Selectivity of Television Media: The Effects of Quasi-Social Networks on Voter Participation

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Abstract

Television has changed the way average citizens receive information. It has made expressing opinions to a mass amount of people very quickly a possibility. The effects of television preference on voting are somewhat unknown, although some research into the topic has been performed (see Baum, 2005; Prior, 2005). Conventional wisdom suggests that most forms of television depress political participation. However, as the forms of media change and the types of shows change to function more as a social network than simply entertainment, then perhaps television has the capacity to persuade people and to make them more likely to participate. This can potentially change the way in which election seasons function and political parties spend their funds. The only way to get at this is to have detailed information about which kinds of shows people watch, which is afforded to us by the 2012 *American National Election Study*. I choose to run a multivariate logistic regression to test my theory. My findings were largely inconclusive and unable to contribute significantly to existing research. Neither of my hypotheses about airtime or type of shows were proven in my study. I still I choose to analyze finite regressions in order to guide future research into this subject and found a relationship between the amount of hard news watched and the size of one's social network. This relationship was insignificant when controlling for other factors, but could be useful to future research as a guide. As stated, my results were inconclusive, but another survey could change this finding. Further research into how television use influences and an individual's social network in relation to voting should be performed.

Introduction

Two essential components to the democratic process are universal suffrage and the right of every citizen to vote. Although these components are part of every democratic citizen's life, frequently a large percentage of the population does not exercise these rights. This has caused much debate in the political community. Why is it that in advanced democratic countries, like the United States, not everyone expresses their universal rights? Even when electoral turnout is highest, during presidential elections, only 60 percent of people come out to vote, as is clear

from past elections (Finkel, 1985; McDonald, 2013). So, the question is: *what causes a person to cast a vote on Election Day?*

Many factors affect voting, such as political efficacy, the sense of civic duty an individual has, and consumption of information (Pinkleton, Austin, & Fortman, 1998; Arrow, 1969; Barzel & Silberberg, 1973; Silberman & Durden, 1975). The mass media movement of the 21st century has guided individual decision making in ways that were never thought possible as it can guide behavior and influence citizens. The importance of the media[1] in everyday life, specifically that of television, in relation to an individual's voting has been a well-researched question; however, there is room for further investigation into this area. The increasing reliance on television for the average voter makes it an interesting concept to explore. *Is it possible that certain types of television shows can be more effective at driving political mobilization than others?*

The Importance of Television

"Traditional television consumption" can be defined as "consumption through a television set, either live or via a digital recorder or video-on-demand-service" and does not account for viewing through Netflix, Hulu, or other streaming services (Stelter, 2012). This is a poor definition of television considering that in November of 2013 these video streaming sites made up over 50 percent of downstream internet usage around primetime hours – between 8 and 11 P.M. (Spangler, 2013; The Deadline Team, 2014; The Nielsen Company, B, 2011). While being considered "internet usage" according to *The Nielsen Company*, the people watching those shows are exposed to the same specific cues as traditional watchers based on preference of the type of show (A, 2011; see Behr & Iyengar, 1985). The large gaps in the definition of television

[1] Media is used to refer to all different technological sources of information in the plural, such as television, news, internet, phones, etc.
Medium is a specific type of media, i.e. television alone.

can have dire effects on studies into the subject, including leaving out valuable information about subjects of the study that do not consume traditional television. My study does not identify how television is consumed; nevertheless it takes into account shows that are available through multiple different types of media, i.e. Netflix or cable.

As different forms of technology have grown to be a normal aspect of life over time, television being used as an information source has gradually increased. As of 2012, 97.1 percent of American households owned at least one television, nearly 90 percentage points higher than in 1950 (Television Bureau of Advertising, Inc. , 2012, p. 2). In addition, average television viewing has increased from around 4 hours per day to over 8 hours per day in the same time span (Television Bureau of Advertising, Inc. , 2012, p. 6; The Nielsen Company, A, 2011). The universality of television in modern times has sparked interest into how it changes human functions and behaviors. In other words, for our understanding about the increasing importance of television additional research should be conducted; more research is necessary to understand this link.

Television media has disenfranchised the average voter; its effect on voting is important to our understanding of the democratic and human processes. Exploring the untold story of how television can increase voter participation could prove valuable to the political science community. In order to mobilize more citizens to participate in their government we must understand the negative and positive consequences of television use. Many different connections can occur through the television depending on what show is being watched. If television hosts and personalities can act as quasi-social networks, it would mean that said networks can relay positive, important messages to viewers and potentially increase or decrease voter participation; this would have large implications for the political community. Learning about the interaction of

television and social networks can teach us both about how to enhance a citizen's democratic experience as well as the flaws in representation and campaigning.

Roadmap or Table of Contents

This paper will begin with a review of the existing research on voter participation and turnout. Many factors potentially cause voting; I will attempt to cover all of these factors, but I am particularly interested in television's effects on voting in reference to social interactions and the consumption of news. Following this will be the outline of my research question and theory about the effects of television on voter participation, including my hypotheses. I then describe my research methods while analyzing the ANES. Finally, I end with the implications of my study and the potential for further research in the field.

Previous Research

Copious amounts of research exist about the nature of voter participation that will be discussed in detail below (see Bakker & Vreese, 2011; Ashworth & Clinton, 2006; Baum, 2003; Bond, et al., 2012; Chen, 2013; Gentzkow, 2006). First, I will explain potential implications that this study could add to the previous research, extending our understanding of the effects of television use on voter participation. Then, I discuss the notable scholars and their findings in detail, as well as many other potential factors that have been cited. I end this section in an attempt to draw my reader toward my research question.

Potential Implications of This Research

If there is a notable and significant connection between television personalities and voter participation, there would be dire implications to the campaigning and election seasons. Instead of investing billions of dollars into television ads and campaigns, political parties can invest in

on-air personalities (Wesleyan Media Project, 2014; FEC, 2014). This would mean that laws would need to be made to cap spending for political parties on teleivision networks as well as regulatuions of what hosts and characters are allowed to promote. Television personalities acting as quasi-social networks for people can change the way in which elections function institutionally. If those on the teleivsion can sway the opinion of a viewer, they can increase cynicism or optimism of political institutions and in turn effect voter participation, then this effect is worth exploring further (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Baum & Jamison, 2006).

Television Use

When it comes to the research on television use and voter participation some scholars cite the insignificance of the relationship (Simon & Stern, 1955), some the negative effects (Prior, 2005; Gentzkow, 2006; Morgan & Shanahan, 1992), and others claim there exists a positive relationship (Bakker & Vreese, 2011). Although most of the research suggests a negative connection between voting and television, the results are not this clear-cut and there is room to further investigate televisions impact on voter participation.

Insignificance of Television

Simon and Stern found that high-density television areas were no more or less likely to vote than low-density television areas (1955, p. 471). There were significant differences in the areas that they studied, but the differences were skewed and not in the same directions. Due to this they conclude there is a "minor net effect" of television on voter turnout; however, it is not statistically significant (Simon & Stern, 1955, p. 471, 475). They did assume that "the postulated mechanism would operate only if the campaign were not already 'saturated' by the other mass media" (Simon & Stern, 1955, p. 477). Essentially, the presence of television is more likely to be effective when other forms of media, such as newspaper, aren't being utilized or are less

abundant. As this experiment was conducted in 1955, it is likely that the effects of television are more pronounced now. Considering Genzkow's argument that "crowding out of information" is caused by television consumption – meaning that as television became a more saturated form of media, other forms of media began to be used less – the effects of television on voting deserves more attention now (2006, p. 934).

Negative Effects of Television

The negative effects of television have been cited countless times, but once again it is not as clear-cut and the consequences of these effects have long been debated. For example, Genzkow noted the negative relationship between television and voting based on its introduction into the market (2006, p. 933, 970). The "crowding out of information" which television caused made information consumed by individuals far less political than it previously was (Gentzkow, 2006, p. 934). "Faced with both a reduction in a price of information and a much larger drop in the price of entertainment, consumers responded by substituting away from the former and toward the latter" (Gentzkow, 2006, p. 970). These conclusions call for a further investigation into how entertainment-based television impacts voters compared to news-based television. It is possible that certain entertainment shows are more likely than others to increase turnout.

Morgan and Shanahan investigated the frequency of television use and found that "heavy [television] viewers are less likely to vote" when compared to "light viewers" (1992, p. 9). However, when controlling for socioeconomic factors, television has little to no impact on whether or not people vote (Morgan & Shanahan, 1992, p. 11-12). They also noted that "millions of people who seek no political information from television nonetheless get it, in the form of both news and entertainment" (Morgan & Shanahan, 1992, p. 4). In this sense, certain groups of people are affected differently than others because television acts as a medium for information

and this effects voting (Morgan & Shanahan, 1992, p. 13-14, 18). For example, women or those who belong to unions could be affected in ways that men or Latinos are not. It is probable that people who watch certain types of television shows are more or less likely to vote than others, thereby requiring additional research. For example, individuals who are more likely to watch daytime talk shows could be more likely to vote.

McLeod and McDonald found that simple exposure to television does not tell the story behind the medias impact on individual decision making (1985, p. 25-26). Marking television users crudely with measures like "heavy" or "light" viewing does not give us enough information about the overall effect of television. This study also found television to be negatively related to political participation (McLeod & McDonald, 1985, p. 26). There is room for further research in terms of exposure. Multiple different measures for television exposure should be taken into account when considering the effects television has on individual participation. McLeod and McDonald also suggest that the "behavior that accompanies" television viewing could be of more interest than simple exposure (McLeod & McDonald, 1985, p. 27).

Positive Effects of Television

Bakker and Vreese cited the positive relationship between television use and political participation (Bakker & Vreese, 2011, p. 10). It is important to note that television only positively predicts voting patterns for "passive forms of participation;" television is more significant in presidential elections (Bakker & Vreese, 2011, p. 10). Likewise, commercial viewing was insignificant in relation to voting behavior (Bakker & Vreese, 2011, p. 10). Television can increase engagement among users and positively predict participation (Bakker & Vreese, 2011, p. 15). However, internet usage is thought to be a better predictor of voting patterns according to Bakker and Vreese (2011, p. 13-15). This article challenges the negative

picture that is painted about the media and its contributions to politically engage citizens due to the opposite effects that Bakker and Vreese found.

Reliance of Television for Viewers

McLeod, McDonald and Glynn found that those who are more reliant on television tended to remember personal qualities of candidates more than newspaper-reliant respondents (1983, p. 54). They also found that television-reliant users were "less accurate in their judgments of candidates' issue stances" (McLeod, McDonald, & Glynn, 1983, p. 55). In all, their work on how images on the television affect voting patterns can give a greater understanding of the media and voting. If television viewers rely more heavily on images, there could be something to be said about the different personalities that appear on shows. There is room to explore different consequences of images and personalities on television and how they impact the average voters' decision making process.

Reliance on Type of Television Shows

Scholars have researched how preference of television shows can affect political participation and attitudes. For a decade, Markus Prior and Matthew Baum have been engaged in a debate about the consequences of soft news and entertainment media on individual voting behavior. Soft news is less politically saturated, generally not critical and lacks a time constraint (Scherr, Legnante, Reinemann, & Stanyer, 2011, p. 225). The following is a discussion of what they have found and how it can influence my thesis.

Soft News Shows

Baum found that soft news outlets "convey substantive information concerning select high-profile political issues" (2002, p. 91). He also notes that although soft news outlets cover a variety of issues including foreign affairs, they are not doing so in the same manner that

traditional news outlets are (Baum, 2002, p. 94). Soft news is generally entertainment-seeking; nevertheless, a byproduct of watching these shows is gaining political information that one would not have gained otherwise (Baum, 2002, p. 94, 98). Baum found that although political knowledge is not associated with soft news, it is positively related to "attentiveness to each [foreign] crisis," thereby implying those who watch soft news are still somewhat politically engaged (Baum, 2002, p. 99). Although Baum has done an extensive amount of research on soft news, he seems to have categorized many different outlets into this group. By classifying talk shows, entertainment-based shows and other outlets in to different categories, this study could find that some forms of soft news are more or less relevant to political participation than others.

Contrary to Baum's study, Prior found that soft news did a poor job of informing its viewers of actual political issues (2003, p. 163-164). Those who are more likely to watch talk shows, generally soft news programs, are more likely to know about political scandals, but not basic political knowledge (Prior, 2003, p. 162-163). His study agreed with Baum's idea that soft news can attract audiences that would otherwise not be attracted to the news, but rivaled Baum's study in that it was unable to show evidence that soft news informed viewers about politically-relevant information (Baum, 2002). Prior concludes that "the real significance of the new media environment (…) may not lie in the opportunities for news hybrids, such as soft news, but in media that give users the greatest control over timing, pace, and content of their news" (2003, p. 164). As the number of television channels available on average in American households increased from 129 channels in 2008 to 189 channels in 2013, it is apparent that users now have more control over their viewership (The Nielsen Company, 2014). Depending on the type of show, entertainment- or news-based, which individuals choose to consume the consequences

could differ, i.e. selection could increase voter participation. I would hypothesize that news-based shows to be better at predicting voter behavior than none news based shows.

To contradict Prior's study, Baum wrote a response arguing that soft news is in fact "good news" (2003, p. 173). He argues that Prior was too hasty in declaring that soft news was unable to contribute to learning (Baum, 2003, p. 187). It is possible that soft news contributes to some forms learning, but not always to "one's long-term store of factual knowledge" (Baum, 2003, p. 187). Soft news can affect ones short-term decision making process, but not contribute to an individual's intelligence the same way that hard news may be able to (Baum, 2003, p. 187). Although the effects of soft news may be limited, for those less politically attentive, soft news may be more impactful (Baum, 2003, p. 187). Certain audiences are more affected by soft news stories than others making it an important aspect for political scientists to study.

Entertainment-based Shows

Baum also found that unengaged voters who watch entertainment television are less likely to vote for the incumbent (2005, p. 213). He comments on the importance of entertainment personalities on television and how many Americans consider the hosts of the shows they watch close friends (Baum, 2005, p. 213). The importance of personal characteristics plays a large role in the decision of which shows people will watch; in turn, these shows help to drive personal decision making (Baum, 2005, p. 215, 231). There is an implication in this case that television personalities can act as part of a viewer's social network. Baum points out that scholars have spent much of their time investigating the effects of the media as a whole on people, instead of researching the specific forms of media that are being consumed (Baum, 2005, p. 231). There could be underlying psychological consequences to the different types of shows that are being

viewed, such as a child having nightmares because of watching a crime show, which can affect television preference.

Specific to voter patterns, Prior found that people who watch more entertainment-based television are less likely to vote than those who watch more news-based television (2005, p. 585-586). He is not citing the negative effects of television in general, but the specific effects of television preference on voters. There is more research to be conducted to see to what extent preference effects voting. It is possible that some entertainment shows are more likely to drive turnout than others – it would be beneficial to political scientists to understand these differences, especially if there is the potential that hosts and characters can act as part of the viewer's social network. Prior mentions that active viewing of television is different than consumption of television; watching a show while eating dinner, for example, would be less active consumption than intentionally viewing *Once Upon a Time* every Sunday evening (2005, p. 578-579). However, even if people are not attentively watching a show, "unmotivated exposure can produce learning" (Prior, 2005, p. 579). This implies that even those watching entertainment-based shows can gain valuable political information.

Hard News Shows

Hard news is a topic that should also be covered briefly. Baum found it is strongly and positively associated with political knowledge (2002, p. 99). Another study asserted "hard news is better suited for enhancing the probability of voting consistently," however it lacked the ability to mobilize those who were generally disenfranchised by news (Baum & Jamison, 2006, p. 948). The difficulty in understanding hard news for the average American makes it more difficult to drive real political participation. To atest Baum and Jamison's finding, Iyengar, Norpoth, and Hahm found that hard news was a stronger driver of all forms of participation when compared to

"horserace news," which lacks substantive information about elections (Iyengar, Norpoth, & Hahn, 2004, p. 158-159, 174). This finding suggests that news with more cohesive coverage appeals more greatly to voters. That being said, I would expect to see hard news being statisically significant and positively related to political participation.

As is apparent, the literature that exists on how different types of television shows, whether entertainment- or news-based, affect people's political behavior is mixed. If there is room to add to the relevant literature on voter participation, it would be in the area of television show preference. I will test multiple diverse types of shows to see how these shows can differently effect a person's voting behavior. I would expect to see traditional and hard news sources driving participation more than soft news sources.

News Consumption

The news, whether print or televised, has been cited by scholars throughout the political world as having a profound effect on voter participation. I begin with a look into the different types of television news and their effect on voters. Then I discuss multiple forms of news outlets, not just television. This is to generalize how news affects individuals and I will be relating them to television specifically.

Local News

From Pew Research, Olmstead, et al. found that three out of four American adults watch a local news program (Olmstead, Jurkowitz, Mitchell, & Enda, 2013). While this may be true, they noted that cable news viewers are relatively more engaged than other news viewers (Olmstead, Jurkowitz, Mitchell, & Enda, 2013). On average, cable news viewers watch twice as much news as local television viewers do (Olmstead, Jurkowitz, Mitchell, & Enda, 2013). These findings pose a problem when considering that cable news viewers seem to be more likely to

participate politically, but there is a more limited audience. The implications of this study include the idea that those who are most likely to watch the news are also the most politically engaged (Olmstead, Jurkowitz, Mitchell, & Enda, 2013). Regardless, there is more research to be done to find how heavily these differences can impact the average voter.

International News

Jurkowitz, Mitchell and Guskin assessed the increases of major world events in 2011 and how this increased news viewership, but suggest that it seemed to be an anomaly (Jurkowitz, Mitchell, & Guskin, 2012). They cite an "almost 2% [sic]" decrease of evening news viewers in 2012 (Jurkowitz, Mitchell, & Guskin, 2012). However, they note the improvement in viewings for CBS and that over a 5 year period, general news audiences have remained the same (Jurkowitz, Mitchell, & Guskin, 2012). Morning news audiences seem to have decreased as well (Jurkowitz, Mitchell, & Guskin, 2012). There is room for more research into different types of shows and their decreases in audience exposure.

News Biases and Quality

DellaVigna and Kaplan found that Fox News broadcasts increased republicans' numbers in the polls even when controlling for other factors (2006, p. 1, 32). This effect is thought to be temporary; rational voters are said to be able to "filter out media bias" and make informed decisions (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2006, p. 30-32). Non-rational voters are thought to be more heavily and permanently affected by media biases (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2006, p. 32). Regardless, consumption of news is presumed to increase voter turnout (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2006, p. 32).

Baum and Jamison argue that news quality is determined by its ability to allow citizens to better understand a candidate's stance on specific issues (2006, p. 946). For politically inattentive

individuals, "soft news" was able to drive voter participation more significantly than "hard news" (Baum & Jamison, 2006, p. 946). This reinforces the theory that exposure is not as simple as it seems. It is likely that even citizens who are not generally politically engaged can gain political knowledge from less traditional news sources. A citizen's interaction with the news may be more important in predicting voter participation (Baum & Jamison, 2006, p. 957). In other words, the images portrayed to the audience can cause different reactions among different citizens. "The soft news media are well suited – indeed, expressly intended – to capture the attention of these relatively apolitical voters" (Baum & Jamison, 2006, p. 958). If one group of people is more likely than another to vote based on the television shows that they view, there is a causal relationship at play that should be investigated.

Newspaper

Bakker and Vreese found newspaper use to be positively related to political engagement and other forms of civic duty (2011, p. 4). Although print news is not applicable to my study, news consumption in any form, i.e. television, newspaper, or via the Internet, was positively associated with political participation (Bakker & Vreese, 2011, p. 10-11). It is important to note the potential reciprocal nature of this relationship, as stated. There is a possibility that those who pay attention to the news are more politically engaged to begin with, which will require specific controls for news consumption in my study.

McLeod and McDonald found print news to be more influential than television in terms of political participation (January 1985, pp. 25-26). Heavier attention to the news could predict higher participation and economic knowledge (McLeod & McDonald, 1985, p. 27). Further, they reference the reciprocal nature of this relationship; those who are "highly informed and active citizens" are more likely to participate in politics (McLeod & McDonald, 1985, p. 27).

As has been demonstrated, news consumption affects voter participation positively. Research should be conducted into the specific type of news that is being viewed and how it can differently affect citizens because of the fact that the world of news and information is constantly changing. I would expect to see those who watch more traditional forms of news to be the most likely to vote and those who watch little to no news at all to be least likely to vote.

Social Interaction and Television

Many scholars have cited the importance of social interactions in predicting voting behavior. For example, Hoffman and Leon found no relationship (Hoffman & Leon, 2011). However, there is a general consensus from most scholars, claiming that social interactions generally increase voter participation (see Bond, et al., 2012; Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008; La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998). There has been some work into the additive nature of social interaction. By the end of this section, there will be a well-established theory of the interaction between social networks and television that will be further discussed before my hypotheses.

Friends and Media

Hoffman and Leon investigated the effects of social networks on voter choice (2011). They found that knowledge of a friends vote had no effect on an individual's vote choice (Hoffman & Leon, 2011, p. 4). The basis of their experiment lay on the claim that "a person's neighbors or social network may play a substitute role for the media" (Hoffman & Leon, 2011, p. 5). Logically, this could also work the other way around. In a world entrenched by the media, it is likely that it can serve as a substitute for social networks. If this is the case, newscasters as well as characters of shows could relay politically influential messages to their viewers. Baum pointed out that hosts of talk shows can be considered friends by some Americans (Baum, 2005,

p. 213). This would imply that other television personalities could be as well. In other words, it could be possible that television can serve as a surrogate social network for some people.

In terms of positive associations between social interactions and voting, Bond et al. found that both "weak tie" and "strong tie" relationships among Facebook users can drive political mobilization (2012, p. 295-298). In this study, "strong tie" relationships meant individuals had multiple friends in common, whereas "weak tie" relationship had few if any connections on Facebook (Bond, et al., 2012, p. 295-296). They noted that the stronger the relationship, the higher the ability to drive voters (Bond, et al., 2012, p. 297). This study showed that messages from those around a person can affect one's political behavior, even if it is through the media and technology. It would be plausible to say that other media connections, such as that through a television to characters or hosts, may also be able to influence the behavior of people.

Social Pressures

Social interactions can also be seen as social pressures. Gerber, Green and Larimer asserted the notion that these pressures can increase turnout (Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008, p. 35). Their study found that there to be an 8.1 percent increase in voter participation from the control group to the group that received the most information about their neighbors' voting behavior (Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008, p. 35, 39). There is a possibility that social pressures can be exerted through the television as well as in normal life interactions. If this is the case, there would be reason to study the interaction of social networks and television use.

Morgan and Shanahan point out "the underlying social messages of television are independently, but interactively participating in voting behavior," leaving holes in the research for what the effects of these messages are (1992, p. 19). There is a potential link between social interactions and television that can change voter participation and should be investigated. Gerber,

Green and Larimer also demonstrate that there is no difference from those who have an "existing motivation to participate" and those who do not (2008, p. 40-41). There are implications that prior motivation to vote should not be heavily affected by social pressures.

Social Capital

In 1998, La Due Lake and Huckfeldt found that social capital relevant to political mobilization is "generated in personal networks" (p. 567). It is likely that someone with a more political network will be more politically mobile (La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998, p. 579). Political participation is higher when one's personal social network is larger (La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998, p. 579). This relates to surrogate social networks in television. By increasing an individual's social network size, i.e. including television hosts and characters as part of one's social network, political participation is, theoretically, likely to increase.

Personal Characteristics

As mentioned, Baum has identified the importance of personal characteristics in political participation (2005, p. 213, 215, 231). He cites that many people consider Oprah or Regis "trusted friends" who can provide them with valuable information (Baum, 2005, p. 213). If many Americans consider the hosts of the shows that they watch to be personal and trusted friends, these hosts would have a great deal of influence on important decisions in said individual's life. The images and attitudes portrayed by characters and television hosts may contribute to one's social network in this case, playing a significant role in a person's choice to vote or not.

From Pew Research Center, Jurkowitz, Mitchell, and Guskin note that *Good Morning America* has seen an increase in audience size when no other morning show has (Jurkowitz, Mitchell, & Guskin, 2012). Four of the five top morning shows have lost viewers in the last two years, but the number one show, *Good Morning America*, has seen a 2.8 percent increase in

audience viewership (Jurkowitz, Mitchell, & Guskin, 2012). This increase in viewership could be due to the fact that the show is more likely to have "the most coveted guests" (Jurkowitz, Mitchell, & Guskin, 2012). If viewers are worried about the people on the show, it could be due to the social connections that one gains from the guests. As is clear, there is more to the story than just saying viewership has increased or decreased; more research should be conducted into the specific types of shows and how they can affect one's social network.

Definition of Social Network

Pescoslido wrote about what defines a social network in detail (2011). She found that social networks were made from the people with which one associates (Pescosolido, 2011, p. 210). However, she also found that there is much more to social networks than just associations to people; they can be made of connections to "organizations or nations" as well (Pescosolido, 2011, p. 210). As Pescosolido asserts, everything around us shapes our everyday life and how we function (2011, p. 210). It is not farfetched to argue that an individual's associations with the television can affect one's social network and, in turn, one's voting behavior.

Social networks are thought to be beneficial to participatory behavior. In other words, the social interaction average citizens have on a day to day basis can greatly impact voting patterns. If the shows a person watches in any way contribute to one's social network, it is worth investigating the effect that they have on political participation. I would expect to see shows that have more talkative hosts who engage the audiences, such as daytime talk shows, are more likely to drive political participation than entertainment-based dramas.

Other Factors

This section is devoted to reviewing some of the remaining literature on voting as many factors have been cited as potential causes. I will briefly discuss the majority of these factors which will be used as controls and other independent variables in my thesis.

The Habit of Voting

Voting is in a way habit-forming, i.e. present turnout could be explained by past turnout (Geys, 2006, p. 646). Those who have voted previously are more likely to vote again, especially if there was a positive association with the act (Kanazwa, 2000, p. 433). Kanazwa also points out that a person is more likely to vote if they have previously voted for a winning party member (2000, p. 440).

Political Efficacy

Political efficacy has a positive effect on voting behavior (Pinkleton, Austin, & Fortman, 1998, p. 42). In turn, political participation has a positive effect on "eternal" efficacy, implying there is a reciprocal relationship between the two (Finkel, 1985, p. 891). However, participation can have a strong, significant effect on "internal" efficacy (Finkel, 1985, p. 906-907). Socialization has been found to be related to political efficacy in the way that it drives voter participation (Klemmensen, et al., 2012, p. 423-424). This goes along with Finkel's argument in that the reciprocity of efficacy and participation is due to socialization in some way.

Voting and Rational Choice

Voting is not considered a rational choice by many as the costs generally outweigh the benefits; there is a consensus that one vote doesn't really make a difference. A collection of literature suggests that because so many people still vote, in spite of these reasons, voting is "irrational" (Downs, 1957, p. 10, 37-38; Barzel & Silberberg, 1973, p. 51-52, 57). This has to do

with a cost benefit analysis of voting. When the costs of voting exceed the marginal benefits, it is unlikely that an individual will vote. However, as the benefits of voting increase, the cost of voting can become smaller, and the likelihood a person is to cast a vote increases (Barzel & Silberberg, 1973, p. 58).

Political Stability

Political stability can also increase the likelihood that a person is to vote (Barzel & Silberberg, 1973, p. 57). If a regime is on the brink of collapse, it can drive revolutionary and counter-revolutionary participation (Barzel & Silberberg, 1973, p. 57). More people can see their vote as making a difference, so participation is likely to increase (Barzel & Silberberg, 1973). The ability to change an electoral system is not something that happens often, so when given the chance there is a sense of optimism and it is not uncommon to see greater participation (Barzel & Silberberg, 1973). Although this generally varies across countries, not people, the current state of the government can drive political participation in one direction or another (Barzel & Silberberg, 1973).

Civic Duty of Voting

Civic duty is thought to be a large driver of voter participation; people try to act as "responsible citizens" and fulfill their perceived obligations to their country (Arrow, 1969). There has been evidence that this is not the only determinant of voting, but does increase the likelihood of participation; the more people feel it is their responsibility to vote, the more likely they will be to vote (Barzel & Silberberg, 1973, p. 56-58; Silberman & Durden, 1975, p. 107). Civic duty has also been linked to socialization process in its explanation of political participation (Klemmensen, et al., 2012, p. 423-424)

Partisanship

Nagel and McNulty found that since the 1960s "the overall relationship between turnout and partisan outcomes has been insignificant" (Nagel & McNulty, 1996, p. 780, 784). However, it was noted that this relationship was different in the Southern parts of the United States, implying that location may mean more than partisanship or be related to it in some way (Nagel & McNulty, 1996, p. 780, 785-786). Chen found that increases in "distributive spending" were able to increase the vote share for an incumbent while decreasing the share for an opposition-party (2013, p. 200, 208, 216). In a way, he shows that government spending can increase partisanship, while also increasing voter participation for certain parties (Chen, 2013, p. 215-216). Partisan elections consistently have a higher turnout than nonpartisan elections when controlling for other factors (Bonneau & Loeep, 2014, p. 128).

Campaigning

Studies have shown that campaign spending can have dire effects on voter participation (Gerber, 2004). Gerber has suggested incumbent spending to have only a "negligible effect on incumbent vote margins;" however, a challenger's spending was found to be highly effective in increasing the vote share (Gerber, 2004, p. 569). Brooks attested Ansolabehere and Iyengar's findings that negative campaigning decreases voter turnout, suggesting their conclusions were premature (2006, p. 684). She claims that most Americans "are more resilient to campaign attacks" and that negative campaigning may not undermine participation (Brooks, 2006, p. 693).

Ballot Design

Straight-party voting, an option on ballots that allows voters to cast a vote for all candidates of one party instead of individually voting for each category, has been found to be most effective at driving participation in partisan elections and decreasing ballot roll-off

(Bonneau & Loeep, 2014, p. 119-121). When it is easier to vote and information is more accessible, as in partisan and straight-party voting option elections, voters are more likely to participate (Bonneau & Loeep, 2014, p. 129).

Clearly, there are many factors that can impact an individual's voting behavior. I have not been able to assess every possible factor, but have covered many of them above. Part of why voting is of interest to political scientists is the fact that it has been nearly impossible to clearly define what causes an individual to vote. Hopefully this experiment I will add to the literature on voter participation.

Future Research

In sum, there are many factors that can influence an individual's political participation. As has been made clear, television's effect on voter behavior is not as clear-cut as it simply positively or negatively effecting citizens; there is more to the relationship than we know. There is room to explore the potential that some shows are more likely to drive participation when compared to others. It is possible that certain individuals are more heavily affected by the social interactions that come with television viewing. In order to better understand the effects of television viewing on users I will investigate how different types and airtimes of shows drive political participation.

Research Question: *In terms of television use, does the type of show or the airtime have an impact on voting of individuals?*

Relevant Definitions

Soft News: This would generally be considered background information or human-interest stories. Soft news has a desire to entertain and advise the viewers; there is no real issue of timeliness for soft news stories being reported – they are leisure stories. Celebrity gossip and problems that are pertinent to the public good would be considered forms of soft news (Scherr,

Legnante, Reinemann, & Stanyer, 2011, p. 223-225). The public good refers to stories the population is intrigued by because of the issue that is being reported.

> *Talk Shows:* "Infotainment" shows provide viewers with a wide variety of information while entertaining them (Baum, 2003). According to Oprah Winfrey, these shows attempt to "transform people's lives, to make viewers see themselves differently and to bring happiness and a sense of fulfillment into every home," (Baum, 2005, p. 213). Talk shows present political information in a way that apolitical viewers can consume.
>
> > *Satirical News:* This would be some talk shows that present news, such as late night television. Typically, there is a comical spin. I am defining this because I may refer to shows such as *Jimmy Kimmel Live* as satirical news, but it is technically classified as a soft news talk show.

Routine News: Routine news stories are not highly politicalized (Scherr, Legnante, Reinemann, & Stanyer, 2011). General these will be shows that include both celebrity news and political news. Unlike hard news, routine news shows include run-of-the-mill stories that average citizens can relate to and understand (Scherr, Legnante, Reinemann, & Stanyer, 2011).

Hard News: Hard news refers to more pressing or urgent issues. Newscaster generally take a more factual and third party approach to reporting hard news stories. Generally, hard news stories involve political openings or are related to international order. If a story can drastically change the lives of individuals throughout a country, it would be considered hard news, e.g. coverage on a school shooting (Scherr, Legnante, Reinemann, & Stanyer, 2011, p. 223-225).

Primetime Shows: These are shows that air from 8 P.M. to 11 o'clock in the evening Monday through Saturday or from 7 in the evening to 11 P.M. on Sundays according to the Nielsen company [all references in Eastern Standard Time] (The Deadline Team, 2014). Traditionally, primetime television has the largest number of views per hour (The Nielsen Company, B, 2011; Halbrooks, 2014). The most popular television shows are aired during primetime hours, including comedies, dramas, sports events, and news-based shows (Halbrooks, 2014).

Notable primetime shows include: *The Big Bang Theory*, *NCIS*, *The Mentalist*, *Dancing with the Stars*, *American Idol*, and *60 Minutes* (The Deadline Team, 2014).

Daytime Shows: These shows air during the day from any time after 9 A.M. to around 4 P.M. [EST] (The Deadline Team, 2014).

Notable daytime shows include: *Good Morning America*, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, *America This Morning*, *The View*, *The Today Show*, and *Sunday Morning* (The Deadline Team, 2014).

Late Night Shows: These are shows that air after 11 P.M., but before 4 A.M. [EST] (The Deadline Team, 2014).

Notable Late Night Shows include: *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, *The Late Night Show with Craig Ferguson*, *Late Show with David Letterman*, and *Saturday Night Live* (The Deadline Team, 2014).

Notable News Anchors and Talk Show Hosts include: *Diane Sawyer*, *Brian Williams*, *Katie Couric*, *Anderson Cooper*, *Barbara Walters* or *Matt Lauer* (Bio., 2014).

Social Network: In simple terms, a social network is a "structure of relationships linking social actors or the set of actors and the ties among them" (Pescosolido, 2011, p. 208). There is more than simply people to social networks; the people one interacts with also connect with their own network and these interactions begin to bleed through more than just physical connections. As the associations that one makes to people, as well as the ties that come from those people, make up a social network, multiple factors are necessary to define social network. For this reason and my purposes I define social network by the number of family members and friends one has and the amount of interpersonal trust one references.

Theory and Hypotheses

The basis of this paper is to demonstrate that television consumption is not as easy to define as "light" or "heavy" viewers. This crude classification implies that the consumption of

certain types of shows over others makes no difference. There is room for extensive research into the type of show and how it may effect a person's voting behavior.

It has been well established in the political world that those who watch the news instead of other shows are more likely to vote (Bakker & Vreese, 2011)**.** Due to this, it would be logical to say that those who watch hard news shows more likely to vote than anyone else. Although this is the likely outcome when it comes to the relationship of television news viewers and voter participation, other types of news shows should be investigated as well, specifically that of soft or routine news shows.

As Baum pointed out, soft news programs are still able to drive voter mobilization (Baum, 2003). Prior also found that entertainment-oriented viewers are less likely to mobilize than news viewers in general (Prior, 2005). Due to this, I argue that there are varying types of news programs which have different effects on viewers. The hard news viewers will be the most likely to vote, followed by the routine news and soft news viewers. Finally, entertainment-oriented viewers will be the least likely to vote. This notion is very in line with other political theories about the news, television, and voting.

H_1: *For television watchers, those who watch hard news broadcasts will be more likely to vote than those who watch any other type of television show, e.g. soft news or entertainment-oriented shows.*

H_0: *The type of news show viewed does not have a significant effect on an individual's likelihood to vote.*

Specific groups of people, e.g. women or Latinos, are likely to watch specific types of shows that fall into their realm of interest, e.g. daytime talk shows or TV dramas. All shows give off informational cues from the hosts or characters to the audience. These cues can be politically charged and change a person's likelihood to vote. As Baum pointed out, "millions of voters consider Oprah Winfrey and Regis Phillbin trusted friends, or depend on Jon Stewart's parodies

and Jay-Leno's late-night monologues for their daily update on national affairs" (Baum, 2005, p. 213). It is likely that relevant political information is given in a more lighthearted fashion that politically inattentive citizens would be more likely to consume (Baum, 2005). By connecting to the voter through the host or characters and engaging citizens with politically relevant stories, soft news talk shows may be able to increase the disenfranchised voter's likelihood to cast a ballot.

Many Americans find themselves connected to the people on the television screen that they watch (Baum, 2005). In other words, hosts and characters on TV shows can act as surrogate social networks for individuals. This would imply that daytime talk show hosts could have the ability to influence and mobilize their viewers, as those in one's social network can have profound effects on one's choice to become politically engaged (Baum, 2005). If this is the case, it is more likely that these shows will leave a lasting impression on viewers and drive political mobilization. I would expect to see those who view daytime talk shows to be more likely to participate than those who watch shows that air at other times throughout the day.

As is apparent in the type of show included in these categories (see Relevant Definitions section, p. 24), the more entertainment-based television shows are aired in the evenings. The point of primetime television, which occurs in the evening, is not to make a political statement or change the views of millions; it is to make money, just like any other corporate activity (Patterson, 2014). Due to the fact that these shows are only seeking to grab the audience's attention and not portray significant messages, it is unlikely that they would have a profound effect on voting patterns.

Unlike primetime shows, daytime talk show hosts are able to relay messages in a more lighthearted fashion that is easily understandable to their viewers; they appeal both emotionally

and rationally to their viewers because of the intimacy the audience feels due to the hosts and characters of the show. "[Oprah] Winfrey as the host draws out stories from the 'ordinary' guests, encourages and regulates feedback from the audience, [and] solicits advice from the experts" (Moorti, 1998, p. 86). Moorti also comments on how many talk shows have names that are intended to connect with their audience and draw them closer; for example, by naming her show "Oprah" she is able to appear more friendly and seem like a "regular" person to the audience (Moorti, 1998, p. 86). This being the case, it is probable that daytime shows can potentially have more likeable personalities and increase mobilization.

H_2: *For television viewers, those who are more likely to watch daytime television shows are more likely to vote than those who watch primetime shows.*

H_0: *The time a television show is viewed does not have a significant effect on an individual's likelihood to vote.*

Research and Methods

For my purposes, I have used the 2012 American National Election Study and have run an OLS multivariate linear regression model using the statistical analysis program STATA. Prior to recoding my variables, the survey included 5,513 respondents. I have used a combination of pre- and post-election questions to develop my variables.

As my study is dependent on voter participation, this will be my dependent variable. I have coded the variable dichotomously – 0 being "No" and 1 being "Yes, voted." In order to check the validity of voter participation and to ensure over-reporting is not a problem, the ANES has verified turnout of each respondent using "official city registration and voting records" (ANES, 2014). Whenever the ANES finds errors in their study, they make sure to correct and post new a Cumulative Data File (ANES, 2014). The codebook I used was last updated in September of 2014 (ANES, 2014).

When it came to my control variables, there were many available within the ANES. I have used: *gender, race , political ideology, religious ideology, age, marital status, perception of the economy, perception of government corruption, highest level of education, employment status, labor union status, current income bracket, previous voting behavior, contact by campaigns, level of civic duty, attention to politics, political interest, and interpersonal trust.*

Gender was coded dichotomously – 0 being "No" and 1 being "Yes" – with the high being "Male." Race is labeled nominally and has 4 categories. I have used a 5 point scale for political ideology ranging from 1 "Strong Republican" to 5 "Strong Democrat." Religious ideology is a nominal variable – the numeric values have little information to the response. It has 8 categories. I coded age as different amounts of age groups. For example, 17-21 is the first category having only 4 years, but the last age group includes 10 plus years as it is 75 and older; 17 is included because the respondent could have been 17 during the pre-interview, but 18 on Election Day. I have done this because classifying age groups as a set amount of years undermines the likeness of certain groups. Education has been coded from 1 "Less than a high school diploma" to 5 "Doctorate degree or higher." Employment status is labeled dichotomously from 0 "Currently unemployed" to 1 "Currently employed." Similarly, labor union status is coded as 0 being "Not involved" to 1 "Involved." Income is categorized by current US tax brackets; this allows for similar income groups to be arranged properly. Similarly to my dependent variable, previous voting behavior is coded dichotomously – 0 being "None" and 1 being "Yes, voted before." Campaign contact was created from 3 individual questions about the form of contact and the party of contact; it is on a scale from 0 to 3. Attention to politics is across a 5 point scale and political interest is on a 4 point scale – both from low to high. Similarly, interpersonal trust is from low to high across a 5 point scale.

I have used two variables for *political attentiveness* and *interest.* Interest was created from a number of questions about how often the respondent attends political rallies and how much they care about their vote and outcome. Political attentiveness was measured using a number of questions about the workings of government and how much the respondent was able to answer. To create a variable for political attention, I recoded several questions to create a "knowledge scale." I used questions about term lengths, political definitions, and the national budget. I will combine the questions, recode, and label them from least to most politically knowledgeable on a 5 point scale.

For my main independent variables, I have used specific questions in the ANES about what television shows the respondent has watched in the last month. There were 48 different questions which asked "In the last month have you watched _____?" for each show included in the survey, such as *The Big Bang Theory, 60 Minutes, Jimmy Kimmel Live,* and *Fox News*. These shows are available on cable, Netflix, Hulu, and other video streaming sources. I have categorized these shows by type, being entertainment, soft news, routine news, and hard news, as well as by airtime of show (See Appendix A Table 1). This has allowed me to test the significance of type of television shows as well as the relevance of airtime.

I have used *frequency of television news consumption* as another control to ensure that the type of show or airtime of viewing is not affected by the amount of television news being viewed by the respondent. As has been established, more heavy television viewers are less likely than light television viewers to vote, so there is room to control for this variable; news viewers are also more likely to vote than none news viewers (Morgan & Shanahan, 1992; Bakker & Vreese, 2011). News consumption was also used as a control for my first hypothesis. I want to ensure that the amount of news someone pays attention to does not have adverse effects on the type of

news that person is watching. As mentioned, general news consumption is positively related to voting (see McLeod & McDonald, 1985). Not controlling for total news consumption would cause serious flaws in my argument.

As had been made clear, my theory involves the interaction of social networks with television preference when compared to voting patterns. Television personalities can potentially function as quasi-social networks and drive voter participation (Baum, 2005; Moorti, 1998). By using serval different questions about the respondents' social connections, I was able to create a variable for *size of one's social network.* These questions were in reference to one's family size, interpersonal trust and interactions among friends, as well as political interactions. From my definitions, a social network is dependent on the number of people one interacts with regularly – family and friends – as well as the level of trust one has. This variable was important for my second hypothesis.

Included in appendix B are 4 tables (Table 1-4) that included relevant variables as well as descriptive statistics of each. Also included is the predicted direction of the relationship.

Findings

Through countless regression and statistical tests, I was unable to find concrete data supporting my assertions. This does not mean that my findings are moot as they can still contribute to future research as a guide for the coding of variables, use of survey data, etc. I have chosen to analyze regressions still, simply from a non-significant standpoint for future purposes. Although I cannot prove that television hosts and characters can function as part of a person's social networks, it cannot be proven that they do not. Simply put, there is room for further research into the effects of television on voters as well as the implications of quasi-social networks acting through television hosts and characters.

My theoretical model included many control variables as well as potential independent variables that can be affecting my dependent variable. My full regression looks like the equation below:

$$Voter\ Participation = \beta_o + \beta_{(Type\ of\ Television\ Show\ Viewed)_4} + \beta_{(Airtime\ of\ Television\ Show\ Viewed)_5} + \beta_{(Frequency\ of\ Television\ News\ Viewing)} + \beta_{(Size\ of\ Social\ Network)} + \beta_{(Interpersonal\ Trust)} + \beta_{(Previous\ Voting\ Behavior)} + \beta_{(Civic\ Duty\ of\ Voting)} + \beta_{(Campaign\ Contact)} + \beta_{(Political\ Interest)} + \beta_{(Government\ Corruption)} + \beta_{(Religion)} + \beta_{(Marital\ Status)} + \beta_{(Employment\ Status)} + \beta_{(Labor\ Union\ Staus)} + +\beta_{(Gender)} + \beta_{(Income)} + \beta_{(Race)} + \beta_{(Age)} + \beta_{(Education)} + \beta_{(Attention\ to\ Poltiics)}$$

Regression with All Controls

This model has allowed me to add variables along the course of my research, but has laid a general structure as to what my regression looked like. This was a model that included all of my control variables. I have chosen to run my two main independent variables, television preference and airtime of shows viewed, as one combined regression. Running separate logit regressions allowed me to see the individual effects of television preference as well as airtime of show viewed on voter participation.

Significant Findings

When controlling for all factors listed in my regression equation, only a few of my independent variables remain statically significant above the 95 percent confidence interval; however, they are not the most significant variables in my study. As mentioned in my literature review, voting is habit forming (Geys, 2006). *Previous Voting Behavior* was the most significant determination of whether or not the respondent would vote in the current election. There is a strongly significant and positive relationship between voting and previous voting patterns. This means that television is less predictive than any of the significant control variables in terms of

causing the respondents to vote or not. Similarly, a respondent's *sense of civic duty* and *level of political interest* were both significantly and positively related to voting.

Other minor controls that may be of interest in the positive significance of the variables would include: *contact from a political campaign*, *union status*, and *education*. The more one is contacted by a campaign, if they have a family member in a union, or have a higher education, the more likely they are to vote. *Race* was negatively associated with voting, but this may have been a factor of coding. I choose to code the variable from "Caucasian" to "Black" to "Hispanic" to "Other." This would imply that the more likely one is a racial minority, the less likely one is to vote.

Independent Variables of Significance

In my full regression – that mentioned above which included all control variables as well as independent variables – four of my independent variables were significant at the 95 percent confidence interval: *routine news, entertainment shows, primetime hours,* and *evening hours.* All of these independent variables were significant; however, they were less significant than in the independent regressions. I will discuss television shows that are significant separately from television airtimes that are significant below.

Type of Television Show

When it came to the television show variables, I predicted that hard news would be a better predictor of voter participation than any other type of television show. In this regression, that was not the case. Not only was hard news a worse predictor than other types of television shows it was not statistically significant. It also had a negative impact on voting, contrary to Bakker and Vreese's findings (2011). Due to this, I am unable to reject the null that television shows have no effect on voter turnout. I think that there is room for this to be studied further, as

all of the television show variables are negatively-related in voting in the full regression and only a few of them were significant. I found this interesting because those who watch the news are more likely to vote and three of my variables included news or news-like shows.

Nearly all of the independent variables I created for type of television show being viewed were very highly skewed to the left, which may account for the negative relationship. This is cited as a pitfall of my work in a latter section. Routine news had a negative slope, but was statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence interval. The same was true for entertainment based shows. Due to the fact that this is contrary to what Baum and Prior found in reference to soft news and entertainment-based television shows, I think there is room to investigate how different types of television shows effect voter mobilization (2003; 2003). This will be further discussed in the implication of my work below.

Airtime of Television Show

For my television airtime hypothesis, I predicted those who are more likely to watch daytime shows would be more likely to vote than those who watch primetime shows. Once again I was incorrect in my prediction. Primetime and evening users were the most likely to vote above both daytime and early morning viewers. Due to this, I am unable to reject the null that television show airtime have no significant effect on individuals. I do find it worth noting that although I cannot reject the null that does not mean that this is not a potentially significant finding. I suggest that television hosts and characters are able to work as quasi social networks as referenced by Baum (2003). Just because the type of show I thought would be most significant to viewers is not, does not mean that there are not implications for primetime and evening television characters and hosts to influence a person's social network. This will be discussed in more detail below.

As stated, primetime television was the best predictor of voter behavior. It was positively and significantly related to my dependent variable when controlling for other factors. Similarly, evening shows were related to voting in nearly the same manner. As stated above, primetime hours account for the largest portion of television viewership (The Nielsen Company, B, 2011; Halbrooks, 2014). From this it makes sense that evening and primetime hours were more signficantly related to voting than daytime hours.

Caveats and Observations

It should be noted that it is important to keep in mind this was a regression using 19 controls as well as nine independent variables. Also, the ANES included over 2,000 variables that could be contributing to my dependent variable. It is possible that I am over estimating the effects of gender and income as those could be highly correlated with daytime television or talk shows. There is also the fact that hard news is associated with voter participation. For this reason, I believe a large flaw in this study is that it was not conducted using an independently done survey, which probably would have allowed more room to ask questions specific to my study on social networks, television and voter participation. Although this does put a large hole in my theory as my main independent variables mean almost nothing, a more finite regression may show what types of television shows or airtimes are significant without stringent controls to guide future research into this subject.

(For full regression see Appendix C Table 1)

Finite Regression with Specific Controls

The following is my analysis of the finite logit regressions that have included only my *social network, news consumption, political attention, interpersonal trust* and *previous voting behavior* variables as controls. I have included size of social network as it is the meat of my

theory. If the size of the respondent's social network was not included in my regressions, then I cannot test to see if there is an interaction between the social network and the television in terms of causing voter participation. Likewise, interpersonal trust is something that makes up my social network variable, but is distinctively different. For this reason I have chosen to include it in my regression to see if it may be more influential than social networks are.

Frequency of news consumption has been used as a control to make sure that those who are more likely to watch the news are not swaying the results of my regression. Similarly, political attention has been used as a control due to the fact that the news is more likely to predict voting for those who are more politically attentive or knowledgeable (Baum, 2002, p. 99). As *previous voting behavior* was the strongest predictor of my dependent variable in my initial regression, I found it to be an important control to include in the finite regression as well. In the next few sections I will analyze the finite regression I have run to determine what variables are above the 95 percent confidence interval and whether or not my hypotheses are proven. Below is what the regression for each set of independent variables looked like:

$$Voter\ Participation = \beta_o + \beta_{(Type\ of\ Television\ Show\ Viewed)_4} + \beta_{(Frequency\ of\ Television\ News\ \ Viewing)} + \beta_{(Size\ of\ Social\ Network)} + \beta_{(Interpersonal\ Trust)} + \beta_{(Previous\ Voting\ Behavior)} + \beta_{(Civic\ Duty\ of\ Voting)} + \beta_{(Campaign\ Contact)} + \beta_{(Political\ Interest)} + \beta_{(Government\ Corruption)} + \beta_{(Religion)} + \beta_{(Marital\ Status)} + \beta_{(Employment\ Status)} + \beta_{(Labor\ Union\ Staus)} + +\beta_{(Gender)} + \beta_{(Income)} + \beta_{(Race)} + \beta_{(Age)} + \beta_{(Education)} + \beta_{(Attention\ to\ Poltiics)}$$

$$Voter\ Participation = \beta_o + \beta_{(Airtime\ of\ Television\ Show\ Viewed)_5} + \beta_{(Frequency\ of\ Television\ News\ \ Viewing)} + \beta_{(Size\ of\ Social\ Network)} + \beta_{(Interpersonal\ Trust)} + \beta_{(Previous\ Voting\ Behavior)} + \beta_{(Civic\ Duty\ of\ Voting)} + \beta_{(Campaign\ Contact)} + \beta_{(Political\ Interest)} + \beta_{(Governemnt\ Corruption)} + \beta_{(Religion)} + \beta_{(Marital\ Status)} + \beta_{(Employment\ Status)} + \beta_{(Labor\ Union\ Staus)} + +\beta_{(Gender)} + \beta_{(Income)} + \beta_{(Race)} + \beta_{(Age)} + \beta_{(Education)} + \beta_{(Attention\ to\ Poltiics)}$$

Type of Television Shows

As predicted by my first hypothesis, hard news was more strongly and positively related to voting than any other type of television show. It was more influential than any other type of show at predicting voter participation, but was not the most statistically significantly variable in the regression. With a z-value of 0.047 and setting our alpha level at 0.05, this study is able to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the regression coefficient for hard news has been found to be statistically different from zero, given the control variables included in the regression. This means that although entertainment-based and soft news shows may portray significant messages to their viewers, they are less significant than hard news is at driving citizens to vote. As has been discussed, hard news is strongly and positively associated political knowledge (Baum, 2002, p. 99). It is important to mention that in this regression, previous voting behavior was still a greater predictor at determining voter turnout with a z-score of 27.64.

Airtime of Television Shows with Controls

My second hypothesis predicted that daytime television viewers would be more likely than primetime television viewers to vote. From my finite regression, this was not the case. To begin, none of my independent variables were significant, while nearly all of my controls were. For that matter, both daytime and early morning television were negatively related to voting, thus

disproving my theory in this case. Due to this, I am unable to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that this regression is not determinate of the population. Evening television was the most significant of my independent variables, which could be due to the face that many local and nightly new casts come on during this time, 4 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. EST (The Nielsen Company, B, 2011). However, controlling for news consumption should have negated this effect. News was strongly significant with a z-value of 4.64 – leading me to believe it may not be the time of show that matters, but news in general does. As stated, all of my controls expect social network were significant – previous voting behavior once again being the most predictive variable for voting behavior. The habit of voting may be more important than television in general.

(For full regression see Appendix C Tables 2 and 3)

Finite Regression with Social Network

Below is an analysis of the relationship between my independent variables and my dependent variable only. I have used no controls to see what the interaction of the types of shows as well as airtime of television shows against one another is. This is what the regression looked like:

$$Voter\ Participation = \beta_o + \beta_{(Harnews\ Shows)} + \beta_{(Routinenews\ Shows)} + \beta_{(Softnews\ Shows)} + \beta_{(Entertainment\ Shows)} + \beta_{(Size\ of\ Social\ Network)}$$

$$Voter\ Participation = \beta_o + \beta_{(Early\ Morning\ Shows)} + \beta_{(Daytime\ Shows)} + \beta_{(Evening\ Shows)} + \beta_{(Primetime\ Shows)} + \beta_{(Latenight\ Shows)} + \beta_{(Size\ of\ Social\ Network)}$$

Type of Television Shows

In the regression concerning types of television shows and social networks, only two variables were statistically significant above the 95 percent confidence interval – hard news and

social network. Watching hard news television shows is very strongly and positively related to voting behavior. This makes sense as those who watch hard news are generally politically involved and attentive and would be more likely to vote (Olmstead, Jurkowitz, Mitchell, & Enda, 2013). Something significant, but not as strong is the relationship of social networks and voting. The size of one's social network is positively related to voting. More research should be done into the effects between social networks and different new shows.

I cannot say for certain that social networks work with all types of shows tested, but there is a correlation between hard news and its influence through a person's social network. Something I found interesting about these two variables was that when they were compared to each other across voting, the relationship was negative. The larger ones' social network, the less of an effect hard news will have on voting (See Figure 1 below). This could have to do with the fact that some people supplement watching news shows with their social network; people more likely to talk to their friends about politics may be less likely to take hard news for its worth. Another interesting finding was that routine news was negatively related to voting – routine news was not significant. I think this could be due to the idea that routine news shows are just normal, run of the mill stories that aren't heavily influential in terms of politics (Scherr, Legnante, Reinemann, & Stanyer, 2011).

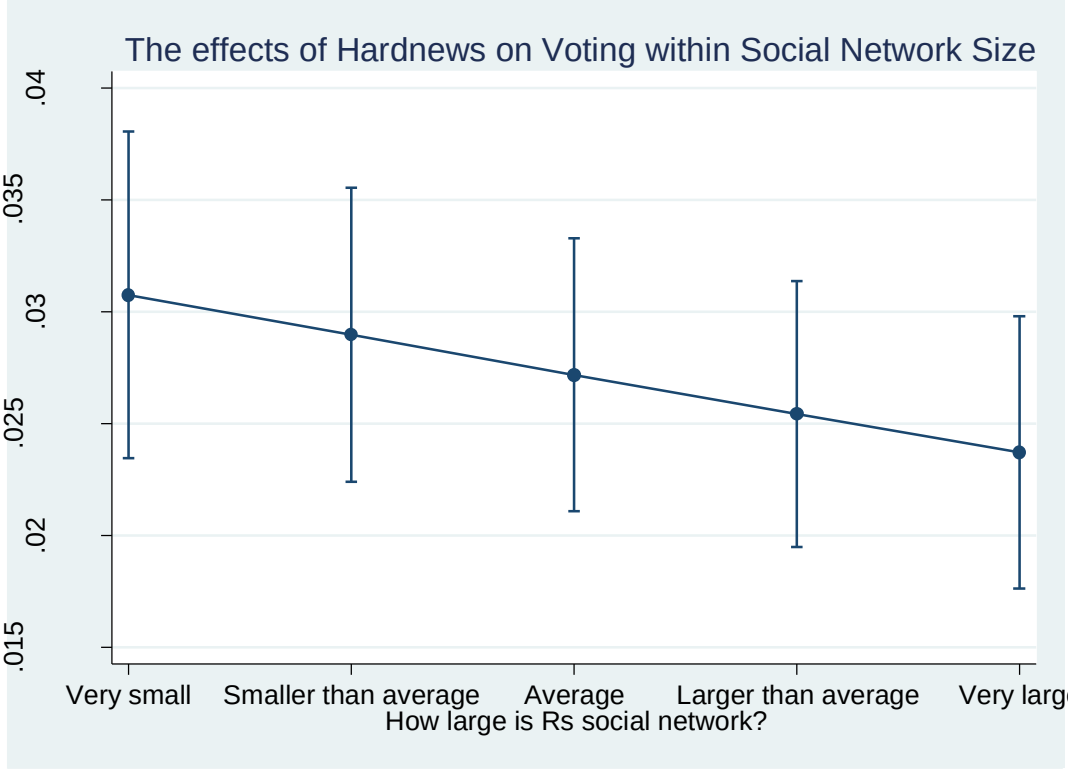


Figure 1: The Effects of Hard news on Voting within the Size of One's Social Network

Airtime of Television Shows

When I ran a regression using only my television show times, watching television shows at night – evening, primetime, and late night hours – is a far better predictor of positive voting behavior than during the day. By this I mean the more likely you are to watch television at night, the more likely to one is vote. Contrary to that, daytime television very negatively affected voting. Unlike my second hypothesis, those who watch television during the day will not be more likely than those who watch television during primetime hours to vote. For that matter, watching daytime television makes a person less likely than any other airtime viewership to vote. This makes sense as primetime viewing hours account for over 50 percent of television viewing (The Nielsen Company, B, 2011). Due to these findings, I am unable to reject the null that time of viewership causes voting. All airtime variables except early morning shows were significant

over the 95 percent confidence interval. The size of a person's social network was positively correlated with voting as assumed, but was less significant than different airtimes were.

(For full regression see Appendix C Tables 4 and 5)

Implications and Future Research

As stated, my regressions did not come out as I had expected them to. I was unable to confirm my hypotheses when controlling for other relevant factors. This does not mean that this article cannot have implications of the impact of social networks and television use. However, the regressions conducted in this paper should be redone with the consideration mentioned in the previous section.

From the regression I ran involving the type of show and my social network variable, the size of one's social network had a positive influence on voting. The same is true for the regression that included airtimes and social networks. As we can see a relationship between social network size and voting, there is room to investigate further what this specific relationship entails. As mentioned, there should be a more finite inquisition into the influence of social networks on voting. By this I mean that specific questions about how much respondents trust television personalities should be asked.

I cannot say for certain that there are any implications in the real world from the research that I have conducted, but I can say that there is room to further explore my theory. If television hosts and characters can influence a person's social network, the way in which campaigns function would be entirely altered. Instead of focusing on negative advertisement, political parties could focus on who is asking the questions to potential candidates. This would open up a new world to election teams as there are much simpler ways to connect with voters. As mentioned, laws and regulations would need to be put in place in order to ensure that there is not

corruption within the television networks in relation to political parties. It is also highly likely that voters would be more inclined to take what hosts and characters are saying in a more straight forward way than previously understood. As stated, I cannot say for certain that television hosts and characters are working as part of a person's social network. However, that should not change the fact that it is something that requires more research to prove or disprove.

Caveats and Observations

As stated, I have mentioned that the data I used may not have been the best choice for the aims of my study. The ANES did not have questions that made it possible to create a solid social network variable, which is a main component of my study. I believe that if I were able to ask specific questions about one's social network size, I may be able to have more concrete findings. I also feel that it would have been very helpful to be able to question respondents about their feelings towards television characters and hosts – to confirm Baum's finding that certain people on the television can be "trusted friends" to their viewers (2005, p. 213).

Other than the survey data being lackluster for my theory, the way in which the independent variables were coded was somewhat odd. I understand that this was by my choosing, but there was no other way I could find to do it without distorting the data, as will be shown below. As there were 48 television shows that respondents were questioned about, I divided them into categories by type of show and airtime of show (see Appendix A Table 1). This meant that my variables were on a large scale, e.g. 0-16. Now, large scale variables are not a problem, but trying to code them all the same across five quantiles was. As my variable was highly skewed to the left, the quantiles were not unique and I was unable to evenly divide them. Due to this fact, there was a discrepancy in how the variable compared to other controls in the study.

I believe that another flaw in my study was the way in which my hypotheses were stated. There was no reference to the relationship of social networks to the type of or airtime of television shows in the propositions. I should have made it clear that my stating how the size of the social network, either large or small, can change viewership and sway voting. I made my hypotheses in the onset of my research, before I had expressed the theory of social networks and voting. Perhaps I should have changed my predictions to fit my theory. As I did not do that before beginning my regressions, my hypotheses are lackluster. However, changing them now would put serious flaws in my study. It is better to be proven wrong than to doctor the research to show what I want it to.

If I were to do this study again I would change many things. I would perform my own survey in order to ask questions that were pertinent to my study, specifically those referring to television and social networks. I also think that it would be important to ask questions relevant to television hosts and characters acting as part of a person's social network. These questions may be harder, but they would get more at the heart of my theory: television can act as a quasi-social network for some people and, in turn, influence voting.

Conclusion

In sum, my research was largely inconclusive. I cannot say with certainty that the size of one's social network is influenced by hosts and characters of television shows. There is defiantly room to further research the inquisition of this paper. In my finite regression, hard news did act as a replacement for social networks in terms of voting. This is something that should be investigated. I have listed various changes that should be made in the format of the survey questions used, as well as specific questions for controls. The potential implications of this theory could change the way in which average citizens view campaigning and election season.

Television use is something that has changed the lives of normal citizens and is of great importance, especially in terms of the political implications it has. I had hopes that my research would unearth some of this fascinating relationship, but this was not the case. Instead, I will have to end this paper in a somewhat unfinished manner with the suggestion that more research be conducted to discover the relationship between television use, social networks, and voting.

Appendix A

Table 1 Classification of airtime and type of show for Independent Variables

TV Show Name	Airtime of show Classification	Type of show Classification
20/20	Primetime	Hard news
60 Minutes	Primetime	Hard news
ABC News Nightline	Late Night	Routine News
ABC World News Tonight	Evening	Routine News
America Live	Daytime	Routine News
America This Morning	Early Morning	Routine News
America's Newsroom	Daytime	Hard News
American Idol	Primetime	Entertainment
Anderson Cooper	Primetime	Hard news
The Big Bang Theory	Primetime	Entertainment
CBS Evening News	Evening	Hard news
CBS This Morning	Early Morning	Hard news
Chris Matthews Show	Early Morning	Hard News
Colbert Report	Late Night	Satire News
Daily Show with Jon Stewart	Late Night	Satire News
Dancing with the Stars	Primetime	Entertainment
Dateline NBC	Primetime	Routine News
Doctors	Daytime	Talk Show
The Ellen DeGeneres Show	Daytime	Talk Show
Face the Nation	Early Morning	Hard News
The Five	Evening	Hard news
Fox Report	Primetime	Hard news
Frontline	Primetime	Hard News
Good Morning America	Early Morning	Routine News
Hannity	Primetime	Hard News
Huckabee	Primetime	Hard News
Insider	Primetime	Routine News
Jimmy Kimmel Live	Late Night	Satire News
Key & Peele	Primetime	Entertainment
The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson	Late Night	Satire News
Late Show with David Letterman	Late Night	Satire News
Meet the Press	Early Morning	Hard news
The Mentalist	Primetime	Entertainment
NBC Nightly News	Evening	Routine News
NCIS	Primetime	Entertainment

O'Reilly Factor	Primetime	Hard news
On the Record with Greta Van Susteren	Primetime	Hard news
Rock Center with Brian Williams	Primetime	Routine News
Saturday Night Live	Late Night	Entertainment
Special Report with Bret Baier	Evening	Hard news
Tavis Smiley	Evening	Talk Show
Sunday Morning	Early Morning	Talk Show
The View	Daytime	Talk Show
This Week	Early Morning	Hard news
Today Show	Early Morning	Routine News
The Voice	Primetime	Entertainment
The Talk	Daytime	Talk Show

Appendix B

Table 1 Dependent Variable Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Voting	5510	0.799274	0.40058	0	1
	Did R vote in the 2012 Presidential elections?				

Table 2 Independent Variable Descriptive Statistics

Independent Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Hardnews	5281	2.326832	2.576992	0	16
Positive	How many hard news shows does R watch?				
Routinenews	5281	1.569778	1.852953	0	10
Positive	How many routine news shows does R watch?				
Softnews	5281	0.987313	1.390454	0	11
Positive	How many soft news shows does R watch?				
Entertainment	5281	1.367165	1.424559	0	8
Negative	How many entertainment shows does R watch?				

Table 3 Dependent Variable Descriptive Statistics

Independent Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Early Morning	5281	1.13793	1.550188	0	9
Positive	How many early morning shows does R watch?				
Daytime	5281	0.454649	0.810372	0	6
Positive	How many daytime shows does R watch?				
Evening	5281	1.005491	1.120136	0	6
Negative	How many evening shows does R watch?				
Primetime	5281	2.635107	2.389047	0	15
Negative	How many primetime shows does R watch?				
Latenight	5281	0.759894	1.144945	0	7
Negative	How many late night shows does R watch?				

Table 4 Control Variables Descriptive Statistics

Independent Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
News Consumption	5012	3.271748	1.083418	1	5
Positive	How much television news does R watch?				
Attention to Politics	5911	3.368635	1.118355	1	5
Positive	How much attention does R pay to politics?				
Interpersonal Trust	5895	2.99542	0.94638	1	5
Positive	R level of interpersonal trust				
Size of Social Network	5883	2.618732	0.910647	1	5
Positive	Size of R social network				
Previous Voting	5892	0.778174	0.41551	0	1
Positive	Has R voted before?				
Campaign Contact	5497	1.124068	0.989518	0	3
Positive	Was R contacted by a campaign?				
Race	5885	1.702294	0.962804	1	4
Negative	R race				
Union Status	5885	0.157689	0.36448	0	1
Positive	Is R involved with a union?				
Level of Education	5864	2.97442	1.159184	1	5
Positive	R level of education				
Marital Status	5904	0.498137	0.500039	0	1
Positive	Is R married?				
Gender	5914	1.518938	0.499684	1	2
Positive	Is R male?				
Sense of Civic Duty	5884	4.317471	2.440625	1	7
Poisitive	R sense of civic duty				

Party ID	5890	4.475722	2.110186	1	7
Positive	Is R democratic?				
Income	5847	3.020181	1.251726	1	5
Positive	R income level				
Age	5914	1970.067	16.43295	1942	1994
Positive	R birth year				
Employment Status	5901	0.524487	0.499442	0	1
Positive	Is R employed?				
Government Corruption	5799	2.909984	0.906172	1	5
Negative	How corrupt does R think the government is?				
Political Interest	5461	1.685406	0.680918	0	3
Positive	R level of political interest				
Religious Ideology	5828	4.638298	2.427091	1	8
Negative	R religious ideology				

Appendix C

Table 1
Full Logit Regression with All Controls

	Voting
Hardnews Shows	-0.222
	(0.127)
Routinenews Shows	-0.328*
	(0.152)
Softnews Shows	-0.294
	(0.179)
Entertainment Shows	-0.349*
	(0.157)
Early Morning Hours	0.246
	(0.149)
Daytime Hours	0.249
	(0.191)
Evening Hours	0.338*
	(0.159)
Primetime Hours	0.317*
	(0.148)
Latenight Hours	0.323
	(0.175)
News Consumption	0.142*
	(0.69)
Size of Social Network	0.074
	(0.073)
Previous Voting	2.471***
	(0.115)

Attention to Politics	0.019
	(0.068)
Interpersonal Trust	0.031
	(0.069)
Campaign Contact	0.239***
	(0.059)
Race	-0.129*
	(0.056)
Union Status	0.359*
	(0.158)
Level of Education	0.196***
	(0.053)
Marital Status	0.070
	(0.118)
Gender	-0.199
	(0.113)
Sense of Civic Duty	0.131***
	(0.023)
Party ID	0.065
	(0.030)
Income	0.050
	(0.044)
Age	-0.003
	(0.004)
Employment Status	0.009
	(0.115)

Government Corruption	-0.062
	(0.059)
Political Interest	0.613***
	(0.088)
Religious Ideology	0.037
	(0.023)
Constant	3.303
	(7.867)
R Squared	0.348
Observations	4112

z statistics in parentheses

*p < 0.05, **p <0.01, ***p <0.001

Table 2

Specific Controls Logit Regression
Type of Show

	Voting
Hardnews Shows	0.056*
	(0.028)
Routinenews Shows	-0.029
	(0.035)
Softnews Shows	0.022
	(0.045)
Entertainment Shows	-0.009
	(0.039)
News Consumption	0.282**
	(0.069)
Size of Social Network	0.069
	(0.073)
Previous Voting	2.484***

	(0.115)
Attention to Politics	0.129*
	(0.060)
Interpersonal Trust	0.145*
	(0.059)
Constant	3.303
	(7.867)
R Squared	0.304
Observations	4372

z statistics in parentheses

*p < 0.05, **p <0.01, ***p <0.001

Table 3
Specific Controls Logit Regression Airtime of Show

	Voting
Early Morning Shows	-0.026
	(0.043)
Daytime Shows	-0.011
	(0.069)
Evening Shows	0.085
	(0.059)
Primetime Shows	0.021
	(0.028)
Latenight Shows	0.008
	(0.059)
News Consumption	0.289***
	(0.062)

Size of Social Network	0.070
	(0.060)
Previous Voting	2.812***
	(0.102)
Attention to Politics	0.139*
	(0.060)
Interpersonal Trust	0.147*
	(0.059)
Constant	-2.415
	(0.242)
R Squared	0.304
Observations	4372

z statistics in parentheses

*p < 0.05, **p <0.01, ***p <0.001

Table 4

Logit Regression Type of Television Show and Social Network

	Voting
Hardnews Shows	0.191***
	(0.022)
Routinenews Shows	-0.043
	(0.028)
Softnews Shows	0.026
	(0.035)
Entertainment Shows	0.017
	(0.030)
Size of Social Network	0.106*
	(0.042)

Constant	0.859
	(0.125)
R Squared	0.026
Observations	4908

z statistics in parentheses

*p < 0.05, **p <0.01, ***p <0.001

Table 5

Logit Regression Airtime and Social Networks

	Voting
Early Morning Shows	0.01
	(0.342)
Daytime Shows	-0.212***
	(0.054)
Evening Shows	0.202***
	(0.047)
Primetime Shows	0.101***
	(0.022)
Latenight Shows	0.113***
	(0.040)
Size of Social Network	0.104**
	(0.042)
Constant	0.811
	(0.124)
R Squared	0.024
Observations	4908

z statistics in parentheses

*p < 0.05, **p <0.01, ***p <0.001

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