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Satire as a source for learning? The differential impact of news versus satire exposure on net neutrality knowledge gain

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ABSTRACT
This study considers the effects of exposure to political satire versus traditional news on issue-specific learning and engagement. Using data from an experiment conducted in January 2016 (N = 296), we employ ANOVA analysis to test the differential effects of exposure to net neutrality coverage from John Oliver’s Last Week Tonight versus ABC News on knowledge gain, issue importance, and perceived issue difficulty. Pairwise comparisons suggest that political comedy is as good a source as news for knowledge gain, but that news exposure is more important for evaluations of issue importance. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings given the increasing size of the political satire audience and the viral reach of these comedy programs.

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KEYWORDS
Political comedy; knowledge gain; net neutrality; issue importance

Seemingly overnight, political satire programs like The Daily Show (TDS) and The Colbert Report (TCR) became the favorite source of news information for young citizens (Gottfried, Matsa, & Barthel, 2015). Concerned that these young viewers brand new to the political arena were going to become more cynical, ill-informed, and disengaged as a result of their satire-heavy diet (Hart & Hartelius, 2007; Prior, 2007), political communication researchers began to study the effects of exposure to political comedy content relative to traditional news on key democratic outcomes including knowledge gain and learning, political efficacy, and political participation (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Becker, 2011; Hoffman & Young, 2011). After more than a decade of careful study, research has shown that exposure to political satire results in modest gains in knowledge and learning and political engagement and efficacy, particularly for the politically inattentive (Baek & Wojcieszak, 2009; Xenos & Becker, 2009).

Specifically, prior research shows that political satire viewers tune into comedy in addition to traditional news content (Young & Tisinger, 2006), that comedy viewers are more likely than news viewers to pay close attention to and learn about political campaigns and candidates as a result of their political comedy exposure (Cao, 2008; Feldman & Young, 2008), and that political comedy exposure encourages viewers to seek out additional information from a variety of traditional news sources (Baum, 2003b; Xenos & Becker, 2009). Scholarship analyzing the content of political satire finds that programs...
like TDS are as information-rich as comparable evening news broadcasts and that the interview conversations on political satire programs are more deliberative, detailed, and well-received than the equivalent combative chats being privileged on cable news shows (Baym, 2010; Becker, 2013; Fox, Koloen, & Sahin, 2007; Hoffman, 2013; Vraga et al., 2012).

At this juncture, while we know from previous research that exposure to traditional political satire can result in modest gains in knowledge and learning, what is less clear is whether exposure to political comedy content relative to traditional news can result in knowledge gain when the context is a ‘hard’ political issue – the sort of issue often taken up by what we see as a class of new political satire programs, led at the moment by John Oliver, TDS alum and host of HBO’s Last Week Tonight (hereafter, LWT). Furthermore, research has yet to assess whether comedy exposure can subsequently increase evaluations of a political issue’s importance or the perceived difficulty of the issue relative to exposure to traditional news content. Finally, with limited exception, research has focused on the knowledge gain that results from exposure to traditional late-night network comedy programs (e.g., The Tonight Show with Jay Leno) and satire institutions like Jon Stewart’s TDS. We know very little about the effects of exposure to what we are calling new political satire – information-rich, longer format programs including LWT, Full Frontal with Samantha Bee, recently cancelled The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore, and HBO’s Real Time with Bill Maher.

In an effort to address these clear gaps in the research on political satire effects, we focus on the net neutrality issue and John Oliver’s 1 June 2014 LWT broadcast as a case study. Analyzing data from a controlled experiment conducted in January 2016 (N = 296), we empirically test the differential effect of exposure to new political satire versus traditional news on issue-specific knowledge gain, evaluations of issue importance, and perceived issue difficulty. We begin our discussion with a review of previous research on the relationship between political satire exposure and resulting gains in knowledge and learning, salience, and perceived issue difficulty before turning toward a discussion of the new political satire of LWT and the case of net neutrality.

**Political comedy’s effects on knowledge, salience, and perceived issue difficulty**

Prior research has shown that being exposed to political comedy content results in modest knowledge and learning gains – comedy exposure encourages greater recognition rather than recall of basic political facts, online rather than memory-based learning, and higher knowledge scores on easier political items among inattentive citizens (Baek & Wojcieszak, 2009; Becker, 2013; Hollander, 2005; Kim & Vishak, 2008). At the same time, more recent work looking at the issue of campaign finance reform found that political satire was more effective at promoting issue-specific knowledge gain and enhancing viewers’ perceptions of their own knowledgeability on the issue than exposure to traditional news content (Hardy, Gottfried, Winneg, & Jamieson, 2014). Specifically, Hardy et al. (2014) found that survey respondents who had seen TCR were more knowledgeable about campaign finance regulations and the restrictions placed on super PACs and other 501c(4) groups than those who had consumed other types of news media including broadcast and cable news, talk radio, and the print newspaper. Similarly, the results of an experimental study conducted by LaMarre (2013) showed that viewers who had seen Colbert talk about
super PACs while in character on TCR were more knowledgeable about campaign finance reform than those who had seen Colbert appear as a guest on Morning Joe, the cable news program. Thus, at least with respect to the issue of campaign finance reform, comedy serves as a better tool for learning and knowledge gain than traditional news content.

In a related vein, research exploring the connections between political comedy exposure and resulting attitudes towards politicians has consistently shown that exposure to comedy content not only influences attitudes toward the comic target, often irrespective of partisan ties, but also makes key attributes more salient or central to viewers’ evaluations (Baumgartner, Morris, & Walth, 2012; Becker, 2012; Cacciatore et al., 2014; Young, 2006). It is no secret that political comedy tends to emphasize personal flaws and foibles, encouraging viewers to think less of political candidates as individuals (Baumgartner, Morris, & Coleman, 2015; Niven, Lichter, & Amundson, 2003). Research has consistently shown that exposure to comedy portrayals negatively impacts overall favorability towards a candidate as well as perceptions of their competence and credibility (Becker, 2012; Becker & Haller, 2014; Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2006). In essence, the personal flaws and missteps emphasized in comedy content become more central to viewers’ evaluations of these politicians via the mechanism of accessibility priming (Moy et al., 2006).

Looking specifically at the 2008 election, Baumgartner et al. (2012) offer evidence of a ‘Fey Effect.’ Their longitudinal analysis of survey data showed that watching Tina Fey’s caricature of Sarah Palin on Saturday Night Live (SNL) made voters think more negatively of Palin, question John McCain’s candidacy, and ultimately weakened their likelihood of voting for the Republican ticket on Election Day. Similarly, work by Esralew and Young (2012) found that those who viewed either Katie Couric’s real interview with Sarah Palin or Fey’s impersonation of the conversation on SNL were more likely to see the traits emphasized in the content (intelligence, competence, and experience) as salient to their own open-ended descriptions of Palin. Those who watched the Fey version of the interview were also more likely to describe Sarah Palin as rural. While Esralew and Young’s (2012) research ultimately points more toward a ‘Palin Effect,’ rather than a ‘Fey Effect,’ their results do suggest that comedy has the ability to make certain candidate traits more salient and central to viewer’s cognitive processing and resulting evaluations. Related analysis of survey data by Cacciatore et al. (2014) found that voters consistently and incorrectly attributed the statement, ‘I can see Russia from my house,’ to Sarah Palin even though the line was only a part of Fey’s SNL impersonation. Finally, recent work by Baumgartner (2013) has shown that comedy targeting candidates can have a spillover effect, encouraging viewers to become more critical toward related targets like government institutions. In essence, the hostile tone presented by candidate-centric comedy makes unfavorable views toward government more salient. This salience effect can be particularly pronounced for those who are less politically knowledgeable yet consume higher levels of political comedy (Young, 2006).

Political comedy also has the ability to make politics seem more accessible and easy to understand for the politically inattentive who may lack the ability or motivation to closely inspect comedic claims (LaMarre & Walther, 2013). More specifically, previous research has suggested that political comedy content is processed peripherally with viewers focusing on getting the joke rather than scrutinizing the quality of the argument (Young, 2008). Particularly, if they find the comic source credible, viewers simply discount the messages present in political comedy and focus on their enjoyment of the material (Nabi, Moyer-
Guse, & Byrne, 2007). While viewers certainly have varying uses for political comedy content, the primary motivation for tuning in is to be entertained; satire makes politics more fun and inherently less difficult to engage with (Feldman, 2013; Young, 2013). This is particularly true for those who have a higher compatibility with or greater need or affinity for political humor (Becker, 2014; Edgerly, Gotlieb, & Vraga, 2016; Hmielowski, Holbert, & Lee, 2011; Matthes, 2013).

In fact, early research on the impact of exposure to soft news and infotainment programming, of which political satire is a key component, found that politically inattentive citizens, in particular, experienced increases in knowledge of foreign policy concerns as a result of bumping into related stories via entertainment programming (Baum, 2002, 2003a, 2003b). While these increases in knowledge and learning were modest at best, this somewhat accidental exposure to foreign policy stories via soft news outlets made these complicated issues easier for politically inattentive viewers to understand and engage with (Prior, 2003). By focusing on entertaining viewers first and conveying information second, soft news in general, and political satire programming more narrowly makes hard political issues seem less complicated to learn about (Baum & Jamison, 2011).

**LWT and case of net neutrality**

While **LWT** takes inspiration from **TDS** and **TCR**, it is in many respects a very different political satire program. Airing once a week on HBO for 30 minutes, as opposed to four nights a week for 22 minutes interrupted by commercials, **LWT** segments are longer and richer in information than prior political satire offerings (Suebaseng, 2014). While Oliver, like Stewart and Colbert before him, asserts that he is a comedian first and foremost, the writers’ room at **LWT** is staffed with former journalists from the *New York Times Magazine* and *ProPublica* as well as comedy writers (Helmore, 2014). Oliver’s stories take on the feel of in-depth investigative journalism and often serve as exposes of particular industries or practices (Bauder, 2014). Many of Oliver’s clips even end with a call-to-action, encouraging viewers to boycott a product or company, engage in social media activism by using the same hashtag, or in the case of net neutrality, comment online via the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) web site (Ross, 2014). While Oliver has fewer interview segments than his predecessors (Becker & Goldberg, 2017), his conversations with public figures tend to run longer and focus on a range of more technical policy topics rather than the trivial; his April 2015 interview with Edward Snowden represents just one archetypal example (Wickman, 2015).

As a political issue, net neutrality is somewhat technical and complicated for the average citizen to understand. It is an issue that for the most part Internet consumers have paid very little attention to, despite relying on service providers to regulate the speed and delivery of a wide range of Internet content. At its core, the debate over net neutrality is about the regulation of Internet speeds and whether large corporations like Verizon and streaming services like Netflix or Hulu should be entitled to a ‘fast-lane’ for Internet traffic, utilizing more bandwidth than small startups or independent web sites (Lee, 2015). Net neutrality advocates call for a level playing field, with the same Internet speeds provided for all on the web, regardless of company size or traffic (Wu, 2003). Charged with regulating the Internet and other forms of telecommunications, the FCC had been carefully reviewing net neutrality during the spring of 2014 (eventually they adopted an Open
Internet policy, on 26 February 2015, which will ‘protect and maintain open, uninhibited access to legal online content’) (Federal Communications Commission, 2015).

Recognizing that the FCC was set to decide on a far-reaching Internet regulation policy, John Oliver chose to focus on net neutrality in the effort to both educate and incite viewers to act during his 1 June 2014 broadcast. During a segment that stretched over 13 minutes, Oliver explained the concept of net neutrality, the implications for large corporations, startups, and the consumer, and the sluggish pace of U.S. Internet speeds relative to other countries in the world in an entertaining, engaging, and humorous way (Oliver, 2014). Full of off-color jokes, popular culture references, and zinger punch lines, Oliver’s segment ended with a call-to-action, encouraging viewers and Internet trolls alike to comment on the net neutrality proposal on the FCC web site. Flashing the http://fcc.gov/comments web address on the screen for about 45 seconds, Oliver implored concerned citizens to state their support for net neutrality before the close of the latest FCC comment period. Oliver’s call to action was so successful that the FCC website was flooded with over 45,000 comments the next day (Hu, 2014). The spike in traffic not only shutdown and effectively crashed the FCC website, but also led to a spate of related media coverage of the successful call to action (Brody, 2015; McDonald, 2014).

Expected outcomes: hypotheses and a research question

Beyond this, what lessons can we take from John Oliver’s advocacy on behalf of the net neutrality issue? Could viewing this humorous take on the net neutrality debate – a complicated, technical, and relatively unfamiliar political issue – encourage citizens to learn more and engage with this hard issue debate? Given the wealth of information present in LWT stories and their inherent investigative nature, and considerable evidence from previous research showing knowledge gains from political comedy given its unique format (Baek & Wojcieszak, 2009; Becker, 2013; Hollander, 2005; Kim & Vishak, 2008), we expect that exposure to LWT should result in greater net neutrality knowledge gain than exposure to a control. More formally, we hypothesize:

\( H1: \) Last Week Tonight viewers will be more likely to show knowledge gains on the net neutrality issue than those exposed to a control.

Given recent work suggesting that comedy is a better source for knowledge and learning than news on the issue of campaign finance reform (Hardy et al., 2014; LaMarre, 2013), we also suspect that exposure to comedy could be a better predictor of net neutrality knowledge gain than exposure to news. However, given that this previous research is tied specifically to the campaign reform context and the lack of related findings on the differential effects of exposure to satire versus news for other complicated, hard political issues, we feel it is premature to hypothesize about the relative influence of satire versus news exposure on net neutrality knowledge gain. As such, we pose a research question:

\( RQ1: \) Are Last Week Tonight viewers more likely to show knowledge gains on the net neutrality issue relative to those exposed to traditional news content?

Net neutrality, by its very nature, is a complicated political and technical issue, one that many consumers have historically paid very little attention to as discussed briefly above. This likely makes it a more malleable issue. Given prior research showing that political
comedy makes candidate traits more salient (Baumgartner et al., 2012; Becker, 2012; Cacciatore et al., 2014; Young, 2006), and the rationale that making something more salient likely increases perceptions of importance as well, we expect that watching John Oliver take on the net neutrality debate will make the issue seem more important to comedy viewers, compared to those that view either news or to a control. A second hypothesis offers an empirical test of this assumption.

**H2:** Viewers exposed to *Last Week Tonight* will be more likely to rate the issue of net neutrality as important relative to those exposed to traditional news or to a control.

Lastly, as we know from prior research, viewing political comedy makes issues easier to digest (Edgerly et al., 2016), which should be of particular relevance given the difficulty of the net neutrality issue. Thus, we expect that viewing John Oliver address net neutrality in a funny, engaging, and satirical way should ease viewers’ apprehension toward the issue, ultimately encouraging them to perceive the technical policy proposal as less difficult to solve. Our final hypothesis directly addresses this proposed relationship:

**H3:** *Last Week Tonight* viewers will be more likely to rate the issue of net neutrality as less difficult to solve, relative to those exposed to news or to a control.

**Methods**

**Experimental design**

A three condition experiment was created using Qualtrics. Subjects (*N* = 296) were recruited via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk Human Intelligence Tasks (HITs) platform (mTurk) and offered $0.75 for completing the 20-minute study. In line with established best practices (Peer, Vosgerau, & Acquisti, 2014), mTurk respondents had at least a 95% approval rating and had completed more than 500 HITs. All data were collected on 21 January 2016. The survey included five attention check measures; those with one or more incorrect responses (*n* = 7) were removed from the dataset.

After a short pre-test questionnaire measuring political interest and media consumption patterns, subjects were randomly assigned to watch one of three video clips. Subjects in the first condition (*n* = 99) viewed a 4-minute clip from the 1 June 2014 broadcast of *LWT* focusing on the net neutrality debate. In the clip, John Oliver used satirical humor to mock U.S. Internet speeds, explain the governing power of the FCC, and the competing interests of consumers versus service providers like Verizon and streaming services like Netflix. Subjects in the second condition (*n* = 99) viewed a 4-minute news clip from a 18 May 2014 *ABC News* broadcast that discussed the net neutrality issue and also focused on the FCC, Internet speeds, and the competing interests of consumers and content providers. Despite the differing tone and comic versus serious orientation of the clips, both the nature and amount of factual content were comparable across the two stimuli, making them a highly useful and valid set for comparison (the video clips are available for review online here: [http://www.blindreview.net/7262016t/](http://www.blindreview.net/7262016t/)). Finally, subjects in the control cell (*n* = 98) viewed a 4-minute video mashup of movie dance scenes accompanied by the Mark Ronson song, ‘Uptown Funk’ (this video is available via YouTube at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmnSm_d2lI4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmnSm_d2lI4)).
All of the videos were captured via YouTube and edited to remove any comments, the scroll bar, ads, and suggestions for related videos. A validation mechanism ensured that subjects could not scroll forward through sections of the video and had to remain on the video screen for at least 240 seconds before advancing the survey. Recall items and manipulation checks followed immediately after the videos. A post-test questionnaire tapped key items like net neutrality knowledge, issue importance, perceived difficulty, efficacy, and demographics.

The Amazon mTurk sample (N = 289) was evenly divided in terms of gender (48.9% female). The average age was 37.77 years (SD = 11.08, range = 20–77 years). More than a third (36.4%) had completed a bachelor’s degree; 22.1% had at least some college experience. 47.8% of the sample were Democrats, 15.5% Republicans, and 31.6% Independents. Finally, the sample was 80.4% Caucasian, 7.1% African-American, 5.9% Asian, and 4.1% Hispanic.

**Key measures**

Given effective randomization, we did not control for demographic or political variables in the analysis. Key measures described below (asked in the post-test) serve as our outcome variables of interest.

Net neutrality knowledge (M = 3.74, SD = 1.14) was based on the number of correct responses to five multiple-choice questions that asked viewers to recall basic facts from the videos about net neutrality. The full text of the questions and answer choices is included in the Appendix.

Net neutrality importance (M = 4.37, SD = .90; 1 = ‘not at all important’ to 5 = ‘very important’) was based on the response to the question, ‘How important do you think the issue of net neutrality is?’

Perceived difficulty (M = 3.09, SD = 1.23; 1 = ‘very difficult’ to 5 = ‘very simple’) was based on the response to the question, ‘How difficult do you think it is to solve the issue of net neutrality?’

**Analysis and results**

To test our three hypotheses and explore our research question, we estimated a series of ANOVA models to determine whether there were significant differences in net neutrality knowledge gain, issue importance, or perceived issue difficulty across the three conditions. The results of the ANOVA analyses are presented in Table 1 and pairwise comparisons between sets of conditions are displayed in Table 2.

As the data show, subjects exposed to either LWT or the news clip were more likely to experience net neutrality knowledge gains than those in the control. Our research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Analysis of variance for knowledge, importance, and difficulty.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>η</th>
<th>ρ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.51</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Each row represents a separate ANOVA model, with condition (control, John Oliver, news) as the variable of interest.
therefore supports \( H1 \) and the results presented in Figure 1 suggest that when it comes to net neutrality knowledge gain, John Oliver’s comedy is on par with traditional news content as a resource for learning. Therefore, with respect to \( RQ1 \), we find that at least with the net neutrality case, comedy viewers are not significantly more likely than news viewers to experience knowledge gains. Subjects who were exposed to news were more likely to find the net neutrality issue of increased importance relative to those viewing \( LWT \). The results therefore fail to support \( H2 \). Given the lack of a significant difference in perceived issue difficulty across the conditions, the data fail to support \( H3 \), yet the pairwise comparisons suggest that both news and \( LWT \) viewers were similar in their assessments of the perceived difficulty of the net neutrality issue, especially relative to those exposed to the control.

Consistent with prior research on political comedy effects, post hoc analyses explored whether the differential impact of exposure to the satire versus straight news conditions on net neutrality knowledge gain, issue importance, or perceived issue difficulty was moderated by key antecedent variables like varying levels of political interest. The results of these analyses were not significant, suggesting that the differential impact of being exposed to satire versus straight news was direct in nature.

### Table 2: Pairwise comparisons between \( LWT \) clip, news clip, and control.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>News</th>
<th>( LWT )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge(^a,c^)</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance(^b^)</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Means reported.

\(^a^\)Indicates significant difference between control and \( LWT \).

\(^b^\)Indicates significant difference between \( LWT \) and news.

\(^c^\)Indicates significant difference between control and news. Significant \( p < .05 \).

**Figure 1.** Mean levels of behavior intentions by condition.
Discussion and conclusion

The key finding is that when it comes to issue-specific knowledge gain, John Oliver’s brand of new political satire is as least as good as news for learning about complicated issue debates like net neutrality. For this particular case, comedy is not superior to news in terms of promoting increased knowledge gain or learning. In addition, comedy does not encourage viewers to see the issue debate as more important. Instead, being exposed to straight news amplifies perceptions of net neutrality issue importance. Finally, both news and comedy viewers were comparable in terms of their perceived difficulty of the issue, especially in contrast with those who were exposed to a control. Taken together, the findings of our controlled experiment suggest that like TDS and TCR before it, LWT may be making a modest contribution to citizen learning and knowledge gain. At the very least, it is doing as much as news to inform citizens on the net neutrality debate.

As we know from media reports and as discussed briefly above, John Oliver’s net neutrality coverage did encourage citizens to comment on the FCC web site (Freelon et al., 2016). The day after the June 1st broadcast, the FCC site logged 45,000 new comments in direct response to Oliver’s segment – so much new web traffic that the site crashed in response to the heightened activity (Aamoth, 2014). To date, the extended 13-minute net neutrality LWT segment has received more than 11.8 million views on YouTube; the same cannot be said for comparable traditional news coverage of the net neutrality issue. In sum, being comparable to traditional news content in terms of knowledge gain may actually be even more significant given the size of the LWT audience and the viral spread of key pieces of content.

While the mTurk convenience sample makes the study’s findings limited, recent work has shown that these samples are comparable with others, especially given a focus on experimental research (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; Clifford & Jerit, 2014; Levay, Freese, & Druckman, 2016; Necka, Cacioppo, Norman, & Cacioppo, 2016). Moreover, the mTurk sample is certainly more diverse and representative than an undergraduate student sample which is so often privileged in political comedy effects research. Given that mTurk workers are more attentive than other subjects (Hauser & Schwarz, 2016), it is possible that the differences between comedy and news exposure are attenuated in this sample. Had we relied on a more inattentive, less politically interested sample, we might well have seen larger differences in the effects of comedy versus news exposure on knowledge gain and other key outcome variables. Moreover, given that mTurk workers tend to be more comfortable and engaged with technology, it is possible that some of the mTurk subjects knew more about net neutrality from the outset than the average media consumer. It is conceivable that we might be seeing smaller gains in net neutrality knowledge as a result of comedy exposure among this convenience sample than we would have seen had we been able to survey a more diverse subject pool.

Before concluding, it is also important to point out that while our comedy and news stimuli were comparable in terms of length, content, and the amount and variety of factual information on the net neutrality issue, they do represent just two examples of net neutrality media coverage. While we think that our results complement existing work on political comedy effects and the differential impact of exposure to satire versus straight news more broadly, we recognize that by relying on just these two stimuli, our experiment presents the results of a single case study.
Despite these limitations, the implications of our research are important given the growing audience for \textit{LWT} and other \textit{new political satire} offerings relative to traditional news programs. This is particularly relevant for young Millennials who are new to the political arena and increasingly learning about candidates and issues from entertaining, satirical news sources rather than from traditional network and cable news programming (Edgerly et al., forthcoming). If \textit{LWT} and programs like it are as least as good a source as news in terms of knowledge gain and learning, we can put stock in the reality that greater understanding and awareness of complicated issues like net neutrality will prevail.

\textbf{Disclosure statement}

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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\textbf{References}


Appendix

Q. What is net neutrality?
○ All data on the Internet has to be treated equally (1)****
○ Content online has to reflect a neutral political point-of-view (2)
○ Any information online has to be offered offline as well (3)
○ Neutral content gets preference online (4)

Q. Which of the following is a result of net neutrality?
○ Some content is slowed down (1)
○ Innovation is possible and startups are able to compete (2)****
○ Cable companies form a monopoly (3)
○ Politics can be censored (4)

Q. Who is in charge of regulating net neutrality?
○ The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) (1)*****
○ Cable companies (2)
○ Congress (3)
○ Local utility companies (4)

Q. According to the video, what is a two-tier system?
○ Content on a home page loads faster than content on other pages (1)
○ People can stream two different types of content at once (2)
○ Individuals access the Internet through a content distributor (3)
○ Some Internet content can be ‘fast-laned’ at an additional cost (5)*****

Q. How fast is internet speed in the United States compared to other countries?
○ Fastest in the world (1)
○ Slowest in the world (2)
○ Slower than most countries (3)*****
○ Faster than most countries (4)