling for the independent variables. The computed regression coefficients and corresponding standard errors were reported in Figure 4.1. First, analyses based on the Baron and Kenny's (1986) causal steps approach suggested that positive emotions did not seem to play a significant mediating role primarily due to the lack of direct relationship between late-night comedy exposure and the positive emotion index—(a) condition, although the latter predicted considerable increases in features of talk—(b) condition.

Table 4.1. Mediation of the relationships between late-night comedy exposure and structural features of interpersonal talk through emotions (Experiment, $N = 768$)

	Discussion Frequency	Online Interaction	Heterogeneous Discussion
Total, direct, and indirect effects: coefficient (<i>SE</i>)			
Total effect of IV on DV	.428** (.150)	.486** (.157)	.219 (.137)
Direct effect of IV on DV	.267# (.142)	.326* (.148)	.129 (.134)
Indirect effect of IV on DV	.161** (.057)	.160** (.061)	.090** (.038)
Formal tests of the indirect effect			
Sobel z value	2.825	2.623	2.368
Bootstrapping CI	.058 to .278	.044 to .283	.024 to .174

Note. CIs are bias-corrected and -accelerated 95% confidence interval (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

$p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

On the other hand, findings endorsed the hypothesized indirect effects of late-night comedy viewing on interpersonal talk through negative emotions. The results showed the significant effect of late-night comedy exposure on negative emotions—(a) condition, while confirming the close relationships between negative emotions and various components of interpersonal talk—(b) condition. The remaining Baron and

Kenny's (1986) conditions were met, when Table 4.1 illustrated that the total effects of late-night comedy exposure on discussion frequency, online interaction, and heterogeneous discussion—i.e., (c) condition—became significantly smaller after accounting for the indirect influence via emotional responses—i.e., (c') condition (from .428 to .267; .486 to .326; and .219 to .129, respectively). The Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) and the bootstrap analysis (Hayes, 2009) results summarized in Table 4.1 further demonstrated that late-night comedy exerted significant indirect effects on the three structural features of interpersonal talk through negative emotions.

Meanwhile, it is worth noting that the total effect of late-night comedy on heterogeneous discussion was insignificant, whereas its indirect influence through emotional responses was highly significant by any standards (e.g., Sobel $z = 2.368$, $p < .01$, and bootstrapping CI = .024 to .174). According to Hayes (2009), it is likely to occur when “two or more indirect paths carry the effect from X through Y, and those paths operate in opposite directions” (p. 414). As can be inferred from Figure 4.1, indirect paths through negative emotions and positive emotions worked in opposition directions, which rendered the total effect insignificant. As this example clearly illustrates, we may find an indirect effect even in the absence of a significant direct effect (a.k.a. total effect). Thus, many (e.g., Hayes, 2009; Hayes et al., 2011; MacKinnon et al., 2000; Shrout & Bolger, 2002) now suggest that a significant direct effect—a key prerequisite according to Baron and Kenny (1986)—should not be imposed for the assessments of indirect effects.

To further disentangle these indirect effects, the point estimates and confidence intervals were computed for specific indirect paths, and the results are summarized in

Table 4.2. The Sobel test and the bootstrap confidence interval results clearly indicate that late-night comedy exposure increased diverse components of interpersonal talk indirectly via the conduit of negative emotions including discussion frequency, online interaction, and heterogeneous discussion. By contrast, none of the indirect paths through positive emotions were significant. Combined results imply that late-night comedy consumption indirectly encourages engagement in various forms of discursive participation by stimulating negative emotions. In addition to this indirect influence, consuming late-night humor also directly propelled an increase in online interaction ($b = .326, SE = .148, p < .05$), as shown in Figure 4.1. Meanwhile, exposure to television news directly increased discussion frequency ($b = .429, SE = .141, p < .01$) and online interaction ($b = .289, SE = .147, p < .05$) without any comparable indirect link via emotions.

Table 4.2. Specific indirect effects of late-night comedy exposure on discussion frequency, online interaction, and heterogeneous discussion through negative emotions and positive emotions (Experiment, $N = 768$)

Specific Indirect Effect	Point Estimate	Boot SE	Sobel z	CI
L → NE → D	.184 ^{***}	.057	3.228	.080 to .303
L → NE → O	.196 ^{***}	.059	3.322	.088 to .319
L → NE → H	.111 ^{**}	.038	2.921	.046 to .200
L → PE → D	-.023	.057	-0.404	-.069 to .011
L → PE → O	-.036	.030	-1.200	-.096 to .021
L → PE → H	-.021	.018	-1.167	-.064 to .007

Note. D: Discussion frequency; O: Online interaction; H: Heterogeneous discussion
 NE: Negative emotions; PE: Positive emotions; CIs are bias-corrected and -accelerated
 95% confidence intervals (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

$p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Accounting for Rival Explanations: Cognitive and Attitudinal Factors

In order to account for possible cognitive and attitudinal mechanisms, an additional model incorporated attitudes and resources such as internal efficacy, political interest, and willingness to learn (as a proxy for political knowledge), which might mediate between exposure to late-night comedy and engagement in interpersonal talk. Findings from the bootstrapping of 5,000 samples show that even after controlling for the possible mediation by cognitive attitudes and resources, exposure to late-night comedy exerted indirect influence via negative emotions on discussion frequency ($b = .111$, $Boot SE = .036$, $CI = .048$ to $.190$), heterogeneous discussion ($b = .060$, $Boot SE = .025$, $CI = .021$ to $.118$), and online interaction ($b = .130$, $Boot SE = .041$, $CI = .057$ to $.220$). Hence, the results clearly speak to the mediating role that negative emotions play between exposure to late-night comedy and engagement in interpersonal talk, above and beyond more conventional cognitive and attitudinal accounts.

Study 2: The Mail Survey

Measures

Interpersonal Talk

Consistent with the experiment, the survey investigates multiple structural features of interpersonal talk. For the measure of discussion frequency, respondents were asked to report on an 8-point scale (ranging from *never in the last 2 months* to *every day*) how often they discuss politics with neighbors, friends, and family and responses were combined to form an index ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.71$, $\alpha = .84$). Heterogeneous

discussion was operationalized by a single item asking on a 6-point scale (ranging from *definitely disagree* to *definitely agree*) to what extent respondents believe that most people they talk to have different political views than their own ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.38$). For the measure of network size, respondents were asked on an open-ended question to report the number of people with whom they talk about politics and public affairs ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 4.55$).

Emotional Responses

As with the preceding chapter, the structural model for the survey exploited two independent indices of emotional responses: the ‘negative’ emotion index ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.01$, $\alpha = .38$) and the ‘positive’ emotion index ($M = 3.02$, $SD = .78$, $\alpha = .20$).

Late-night Comedy Viewing

Late-night comedy consumption was operationalized in the same manner as in the previous chapter ($M = 1.33$, $SD = .76$, $\alpha = .85$).

Conventional News Use

The model incorporated measures of conventional news uses: television news use ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.26$, $\alpha = .79$) and newspaper use ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.26$, $\alpha = .79$).

Control Variables

Analyses controlled for a host of demographic variables, including age ($M = 51.86$, $SD = 13.25$), gender (46% female), race (75% white), household income (Median:

\$55,000), education (Median: 'some college or associate degrees'), and party affiliation (33% Republican, 31% Democrat). In addition, the model incorporated political interest ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.71$), knowledge ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.43$, KR-20 = .75), and internal efficacy ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.22$, $\alpha = .60$) that could also explain variance in media uses, emotional responses, and interpersonal talk.

Results

Model Specification and Modification

A path model was specified using AMOS. Before fitting the model to the data, all variables in the model were residualized for the previously discussed control variables to avoid any confounding results (see Table 4.3). The analyses were then conducted with the covariance matrix of unstandardized error terms obtained from this residualization procedure. First, a saturated model was estimated, with all structural paths left free. The model was then trimmed by removing non-significant paths ($p \geq .05$).

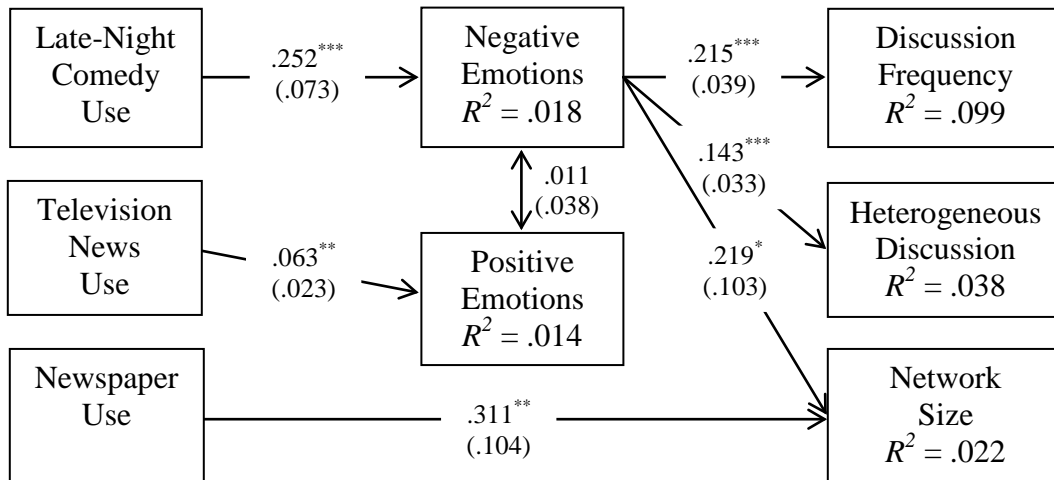
Model Fit

Figure 4.2 reports unstandardized coefficients from the path model of media uses, emotions, and interpersonal talk. Overall, this model fits the data well, with a chi-square value of 16.49 with 14 degrees of freedom. Other goodness-of-fit indices also provide evidence of the adequacy of the model ($p = .28$; RMSEA = .02, 90% CI for RMSEA = .00 to .04; GFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.99; and NFI = 0.96).

Relationships between Emotions and Interpersonal Talk

Findings support H4.1a that negative emotions predicted increases in discussion frequency ($b = .215$, $SE = .039$, $p < .001$), heterogeneous discussion ($b = .143$, $SE = .033$, $p < .001$), and network size ($b = .219$, $SE = .103$, $p < .05$). However, positive emotions did not yield comparable relationships with components of interpersonal talk (H4.1b).

Figure 4.2. Path model of media exposure, emotions, and interpersonal talk (Survey, $N = 777$)



Note. Unstandardized path coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses. Estimates were calculated by AMOS based on the Maximum Likelihood Estimation method. The effects of demographics (age, gender, race, household income, education, and party affiliation) and cognitive factors (internal efficacy, political interest and knowledge) on endogenous and exogenous variables have been residualized.

Table 4.3. Results from regressing exogenous and endogenous variables of the path model on control variables (Survey, $N = 777$)

	Discussion Frequency	Network Size	Heterogeneous Discussion	Negative Emotions	Positive Emotions	Late-Night Comedy Use	Television News Use	Newspaper Use
Age	.006 (.004)	.001 (.011)	.005 (.004)	-.011** (.004)	.000 (.002)	-.006** (.002)	.015*** (.004)	.014*** (.004)
Gender(female=1)	-.068 (.118)	-.644* (.306)	-.039 (.105)	.031 (.109)	.161** (.058)	.003 (.057)	.299** (.095)	.057** (.110)
Race(White=1)	-.333* (.145)	-.771* (.376)	-.027 (.128)	-.154 (.133)	-.037 (.070)	.133# (.071)	-.277* (.117)	-.228 (.134)
Household income	.002 (.001)	.005 (.003)	.000 (.001)	-.000 (.001)	-.001 (.001)	-.001# (.001)	.001 (.001)	.001# (.001)
Education	.034 (.060)	.094 (.160)	-.211*** (.054)	.001 (.056)	-.060* (.030)	.109*** (.029)	-.142** (.049)	-.008 (.055)
Party ID (Dem=high)	-.080 (.050)	-.054 (.129)	.121** (.044)	.558*** (.046)	.072** (.024)	.125*** (.024)	.065 (.040)	.088# (.046)
Internal efficacy	.342*** (.059)	1.053*** (.152)	.153** (.052)	.039 (.054)	.176*** (.029)	.054# (.028)	-.004 (.047)	.026 (.054)
Political knowledge	.171** (.050)	.394** (.130)	-.067 (.044)	.189*** (.046)	-.016 (.024)	.021 (.024)	.080* (.040)	.168*** (.046)
Political interest	.123** (.043)	.501*** (.112)	-.047 (.038)	-.012 (.040)	.005 (.021)	.040# (.021)	.036 (.035)	-.046 (.040)
R ² (%)	21.5	27.8	5.7	20.2	9.4	9.0	7.3	6.0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients calculated by SPSS are reported along with corresponding standard errors in parentheses.

$p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Mediating Effects of Emotions

Consistent with the findings of the experiment, the relationships retained in the survey bolster the hypothesized indirect effect of late-night comedy consumption on interpersonal talk via the conduit of negative emotions, whereas little is found for the mediating influence of positive emotions. Evaluating the causal steps suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) reveals that late-night comedy consumption was little intertwined with positive emotions—i.e., (a) condition, which did not show a significant relationships with any feature of talk examined—i.e., (b) condition. In contrast, findings advocate the significant indirect effects through negative emotions. First, the significant relationship between the measure of late-night comedy consumption and the index of negative emotions presents support for the (a) condition, while the latter’s meaningful links to various components of interpersonal talk sustains the (b) condition.

Table 4.4. Mediation of the relationships between late-night comedy exposure and structural features of interpersonal talk through emotions (Survey, $N = 777$)

	Discussion Frequency	Network Size	Heterogeneous Discussion
Total, direct, and indirect effects: coefficient (<i>SE</i>)			
Total effect of IV on DV	.054** (.019)	.055* (.032)	.036** (.014)
Direct effect of IV on DV	—	—	—
Indirect effect of IV on DV	.054** (.019)	.055* (.032)	.036** (.014)
Formal tests of the indirect effect			
Sobel z value	2.842	1.719	2.571
Bootstrapping CI	.022 to .099	.007 to .136	.014 to .068

Note. CIs are bias-corrected 95% confidence interval (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

$p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The results fulfill the remaining Baron and Kenny's (1986) conditions, when Table 4.4 shows that the total effects of late-night comedy consumption on discussion frequency, network size, and heterogeneous discussion—i.e., (c) condition—disappeared after accounting for the indirect influence via emotional responses—i.e., (c') condition. Consistent with analytical approaches employed in the experiment, the investigation incorporated the Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) and the bootstrap analysis (Hayes, 2009) for more rigorous testing of indirect effects. The results summarized in Table 4.4 clearly demonstrate that late-night comedy consumption was indirectly associated with discussion frequency, network size, and heterogeneous discussion through negative emotions.

Further in line with the experiment results, the linkages between conventional news uses and structural components of talk were not mediated by either emotion type. Figure 4.2 illustrates that instead of comparable indirect relationships via emotions, the use of newspaper showed only a direct association with expanded network size ($b = .311$, $SE = .104$, $p < .01$). The consumption of television news was attached to positive emotions ($b = .063$, $SE = .023$, $p < .01$), yet positive emotions did not predict any feature of interpersonal talk, thus failing to show an indirect relationship.

Discussion

The findings of the current research support the hypotheses concerning the mediating effects of negative emotions on the relationship between exposure to late-night comedy and engagement in interpersonal talk. In the experiment, it was observed that negative emotions mediated and enriched the effects of exposure to late-night comedy on

the respondents' intended engagement with interpersonal talk (H4.2), with the manipulation of humor provoking their anger and worry and the stirred negative emotions predicting higher levels of discussion frequency, heterogeneous discussion, and online interaction (H4.1a). By and large, the results of the survey replicate those of the experiment, testifying to the generalizability of the observed relationships in the real-world setting. In the survey, frequent use of late-night comedy was associated with a higher level of negative emotions, which in turn, was tied to increases in discussion frequency, heterogeneous discussion, and network size (H4.1a). Thus, late-night comedy consumption seemed to have an indirect relationship with higher levels of talk via the conduit of negative emotions. Further, the bootstrapping results from both study designs clearly indicate that negative emotions played a significant reinforcing mediating role between consuming satirical humor and engaging in interpersonal political talk (H4.2). Given the strengths of the experiment and the survey, the present study clearly evidenced that late-night comedy watching could promote viewers' engagement in interpersonal talk about politics indirectly by stimulating their negative emotions.

In contrast, conventional news uses did not seem to produce comparable indirect associations with interpersonal talk via emotions. Instead, the combined results from the experiment and the survey suggest that the links between conventional news uses and interpersonal talk were mostly direct. In the experiment, exposure to television news yielded direct increases in potential discussion frequency and online interaction, whereas the results of the survey indicate that frequent use of newspaper was directly associated with an expanded discussion network size.

On the other hand, the present study found little data supporting the mediating role of positive emotions. Although the results of the experiment showed the expected relationships between positive emotions and structural dimensions of interpersonal talk (H4.1b), the consumption of late-night comedy failed to produce a significant link to positive emotions in both research designs. Muffled effects of positive emotions observed in this chapter may have warranted the prominence of negative emotions when it comes to more careful and attentive processing of information (Marcus et al., 2000). However, as in the preceding chapter, the lack of a mediating effect and the erratic results may allude to weaknesses in operationalization. The positive emotion index in the survey combined respondents' hopeful and excited responses toward the two major parties, which was measured by enthusiasm about a government's policy in the experiment. Hence, the types as well as the objects of positive emotion exploited in the two research designs differed, and these inconsistencies may have produced vague results. Although relatively less attention has been paid to distinct ramifications of different types of positive emotion, future research can benefit from incorporating more diverse positive emotion items while assessing their specific causes and effects.

Furthermore, the present study revealed little about the difference between anger and worry, which has received a great deal of scholarly attention lately. In particular, many students of the cognitive appraisal theory have identified unique causes (Huddy et al., 2007; Lerner & Keltner, 2001; MacKuen et al., 2010) and effects (Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Valentino et al., 2011; Weber, 2007) of fear (or worry) and anger (or aversion). With regard to deliberative behaviors, MacKuen et al. (2010) recently demonstrated that anger stemming from familiar threats tends to propel a biased search for supportive

information and resistance to accommodation, whereas anxiety evoked by unfamiliar circumstances promotes the balanced consideration of heterogeneous views and more willingness to compromise. Hence, the following research questions should ignite further intellectual inquiries about the causes and effects of discrete emotions: What type of negative emotion is more likely following the consumption of late-night humor? What type of negative emotion encourages interpersonal talk more powerfully? Do anger and worry promote different types of discussion (e.g., discussion with likeminded others or those with dissimilar views)?

As with measures employed in the current research, the overall design is not without limitations. Due to the limitation of the data, the causal relationships observed in the current research tend to address the short-term nature. Although care was taken in both the experiment and survey to control for cognitive and attitudinal measures that could serve as alternative mediators between late-night comedy consumption and interpersonal talk, it is still plausible that emotions, in the long run, can influence an individual's more stable cognitive attitudes or resources that could subsequently promote discursive activities. In particular, it could well be that provoked negative emotions may spur further information search, thereby increasing the level of an individual's hard knowledge. Future study may exploit a time-series design (e.g., panel survey and pretest-posttest experiment) and investigate the long-term interrelatedness between emotions and other cognitive measures that could intervene between the reception and the final outcome.

Incorporating a time-anchored study will also improve our understanding about the temporal precedence between emotions and interpersonal talk. Even in the

experiment, emotions and structural features of interpersonal talk were measured simultaneously. For instance, it is feasible that exposure to late-night comedy affect emotions and interpersonal talk, thereby leaving the observed link between these two spurious. However, this alternative explanation for the relationship can be ruled out, when a post-hoc examination of correlation coefficients revealed that the index of negative emotions was highly correlated with all three structural measures of interpersonal talk (discussion frequency: $r = .220, p < .001$; heterogeneous discussion: $r = .177, p < .01$; and online interaction, $r = .249, p < .001$), even when the manipulation condition was held constant (i.e., within the late-night comedy group).

Another more serious confounding issue is the reverse causal direction. It seems more plausible that manipulating the tone in the experiment immediately elicited emotions; respondents' willingness to engage in talk was likely to follow. However, over an extended period of time, emotion might also become the effect of interpersonal talk. For instance, persistent engagement in interpersonal talk may reinforce or undermine prior emotional states depending upon the nature of discussion network (e.g., whether it is homogenous or heterogeneous). Hence, future study needs to adopt a time-series design (e.g., panel survey and pretest-posttest experiment) in order to fend off these reverse and reciprocal orders that may underlie the mundane relationships.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings, the findings of this chapter contribute to our understanding of the relationship between mass media and interpersonal communication. In particular, the results indicate that late-night comedy viewing could encourage interpersonal talk about politics in an idiosyncratic manner clearly distinguished from the process for conventional news channels; consuming humor could indirectly spur

discursive activities among audiences by eliciting their negative emotion, whereas the comparable mechanisms for traditional news were mostly direct with little development of affective responses. Moreover, the two employed research designs replicated the pattern of indirect associations between the various modes of news acquisition and the engagement in interpersonal talk, thereby cementing our confidence in the generalizability of the observed casual relationships.

Indeed, the results clearly suggest that late-night comedy programs play no less significant role than traditional news sources in fostering interpersonal talk and that their motivational influence is primarily explained by negative emotions that may arise from exposure to widespread criticism of satire. Frequent viewers of late-night comedy programs who are encouraged to participate in interpersonal talk by their emotional experiences should be distinguished from cynical citizens, who are tired of politics and opt to remain silent in a forum for public debate. Thus, the findings of this chapter should alarm those who often downplay the value of late-night comedy in democratic discourse and criticize it for brewing cynicism among citizens while ultimately leading them into political inactivity. At the very least, late-night comedy shows seem to encourage citizens' meaningful discussion about politics and prompt more animated engagement in the public discourse by eliciting their emotional responses.

Chapter 5

Communication Mediation Model of Late-Night Comedy

The present chapter advances the communication mediation model (J. M. McLeod et al., 2001; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001) as a theoretical and empirical framework to investigate the process wherein consuming satirical humor works in concert with interpersonal discussion to stimulate political engagement. Recognizing the complementary relationships between mass media and interpersonal talk should shed light on indirect consequences that conventional direct effects models could not account for (Southwell & Yzer, 2007). Mass communication scholars have long noted that one type of media use can influence another and that this joint relationship can shape political attitude and behavior (J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). Briefly, it will be argued that viewing late-night comedy can trigger interpersonal political talk, which would in turn spur political participation.

Theoretical Model: Communication Mediation Model

Although earlier perspectives tended to view news media and interpersonal communication as competing sources of information (Klapper, 1960), most scholars have now accepted them as complementary or convergent forces (Chaffee & Mutz, 1988).

The idea that interpersonal talk largely mediates between the consumption of news information and individual engagement stemmed from as early as Bryce's (1973) four stages of the public opinion formation (i.e., reading newspapers; political talk, opinion formation; and participation) and it became widely published with the introduction of the two-step flow model (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). In recent decades, a growing body of literature (e.g., Cho et al., 2009; Holbert, 2005a; Shah et al., 2005; Shah et al., 2007) stressed that mass media work in conjunction with interpersonal networks to produce behavioral outcomes. For instance, Scheufele (2002) showed that interpersonal discussion plays a role in the reception and processing of political news by translating mass-mediated messages into meaningful individual action. Consequently, he concluded that people who are frequent hard news users are significantly more likely to engage in various forms of political action if they talk these issues through with others than are frequent news users who talk to others less often.

Examination of the complementary relationships between mass media and interpersonal discussion culminated with the advent of the communication mediation model (J. M. McLeod et al., 2001; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001), which theorizes deliberation among citizens as a critical intervening variable between news consumption and participatory behavior. One of the implicit premises in the theory postulates that although the influence of mass media on participatory behavior is strong, it is mostly mediated by an individual's discussion about politics. Building upon the model, Shah et al. (2005) showed that citizens' information seeking and communication, both online and offline, served as an intermediary channeling the effects of news consumption onto civic participation. In addition, Shah et al. (2007) demonstrated that campaign ads exerted

direct influence on civic and political engagement to a lesser extent, yet political talk largely played a substantial mediating role, while reinforcing the effects of ad exposure on participatory behavior. Further expanding the scope of the theoretical framework by synthesizing the communication mediation model with the cognitive mediation model (Eveland, 2001; Eveland, Shah, & Kwak, 2003), Cho et al. (2009) observed that campaign ad exposure and news consumption could produce indirect effects on political participation through face-to-face political conversation, online political messaging, and cognitive reflection.

Explanations for the positive mediating effect of interpersonal talk on the association between news media exposure and political participation are twofold. First, receiving news information offers resourceful subjects for political conversations (Delli Carpini & Williams, 1994), which could, in turn, underscore common issues, highlight opportunities for recruitments, and eventually ignite participatory motivation (Kwak et al., 2005; J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). Second, scholars understand the reinforcing mediating role in terms of the deliberative nature of interpersonal talk and accordingly conceptualize it as a reasoning behavior that facilitates mainly the influence of news exposure (Cho et al., 2009; Eveland, 2004; Shah et al., 2007). In fact, there is some evidence illustrating that interpersonal discussion could facilitate individuals' understanding of the news (Robinson & Levy, 1986). Implied in this proposition is that individuals anticipating interpersonal talk tend to show more careful cognitive processing of information, which frequently involves elaboration and collective consideration (Jung et al., 2011).

By integrating mass and interpersonal information channels, the communication mediation model portrays a fuller process whereby news consumption yields various attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. The present chapter aims to extend the scope of the communication mediation model. To this end, late-night comedy will be introduced as an additional independent variable while exploring how various structural features of interpersonal talk mediate the effects of consuming humor on participating in politics. To set up this mediation model, the following sections will highlight the pivotal features of interpersonal communication and their roles in participatory democracy. Then, I will discuss the potential effects of late-night comedy viewing on diverse elements of interpersonal talk.

Structural Features of Interpersonal Talk and Their Effects on Participation

Sufficient evidence has accumulated to confirm that interpersonal political discussion is an essential catalyst for political participation (e.g., Gastil, Deess, & Weiser, 2002; J. Kim et al., 1999; Kwak et al., 2005; J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Pan et al., 2006; Scheufele, 2002). Discussing politics provides citizens with resources that are conducive to political engagement such as civic virtues, participatory motivations (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995; Verba et al., 1995), and social networks (J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). In addition, political discussion affords citizens numerous benefits including exposure to diverse perspectives, opportunities for issue deliberation, and contact with civic recruitment (Shah et al., 2005).

Indeed, the mobilizing effects of interpersonal talk have been advocated by a sizable body of empirical work. For example, Gastil et al. (2002) found that participants

in jury deliberations were subsequently more likely to vote in elections. Gastil (2000) observed that participating in the Kettering Foundation's National Issues Forums augmented political activity. In addition, Wuthnow (1994) showed that participants in "the small group movement" who deliberated were subsequently moved to pursue a range of political activities. Recently, Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini (2009) demonstrated that engagement in face-to-face forums exerted a considerable effect on elite contacting and civic participation.

Meanwhile, as reviewed earlier in Chapter 4, communication scholars have identified a multitude of structural features entrenched in interpersonal discussion that may yield distinct ramifications such as discussion frequency, network size, heterogeneous discussion, and online interaction. First, researchers have consistently found the significant effects of frequent conversations among family, friends, and co-workers on political participation (e.g., J. Kim et al., 1999; Marques & Maia, 2010; Pan et al., 2006; Wyatt et al., 2000). Mobilizing effects of frequent discussion may transpire by improving citizens' efficacy and knowledge and by empowering them to share information, perceive common issues, and hear about recruiting opportunities (Eveland & Thomson, 2006; Gil de Zúñiga, 2009; Klofstad, 2007; Rojas et al., 2005; Walsh, 2004).

The size of a discussion network is yet another important structural aspect that may prove beneficial to participatory democracy. The significance of a larger network was recognized as early as in Granovetter's (1973) idea of weak ties, which suggested that an extended network refers to the increased number of weak ties that could help citizens assimilate skills and resources they may find useful for their participation. In line with this notion, numerous scholars observed that citizens entrenched in a more

extensive network tended to show greater participatory orientations, even after controlling for the frequency of political discussion (Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011; Kwak et al., 2005; J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Moy & Gastil, 2006; Rojas, 2008; Scheufele et al., 2004). For instance, Rojas (2008) found that network size was a strong predictor of active membership in voluntary organizations, including neighborhood and educational organizations. Shah et al. (2005) demonstrated having more contacts can also increase individuals' frequency of discussion about public affairs, which has been shown to have a direct effect on civic engagement. Rojas, Shah, and Friedland (2011) have recently demonstrated that network size can intersect with news exposure (particularly, news attention) to spur civic engagement.

In addition, explanations have been offered to substantiate the presumed link between network size and participation. Huckfeldt et al. (1995) argued that network size should increase the likelihood of receiving non-redundant recruiting opportunities for participation, and Lake and Huckfeldt (1998) later found that citizens entrenched in a more extensive network tended to show greater participatory orientations, even after controlling for the frequency of political discussion. As such, individuals with larger social networks are more likely to encounter politically active individuals, and interacting with them could stimulate greater participation (Leighley, 1990; Verba et al., 1995).

The introduction of the Internet has led scholars to examine whether online interaction via web-based communication technologies such as e-mail, instant messaging, electronic bulletin boards, and online chats has the capability to promote participation in a manner that amplifies the benefits of offline discussion by reducing time and costs (Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2002; Shah et al., 2007; Valenzuela et al., 2009). Diverse

communication methods via the Internet permit citizens to freely exchange their perspectives, encounter more frequent opportunities for political engagement, and coordinate community activities with ease (Shah et al., 2005; Shah et al., 2007). Indeed, empirical evidence supports the constructive role of communicative behaviors on the Internet in fostering political participation and community engagement (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Ho & McLeod, 2008; Jung et al., 2011; Shah et al., 2007). Given that online communication tend to be more goal-oriented than offline talk (Berger, 2009), the former should produce no less strong mobilizing effects among citizens (Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011). While evaluating the relative outcomes of these two (not necessarily competing but more complementary) deliberation modes, Min (2007) demonstrated under a controlled setting that online discussion evoked participants' willingness to participate in politics to the comparable extent that face-to-face communication did.

In addition, we may investigate the potential consequences of interpersonal communication in light of the extent to which individuals are engaged in heterogeneous discussion. However, sharp inconsistencies arise surrounding the motivational role of heterogeneous discussion. Most notably, Mutz (2002, 2006) argued that “cross-cutting exposure” should predict the lower level of political participation, and this claim has received some empirical support (Bélanger & Eagles, 2007; McClurg, 2006a, 2006b). In contrast, a sizable body of literature advocated the positive relationship between greater engagement in heterogeneous discussion and political participation (Ikeda & Boase, 2011; Leighley, 1990; Scheufele, Hardy, Brossard, Waismel-Manor, & Nisbet, 2006). To better understand this causal chain, others advanced more complex communication processes—e.g., mediating (Scheufele et al., 2004; Wojcieszak, Baek, &

Delli Carpini, 2010) or moderating (E. Kim et al., 2011; Kwak et al., 2005; Wojcieszak et al., 2010)—wherein heterogeneous discussion operates.

Conflicting results surrounding the participatory effects of heterogeneous discussion might be reconciled when we consider two key underlying mechanisms, each of which could provide an account of either a negative dampening influence or a positive mobilizing role (Lee, in press). First, greater engagement in heterogeneous discussion can exert detrimental effects on political participation by creating attitudinal ambivalence about complex issue stances, thereby leaving citizens rather apathetic (Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Mutz, 2002, 2006). In contrast, the second explanation refers to the positive role, suggesting that exposure to dissimilar viewpoints could spur participation indirectly by facilitating learning about politics. According to this optimistic view, exposure to non-congruent perspectives can force individuals to learn about alternatives and reflect more carefully upon their own opinions, and it could further promote information seeking via hard news channels (J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, Moy, et al., 1999; Scheufele et al., 2003; Scheufele et al., 2004). Rather than being mutually exclusive, these two processes are likely to occur simultaneously in the actual communication environment.

However, the relative importance of these two mechanisms may be determined in terms of an individual's expertise such that one process prevails over the other among a particular group of people. Specifically, ambivalence seems to provide an overriding explanation for the effects of encountering dissimilar viewpoints among less skillful citizens. For the most part, ambivalence, as characterized by less firmly held viewpoints (Scheufele et al., 2004), is more prevalent among political novices. On the other hand, learning provides a better account for the influence of heterogeneous discussion among

political experts. After all, the central tenet of the knowledge gap hypothesis posits that those who are already savvy tend to learn more (Tichenor, Donahue, & Olien, 1970). Moreover, well-educated citizens are more likely to possess the cognitive skills facilitating them to comprehend and assimilate the intricacies of complex information (Rosenberg, 1988) frequently featured in clashes of heterogeneous opinions. Consequently, we should expect that rewards of factual knowledge gain from deliberation of heterogeneous views are greater for political experts. Taken together, it is arguable that heterogeneous discussion demobilizes less skillful citizens by generating their ambivalence, whereas it could play a constructive role among well-educated counterparts by increasing their knowledge. Although empirical evidence directly that would this claim is sparse, some recent studies have stressed that individual factors could moderate the extent to which heterogeneous discussion influences political participation (E. Kim et al., 2011; Wojcieszak et al., 2010). Thus, it will be interesting to assess not only whether deliberation of dissimilar views can spur political participation, but also who is more prone to mobilization because of conversing with non-likeminded others.

Late-Night Comedy and Structural Features of Interpersonal Talk

Late-night comedy could spark critical debate by uncovering wrong doings and ills of the government and by making political criticism more accessible (Caufield, 2008). Bolstering the constructive role of entertainment media in deliberative democracy, Delli Carpini and Williams (2001) observed that both informational and entertainment media sources could encourage political talk during a campaign. In addition, Nabi, Moyer-Guse, and Byrne (2007) demonstrated that consuming political comedy fostered

subsequent discussion about political humor, while concluding that the memorable nature of the message may have motivated individuals to ponder upon the content over time and eventually encouraged them to talk about it. More bluntly, a handful of studies (e.g., J. Gray et al., 2009; Jones, 2010; Landreville et al., 2010; Moy et al., 2005a) revealed that late-night comedy viewing was associated with more frequent engagement in political talk. Principally, political stories conveyed by late-night comedy programs, albeit less informative than the contents of hard news, provide conversation topics for what Baum (2003b) called ‘water cooler events’—i.e., the events one talks about around the water cooler at workplaces across the nation. Hence, it is reasonable to expect that late-night comedy shows could serve as impetus for more frequent interpersonal talk.

Furthermore, Jones (2010) observed that interactions among the followers of late-night comedy programs are not bound to their familiar communication network. Rather, viewers of late-night comedy continued their political discussion with strangers or virtual acquaintances they encounter in cyberspace. In particular, he investigated the online discussion forum dedicated to one of the late-night political humor programs (*Politically Incorrect*) and found that forum visitors were engaged in extensive and substantive discussions out of their desire for argumentation, hope for information gathering, expression of various feelings, tapping into other pleasures and interests, participating in human relations, and being a political person. Discussion topics among the participants of the forum included welfare, gun control, immigration, environment, taxation, free speech, education, race, crime, health care, and so on. Jones (2010) opined that although the actual program may not have been the best forum for the wide exchange of ideas, engaged participants of the forum might hold a much more extensive

and reasoned argument than that hosted on the program. Hence, evidence suggests that late-night political humor could be important as a spark for drawing viewers toward greater discursive participation in politics via the Internet. Furthermore, given that consuming political humor seems to motivate individuals to exchange ideas with a wider range of people, late-night comedy viewing should also predict an increase in the size of a discussion network.

However, it is less clear whether exposure to late-night comedy invigorates or dampens a viewer's willingness to engage in heterogeneous discussion. On the one hand, an alleged liberal nature of late-night comedy (see e.g., Baym, 2005; Coe et al., 2008 for discussion about liberal bias in political satire) may facilitate selective exposure, which could subsequently lead to less cross-cutting exposure (Goldman & Mutz, 2011). Meanwhile, J. Kim et al. (1999) maintained, while elaborating on Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory (1993), that perceived opinion congruity could bolster an individual's willingness to argue with those holding dissimilar viewpoints. Then, it is arguable that the degree of heterogeneous discussion increases at least amongst those viewers whose views agree well with the climate of opinion as portrayed by political satire programs. Hence, the present chapter first addresses whether late-night comedy use can promote the likelihood of heterogeneous discussion in general and then investigates whether a specific group of people is more willing to converse with non-likeminded others.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Late-night comedy programs feature a wide range of political topics that could trigger meaningful interpersonal talk about politics (J. Gray et al., 2009; Jones, 2010; Landreville et al., 2010; Moy et al., 2005a). In addition, audiences seem to continue their communicative activities with strangers or virtual acquaintances over the Internet (Jones, 2010), thereby further expanding their discussion network. Accordingly, the present chapter postulates the following set of hypotheses concerning the relationships between exposure to late-night comedy and various structural components of interpersonal talk.

Hypothesis 5.1a (H5.1a): Late-night comedy viewing will be positively associated with discussion frequency.

Hypothesis 5.1b (H5.1b): Late-night comedy viewing will be positively associated with online interaction.

Hypothesis 5.1c (H5.1c): Late-night comedy viewing will be positively associated with network size.

However, the relationship between late-night comedy viewing and heterogeneous discussion is less clear. As discussed earlier, the literature on selective exposure implies that late-night comedy viewing may be associated with a lower level of heterogeneous discussion (Goldman & Mutz, 2011), whereas the spiral of silence theory suggests that humor viewing can elicit a greater willingness to converse with non-likeminded others at least among those who believe that their views represent the majority opinion (J. Kim et al., 1999). Accordingly, the present study poses the following research questions.

Research Question 5.1a (RQ5.1a): Does late-night comedy viewing stimulate heterogeneous discussion?

Research Question 5.1b (RQ5.1b): Who is more likely to engage in heterogeneous discussion following the exposure to late-night comedy?

As noted earlier, previous studies have endorsed the mobilizing effects of multiple facets of interpersonal talk (e.g., Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Gastil et al., 2002; J. Kim et al., 1999; Kwak et al., 2005; Min, 2007; Rojas, 2008; Scheufele, 2002; Shah et al., 2007). Hence, the current research predicts positive associations between key features of interpersonal talk and political participation.

Hypothesis 5.2a (H5.2a): Discussion frequency will predict greater political participation.

Hypothesis 5.2b (H5.2b): Online interaction will predict greater political participation.

Hypothesis 5.2c (H5.2c): Network size will predict greater political participation.

On the other hand, inconsistent research findings surrounding the consequences of heterogeneous discussion warrant an additional research question. Furthermore, given the competing processes defining the effects of encountering dissimilar viewpoints, i.e., ambivalence and learning (Lee, in press), it is interesting to ask who is likely to extract greater mobilizing benefits from heterogeneous discussion.

Research Question 5.2a (RQ5.2a): Does heterogeneous discussion spur political participation?

Research Question 5.2b (RQ5.2b): Who is more likely to participate in political activities following heterogeneous discussion?

While integrating the direct relationships summarized above and further building upon the well-established communication mediation model, the present study

hypothesizes that the association between exposure to late-night comedy and political participation is significantly and positively mediated by key structural features of interpersonal talk.

Hypothesis 5.3a (H5.3a): Discussion frequency will positively mediate the relationship between late-night comedy viewing and political participation.

Hypothesis 5.3b (H5.3b): Online interaction will positively mediate the relationship between late-night comedy viewing and political participation.

Hypothesis 5.3c (H5.3c): Network size will positively mediate the relationship between late-night comedy viewing and political participation.

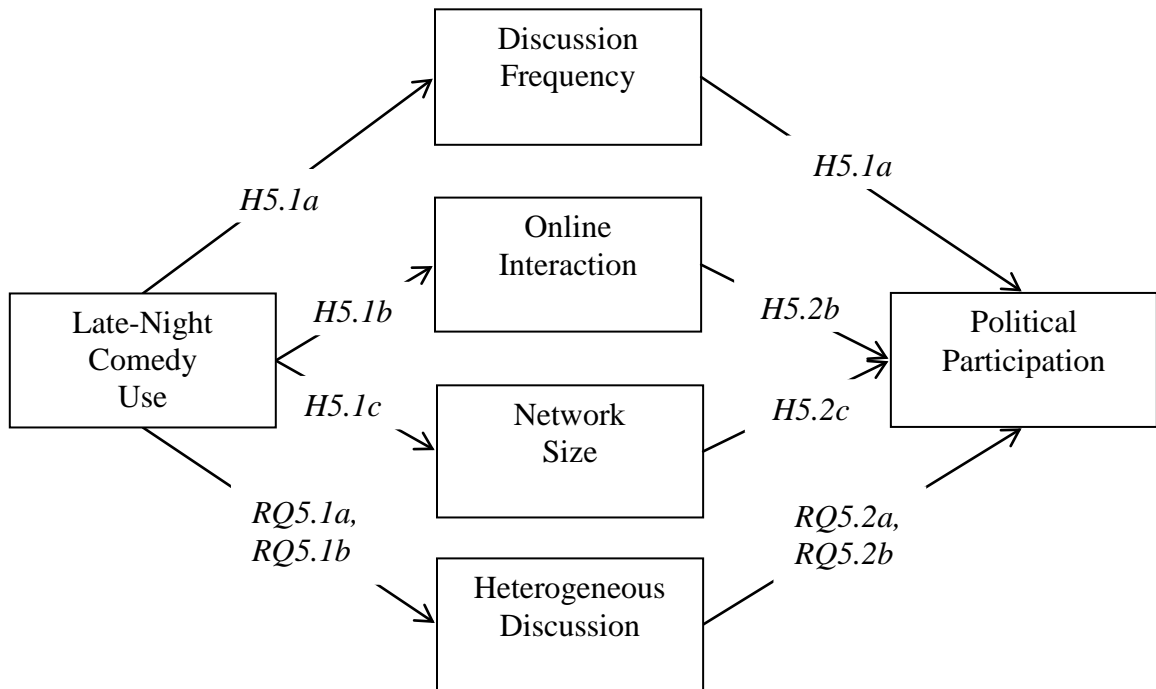
However, it is unclear whether heterogeneous discussion mediates the effects of late-night humor. As noted earlier, little has been said about the causal link between late-night comedy viewing and willingness to engage in heterogeneous discussion. Furthermore, research awaits a verdict on the motivational role of a heterogeneous network. Even when assuming an indirect effect via exposure to dissimilar views, existing literature does not permit a clear prediction about the manner in which heterogeneous discussion translates the influence of late-night humor into meaningful behaviors. On the one hand, deliberation of heterogeneous perspectives can mediate and reinforce the influence of the media on political behaviors, given that those who anticipate conversations with non-likeminded others tend to process mass mediated information more carefully to defend their views (Scheufele et al., 2004). Conversely, the exposure to heterogeneous perspectives may counterbalance the effects of mass media (Godbold & Pfau, 2000; Pfau et al., 2003). In short, current literatures remain equivocal about the mediating role of heterogeneous discussion. Accordingly, an

additional research question is advanced to assess the mediating effect of heterogeneous discussion.

Research Question 5.3 (RQ5.3): How does heterogeneous discussion mediate the relationship between late-night comedy viewing and political participation?

These formulated hypotheses and research questions will embody the mainstay of a communication mediation model of late-night comedy and Figure 5.1 summarizes the holistic framework detailing all the proposed causal links.

Figure 5.1. Summary of hypotheses and research questions in the communication mediation model of late-night comedy



Hypotheses and Research Question Regarding Mediating Effects of: Discussion Frequency (H5.3a); Online Interaction (H5.3b); Network Size (H5.3c); and Heterogeneous Discussion (RQ5.3)

Methods

As in the previous chapters, the online experiment and the mail survey were used to assess the proposed hypotheses and research questions. First, experimental manipulation and randomization in a controlled setting allow us to disentangle the precise causal influence of consuming humor on interpersonal talk and political participation. Then, the representativeness of the sample in the survey enhances the generalizability of the observed associations among core variables in a real-world setting. Ultimately, combining the results from the experiment and the survey increases the internal and external validity of the communication mediation model of late-night comedy.

Study 1: The Online Experiment

Measures

Political Participation

The statistical model in this chapter employs the political participation index introduced in Chapter 3 ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.74$, $\alpha = .88$).

Interpersonal Talk

Acknowledging the multifaceted nature of interpersonal talk, the experiment includes measures of discussion frequency ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.71$, $\alpha = .92$), online interaction ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.79$, $\alpha = .89$), and heterogeneous discussion ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.55$).

Results

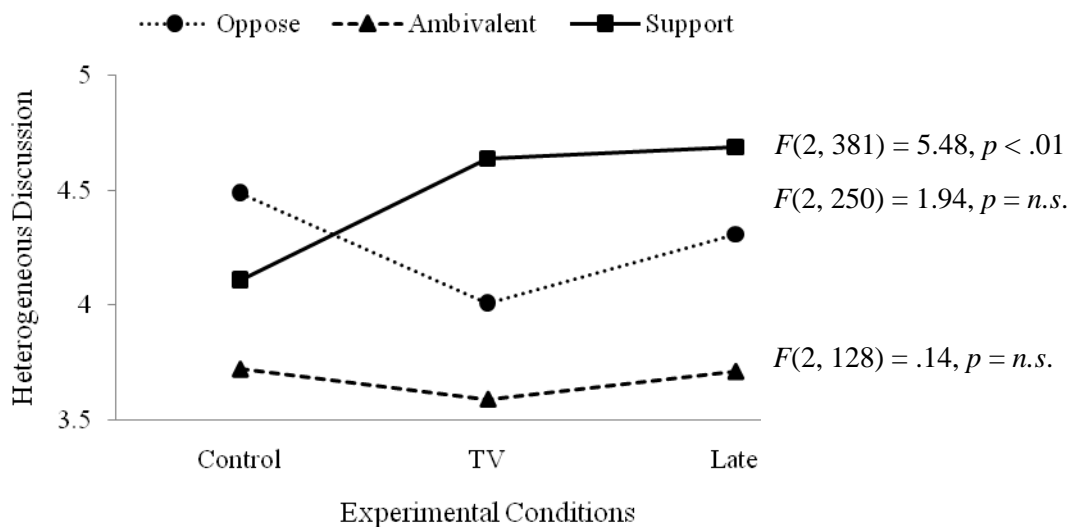
Effects of Late-night Comedy Viewing on Structural Features of Interpersonal Talk

A one-way ANOVA on discussion frequency (H5.1a) found significant between-group differences, $F(2, 765) = 6.28, p < .01, \eta^2 = .02$. Specifically, post-hoc Scheffe tests revealed the group exposed to late-night comedy ($M = 4.67, SD = 1.71$) reported a greater intent to engage in frequent discussion compared to the control group ($M = 4.25, SD = 1.69$), $p < .05$, but not compared to the hard news group ($M = 4.73, SD = 1.69$), $p = n.s.$ Meanwhile, supporting the H5.1b, the results indicated significant differences in the degree of online interaction, $F(2, 765) = 5.01, p < .01, \eta^2 = .01$, with the late-night comedy group ($M = 4.30, SD = 1.76$) scoring significantly higher compared to the hard news ($M = 4.15, SD = 1.83$) and control ($M = 3.81, SD = 1.76$) groups. A Scheffe test indicated that compared to the baseline, the late-night comedy viewing produced a significant increase in the intended online interaction ($p < .01$).

Concerning RQ5.1a, evidence here suggests that consuming late-night humor exerted little influence on an individual's tendency to engage in a discussion with non-likeminded others, $F(2, 765) = 1.30, p = n.s.$ However, RQ5.1b asked whether a specific group is more likely to engage in heterogeneous discussion. To address this question, an ANOVA was conducted separately for the three subsamples representing distinct perspectives. The results indicated significant effect of the stimuli among those who supported the expansion, $F(2, 381) = 5.48, p < .01, \eta^2 = .03$. A post-hoc Scheffe test suggested that least the late-night comedy video increased the likelihood of heterogeneous discussion ($M = 4.69, SD = 1.50$) more amongst the proponents of the

stimulus plan than among those in the control video condition ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.61$), $p < .05$. In contrast, late-night comedy viewing produced little effects among participants who were against the stimulus plan, $F(2, 250) = 1.94$, $p = n.s.$, and among those who were ambivalent, $F(2, 128) = .14$, $p = n.s.$ Thus, these results suggest that late-night comedy prompted conversations with non-likeminded others primarily among the supporters of the stimulus plan (see Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2. Effects of late-night comedy exposure on heterogeneous discussion among different opinion groups (Experiment, $N = 768$)



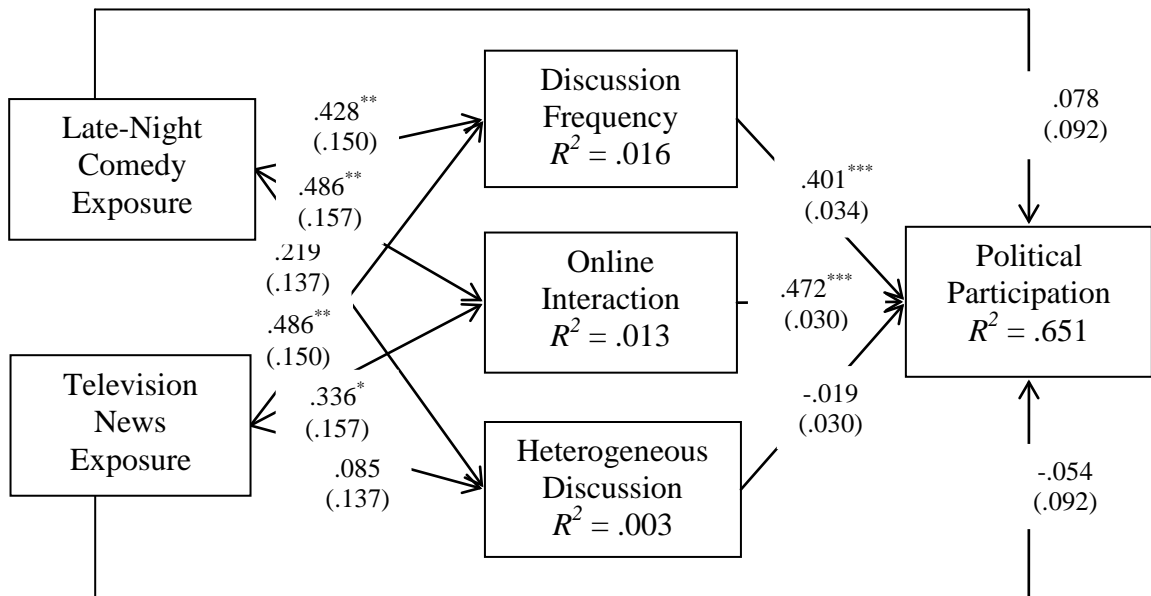
Note. ANOVA was repeated for those who supported the expansions of the stimulus plan, those who supported it, and those who were ambivalent.

Structural Features of Interpersonal Talk and Political Participation

A host of hypotheses referred to the mobilizing effects of various structural features of interpersonal talk. These hypotheses were tested by regressing the index of political participation on the measures of discussion frequency, online interaction, and heterogeneous discussion, after controlling for the independent variable (i.e., late-night comedy group dummy and hard news group dummy). The findings indicated a positive

role of discussion frequency (H5.2a: $b = .401$, $SE = .034$, $p < .001$) and online interaction (H5.2b: $b = .472$, $SE = .030$, $p < .001$). On the other hand, heterogeneous discussion predicted lower level of political participation, but the relationship was not significant (RQ5.2a: $b = -.019$, $SE = .030$, $p = n.s.$).⁹

Figure 5.3. Mediation model of media exposure, interpersonal talk, and political participation (Experiment, $N = 768$)



Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients and corresponding standard errors calculated by Preacher and Hayes' (2008) indirect SPSS Macro are reported.
[#] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Mediating Effects of Interpersonal Talk

The present chapter hypothesized that the influence of late-night comedy on political participation is significantly mediated by diverse structural components of

⁹ As Lee (in press) has recently reviewed, we could either examine the separate main effects of discussion frequency and heterogeneous talk, or assess interactive workings of these two. The present research adopts the former approach in that one of the primary goals involves estimating a unique mediating effect of each dimension controlling for the others. Although it is beyond the scope of the current study, we acknowledge possible interactions among these features.

interpersonal talk including discussion frequency (H5.3a) and online interaction (H5.3b). As in the previous chapters, Preacher and Hayes' (2008) indirect SPSS macro was utilized to test these hypotheses. Technically, the employed macro first regresses structural features of interpersonal talk on late-night comedy exposure and television news exposure, and then, regresses political participation on structural components of talk while controlling for late-night comedy exposure and television news exposure. The resulting regression coefficients and corresponding standard errors were reported in Figure 5.3.

Table 5.1. Mediation of the association between late-night comedy exposure and political participation through structural features of interpersonal talk (Experiment, $N = 768$)

	Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects			Formal Tests of Indirect Effects	
	Total	Direct	Indirect	Sobel z	CI
Late-night comedy exposure	.475 ^{***} (.153)	.078 (.092)	.397 ^{***} (.125)	3.176	.150 to .645
Television news exposure	.298 [#] (.153)	-.054 (.092)	.352 ^{**} (.128)	2.750	.100 to .607

Note. CIs are bias-corrected and -accelerated 95% confidence interval (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

[#] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Assessing the results in light of Baron and Kenny's (1986) conditions yields a great deal of support for hypothesized mediation by diverse talk features. First, findings present support for the (a) condition, when it was observed that exposure to late-night comedy increased the intended level of discussion frequency and online interaction. Additionally, discussion frequency and online interaction predicted greater intent to participate, thereby advocating the (b) condition. Moreover, as summarized in Table 5.1, the significant effects of late-night comedy exposure—i.e., (c) condition—became

insignificant after accounting for the indirect influence via interpersonal talk—i.e., (c') condition. For more rigorous testing of mediating effects, the current study employed the Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) and the bootstrap analysis (Hayes, 2009). As Table 5.1 presents, the Sobel test bolstered the indirect effects of late-night comedy exposure through various features of talk, and the mediation by interpersonal talk was further supported by the 95% confidence interval that did not include 0.

Table 5.2. Individual mediating effects of structural features of interpersonal talk on the relationship between media exposure and political participation (Experiment, $N = 768$)

Individual Indirect Effect	Point Estimate	<i>Boot SE</i>	Sobel z	CI
L → D → P	.172**	.065	2.646	.055 to .307
L → O → P	.229**	.077	2.974	.080 to .383
L → H → P	-.004	.009	-.444	-.031 to .008

Note. L: late-night comedy exposure; D: discussion frequency; O: online interaction; H: heterogeneous discussion; P: political participation; CIs are bias-corrected and -accelerated 95% confidence intervals (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

$p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

To assess a specific indirect effect through each component of talk controlling for the remaining features employed, the point estimates and corresponding confidence intervals were estimated separately for discussion frequency, online discussion, and heterogeneous discussion, and the results are summarized in Table 5.2. Concerning H5.3a, the Sobel test and the bootstrap confidence interval indicated that discussion frequency significantly (and positively) mediated the influence of late-night comedy on political participation. Findings also endorsed H5.3b, which proposed a significant mediating effect of online interaction. However, results revealed that after controlling for the two prior aspects, the mediating role of heterogeneous discussion became small (RQ5.3).

Study 2: The Mail Survey

Measures

Political Participation

The analytical model in this chapter employed the political participation index, which combined responses on the four items (see Appendix Question Wording). Each of which was measured on an 8-point scale ($M = 1.33$, $SD = .70$, $\alpha = .80$).

Interpersonal Talk

Consistent with the experiment, the survey investigates multiple structural features of interpersonal talk. Toward this end, the model incorporates indices of discussion frequency ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.71$, $\alpha = .84$), heterogeneous discussion ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.38$), and network size ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 4.55$), which were introduced in Chapter 4.

Late-Night Comedy Viewing

Consistent with the previous chapters, late-night comedy consumption was operationalized by averaging responses on the two items measuring on a 5-point scale how often they viewed *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report* ($M = 1.33$, $SD = .76$, $\alpha = .85$).

Conventional News Use.

Parallel to the preceding chapters, the model incorporated measures of

conventional news uses: television news use ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.26$, $\alpha = .79$) and newspaper use ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.26$, $\alpha = .79$).

Control Variables

Analysis control for a host of demographic variables, including age ($M = 51.86$, $SD = 13.25$), gender (46% female), race (75% white), household income (Median: \$55,000), and education (Median: 'some college or associate degrees'). The model also controlled for party affiliation (33% Republican, 31% Democrat). In addition, political interest was included as a control variable ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.71$).

Results

Model Specification and Fit

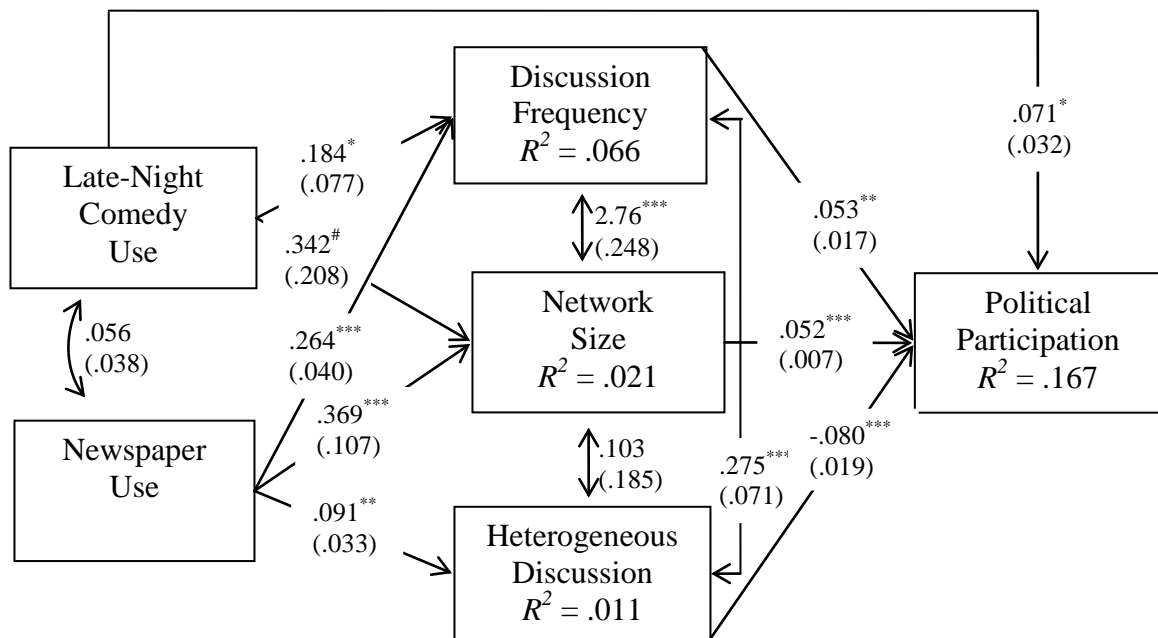
A path model was specified using AMOS to explore the hypothesized relationships. Before fitting the model to the data, all variables in the model were residualized for the control variables mentioned above to avoid any confounding results (see Table 5.3). Then, the analyses were conducted with the covariance matrix of unstandardized error terms that were obtained from this residualization procedure. To identify the best fitting model, I started by fitting a saturated model and then trimmed the model by removing the paths that were far from significant ($p \geq .10$). Figure 5.4 presents unstandardized coefficients and corresponding standard errors from the path model of media uses, emotions, and political participation. Overall, this model fits the data well, with a chi-square value of 3.59 with 2 degrees of freedom. Other goodness-

of-fit indices also provide evidence of the adequacy of the model ($p = .17$; RMSEA = .03; GFI = .99; AGFI = .98; and NFI = 0.99).

Relationships between Late-night Comedy Consumption and Structural Features of Interpersonal Talk

The results addressing H5.1a illustrate that exposure to late-night comedy was significantly associated with discussion frequency. Although the strength was relatively weak, viewing late-night humor showed a marginally significant positive link to the size of discussion network (H5.1c). The result concerning RQ5.1a illustrates that frequent viewers of late-night comedy were no more likely to discuss politics with non-likeminded others compared to less frequent viewers.

Figure 5.4. Path model of media uses, interpersonal talk, and political participation (Survey, $N = 777$)



Note. Unstandardized path coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses. Estimates were calculated by AMOS based on the Maximum Likelihood Estimation method. The effects of demographics (age, gender, race, household income, education, and party affiliation) on endogenous and exogenous variables have been residualized.

Table 5.3. Results from regressing exogenous and endogenous variables of the path model on control variables (Survey, $N = 777$)

	Political Participation	Discussion Frequency	Network Size	Heterogeneous Discussion	Late-Night Comedy Use	Television News Use	Newspaper Use
Age	.005 [*] (.002)	.011 [*] (.004)	.013 (.012)	.004 (.004)	-.005 [*] (.002)	.017 ^{***} (.003)	.018 ^{***} (.004)
Gender (female=1)	.042 (.054)	-.094 (.122)	-.768 [*] (.318)	-.066 (.105)	-.002 (.057)	.304 ^{**} (.095)	.064 (.110)
Race (White=1)	-.121 [#] (.067)	-.344 [*] (.149)	-.859 [*] (.391)	-.045 (.128)	.130 [#] (.071)	-.267 [*] (.117)	-.211 (.134)
Household income	.000 (.001)	.003 [*] (.001)	.009 ^{**} (.003)	.000 (.001)	-.001 (.001)	.000 (.001)	.002 [#] (.001)
Education	.034 (.027)	.104 [#] (.061)	.268 [#] (.162)	-.222 ^{***} (.053)	.118 ^{***} (.029)	-.118 [*] (.048)	.043 (.055)
Party ID (Dem=high)	-.019 (.023)	-.085 [#] (.051)	-.064 (.135)	.121 ^{**} (.044)	.125 ^{***} (.024)	.064 (.040)	.085 [#] (.046)
Political interest	.123 ^{***} (.027)	.307 ^{***} (.035)	1.030 ^{***} (.093)	-.005 (.031)	.067 ^{***} (.017)	.057 [*] (.028)	.012 (.032)
R ² (%)	10.6	15.9	21.4	4.4	8.4	6.8	4.1

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients calculated by SPSS are reported along with corresponding standard errors in parentheses.

[#] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Relationships between Structural Features of Interpersonal Talk and Political Participation

As hypothesized, more frequent discussion (H5.2a) and larger discussion network (H5.2c) predicted greater political participation. Meanwhile, heterogeneous discussion showed a significant inverse association with political participation (RQ5.2a). However, the observed relationship calls for more careful investigation, given that RQ5.2b lends plausibility to the idea that whether heterogeneous discussion exerts negative or positive influence may depend upon an individual’s political expertise, and further inquires about who is more likely to participate following the exposure to dissimilar perspectives.

Table 5.4. Relationship between heterogeneous discussion and political participation moderated by education (Survey, $N = 777$)

Education	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	CI
Low	-.188 ^{***}	.029	-.247 to -.134
Mean	-.057 [*]	.026	-.108 to -.007
High	.146 ^{**}	.057	.035 to .261

Note. *bs* are path coefficients estimating the relationships between heterogeneous discussion and political participation. The output displays the coefficients at the following three levels of education: the mean, one standard deviation lower than the mean, and one standard deviation higher than the mean. Consequently, the low group refers to those who have “high school education or less” (1 – 3), the mean group consists of those who attained “college education” (4 – 5), and the high group includes those who received “post-graduate education” (6). CIs are bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

[#] $p < .10$; ^{*} $p < .05$; ^{**} $p < .01$; ^{***} $p < .001$

In line with this reasoning, the path model observed in the full sample was estimated within three levels of political expertise operationalized by education, i.e., high

school education or less ($n = 214$, one standard deviation below the mean), college education ($n = 423$, the mean), and post-graduate education ($n = 96$, one standard deviation above), while excluding those who did not answer ($n = 43$).¹⁰

All structural paths were constrained to be equal across groups, freeing up only the path from heterogeneous discussion to political participation. Then, path coefficients and confidence intervals (based on the bootstrapping of 5,000 samples) were computed for individual levels of education. The findings, reported in Table 5.4, showed that the association between deliberation of heterogeneous views and engagement in political activities was contingent upon education such that the association between heterogeneous discussion and political participation was contingent upon education, indicating an inverse relationship for those with low education level. This inverse relationship became weaker within the mean group. For those who were highly educated, this relationship was significantly positive. Moreover, the estimated confidence intervals did not overlap, clearly indicating that path coefficients from the three groups differed substantially and thus, education significantly moderated the relationship between heterogeneous discussion and participation. This implies that the dampening role of heterogeneous discussion is mostly concentrated among poorly educated individuals. In contrast, experts in politics seem capable of enjoying the benefits of conversations with heterogeneous people.

Mediating Effects of Interpersonal Talk

¹⁰ Although some (e.g., Huckfeldt, 2001; Krosnick, 1990) argued for more nuanced operationalization of political expertise, the current study employed education as a proxy measure since education affords more advanced cognitive capacity to make sense of complex information (Rosenberg, 1988), which often characterizes heterogeneous discussion.

The findings of the survey showed that structural components of interpersonal talk significantly mediated the relationship between late-night comedy consumption and political participation. Baron and Kenny's (1986) first two requirements were supported by the relationship between late-night comedy consumption and interpersonal talk and the latter's subsequent link to political participation (see Figure 5.4). Additionally, Table 5.5 reports that adding mediating variables of interpersonal talk reduced the strength of the relationship between late-night comedy consumption and participation. Furthermore, the Sobel test as well as the bootstrap approach revealed the significant indirect effects of late-night comedy consumption via the conduit of interpersonal talk.

Table 5.5. Mediation of the association between late-night comedy consumption and political participation through structural features of interpersonal talk (Survey, $N = 777$)

	Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects			Formal Tests of Indirect Effects	
	Total	Direct	Indirect	Sobel z	CI
Late-night comedy consumption	.098** (.035)	.071* (.032)	.027* (.014)	1.929	.001 to .056
Newspaper use	.026*** (.008)	—	.026*** (.008)	3.250	.010 to .041

Note. CIs are bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

$p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

In addition, a specific indirect effect was estimated for a respective talk component, and the results are summarized in Table 5.6.

The computed Sobel z and confidence interval supported H5.3a in that discussion frequency significantly mediated the link between the independent and dependent variables. On the other hand, the assessments pertaining to H5.3c presented partial support for the mediation by network size ($p < .10$). However, network heterogeneity

(RQ5.3) did not seem to play a mediating role, primarily due to the absence of a significant path from late-night comedy use.

Table 5.6. Individual mediating effects of structural features of interpersonal talk on the relationship between media exposure and political participation (Survey, $N = 777$)

Individual Indirect Effect	Point Estimate	Boot SE	Sobel z	CI
L → D → P	.009*	.004	2.250	.002 to .017
L → N → P	.018 [#]	.011	1.636	-.004 to .039

Note. L: late-night comedy exposure; D: discussion frequency; N: network size discussion; P: political participation; CIs are bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

[#] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Discussion

Concurrent assessments of the data from the experiment and the survey found considerable support for the proposed communication mediation model of late-night comedy. First, the experiment conducted under a controlled setting demonstrated that exposure to late-night comedy increased the likelihood of political participation indirectly via the conduit of interpersonal talk. In particular, consuming satirical humor produced greater discussion frequency (H5.1a) and online interaction (H5.1b), which subsequently predicted higher levels of political participation (H5.2a and H5.2b), the results clearly advocating the mediating role played by diverse aspects of interpersonal talk (H5.3a and H5.3b). Second, the analysis of the survey displayed the mundane relationships among the core variables, with late-night comedy viewing associated significantly with discussion frequency (H5.1a) and marginally with network size (H5.1c), which in turn, predicted meaningful increases in political participation (H5.2a and H5.2c). Taken together, it was observed that the relationship between late-night comedy consumption

and participation was mediated significantly by discussion frequency (H5.3a) and marginally by network size (H5.3c).

On the other hand, a careful examination of causes and effects of heterogeneous discussion produced highly dynamic and interesting results. First, integrated findings from the two research designs implied that exposure to late-night comedy yielded a limited effect on an individual's willingness to discuss with non-likeminded others (RQ5.1a). Specifically, the survey failed to detect a meaningful connection between late-night comedy and heterogeneous discussion, which is in tune with the selective exposure thesis that the alleged liberal leaning of late-night comedy programs tends to create a community of likeminded viewers. Admittedly, in the real world setting, individuals decide what they want to watch voluntarily; therefore, those who feel disturbed by the presumed bias of late-night comedy may opt out from viewing it. Echoing this view, Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng (2011) have recently demonstrated that audiences selectively search for attitude-consistent messages and avoid counter-attitudinal information to reinforce their preexisting views and self-concept.

In the experiment, randomly assigning participants to a late-night comedy condition prevented possible selective exposure. Though the overall effect was weak in the experiment (RQ5.1a), the results indicated that exposure to late-night comedy significantly raised the intended level of heterogeneous discussion at least among those who supported the expansion of the stimulus plan (RQ5.1b). Here, the perceived bias in satirical humor appears to be working again. The liberal leaning of political satire (in the direction of supporting the expansion in this case) may have enhanced the perceived opinion congruity primarily among proponents of the stimulus plan, which in turn,

bolstered their willingness to discuss with non-likeminded others (J. Kim et al., 1999). All in all, late-night comedy viewing seemed to boost the intended level of heterogeneous discussion only among those who possessed the majority perception.¹¹

Meanwhile, the two exploited designs produced somewhat inconsistent results regarding the mobilizing effect of heterogeneous discussion (RQ5.2a). Findings of the experiment seemed to indicate that deliberation of non-congruent views exerted little influence on political participation, yet it should be noted that the measure of heterogeneity here tapped into the respondents' likelihood of exposure to heterogeneous views rather than their actual engagement. In this regard, the survey is more suitable to capture the actual effect of heterogeneous discussion that tends to accumulate over time by virtue of repeated exposure to oppositional viewpoints. The evidence from the survey demonstrated that discussion with non-likeminded others predicted decreased participation (RQ5.2a). However, addressing RQ5.2b, additional assessments of conditional relationships suggested that poorly educated citizens tended to be vulnerable to demobilization, whereas perceptive counterparts seemed to participate even more. Thus, the observed relationships imply that encountering dissimilar views may widen the participation gap between different education groups.

Although the present study failed to show a significant mediating role of heterogeneous discussion, findings above provide a couple of important implications

¹¹ To measure the perceived opinion incongruity, respondents were asked to report their own issue position regarding the expansion of the stimulus plan as well as their estimate of other Americans' position on the identical 7-point scale. While exploiting Hwang et al's (2008) incongruity scale, these two items were recoded into a 3-point scale (-1 = opposed, 0 = ambivalent, and 1 = supported). Then, the self-majority difference was computed into a 3-point scale (0 = no difference, 1 = one-point difference, and 2 = two-point difference; $M = .33$, $SD = .65$). Mean on this incongruity scale was compared across different opinion groups, and findings showed that supporters of the stimulus plan ($M = .27$, $SD = .63$) perceived significantly less incongruity than those who opposed it ($M = .41$, $SD = .76$), $t(635) = 2.47$, $p < .05$, and a little less than those who were ambivalent ($M = .34$, $SD = .47$), $t(513) = 1.09$, $p = n.s.$ In short, the results indicate that proponents of the stimulus plan tended to possess greater perceived opinion congruity.

regarding RQ5.3. First and broadly, combined results highlight multifaceted nature of interpersonal communication, and thus, suggest that the communication mediation model should now extend the scope of investigation to incorporate more diverse dimensions of talk. Research in the communication mediation model so far has principally revolved around how the quantity of discussion (frequency in particular) augments the effects of the news media. However, the examination of discussion heterogeneity illustrated that it is not just the amount or degree of conversation that could shift the influence of mass mediated messages; what they do when they discuss is an equally critical factor either to attenuate or reinforce the impact. As shown above, conversing with non-likeminded others may exert harmful influence at least for some. Thus, depending on the nature of discussion, it can play a suppressing mediating role between the reception and the response (see also Godbold & Pfau, 2000; Pfau et al., 2003).

The second and more specific implication from the investigation of heterogeneity combines findings of the experiment as to who is more likely to engage in heterogeneous discussion following comedy viewing (RQ5.1b) and the survey results concerning who tends to participate more, given exposure to different views (RQ5.2b). First, the experimental data showed that given all else is the same, individuals whose views resonated well with the perceived framing of late-night humor were more likely to engage in discussion with non-likeminded others. Second, results of the survey suggested that when engagement in heterogeneous discussion is assumed, well-educated experts seemed to extract greater benefits from exposure to dissimilar perspectives. Taken together, findings imply that exposure to late-night comedy may disproportionately mobilize (or demobilize) a certain segment of the electorate indirectly

by stimulating discussion with non-likeminded others. That is, late-night comedy can draw a higher level of political involvement from the liberals (by virtue of greater inclination for heterogeneous discussion) who are highly educated (due to their advanced ability to unravel and digest conflicting messages).¹²

However, the current research reflects only an initial effort to examine how and why heterogeneous discussion produces distinct outcomes among different groups of people. The observed contrast between political novices and experts might depend on which of the two competing communication processes—i.e., ambivalence (Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Mutz, 2002, 2006) and learning (J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, Moy, et al., 1999; Scheufele et al., 2003; Scheufele et al., 2004)—plays a dominating role in explicating the effects of heterogeneous discussion. The findings in this chapter may have illustrated that heterogeneous discussion can discourage political behaviors of less skillful citizens by increasing their attitudinal ambivalence. On the other hand, experts in politics might be able to learn greatly from the exposure to diverse perspectives, thereby enhancing their desire to participate. However, due to the data limitations, the current study did not examine these intervening processes.

Another, perhaps more serious, concern of the current research involves the presumed causal ordering between interpersonal talk and political participation. In analyzing the data, I assumed the causal flow from deliberative behaviors to political activities, yet these two forms of engagement were measured simultaneously in both experiment and survey. For the most part, treating the former as the antecedent of the latter is consistent with a large body of previous work (e.g., Gastil et al., 2002; Gil de

¹² Although the experiment did not directly measure an individual's ideological attitude, being a Democrat was highly associated with the increased likelihood of support for the expansion of the stimulus plan ($r = .34, p < .001$).

Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011; J. Kim et al., 1999; J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Rojas, 2008; Scheufele, 2002). Furthermore, some theorists showed that the casual flow from talk to participation survived even when accounting for the reverse or reciprocal relationships between these two (Jacobs et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2005). These results are consistent with earlier research showing that information shared among citizens is a key driver of engagement (J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, Moy, et al., 1999; Verba et al., 1995). However, the current data could not rule out the reversed causal direction that discursive engagement leads to political participation. It may well be that engagement in political activities could facilitate citizens' interpersonal communication, especially if participation in such activities allows individuals to meet and get to know others with whom they have a common interest.

Thus, future research needs to adopt a time-anchored design (e.g., longitudinal survey and pretest-posttest experiment) to address the temporal order between interpersonal talk and political participation. This approach should be a powerful tool to estimate the precise causal influence. Furthermore, employing sequential measures should be useful for disentangling embedded communication processes whereby heterogeneous discussion produces distinct outcomes among various groups of people. With improved understanding of sequential arrangement, we might be able to explain the contrasting behavioral consequences of heterogeneous discussion between political experts and novices in terms of different intervening causal routes.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings, the findings of the present chapter contribute to our understanding of collaborative workings of mass media and interpersonal communication in fostering political participation. After all, the results reaffirmed the

merit of the communication mediation model. However, investigating multiple facets of interpersonal discussion that might have different implications for participatory democracy has further extended the purview of mediators that might be employed in the communication mediation model. Most interestingly, the examination of discussion heterogeneity illustrated that not just the frequency of conversation could shift the influence of mass mediated messages, rather what individuals do during discussion is an equally critical factor that can attenuate or reinforce the effect of the media messages.

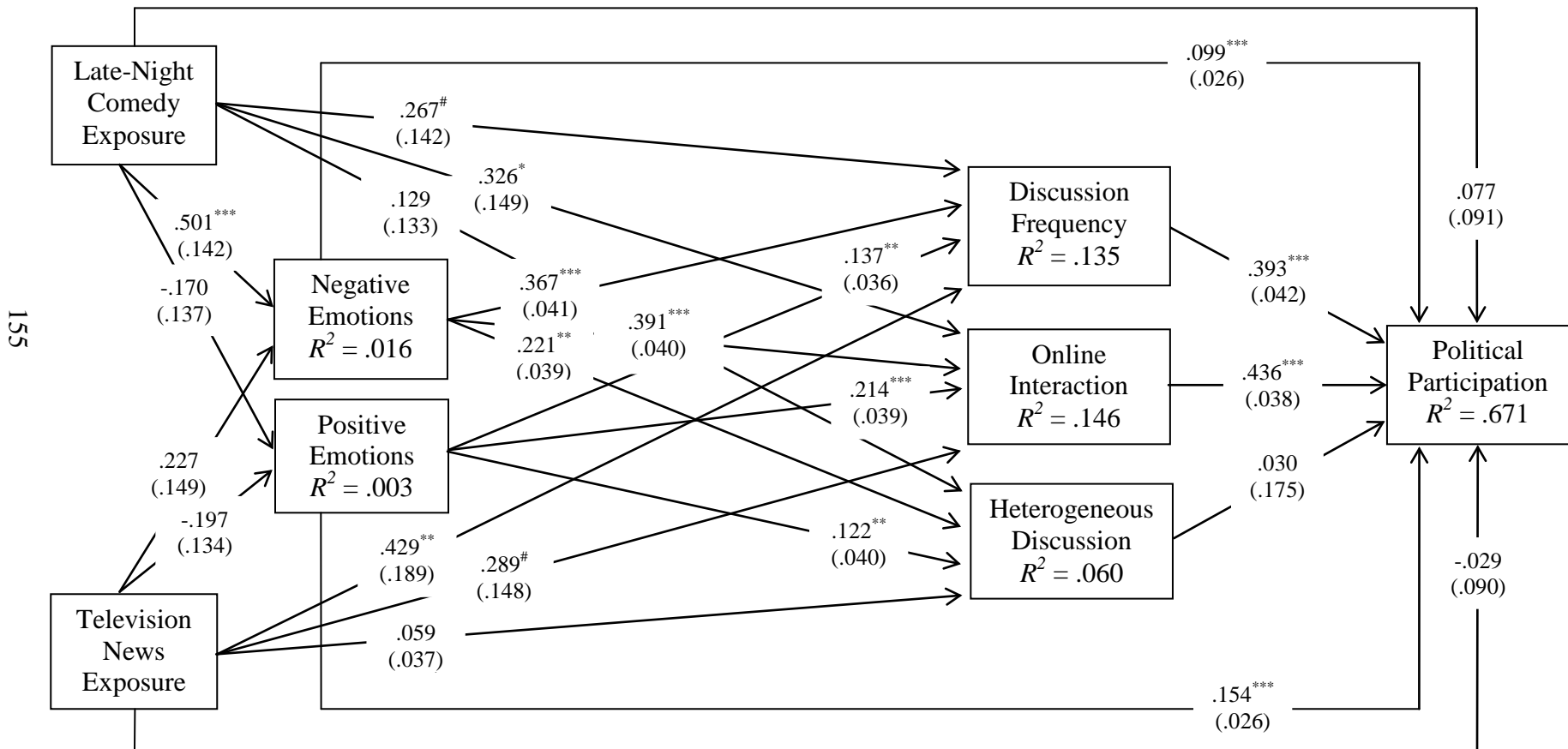
Moreover, the two employed research designs that introduced another readily available independent variable in the theoretical and empirical framework largely replicated the pattern of indirect relationships between late-night comedy viewing and political participation through diverse components of interpersonal communication. Indeed, the results clearly showed that late-night comedy programs play no less important role than traditional news sources do in fostering political participation via the conduit of interpersonal talk. Thus, findings of this study should alarm the critics of late-night humor who simply dismiss it as a distraction from substantive democracy. At least within the growing body of audiences who rely on these programs for news, satire shows seem to provide sufficient political topics that could trigger meaningful discussion and promote more animated engagement in the public discourse.

Chapter 6

Assessing the Omnibus Model

The findings thus far have illustrated that late-night comedy viewing could exert indirect influence on an individual's motivation to participate in politics by fostering emotions and further via diverse structural features of interpersonal talk. In addition, it was found that emotions could be situated between the consumption of satirical humor and engagement in political talk. The present chapter endeavors to integrate all the variables germane to discussion up to this point and synthesize an omnibus model, which postulates the following causal order: late-night comedy consumption, emotions, interpersonal talk, and political participation. This model is assessed with the data from the online experiment and the mail survey that have been examined so far. However, unlike the preceding chapters, Mplus was the platform of the choice for statistical analyses of this complex model, since it offers by far the most flexible options to partition total effects into manifold layers of direct and indirect components embedded in this type of *multiple-step multiple mediator* model (see Hayes et al., 2011).

Figure 6.1. Multiple-step multiple mediator model of media exposure, emotions, interpersonal talk, and political participation (Experiment, $N = 768$)



Note. Unstandardized path coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses. Estimates were calculated using Mplus.
 $\#p < .10$; $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$

Study 1: The Online Experiment

As stated earlier, the two employed research designs have distinct foci. The purpose of the experiment lies in investigating, under a controlled setting, every detailed consequence of manipulation. Toward this goal, it seems more appropriate to look at all applicable causal links including those failing to reach statistical significance. On the other hand, the goal of the survey revolves around identifying mundane relationships among the variables of interest. To fulfill a respective purpose of each research design, analyses of the experiment examine the saturated model that include the exhaustive list of causal paths, whereas the structural model of the survey data removes insignificant paths that may suggest null relationships in the real world and investigate as to whether the proposed model as a whole fits the data well. The following section discusses the results from the experiment first and the coefficients obtained from this indirect effects model are reported in Figure 6.1 along with their standard errors.

Effects of Media Exposure

Findings show that late-night comedy exposure elicited the audiences' negative emotions ($b = .501, SE = .142, p < .001$). In addition, late-night comedy viewing raised the intended levels of discussion frequency (H5.1a: $b = .267, SE = .142, p < .10$) and online interaction (H5.1b: $b = .326, SE = .149, p < .05$), although it was little associated with the extent to which individuals were willing to discuss with non-congruent others (RQ5.1a: $b = .129, SE = .133, p = n.s.$). However, it is worth noting that direct effects of late-night comedy exposure on interpersonal talk have become noticeable smaller as

compared to the coefficients for discussion frequency and online interaction observed in Chapter 5 (.428 and .486, respectively), insinuating the considerable mediation of negative emotions between humor consumption and political discussion (H4.2). Finally, the direct effect of late-night comedy watching on political participation was not significant, after accounting for indirect effects via emotional responses and various structural components of interpersonal talk ($b = .077, SE = .091, p = n.s.$).

On the other hand, the results for television news watching painted a somewhat different picture than those for late-night comedy viewing. Exposure to network television news stimulated negative emotions, but this effect failed to reach statistical significance ($b = .227, SE = .149, p = n.s.$). However, it manifested equivalent relationships with discussion frequency ($b = .429, SE = .189, p < .01$) and online interaction ($b = .289, SE = .148, p < .10$). Combined findings suggest that the influence of television news viewing on interpersonal talk was mostly directly without involving significant indirect pathways through affective responses. Additionally, the direct participatory effect was hardly noticeable ($b = -.029, SE = .090, p = n.s.$).

Effects of Emotional Responses

The results from the experiment clearly speak to the significance of emotions in providing fresh impetus for revitalizing democracy (not only in participatory but in deliberate nature as well). First, findings support H4.1, while demonstrating that negative emotions predicted significant increases in discussion frequency, online interaction, and heterogeneous discussion. As was observed in Chapter 4, positive emotions yielded significant associations with diverse component of political discussion.

Furthermore, negative emotions predicted greater intent to participate in political activities, even after simultaneously controlling for possible mediating influence of interpersonal talk ($b = .099$, $SE = .026$, $p < .001$). Positive emotions played no less significant role in spurring individuals to participate more ($b = .154$, $SE = .026$, $p < .001$). These findings lend credence to the conclusion that citizens' emotional responses are critical, substantially affecting engagement in participatory and deliberate democracy.

Effects of Structural Features of Interpersonal Talk

The omnibus model presents support for H5.2a and H5.2b, when it was found that discussion frequency and online interaction predicted more active political participation ($b = .393$, $SE = .042$, $p < .001$; and $b = .436$, $SE = .038$, $p < .001$, respectively) even after simultaneously controlling for the mediating effects of emotional responses. In addition, heterogeneous discussion was inversely associated with political participation, though the relationship was not significant (RQ5.2a: $b = -.027$, $SE = .032$, $p = n.s.$).

Indirect Effects on Political Participation

The omnibus effects model advanced in the present chapter postulates that consuming late-night humor can affect political participation indirectly by eliciting viewers' emotional responses, by prompting interpersonal discussion about politics, or via the mixture of these two intervening paths. The Mplus model permits us to partition the effect into various specific indirect effects, and the significance of each individual

element can be assessed with the Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) and the bootstrap analysis (Hayes, 2009). Table 6.1 summarizes the resulting estimates.

Table 6.1. Specific indirect effects of media exposure on political participation through emotional responses and structural features of interpersonal talk (Experiment, $N = 768$)

Individual Indirect Effect	Point Estimate	Boot SE	Sobel z	CI
L → NE → P	.050 [#]	.020	2.502	.019 to .099
L → PE → P	-.026	.022	-1.211	-.073 to .013
L → F → P	.105 [#]	.057	1.831	-.004 to .200
L → O → P	.142 [*]	.067	2.122	.011 to .276
L → H → P	-.004	.007	-.510	-.028 to .004
L → NE → F → P	.072 ^{**}	.024	2.956	.032 to .129
L → NE → O → P	.085 ^{**}	.026	3.230	.040 to .144
L → NE → H → P	-.003	.004	-.777	-.013 to .003
L → PE → F → P	-.009	.008	-1.166	-.030 to .003
L → PE → O → P	-.016	.013	-1.214	-.045 to .008
L → PE → H → P	.001	.001	.532	.000 to .005
T → NE → P	.022	.017	1.339	-.004 to .064
T → PE → P	-.030	.022	-1.391	-.079 to .007
T → F → P	.169 ^{**}	.057	2.969	.064 to .289
T → O → P	.126 [#]	.066	1.922	.006 to .262
T → H → P	-.002	.006	-.262	-.023 to .006
T → NE → F → P	.033	.022	1.471	-.007 to .079
T → NE → O → P	.039	.026	1.487	-.009 to .094
T → NE → H → P	-.001	.002	-.623	-.009 to .001
T → PE → F → P	-.011	.008	-1.347	-.031 to .001
T → PE → O → P	-.018	.013	-1.406	-.048 to .004
T → PE → H → P	.001	.001	.580	.000 to .005

Note. L: late-night comedy exposure; NE: negative emotions; PE: positive emotions; F: discussion frequency; O: online interaction; H: heterogeneous discussion; P: political participation; CIs are bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).
[#] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The analysis results indicate that exposure to late-night comedy yielded a considerable indirect effect on political participation via the conduit of negative emotions

(H3.3). The Sobel z score suggests that the degree of mediation by negative emotions is significant at the $p = .05$ level. Moreover, the 95% confidence interval that lies beyond 0 confirms that negative emotions played a reinforcing mediating role between watching late-night comedy programs and participating in political activities.

Meanwhile, the degree of mediation by structural components of interpersonal talk has markedly diminished, when the statistical model concurrently incorporated the indirect paths through emotions. The specific indirect effect of humor consumption on political participation through discussion frequency became marginally significant (H5.3a: $b = .105$, $SE = .057$, $p < .10$, $CI = -.004$ to $.200$) and the corresponding indirect effect through online interaction was significant at the $p = .05$ level (H5.2b: $b = .142$, $SE = .067$, $p < .05$, $CI = .011$ to $.276$). However, the magnitude of mediation has become noticeably smaller as compared to the estimates that were observed in the earlier proposed communication mediation model (compare with $.172$ for discussion frequency and $.229$ for online interaction). These decreased effects imply that the association between late-night comedy consumption and interpersonal talk (i.e., L-F and L-O links) can be partitioned into the direct effect and the indirect effects through emotional responses. Echoing this view, the results in Chapter 4 showed that the effects of humor viewing on discussion frequency as well as those on online interaction were significantly mediated by negative emotions (H4.2).

Taken together, it can be inferred that the indirect effects of comedy consumption on political participation via the conduit of interpersonal talk (i.e., L-F-P and L-O-P links) can be further partitioned into the single-step specific indirect pathways through talk components (i.e., L-F-P and L-O-P links) and the multiple-step intervening

routes, which encompass humor consumption, negative emotions, discussion, and participation (i.e., L-NE-F-P and L-NE-O-P). Indeed, the specific indirect effect that progresses first through negative emotions and then through discussion frequency before ending at political participation was highly significant ($b = .072$, $SE = .024$, $p < .01$, $CI = .032$ to $.129$). Additionally, exposure to late-night comedy manifested sizable mobilizing influence through both negative emotions and online interaction ($b = .085$, $SE = .026$, $p < .01$, $CI = .040$ to $.144$).

In sum, findings plainly documented the importance of negative emotions in the indirect effects model of late-night comedy. Consuming late-night comedy exerted a significant indirect effect on political participation through negative emotions (i.e., $L \rightarrow NE \rightarrow P$), whereas the indirect effects through interpersonal talk could be partitioned into the specific indirect effects of their own (i.e., $L \rightarrow F \rightarrow P$ and $L \rightarrow F \rightarrow O$) and the multiple-step indirect effects via negative emotions as well as features of talk (i.e., $L \rightarrow NE \rightarrow F \rightarrow P$ and $L \rightarrow NE \rightarrow O \rightarrow P$).

Conversely, findings suggest that emotional responses exerted marginal mediating influence in stipulating the implications of traditional news consumption. The specific indirect effect of television news exposure on political participation was positive, but it was not significant ($b = .022$, $SE = .017$, $p = n.s.$, $CI = -.004$ to $.064$). Moreover, none of the multiple-step indirect effects either through negative emotions and discussion frequency ($b = .033$, $SE = .022$, $p = n.s.$, $CI = -.007$ to $.079$) or through negative emotions and online interaction ($b = .039$, $SE = .026$, $p = n.s.$, $CI = -.009$ to $.094$) was significant. Instead, hard news use yielded substantial indirect effects via the conduit of interpersonal talk. The more frequent discussion tendency significantly

reinforced the stimulating effects of hard news exposure ($b = .169$, $SE = .057$, $p < .01$, $CI = .064$ to $.289$). The specific indirect effect through intended online interaction was marginally significant according to the Sobel test ($b = .085$, $SE = .026$, $p < .10$), but the quantified 95% confidence interval that did not include 0 corroborated the statistical significance of this indirect path ($CI = .006$ to $.262$). Hence, combined findings illustrate that the use of traditional news takes predominantly deliberative pathways toward political participation, whereas the motivational effects of late-night comedy viewing are intertwined with both affective and deliberative intervening mechanisms.

Disentangling Emotions

Based on the cognitive appraisal approach stressing the differences between anger and anxiety (e.g., Huddy et al., 2007; Valentino et al., 2011; Weber, 2007) as well as on the Dunlop et al.'s (2008) typology classifying diverse referents of emotion, one of the structural models employed in Chapter 3 investigated the effect of each emotion item. Adding significantly to this procedure, the present chapter advances a supplementary structural model wherein discrete emotion components that were further differentiated by referents constitute the second variable block in lieu of the two composite affective indices. Coefficients for direct paths in conjunction with corresponding standard errors are reported in Figure 6.2, while the results for specific indirect effects are summarized in Table 6.1. For the sake of simplicity, only significant results are shown, although the model estimated all applicable relationships—i.e., the model was saturated.

First, Figure 6.2 shows that exposure to late-night comedy elicited all six components of negative emotions. Subsequently, message-referent anger predicted

higher levels of online interaction ($b = .141, SE = .081, p < .10$) and heterogeneous discussion ($b = .157, SE = .078, p < .05$), whereas message-referent worry was positively associated with discussion frequency ($b = .218, SE = .092, p < .05$) and online interaction ($b = .195, SE = .081, p < .05$). In light of these findings, Dunlop et al. (2008) suggested that the mobilizing effects of message-referent and plot-referent emotions were mostly indirect via an intervening route through promoting interpersonal discussion about the message. They posited that these types of emotional responses provided a basis for social sharing with others, thereby triggering conversations about the message. In turn, interpersonal talk could prompt the individuals' motivation to take action.

The results summarized in Table 6.2 vindicate this view. Above all, late-night comedy viewing produced increases in features of interpersonal talk primarily through message-referent emotions. In particular, late-night comedy exposure raised the intended level of heterogeneous discussion through message-referent anger (i.e., the L-MA-H link); this indirect route was marginally significant according to the Sobel test ($z = .1.790$), but the more powerful confidence interval approach indicated that it was statistically significant at the $p = .05$ level (95% CI = .008 to .248). Likewise, although message-referent worry did not seem to yield a significant mediating effect between comedy consumption and interpersonal talk in terms of the conventional standard, the confidence intervals that lie beyond 0 demonstrated that encountering satirical humor added significantly to the degrees of discussion frequency (95% CI = .004 to .206) and online interaction (95% CI = .003 to .181) by virtue of stimulated message-referent worry. Moreover, consuming late-night humor propelled the respondents' willingness to participate indirectly through message-referent worry, which, in turn, seemed to

encourage more frequent discussion (i.e., the L-MW-F-P link: 95% CI = .002 to .082). In a similar vein, the motivational effects of message-referent worry that was provoked by comedy exposure were further mediated by online interaction (i.e., the L-MW-O-P link: 95% CI = .001 to .079). In short, message-referent emotions that are likely to follow the use of late-night humor tend to influence political participation rather indirectly via the conduit of interpersonal talk.

On the other hand, Dunlop et al. (2008) argued that self-referent emotion would contribute directly to behavior change, as the emotional response is closely linked to perceived risk (i.e., an individual's thought about the likelihood and the magnitude of the negative outcome), which has been shown to translate into behavioral outcome (see, for instance, Becker, 1974; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In the context of political communication, it could be that self-referent emotion could produce an immediate effect on the citizen's motivation to participate as the self-referent emotional response may be tantamount to an increase in perceived risk (e.g., the perceived costs of non-participation). Findings lend credence to this line of reasoning, while illustrating that self-referent anger directly influenced political participation ($b = .146, SE = .047, p < .05$) without engaging any significant indirect paths through interpersonal talk (see Figure 6.2). Furthermore, Table 6.2 showed that self-referent anger alone intervened and substantially multiplied the participatory influence of late-night comedy exposure ($b = .088, SE = .036, p < .05, CI = .030$ to $.177$). However, self-referent worry was not directly associated with an increase in political participation (see Figure 6.2) nor did it mediate the mobilizing effects of humor consumption (see Table 6.2). First, these muffled impacts of self-referent worry can be explained by the cognitive appraisal approach that highlights the greater

mobilizing role of anger as compared to anxiety due to the former's enhanced appraisal of *control* and *certainty* (see e.g., Huddy et al., 2007; Valentino et al., 2011; Weber, 2007). Second, it is also plausible that self-referencing might have intensified the inherent avoiding tendency of worry (see e.g., Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991; Heatherton et al., 1998; Sherman & Cohen, 2002). In any case, it is important to note that neither of the self-referent negative emotions involved features of interpersonal talk. As Dunlop et al. (2008) reasoned, some of the self-referent emotions could impede interpersonal talk, since they may yield embarrassment.

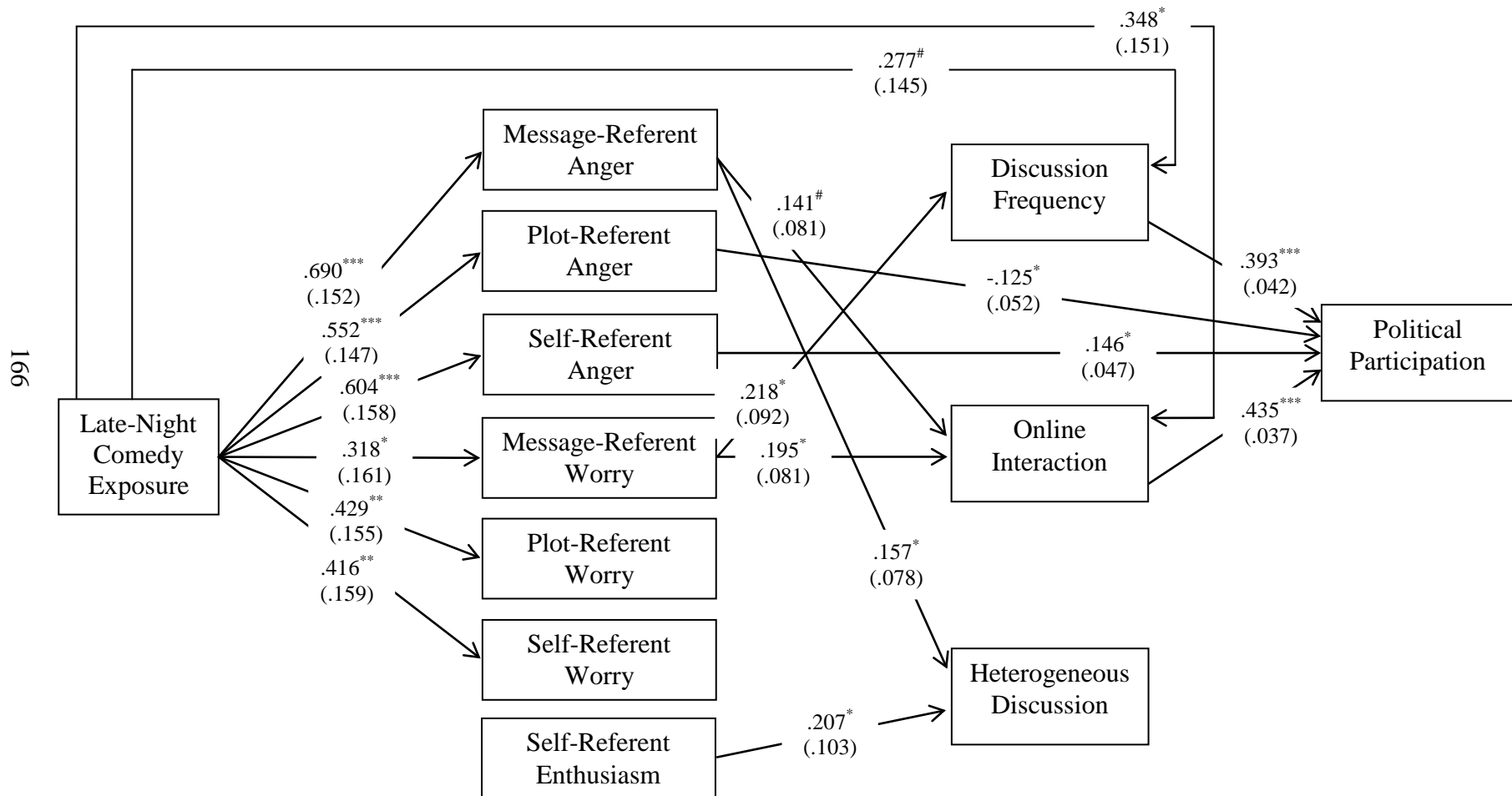
Table 6.2. Specific indirect effects of media exposure on political participation through discrete emotions and structural features of interpersonal talk (Experiment, $N = 768$)

Individual Indirect Effect	Point Estimate	Boot SE	Sobel z	CI
L → PA → P	-.069 [*]	.035	-1.972	-.157 to -.016
L → SA → P	.088 [*]	.036	2.436	.030 to .177
L → MA → H	.108 [#]	.061	1.790	.008 to .248
L → MW → F	.069	.049	1.424	.004 to .206
L → MW → O	.062	.044	1.417	.003 to .181
L → F → P	.109 [#]	.058	1.872	-.002 to .229
L → O → P	.151 [*]	.067	2.248	.024 to .288
L → MW → F → P	.027	.019	1.411	.002 to .082
L → MW → O → P	.027	.019	1.413	.001 to .079

Note. L: late-night comedy exposure; MA: message-referent anger; PA: plot-referent anger; SA: self-referent anger; MW: message-referent worry; F: discussion frequency; O: online interaction; H: heterogeneous discussion; P: political participation; CIs are bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$). Insignificant indirect effects are not shown here

[#] $p < .10$; ^{*} $p < .05$; ^{**} $p < .01$; ^{***} $p < .001$

Figure 6.2. Significant paths from the model of late-night comedy exposure, discrete emotions, structural features of interpersonal talk, and political participation (Experiment, $N = 768$)



Note. Path coefficients and standard errors in parentheses were computed using Mplus. Insignificant paths are not shown here.
 # $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Nonetheless, the structural model also produced some unexpected results. In particular, Figure 6.2 shows that plot-referent anger predicted even lower level of political participation ($b = -.125$, $SE = .052$, $p < .05$). As an extension, Table 6.2 indicates that plot-referent anger played the significant mediating role undermining the mobilizing effects of late-night comedy consumption ($b = -.069$, $SE = .035$, $p < .05$, $CI = -.157$ to $-.016$). It could be that anger may thwart an individual's willingness to participate unless it is complemented by self-referencing. Alternatively, those who hold plot-referent anger (i.e., angry about the way that the government's bailout of big companies affects middle class Americans) may be led to consider more overarching negative implications of the government's policy and consequently, they may end up with heightened cynicism, subsequently dampening their participatory intentions. However, these post-hoc explanations would need additional empirical testing before we could be confident about them. Furthermore, these explications leave unexamined the process as to why plot-referent worry did not yield parallel deleterious influence. Thus, future study can benefit by assessing dissimilar ramifications that are embedded in plot-referencing of anger and worry.

Moreover, findings from this supplementary structural model revealed less about non-monolithic effects of anger and worry on distinct patterns of deliberative behaviors. Specifically, MacKuen et al. (2010) argued that anger triggered by familiar threats tended to propel a lopsided search for confirming information and resistance to accommodation, whereas anxiety elicited by unfamiliar circumstances encouraged the balanced consideration of heterogeneous views and more willingness to compromise. Similarly, Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, and Davis (2009) illustrated that anxiety could decrease

selective exposure. They also observed in their earlier work that anger could limit the scope of political information seeking (Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, & Davis, 2008). Cast in light of deliberative behavior, these studies may suggest that angry responses are more likely to trigger conversations within a familiar network circle among neighbors, friends, and family members. Accordingly, anger should be closely intertwined with discussion frequency, which was operationalized by the composite index measuring the respondents' willingness to discuss the government policy with neighbors, friends, and family. Conversely, worried citizens being faced with unfamiliar threats should pursue more balanced search for opposing information. Thus, worried reactions could encourage people to engage in deliberation with strangers and virtual acquaintances they encounter online, while increasing their opportunities for heterogeneous discussion.

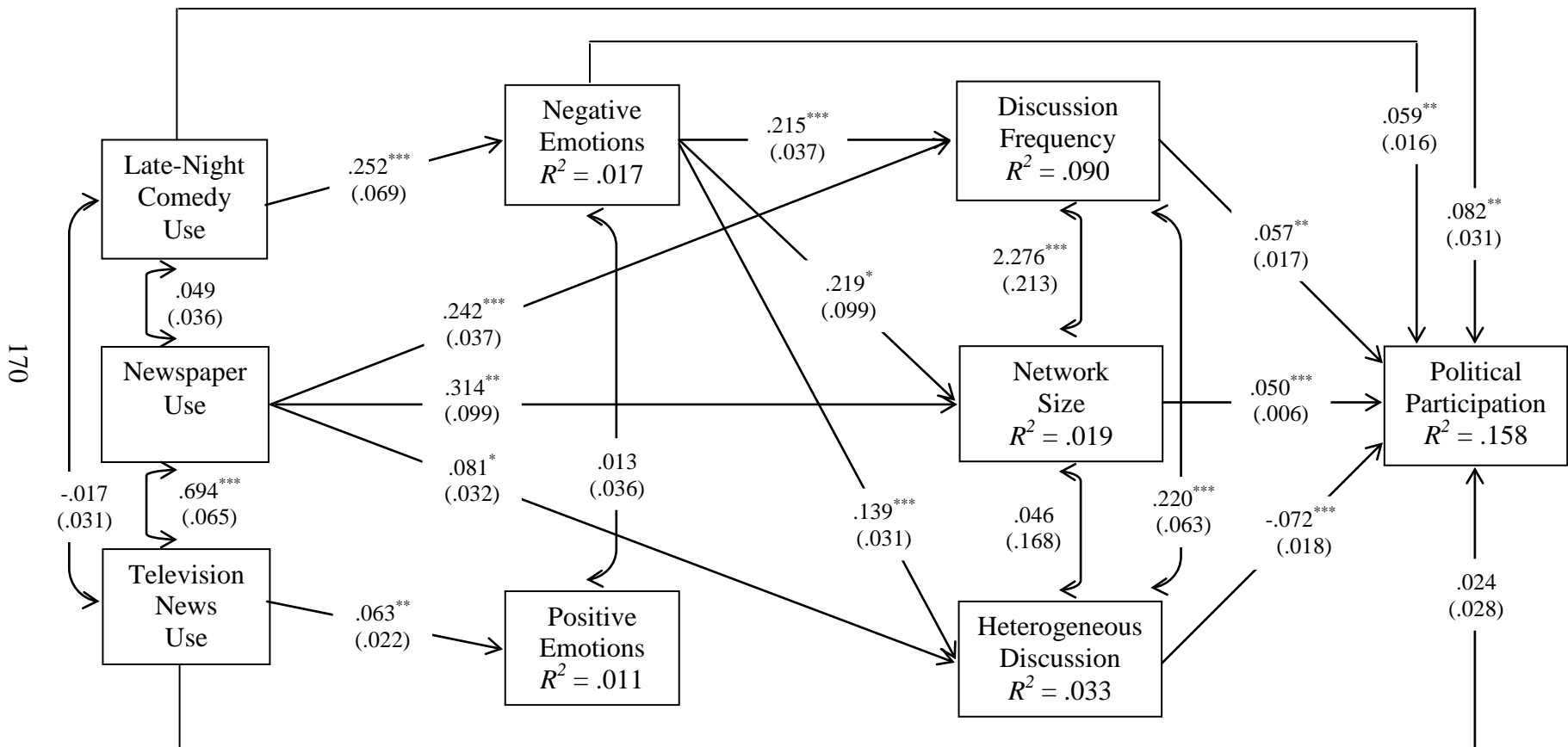
Nevertheless, the results lend little support for the unique contributions of anger and worry to diverse deliberative patterns. Figure 6.2 shows that message-referent anger was associated with online interaction and heterogeneous discussion, whereas message-referent worry predicted significant increases in discussion as well as in online interaction. These incongruent findings may suggest patterns of information seeking may be conceptually different from conversing activities. Further, inconsistencies may allude to inappropriate operationalization of interpersonal talk delicate enough to distinguish homogenous and heterogeneous discussion. That is, the indices of interpersonal talk in this study were employed to tap into diverse structural dimensions of discussion, but it was of less interest to classify conversations into two contrasting forms. Hence, future studies can employ more diversified measures of interpersonal talk that

could highlight the clear polarity between homogeneous and heterogeneous conversations, and investigate as to how discrete emotions affect these discussion types differently.

Study 2: The Mail Survey

A multiple-step multiple mediator model comprised with four core variable blocks—i.e., media uses, emotional responses, components of interpersonal talk, and political participation—was assessed with the survey data using Mplus. Before fitting the model to the data, all variables in the model were residualized for demographic variables (age, gender, race, household income, education, and party affiliation) and the measures of cognitive and attitudinal factors (political interest, knowledge, and internal efficacy). Then, the covariance matrix of unstandardized residuals was entered in the structural model. To identify the best fitting model, a saturated model was assessed with all structural paths freed up to be estimated. As suggested by standard refinement approaches of structural equation models (Bollen, 1989; Kline, 2005), the model was trimmed by removing non-significant paths ($p \geq .05$).

Figure 6.3. Multiple-step multiple mediator model of media uses, emotional responses, interpersonal talk, and political participation
(Survey, $N = 777$)



Note. Unstandardized path coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses. Estimates were calculated by Mplus. The effects of demographics (age, gender, race, household income, education, and party affiliation) and cognitive and attitudinal factors (internal efficacy, political interest and knowledge) on endogenous and exogenous variables have been residualized.
$p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 6.3 presents unstandardized coefficients from this multiple-step multiple mediator model consisting of media uses, emotional responses, structural features of interpersonal talk, and political participation. Overall, this model fits the data well, with a chi-square value of 17.783 with 14 degrees of freedom. Other goodness-of-fit indices also provide evidence of the adequacy of the model ($p = .217$; RMSEA = .019, 90% CI for RMSEA = .000 to .042; SRMR = .022, CFI = .991, and TLI = .979).

Effects of Media Uses

The results from the survey demonstrate that frequent use of late-night comedy was attached to viewers' negative emotions ($b = .252$, $SE = .069$, $p < .001$). In addition, late-night comedy viewing was directly related to more animated political participation ($b = .082$, $SE = .031$, $p < .001$). However, the significant relationships between humor consumption and interpersonal talk found in Chapter 5 have disappeared after simultaneously controlling for the possible mediating influence of emotional responses. Implied is that negative emotions substantially mediated the direct pathways from comedy consumption to interpersonal talk to the extent that the links between these two became insignificant. Resonant with this view, negative emotions that are likely to follow the use of late-night humor predicted more frequent discussion ($b = .215$, $SE = .037$, $p < .001$), enlarged network size ($b = .219$, $SE = .099$, $p < .05$), and greater exposure to heterogeneous views ($b = .139$, $SE = .031$, $p < .001$), the results lending support for H4.1. Admittedly, late-night comedy watching seems to affect diverse features of interpersonal talk rather indirectly by provoking audiences' negative emotions (H4.2).

Meanwhile, the results for traditional media uses painted a somewhat different picture. Television news use was significantly attached to positive emotions ($b = .063$, $SE = .022$, $p < .01$). More importantly, newspaper use yielded significant direct relationships with discussion frequency ($b = .242$, $SE = .037$, $p < .001$), network size ($b = .314$, $SE = .099$, $p < .01$), and heterogeneous discussion ($b = .081$, $SE = .032$, $p < .05$). Taken together, the survey results illustrated that newspaper use bypassed affective pathways toward various components of interpersonal talk, whereas negative emotions played the pivotal role translating the deliberative effects of late-night comedy consumption.

Effects of Emotional Responses

The omnibus model for the survey produced highly dynamic results pertaining to the effects of emotional responses. First, findings confirmed the nontrivial role of anger and worry in promoting more lively deliberative democracy, when it was shown that negative emotions predicted sizable increases in diverse structural features of interpersonal talk (H4.1). However, while countering the mobilizing influence observed in the experiment, *prima facie* evidence from the survey suggests that negative emotions may thwart political participation (H3.2: $b = -.059$, $SE = .016$, $p < .01$). Nevertheless, this unexpected finding could be reconciled in terms of the conditional indirect relationship proposed in Chapter 3, which clearly demonstrated that negative emotions could yield opposing effects (either motivating or dampening) depending upon an individual's level of education. Rather than manifesting pandemic harmful effects,

negative emotions seemed to exert only limited demobilizing influence primarily among those who attained high school education or less.

Effects of Structural Features of Interpersonal Talk

While advocating the constructive role of interpersonal talk, findings of the survey revealed that political participation was predicted by discussion frequency (H5.2a: $b = .057, SE = .017, p < .01$) and network size (H5.2c: $b = .050, SE = .006, p < .001$), even after simultaneously controlling for emotional responses. In contrast, heterogeneous discussion yielded a significant inverse correlation with political participation (RQ5.2a: $b = -.072, SE = .018, p < .001$). However, the analysis of the conditional relationship inspired by RQ5.2b illustrated that the link between heterogeneous discussion and political participation was moderated by education such that encountering dissimilar views may unevenly mobilize citizens with post-graduate education, while it could suppress poorly educated counterparts, thereby widening the participation gap between haves and have-nots.

Table 6.3. Specific indirect effects of media exposure on political participation through emotional responses and structural features of interpersonal talk (Survey, $N = 777$)

Individual Indirect Effect	Point Estimate	Boot SE	Sobel z	CI
L → NE → P	-.015*	.006	-2.560	-.003 to -.004
L → NE → F → P	.003*	.001	2.283	.001 to .006
L → NE → S → P	.003 [#]	.001	1.847	.000 to .006
L → NE → H → P	-.003*	.001	-2.294	-.005 to -.001
N → F → P	.014**	.005	2.996	.005 to .024
N → S → P	.016**	.005	2.938	.006 to .027
N → H → P	-.006*	.003	-2.157	-.012 to -.001

Note. L: late-night comedy consumption; N: newspaper news use; NE: negative emotions; PE: positive emotions; P: political participation; F: discussion frequency; S: network size; H: heterogeneous discussion; CIs are 95% confidence intervals that were estimated based on the Monte Carlo Method, while exploiting the Selig and Preacher's (2008) web utility (Bootstrap $N = 5,000$).

[#] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Indirect Effects on Political Participation

The Mplus model enables us to tease out the exact underlying mechanism and assess the statistical significance of the specific indirect effect for each mediating route. However, when the covariance matrix is entered as the input data as in the analyses of the survey data employed in the current study, the Mplus model does not permit the estimation of confidence intervals. As an alternative method, confidence intervals were computed based on the Monte Carlo Method, while exploiting the Selig and Preacher's (2008) web utility. MacKinnon, Lockwood, and Williams (2004) showed that this method for assessing mediation did not perform as well as the bias-corrected bootstrap, but did perform better than the conventional Sobel test (Sobel, 1982). For more precise testing of specific mediating effects, the present section adopts both methods, and Table 6.3 summarizes the results from the Sobel test and the bootstrap approach.

Findings show that late-night comedy was indirectly associated with decreased political participation via the conduit of negative emotions ($b = -.015$, $SE = .006$, $p < .05$, $CI = -.003$ to $-.004$). However, as suggested by the conditional indirect relationship found in Chapter 3, the indirect demobilizing effects of late-night humor use through anger and worry seemed to exist only among those who had high school education or less (H3.4b). In addition, the multiple-step indirect route that progresses from comedy consumption, then through negative emotions and further through heterogeneous discussion before ending at political participation (i.e., the L-NE-H-P link) was highly significant according to the results from the Sobel test and the bootstrap analysis ($b = -.003$, $SE = .001$, $p < .05$, $CI = -.005$ to $-.001$). However, this specific indirect pathway wherein consuming satirical humor seemed to thwart political participation should be qualified, given that previous findings demonstrated that education significantly moderated the effects of negative emotions as well as heterogeneous discussion. Consequently, this specific indirect link is likely to manifest itself predominantly among poorly educated citizens.

Aside from these inverse relationships, late-night comedy consumption showed some motivational influence via multiple-step intervening routes, which encompass humor consumption, negative emotions, discussion, and participation (i.e., L-NE-F-P and L-N-S-P). Consistent with the result of the experiment, increased comedy viewing predicted the higher degree of political participation indirectly first through negative emotions and then through discussion frequency ($b = .003$, $SE = .001$, $p < .05$, $CI = .001$ to $.006$). In addition, the multiple-step mediating path via the combined link between

negative emotions and network size was marginally significant ($b = .003$, $SE = .001$, $p < .10$, $CI = .000$ to $.006$).

In short, findings of the survey paralleled those of the experiment, while stressing the significance of negative emotions in assessing specific mechanisms that may underlie the effects of late-night comedy consumption, although some observed relationships were contingent upon education. Indeed, comedy consumption was significantly intertwined with political participation through anger and worry (i.e., $L \rightarrow NE \rightarrow P$). Moreover, consuming satirical humor produced highly dynamic relationships with political participation first through negative emotions and then through various structural features of interpersonal talk (i.e., $L \rightarrow NE \rightarrow F \rightarrow P$; $L \rightarrow NE \rightarrow S \rightarrow P$; and $L \rightarrow NE \rightarrow H \rightarrow P$).

Further in accordance with the results of the experiment, emotions find little place in situating the effects of traditional media uses. Television news use did not yield any significant indirect links to political participation. Additionally, the relationships between newspaper use and political participation were exclusively mediated by diverse components of interpersonal talk such as discussion frequency ($b = .014$, $SE = .005$, $p < .01$, $CI = .005$ to $.024$), network size ($b = .016$, $SE = .005$, $p < .01$, $CI = .006$ to $.027$), and heterogeneous discussion ($b = -.006$, $SE = .003$, $p < .01$, $CI = -.012$ to $-.001$) with no comparable indirect paths through emotional responses. In short, findings of the survey assured the conclusion drawn from the experiment that reliance on traditional news sources tends to promote greater engagement with public affairs mainly by prompting interpersonal talk, whereas the mobilizing effects of late-night comedy consumption are likely to entail deliberative as well as affective indirect routes.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

It has been one of the foci of traditional media research that media content (e.g., television news, newspaper articles, and political advertisements) could provide political knowledge and mobilize citizen engagement in public affairs. Following this conventional approach, many believe that exposure to late-night comedy could inform citizens, which would in turn encourage political engagement. However, the extant literature has been highly inconsistent thus far about the impact of consuming late-night humor on political knowledge. Hence, the indirect mobilizing influence of late-night comedy through its effects on political knowledge might be modest.

Echoing this pessimistic view, late-night comedy programs may be insufficiently substantive, thus unable to inform citizens. However, the lack of political knowledge is well known, and information is but one component in rehabilitating the democratic citizen (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Furthermore, the democratic ideal of an informed citizenry has been challenged both theoretically and empirically. Many (e.g., Lupia, 1994; Popkin, 1994; Sniderman et al., 1991) have demonstrated that even poorly informed citizens are capable of sophisticated political thought and rational decision making, as long as informational shortcuts and heuristics are available. In support of

this proposition, Kaufhold et al. (2010) argued that new forms of user-driven media could spur political participation even with little increase of substantive knowledge.

Motivated by this direction, I examined the indirect influence of late-night comedy viewing on political engagement (both participatory and deliberative) through emotional responses. To investigate the more complex communication processes whereby late-night comedy viewing can produce significant indirect effects on citizen engagement in political life, I developed a theoretical framework, which synthesized Affective Intelligence theory (Marcus et al., 2000) and the Orientation-Stimulus-Orientation-Response (O-S-O-R) approach (Markus & Zajonc, 1985; J. M. McLeod et al., 1994), and the Communication Mediation Model (J. M. McLeod et al., 2001; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001). With the introduction of a series of indirect effects models, I strived to address the following two interrelated questions:

1. What are the impacts of entertainment journalism on political engagement?
2. How do the impacts of entertainment-oriented programs on citizen attitudes and behaviors differ from those derived from more conventional news sources?

In searching for the answers, I pursued the methodological triangulation of blending experimental and survey research. First, manipulating the exposure to late-night comedy in an experiment enabled me to examine under a controlled setting the precise causal effects of consuming humor on citizen attitude and behavior. Then, employing a secondary analysis of a national survey assessed whether the observed associations are generalizable to the real-world setting. By integrating the results attained from the experiment and the survey, I sought to uncover the precise causal mechanisms through which late-night comedy affects democracy and also examine

whether the observed cause-effect processes were generalizable to an actual real-world setting.

Numerous significant findings were obtained pertaining to the impacts of entertainment journalism on political engagement. First, I found that late-night comedy viewing could promote citizens' engagement in political life indirectly by eliciting their anger and their worry about a circumstance or an issue. Moreover, these findings remained significant even after controlling for conventional mediating accounts that included internal efficacy, cynicism, political interest, and knowledge. In addition, findings highlighted the key source of mediation demonstrating that late-night comedy viewing exerted a significant indirect effect on the likelihood of political participation mostly through self-referent anger. Considering the cognitive appraisal dimension of emotions, the results suggested that anger played a greater motivational role mediating between exposure to late-night comedy and political participation (Huddy et al., 2007; Valentino et al., 2011; Weber, 2007), and further that self-referencing tended to boost the mobilizing effect of anger (Dunlop et al., 2008), whereas it could augment the inherent avoiding tendency of worry (Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991; Heatherton et al., 1998; Sherman & Cohen, 2002).

Second, I investigated the impacts of late-night comedy on citizen engagement in interpersonal talk, while extending the already well-established research tradition that examined the link between mass media and interpersonal communication. At an intersection of the results from the experiment and the survey, I observed that consuming humor could mobilize potential discursive activities for citizens by provoking their negative emotions. Particularly interesting in this project was that the influence of late-

night comedy on deliberative engagement was not limited to the simple frequency of talk; exposure to political satire also exerted significant influence on other structural features of potential interpersonal talk, such as the size of the discussion network, the degree of online interactions, and the extent to which people discuss politics with non-likeminded others.

Third, I applied the Communication Mediation Model (J. M. McLeod et al., 2001; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001) to examine the process wherein the act of consuming satirical humor works in concert with interpersonal discussion to spur political participation. Findings suggested that more frequent discussion, a larger discussion network, and greater engagement in online communication activities could mediate and reinforce the mobilizing effects of late-night comedy viewing. However, discussion with heterogeneous others seemed to exert limited positive influence primarily among political experts. Hence, this study called for the extension of the Communication Mediation Model to acknowledge non-monolithic effects that diverse structural components of interpersonal talk could produce.

Aside from examining the influence of late-night comedy viewing, this dissertation aimed to compare the impacts of entertainment-oriented programs on citizen attitudes and behaviors with those derived from more conventional news sources. To this end, I integrated the results of these research efforts and sought to identify particular causal mechanisms that could account for the effects of satirical humor programs on democracy. Specifically, the indirect paths through which late-night comedy shows influenced citizens' political engagement were juxtaposed with the parallel causal processes for traditional news sources. The major difference between these new forms

of journalism and traditional news channels lied in their elicitation of affective responses. In explaining the impacts of exposure to late-night comedy programs on individuals' deliberative and participatory behaviors, emotions (particularly anger and worry) played a critical mediating role boosting the constructive influence. Further, findings aligned well with the Dunlop et al.'s (2008) typology classifying diverse referents of emotion in that exposure to late-night comedy produced an immediate effect on the citizen's intent to participate, whereas message-referent emotions elicited by the consumption of satirical humor tended to promote interpersonal talk first. In contrast, newspaper and television news consumption tended to promote citizen participation in political activities and engagement in interpersonal discussion rather directly with little elicitation of emotional responses involved in their causal models.

On a somewhat different note, though, findings of the current research provided a caveat against overly optimistic views regarding the unique role of late-night comedy in revitalizing democracy. Specifically, the results showed that the indirect effect of late-night comedy viewing on political participation through negative emotions will be conditional upon education such that the effect is stronger for those who are highly educated. Specifically, the evaluation of conditional indirect effect in the survey indicated that the observed inverse association between late-night comedy consumption and political participation via the conduit of negative emotions existed only among poorly educated citizens, whereas the equivalent assessment in the experiment showed that well-educated experts seemed to extract greater benefits from negative emotions stirred by satirical humor. Moreover, the investigation of diverse structural features of discussion suggested that engagement in heterogeneous discussion rendered poorly

educated citizens vulnerable to demobilization, whereas it mobilized politically savvy counterparts. Taken together, these findings implied that exposure to late-night comedy may draw a higher level of political involvement from experts, while demobilizing political novices. These results bolstered the argument that those with greater cognitive resources and processing skills were more likely to gain value from late-night comedy since understanding humor itself might require a certain level of expertise (Moy et al., 2005a; Young, 2008; Young & Tisinger, 2006). Hence, findings may illustrate that late-night comedy viewing could widen the participation gap between haves and have-nots.

Based on these important findings, I am confident that the present work provided a range of insights that could be used to explore the role of newly emerging media that are presumably of less enlightening value and yet more emotionally amusing and provocative. Primarily, these findings contributed to our understanding of various mediation models anchored in the O-S-O-R framework (Markus & Zajonc, 1985; J. M. McLeod et al., 1994), including the Cognitive Mediation Model (Eveland, 2001; Eveland et al., 2003) and other approaches that may be contingent upon cognitive and attitudinal elements (J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Scheufele et al., 2004). By incorporating emotion as a viable mediator (the second O) between the reception of a message (S) and its ensuing response (R), the proposed indirect effects models enlarged the scope of the mediation model, while also capturing the dynamic intervening mechanisms that could lie above and beyond more conventional cognitive accounts. Further, education was introduced as a first O and showed that the mobilizing effect of late-night comedy viewing was stronger for political sophisticates. Taken together, the current research fully exploited the O-S-O-R framework in assessing the impact of

political entertainment by introducing the following causal chain: education (first O) - late-night comedy viewing (S) - negative emotions (second O) - political participation (R). Moreover, I believe that investigating multiple facets of interpersonal discussion, which harbor distinct implications for participatory democracy, has further extended the purview of mediators that might be employed in the Communication Mediation Model (J. M. McLeod et al., 2001; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001).

Notwithstanding the significance of the current research effort, it should be understood as only the beginning of an effort to examine the rise of entertainment media in the public discourse and its social and political implications, given the shortcomings in research methods and the limited scope of inquiries. Perhaps the most serious concern of the present study involves the presumed causal orderings among media use, emotion, interpersonal talk, and political participation. In particular, the current research left unexamined the precise temporal order among the possible consequences of late-night comedy viewing, including emotion, interpersonal talk, and political participation. Furthermore, the design was not sensitive enough to capture long-term cumulative effects from repeated exposure to satirical humor. Given that the consequences of media use can also determine the selection of and attention to specific media content, the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes examined in the present study can constitute not only the results of exposure to late-night comedy shows, but also important antecedents to the selection of and attention to these programs, thereby creating a reinforcing spiral effect (Slater, 2007). A carefully designed time-based model with multiple measures of both reception and response will enable us to define the precise causal direction and further to capture the cumulative effects from repeated exposure to late-night humor.

As with the overall design, measures employed in the current research are not without limitations. Specifically, the failure to detect the hypothesized mediating effects of positive emotions may reflect weak operationalization of the measures. Although these results may lend credence to the studies suggesting that individuals tend to pay greater attention to negative and threatening information (e.g., Baumeister et al., 2001; Rozin & Royzman, 2001; Taylor, 1991) and further that positive emotions are less effective than negative responses (e.g., Coleman & Wu, 2010; Miller, 2007; Petty & Wegener, 1998), one can investigate subtle distinctive consequences that may arise from different types of positive emotions by employing a greater number of positive emotion items while specifying their respective causes and effects. Perhaps, future scholarship needs to revisit the theoretical foundation for the link between late-night comedy viewing and arousal of positive emotions, while clearly specifying the target of positive emotions. After all, people may not be so enthusiastic about a political issue following the consumption of satirical humor, but rather it could be a joke and a show host that make audiences amused.

In addition, the examination of the influence of heterogeneous discussion left unexamined how and why it produced contrasting results for political novices and experts. Future studies can examine the complex processes wherein heterogeneous discussion could yield divergent outcomes by examining potential intervening mechanisms, such as ambivalence (Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Mutz, 2002, 2006) and learning (J. M. McLeod, Scheufele, Moy, et al., 1999; Scheufele et al., 2003; Scheufele et al., 2004).

Finally, the limited scope of the current research should be noted. I found that traditional news media did not elicit emotions in the same powerful way that late-night

comedy did. However, it could well be that some news topics (e.g., 9/11) would clearly generate powerful emotions. Brader, Valentino, and Suhay (2008) showed that news stories about the immigration issue could have powerful emotional effects and that these could encourage participation. Thus, the proposed indirect effects models should be tested on more diverse issues in a multitude of contexts. Further, entertainment journalism in the current research was limited to late-night comedy programs, but future study can extend the scope of inquiries by incorporating other politically influential contents in the entertainment genre such as pop music and movies.

In closing, I remain fascinated by the rise of entertainment media in the public discourse, and I will continue to pursue future work in this line of research, while more closely investigating the multifaceted communication processes of political entertainment. Yet my intellectual endeavors range far beyond a limited domain. My long-term vision encompasses the examination of the role of growing news channels in cross-national and cross-cultural contexts. Of particular emphasis is how the complex interplay between political, economic, and cultural conditions moderates the impacts of new forms of journalism, including entertainment media. To this end, I hope to extend my research to East Asian landscapes in a comparison of the U.S. and Korean cases. Underlying all these efforts, my central attention will be directed toward emerging media practices, their influence on democracy, and how the mix of individual and social factors responds to and shapes the future environment for news provision.

Appendices

Appendix A1

Question Wording and Descriptive Statistics of Variables in the Online Experiment

Political Participation

For each activity, please tell us how likely you are to take part in that activity. There are seven numbers from 1 – 7 where each number represents the following: 1. *Extremely unlikely*; 2. *Very unlikely*; 3. *Somewhat unlikely*; 4. *Neither unlikely nor likely*; 5. *Somewhat likely*; 6. *Very likely*; or 7. *Extremely likely*.

- Attend a political meeting, rally, or speech (PPE1: $M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.84$, $Mdn = 4$)
- Contact a public official or a political party (PPE2: $M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.92$, $Mdn = 4$)
- Display a bumper sticker or yard sign on a political issue (PPE3: $M = 3.46$, $SD = 2.06$, $Mdn = 3$)

Interpersonal Talk

Discussion frequency

For each activity, please tell us how likely you are to take part in that activity. There are seven numbers from 1 – 7 where each number represents the following: 1. *Extremely unlikely*; 2. *Very unlikely*; 3. *Somewhat unlikely*; 4. *Neither unlikely nor likely*; 5. *Somewhat likely*; 6. *Very likely*; or 7. *Extremely likely*.

- Talk about the government's bailout of big companies with neighbors (DFE1: $M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.90$, $Mdn = 4$)
- Talk about the government's bailout of big companies with friends (DFE2: $M = 4.71$, $SD = 1.82$, $Mdn = 5$)
- Talk about the government's bailout of big companies with family (DFE3: $M = 4.84$, $SD = 1.80$, $Mdn = 5$)

Online interaction

For each activity, please tell us how likely you are to take part in that activity. There are seven numbers from 1 – 7 where each number represents the following: 1. *Extremely unlikely*; 2. *Very unlikely*; 3. *Somewhat unlikely*; 4. *Neither unlikely nor likely*; 5. *Somewhat likely*; 6. *Very likely*; or 7. *Extremely likely*.

- Read or post a comment about the government's bailout of big companies (OIE1: $M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.98$, $Mdn = 5$)

- Discuss the government's bailout of big companies online with people over email, in chat rooms, using message boards, forums or instant messaging services (OIE2: $M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.99$, $Mdn = 4$)
- Forward any emails, audio or video concerning the government's bailout of big companies (OIE3: $M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.99$, $Mdn = 4$)

Heterogeneous discussion

Now, we would like to ask you to express your own opinion on the government's economic stimulus plan. Please indicate the extent to which you would agree or disagree with the same statement. There are seven numbers from 1 – 7 where each number represents the following: 1. *Strongly disagree*; 2. *Disagree*; 3. *Somewhat disagree*; 4. *Neither agree nor disagree*; 5. *Somewhat agree*; 6. *Agree*, or 7. *Strongly agree*.

- The government should expand the economic stimulus plan in order to address the current recession.

Suppose that a friend you know very well (or a stranger you encounter at a social gathering) is arguing that the government should (or should not) expand the economic stimulus plan in order to address the current recession. How likely are you to have a discussion with that friend (or that stranger) on this matter? (HFS: $M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.57$, $Mdn = 5$; HSS: $M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.72$, $Mdn = 4$; HFO: $M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.60$, $Mdn = 5$; HSO: $M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.73$, $Mdn = 4$) There are seven numbers from 1 – 7 where each number represents the following: 1. *Extremely unlikely*; 2. *Very unlikely*; 3. *Somewhat unlikely*; 4. *Neither unlikely nor likely*; 5. *Somewhat likely*; 6. *Very likely*; or 7. *Extremely likely*.

Emotional Responses

We'd like to know how angry (worried, or enthusiastic) you are about the government's bailout of big companies. For each question below, please indicate how angry (*worried, or enthusiastic*) you are. There are seven numbers from 1 – 7, where 1 means *Not at all angry (worried, or enthusiastic)*, and 7 means *Extremely angry (worried, or enthusiastic)*.

- Message-referent: How angry (worried, or enthusiastic) are you about the government's bailout of big companies? (MAE: $M = 5.23$, $SD = 1.71$, $Mdn = 6$; MWE: $M = 4.89$, $SD = 1.83$; $Mdn = 5$, MEE: $M = 2.17$, $SD = 1.54$, $Mdn = 1$)
- Plot-referent: How angry (worried, or enthusiastic) are you about the way that the government's bailout of big companies affects middle class Americans? (PAE: $M = 5.38$, $SD = 1.62$, $Mdn = 6$; PWE: $M = 5.15$, $SD = 1.76$, $Mdn = 6$; PEE: $M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.57$, $Mdn = 2$)
- Self-referent: How angry (worried, or enthusiastic) are you about the way that the government's bailout of big companies affects you? (SAE: $M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.82$, $Mdn = 5$; SWE: $M = 4.89$, $SD = 1.86$, $Mdn = 5$; SEE: $M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.59$, $Mdn = 2$)

Internal Efficacy

For each statement listed, we would like to know whether you personally agree or disagree with the statement. There are seven numbers from 1 – 7 where each number represents the following: 1. *Strongly disagree*; 2. *Disagree*; 3. *Somewhat disagree*; 4. *Neither agree nor disagree*; 5. *Somewhat agree*; 6. *Agree*, or 7. *Strongly agree*.

- People like me have considerable influence on politics. (IES1: $M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.69$, $Mdn = 3$)
- I know a lot about the policies of political candidates I support. (IES2: $M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.65$, $Mdn = 5$)
- I know a lot about the policies of political candidates I don't support. (IES3: $M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.65$, $Mdn = 4$)

Willingness to Know

We would like to ask how much you are interested in learning more about the government's economic stimulus plan. There are seven numbers from 1 – 7 where each number represents the following: 1. *Extremely unwilling*; 2. *Very unwilling*; 3. *Somewhat un willing*; 4. *Neither unwilling nor willing*; 5. *Somewhat willing*; 6. *Very willing*; or 7. *Extremely willing*.

- Thinking about what you have seen, how willing are you to learn more about the ideas supporting the government's economic stimulus plan? (WKE1: $M = 4.84$, $SD = 1.57$, $Mdn = 5$)
- How willing are you to learn more about the ideas opposing the government's economic stimulus plan? (WKE2: $M = 5.03$, $SD = 1.41$, $Mdn = 5$)
- More generally, how willing are you to learn more about the government's economic stimulus plan? (WKE3: $M = 5.15$, $SD = 1.38$, $Mdn = 5$)

Cynicism

For each statement listed, we would like to know whether you personally agree or disagree with the statement. There are seven numbers from 1 – 7 where each number represents the following: 1. *Strongly disagree*; 2. *Disagree*; 3. *Somewhat disagree*; 4. *Neither agree nor disagree*; 5. *Somewhat agree*; 6. *Agree*, or 7. *Strongly agree*.

- Politicians don't realize how badly they come across. (CYE1: $M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.46$, $Mdn = 5$)
- Most politicians are boring. (CYE2: $M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.51$, $Mdn = 5$)
- Corruption is always present in American politics. (CYE3: $M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.35$, $Mdn = 6$)
- No matter which party is in power, it seems like our government is run by a few big interests. (CYE4: $M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.25$, $Mdn = 6$)

Political Interest

We would like to know whether you personally agree or disagree with the following statement. There are seven numbers from 1 – 7 where each number represents the following: 1. *Strongly disagree*; 2. *Disagree*; 3. *Somewhat disagree*; 4. *Neither agree nor disagree*; 5. *Somewhat agree*; 6. *Agree*, or 7. *Strongly agree*.

- I am very interested in politics. (PIE: $M = 4.29$, $SD = 1.80$, $Mdn = 4$)

Age

What was your age on your last birthday? (AGE: $M = 47.27$, $SD = 14.13$, $Mdn = 49$, $Min = 18$, $Max = 80$)

Education

Which of the following best describes the highest level of education you attained? 1. *Elementary school*; 2. *Some high school or less*; 3. *High school diploma*; 4. *Some college or associate degree*; or 5. *Post-graduate education*. (EDE: $M = 3.87$, $SD = .83$, $Mdn = 4$)

Household Income

What was the total income for your family last year? *Less than \$15K*, *\$15K to \$34,999*, *\$35K to \$59,999*, *\$60K to \$89,999*, or *\$90K and over*. (HIE: $Mdn = \$35,000$ - $\$59,999$)

Gender

What is your gender? (GEE: 51% female)

Party Affiliation

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? If Democrat or Republican, would you call yourself a strong or a weak Democrat or Republican? If Independent, are you closer to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party? *Strong Democrat*, *Weak Democrat*, *Independent Democrat*, *Independent*, *Independent Republican*, *Weak Republican*, or *Strong Republican*. (PAE: 14.5% Strong Democrat, 10.3% Weak Democrat, 12.5% Independent Democrat, 29.0% Independent, 12.4% Independent Republican, 7.3% Weak Republican, 14.1% Strong Republican)

Note. M : mean; SD : standard deviation; Mdn : median; Min : minimum; Max : maximum

Appendix A2

Question Wording and Descriptive Statistics of Variables in the Mail Survey

Political Participation

For each activity listed, please indicate your frequency of engagement during the past two months. There are eight numbers from 1 – 8 where each number represents the following: 1. *None in last 2 months*; 2. *About once in last 2 months*; 3. *Once or twice a month*; 4. *Every other week*; 5. *Once a week*; 6. *Two-three times a week*; 7. *Almost every day*; or 8. *Every day*.

- Attended a political meeting, rally, or speech (PPS1: $M = 1.21$, $SD = .69$, $Mdn = 1$)
- Contacted a public official or a political party (PPS2: $M = 1.33$, $SD = .82$, $Mdn = 1$)
- Circulated a petition for a candidate or issue (PPS3: $M = 1.12$, $SD = .59$, $Mdn = 1$)
- Worked on behalf of a social group or cause (PPS4: $M = 1.59$, $SD = 1.24$, $Mdn = 1$)

Interpersonal Talk

Discussion frequency

For each activity listed, please indicate your frequency of engagement during the past two months. There are eight numbers from 1 – 8 where each number represents the following: 1. *None in last 2 months*; 2. *About once in last 2 months*; 3. *Once or twice a month*; 4. *Every other week*; 5. *Once a week*; 6. *Two-three times a week*; 7. *Almost every day*; or 8. *Every day*.

- Talked about politics with neighbors (DFS1: $M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.63$, $Mdn = 1$)
- Talked about politics with friends (DFS2: $M = 3.14$, $SD = 2.00$, $Mdn = 3$)

- Talked about politics with family (DFS3: $M = 3.58$, $SD = 2.21$, $Mdn = 3$)

Network size

Outside your immediate family, how many people do you often talk with about politics or public affairs? (NSS: $M = 5.00$, $SD = 4.55$, $Mdn = 4$)

Heterogeneous discussion

I'd like to know whether you personally agree or disagree with this statement. There are six numbers from 1 – 6, where 1 means *Definitely disagree* and 6 means *Definitely agree*.

- *Most people I talk to have different political views than my own.* (HDS: $M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.38$, $Mdn = 3$)

Emotional Responses

For each statement listed, I'd like to know whether you personally agree or disagree with this statement. There are six numbers from 1 – 6, where 1 means *Definitely disagree* and 6 means *Definitely agree*.

- When I think of the Republican Party, I feel angry (worried, hopeful, or excited). (RAS: $M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.68$, $Mdn = 1$; RWS: $M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.68$, $Mdn = 3$; RHS: $M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.69$, $Mdn = 3$; RES: $M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.55$, $Mdn = 1$)
- When I think of the Democratic Party, I feel angry (worried, hopeful, or excited). (DAS: $M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.68$, $Mdn = 3$; DWS: $M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.80$, $Mdn = 3$; DHS: $M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.81$, $Mdn = 3$; DES: $M = 2.82$, $SD = 1.68$, $Mdn = 3$)

Late-Night Comedy Viewing

Below are media you may/may not use. Please indicate how often you use. There are eight numbers from 1 – 5 where each number represents the following: 1. *Never*; 2. *Once in a while*; 3. *Sometime*; 4. *Often*; or 5. *Regularly*.

- *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (LCS1: $M = 1.39$, $SD = .87$, $Mdn = 1$)
- *The Colbert Report* (LCS2: $M = 1.28$, $SD = .75$, $Mdn = 1$)

Conventional News Use

Below are media you may/may not use. Please indicate how often you use. There are eight numbers from 1 – 5 where each number represents the following: 1. *Never*; 2. *Once in a while*; 3. *Sometime*; 4. *Often*; or 5. *Regularly*.

- National Nightly News on ABC, CBS, or NBC (TVS1: $M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.48$, $Mdn = 4$)
- Local television news programs (TVS2: $M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.29$, $Mdn = 5$)
- Daily newspapers (NPS: $M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.42$, $Mdn = 4$)

Internal Efficacy

I'd like to know whether you personally agree or disagree with this statement. There are six numbers from 1 – 6, where 1 means *Definitely disagree* and 6 means *Definitely agree*.

- People like me have considerable influence on politics. (IES1: $M = 2.59$, $SD = 1.43$, $Mdn = 2$)
- I know a lot about politics. (IES2: $M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.45$, $Mdn = 3$)

Political Knowledge

Do you happen to know... *Democratic Party*; *Republican Party*; and *Don't Know*.

- Which political party will hold a majority in the U.S. House next year? (PKS1: 76% correct)
- Nancy Pelosi belongs to which political party? (PKS2: 58% correct)
- Dennis Hastert belongs to which political party? (PKS3: 30% correct)
- Which party argues more strongly for a phased redeployment of U.S. troops out of Iraq over the next 12 to 18 months? (PKS4: 61% correct)

Political Interest

I'd like to know whether you personally agree or disagree with this statement. There are six numbers from 1 – 6, where 1 means *Definitely disagree* and 6 means *Definitely agree*.

- I am interested in politics. (PIS: $M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.48$, $Mdn = 4$)

Age

What was your age on your last birthday? (AGS: $M = 51.86$, $SD = 13.25$, $Mdn = 52$, $Min = 18$, $Max = 88$)

Education

Which of the following best describes the highest level of education you attained? 1. *Grade school*, 2. *Some high school or less*; 3. *High school grad*; 4. *Some college or associates*; 5. *College grad*; or 6. *Post-graduate education*. (EDS: $M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.09$, $Mdn = 4$)

Household Income

What was the total income for your family last year in thousands? (GES: $Mdn = \$55,000$)

Gender

What is your gender? (GES: 46% female)

Race

Which of the following best describes your ethnicity? *White*, *Hispanic*, *Black*, *Asian*, *American Indian*, *Pacific Islander*, or *Other*. (RCS: 75% White, 2.2% Hispanic, 2.7% Black, .9% Asian, .3% American Indian, .0% Pacific Islander, 1.4% Other)

Party Affiliation

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? If Democrat or Republican, would you call yourself a strong or a weak Democrat or Republican? *Strong Democrat*, *Weak Democrat*, *Independent*, *Weak Republican*, or *Strong Republican*. (PAS: 11.7% Strong Democrat, 19.7% Weak Democrat, 34.6% Independent, 21.6% Weak Republican, 11.9% Strong Republican)

Note. M : mean; SD : standard deviation; Mdn : median; Min : minimum; Max : maximum

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