

Examining the Impact of Canadian Political Satire Shows on Generation Y:
A Qualitative Investigation of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*

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Abstract

In contemporary society, political satire shows are prominent programs that seem to resonate with the viewing public. This thesis seeks to observe the meanings that generation Y attach to the Canadian political satire show, *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. Focusing on the Canadian context, this research examines how members of generation Y view political satire shows, specifically *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and if this show caters to their attitudes, concerns and interests more so than traditional news media.

The theoretical framework guiding this study is the uses and gratifications theory.

This research implements a qualitative phenomenological research approach in the form of focus groups. This study concludes that this generation still maintains, however, that when looking to be informed, they connect more with traditional news media given that these programs provide them with all the facts and stories in a more reliable manner. This study contributes to the field of communication because it demonstrates the rationale and experiences of generation Y in relation to political news.

Keywords: Political Satire; Canada; Generation Y; This Hour Has 22 Minutes; Uses and Gratifications Theory

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents who have constantly supported me throughout all my endeavours and encouraged me to fearlessly follow my bliss in life.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Context

News media are an integral aspect of people's lives due to their ability to connect and inform them about the issues taking place in the public sphere. When it comes to news media there are two main forms: traditional news media (hard news) and non-traditional news media (soft news). Traditional news or hard news "concerns events potentially available to analysis or interpretation and consists of 'factual presentations' of events deemed newsworthy" (Berkowitz, 1997, p. 176). Non-traditional news media, also known as soft news, are programs that "feature lower levels of public affairs information and focus more on drama, sensationalism, human interest themes, and personalities" (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006, p. 341). This form of news focuses mainly on entertainment and humour when delivering content. It is important to note that "soft news includes several types of programs: network and cable newsmagazine shows, entertainment and tabloid newsmagazine shows, and daytime and late-night talk shows" (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006, p. 342). In relation to this study, political satire shows such as *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* can be classified as one of these programs.

The Issue. In today's society, some claim that younger members of the Canadian population are gravitating more toward non-traditional news. It has been noted that "while younger Canadians are more likely than their elders to have confidence in non-traditional news providers, they retain strong confidence in the mainstream media as well" (Fletcher, Logan, Hermida, & Korell, 2011, p. 2). There are significant benefits to non-traditional news media. For example, "soft news creates a more knowledgeable

citizenry by educating an inattentive public that would not otherwise follow traditional hard news” (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006, p. 342). This indicates the powerful effect that non-traditional news has over people, particularly young people who may feel disconnected with or disinterested in traditional news media. This investigation hopes to gain a better understanding of how members of generation Y in Canada perceive soft news in the form of political satire shows, specifically *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and what meanings they attach to this type of programming.

Background

Regarding politics, television shows have grown to offer viewers entertainment and information (Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2006; Holbert, Lambe, Dudo, & Carlton, 2007; Cao, 2008; Harrington, 2008; Xenos & Becker, 2009; Cao, 2010; Matsa, 2010; Guggenheim, Kwak, & Campbell, 2011; Ruggieri, 2013; Simenc, 2013). Political satire shows have become increasingly popular within the last two decades. In Canada, one such program has gained notoriety for engaging with its audience in a manner which is both informative and amusing; this program is *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*.

This Hour Has 22 Minutes is a 22 minute long Canadian political satire program that airs weekly on the CBC network. The show first aired on October 1, 1993, with the focus of mocking weekly news and political events. As Rukszto (2006) noted, “the current industry standard of twenty-two minutes of news between commercials in a half hour show; the format is modelled on a CBC news broadcast, including commercial and network advertisements; the segments are based on current national and international news, the CBC, commercials and TV journalism itself” (p. 80). Its format is made to resemble a traditional news program, which allows for its ability to critique and parody

the news in a convincing way. As stated “the show consists of a mock newscast, interspersed with mock commercials, public announcements and on-location commentaries from *22 Minutes* ‘correspondents’”(Rukszto, 2006, p. 81). While the program does touch on issues both international and domestic, it mainly focuses on politics, specifically Canadian politics. Ultimately, this show has come to define and illustrate political satire in the Canadian context.

Theoretical Framework

This investigation attempts to better understand how generation Y perceives non-traditional news media in terms of meanings and attitudes, specifically political satire shows in the Canadian context. The theoretical framework of this study is the uses and gratifications theory.

The uses and gratifications theory states that “users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use...a media user seeks out a media source that best fulfills their needs”(Ruggiero, 2000, p. 5). The uses and gratifications perspective is utilized to understand generation Y’s motives for seeking out this type of programming.

This is an exploratory study of how generation Y views the Canadian political satire show *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. This study will also suggest how this program could have an influence over the political participation or engagement of young people, which can include awareness of the issues, elections, party platforms and party developments.

Research Objectives

This study contains four key research objectives. The first is to understand why members of generation Y seek out this type of programming over other programs such as traditional news media. The second research objective will be to examine if there is a possible link between viewing Canadian political satire shows like *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and generation Y's political attitudes. The third research objective will be to shed light on the possible influence of political satire shows like *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* in the Canadian context since there have been relatively few studies conducted.

The final research objective of this study will be to add to the existing knowledge base of political communication. This will be done by suggesting how Canadian political satire shows could influence generation Y's political attitudes and, furthermore, their internal political efficacy. Through all these objectives, this study hopes to encourage future research on this particular area of study.

Research Questions

With this thesis resting upon the uses and gratifications theory, this study will gain insight into generation Y's relationship with political satire programs in the Canadian setting. The central research question brought about by this important theory is as follows: "What meanings does generation Y attach to the Canadian political satire show, *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*?" Due to the fact that there are many layers and vital aspects to explore when attempting to answer this question this study will need to raise the subsequent sub-research questions:

- RQ1: Do they perceive it as a credible source of information?
- RQ2: Do they view the show as entertainment or as a regular news program?

- RQ3: Do viewers of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* perceive themselves as being alienated by the mainstream news media and, if so, how does this program speak more to their needs and interests?
- RQ4: How does the show affect their attitudes toward politics?

The first question speaks to the credibility of the information conveyed by political satire shows like *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* as perceived by generation Y. This question was created in order to explore the possible trust and dependency that this generation places on these types of shows.

The second question addresses generation Y's perception of this show and examines how this generation actively categorizes programs like *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*.

The third question explores the reasons why generation Y appears to seek out these types of shows and why they feel alienated by or disconnected from traditional news media. This question was intended to explore what these shows provide this generation with that traditional news media do not.

The fourth question tackles the ramifications of viewing these shows and the impact that it may have on this generation, particularly in terms of their feelings toward politics. This question was posed in order to examine the possible influence of these shows on generation Y's political involvement.

The central research question and sub-questions two and three are grounded in the uses and gratifications theory because this theory will help to explain why members of generation Y in Canada are drawn to certain media to fulfill their needs. These two sub-questions focus on how political satire shows are perceived and what they offer to the

viewer. These sub-questions deal with why this generation chooses this form of media as opposed to the alternatives.

Methodology and Operationalization

This study was qualitative in nature because it interpreted and attempted to make sense of a phenomenon. The phenomenological research design fits well with a project such as this one, that involves recognizing the essence of human experiences regarding a phenomenon, in this case generation Y's views of political satire shows. Phenomenology is concerned with understanding the perspectives of the participants taking part in the study (Creswell, 2013). It is important to note that this methodology does not speak to causality or influence but rather observes patterns and sequences of behaviour. This research design will be employed because it provides an understanding of the themes and patterns portrayed by the responses of the participants. This study utilized a focus group format consisting of two sessions containing carefully selected participants.

This study recruited the participation of two groups of university students from the Integrated System of Participation in Research Program (ISPR) at the University of Ottawa who were members of generation Y. Students recruited for this study needed to be aware of the events taking place in the political arena and watch or have watched both traditional news as well as *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. The questions posed were open-ended, thus allowing participants to give detailed responses which were documented by the researcher.

Rationale for Research

The rationale of this proposed study rests on the fact that there are few studies conducted within the Canadian context regarding political satire and generation Y.

Preliminary research has shown that there have been so few studies done concerning the Canadian political satire show *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and the political attitudes of generation Y. Studies regarding the influence of political satire shows have thus far only been conducted in the United States and center on generation X and Y. The focus of these studies has been based on American satire shows such as *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* or *The Colbert Report* (see Ladd, 2006; Baumgartner & Morris, 2008; LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam, 2009; Polk, Young, & Holbert, 2009; Hmielowski, Holbert, & Lee, 2011; Hoffman & Young, 2011; Lee, 2012; Hoffman, 2013; Holbert, Tchernev, Walther, Esralew, & Benski, 2013).

The motivation behind this projected study is the notion that perhaps Canadian political satire shows, much like those in the United States, could help influence this new generation of voters by speaking to their needs and issues. This trend of political satire shows impacting the public sphere as well as potentially influencing activities in the political arena is a dynamic and growing trend. Ultimately, it would be interesting to explore this innovative movement within the Canadian context and center it on generation Y.

As this study employs a qualitative research design, it will seek to uncover meaning and understand the intangible aspects of this research topic. This design is important to this study because it will shed a greater light on the capability for society and culture to shape people's behaviours (Creswell, 2013). The justification for this phenomenological research design is that it will allow this thesis to delve deeper and make it easier for participants to describe their feelings, opinions and reactions to this Canadian political satire show.

By understanding the underlying factors of this phenomenon, perhaps this research can fill in the existing gaps in this field of research. It was stated that “experimental studies examining media effects and political measures have had limited success explaining the complex relationships between these variables, primarily due to the inherent difficulty in determining the direction of causation” (Sohar, 2005, p. 56). Using an in-depth approach and examining it from a Canadian perspective, this research hopes to probe deeper and gain a better understanding of the influential factors residing in this interrelated relationship.

Potential Contributions to the Field of Study

Research has been done in the United States and in Canada on generation X’s and Y’s attitudes toward political satire and, in turn, their political participation. Thus far, there have been studies on generation Y and political satire shows in the Canadian context (Reilly, 2011) but there have been few studies conducted on generation Y in relation to *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, notably in terms of the meanings attached to this program. This research will illuminate how generation Y in Canada views this political satire show compared to traditional news.

Addressing the proposed research question is of value because it will seek to provide greater understanding of this generation’s views toward political programming. The findings of this project will add to the existing research on political satire shows but will also contribute new information since the study results will reflect the views of a unique demographic. The results may also help us to speculate about a potential connection between certain programming and generation Y’s political participation,

which may include: voting, protesting, volunteering for certain political parties, being aware of the issues and different party platforms as well as party developments.

Structure of the Thesis

The following segment of this thesis illustrates the structure of this study. This section provides a succinct yet detailed overview of all the components of each chapter of this thesis.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

This chapter begins by defining the concepts of generation Y, infotainment participation and engagement. The theoretical framework used in this study will be described in this section. Prior studies and relevant literature on the issue will be critically reviewed in this section. The literature review will describe generation Y and the recent trend of this generation favouring political satire programs. This section also illustrates the role and perceived influence that these shows have on generation Y's attitudes. This chapter demonstrates how this study will fill in the gaps in the existing literature and connects this study to the broader discussion taking place within the current literature.

Chapter Three – Methodology

In addition to outlining the research strategy, the methodology section describes the details of the focus group discussions. This section outlines the sampling criteria, the procedures and the coding schemes that were used to thematically analyze the data. This section will delve further into the data analysis techniques that were used to organize and categorize the data. This section will also shed light on how certain patterns were identified. This section will ultimately justify the strategies and techniques that were implemented.

Chapter Four – Results and Analysis

The results and analysis section summarizes the important patterns and themes attained through the focus group discussions. An in-depth discussion of those results will be present in this portion of the thesis. This section attempts to link back to the research questions by drawing on key findings and presenting participant quotes. This section attempts to make linkages with past studies on the subject matter, which were presented in the literature review portion of the paper.

Chapter Five – Conclusion

Chapter five reviews the key aspects of this study and explains the relevance of the findings in the field of political communication. This chapter presents the limitations of this study and suggests potential pathways for future research.

Chapter 2

Background/Theory/Literature Review

This literature review will begin by defining the central concepts: generation Y, infotainment, participation and engagement. From there, the literature review will move towards examining the uses and gratifications theoretical perspective. Afterwards, an examination of the media uses of generation Y will be presented, which will be followed by an exploration of political socialization. The literature concerning political socialization will be broken down into the following themes: perception of credibility, information processing and acquisition, media effects and media effects in relation to political participation.

This chapter will conclude by citing where the most relevant literature has left off and where this study will begin. There will then be a discussion concerning the grounds for this research, in terms of its objectives. There will also be a justification as to how answering the central research question will contribute to the existing knowledge base pertaining to this phenomenon.

Operational Definitions

There are two definitions of generation Y: Weiler (2005) defines generation Y as the generation born between 1980 and 1994; and Howe and Strauss (2000) who have a slightly extended definition of generation Y as those born between 1982 and 2000. Both these definitions are valid to this study and both ultimately indicate that this is the generation that has grown up in the technology era and is accustomed to receiving the majority of their news via new media.

This group is a key target demographic in contemporary society and the need to understand them has become increasingly important, specifically when it comes to civic participation. As McCrindle (2003) noted, “by understanding what today’s youth most value, we can determine how to most effectively engage with them” (p. 3). When attempting to understand why (if so) this generation seeks out non-traditional news media over traditional news and how this generation identifies with these types of shows one must first have a firm grasp of what this generation values.

There are a variety of definitions pertaining to infotainment but for the purpose of this thesis the following definition will be adopted:

In recent years media scholars have noted the blurring of the line between informational programming, or “hard news,” and entertainment content. As traditional hard news has become increasingly driven by consideration of entertainment value, perhaps to combat sagging rates of attention among readers and viewers, and entertainment programs take on more serious topics, the resulting admixture has been dubbed ‘infotainment’ (Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005, p. 113).

This definition will be used to explain the phenomenon of political satire programs such as *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and its influence over the target population, as reflected in the discussions with generation Y.

With respect to participation, this study will employ Putnam’s (2001) definition which includes:

...contacting local and national officials, working for political parties and other political organizations, discussing politics with our neighbors, attending public meetings, joining in election campaigns, wearing buttons, signing petitions, speaking out on talk radio, and many more (p. 31).

Due to the fact that this study is looking at the broader idea of participation, it is important to incorporate the following addition to this definition, which states that

political participation is defined as the traditional as well as the non-traditional actions conducted to influence decisions made in the political sphere (O'Neill, 2006).

When discussing the notion of engagement, this study will utilize the following definition that specifically deals with civic engagement:

Civic engagement is normally defined to include psychological engagement in civil society. Common measures of civic engagement include such indicators as political interest, media consumption and political knowledge, in that these provide a measure of the degree to which citizens are mentally participating in society. On the whole, civic engagement refers to the actions, beliefs and knowledge that link citizens to their societies and that establish the basis for cooperative behaviour (O'Neill, 2006, p. 5).

Clarifying these operational definitions is integral to this study and will prove to be quite critical in following chapters. The subsequent section will examine the evolution and key tenets of the uses and gratifications theory.

Theoretical Framework

The Uses and Gratifications Theory. The uses and gratifications theory attempts to understand how and why people use certain media to fulfill their needs. This theory can be linked back to Lasswell's (1948) communication model that famously asks: "who says what in which channel to whom with what effect." Lasswell recognized that mass media texts served three functions for people: surveillance (gain information), correlation (how the media interprets the information) and cultural transmission (how norms, rules and values are communicated). Later, Wright (1960) added entertainment as a fourth function (the media's ability to provide escapism). Maslow (1970) suggested that the uses and gratifications theory was an extension of his Hierarchy of Needs in which motivation is the outcome of someone trying to fulfill five basic needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization.

The uses and gratifications theory was ultimately first coined by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) to explain how people use the media to meet certain needs and goals. People are seen as goal-oriented and living amongst many forms of communication available to them (Blumler, 1979; Ball-Rokeach, 1998). In addition to the theory, Blumer (1979) composed a list of activities that audiences were doing while interacting with various forms of media. It was noted that the two main motives behind media use were the need for information and entertainment (McQuail, 1987). McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972) suggested that the various motivations behind people's viewership and media uses could be categorized into four main media gratifications: diversion (using media as an escape from routine life), personal relationships (using media as a substitute for real life interactions), personal identity (seeing themselves in the programs as well as acquiring values and behaviours) and surveillance (using media to fulfill their need for information).

The uses and gratifications theory of communication research, sought to examine "the gratifications that attract and hold audiences to the kinds of media and the types of content that satisfy their social and psychological needs" (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 3). Primary research wanted to understand what drew people to the media and the information that fulfilled their deepest needs. Ruggiero (2000) also noted that "other media effects research sought to discover motives and selection patterns of audiences for the new mass media" (p. 4). Early research with respect to this theory dealt more with categorizing the reactions of audiences in an explanatory manner.

It was noted that "work in this area has tried to answer the question of why individuals choose to attend to particular media channels or types of content and what

gratifications they expect and gain as a result of these interactions” (Shah, Kwak, & Holbert, 2001, p. 469). It is important to note that people have different needs that, according to Miller and Landau (2005), can stem from age, social status and even personalities.

The idea of a passive viewer or inactive audience was brought forth with regard to this theory. It has been suggested that one may not always necessarily gain the gratifications they sought to achieve through their media use. Some people use the media to be entertained and not informed. Through a political lens, according to Brewer and Cao (2006), viewers may be unintentionally informed about campaigns or politics while trying to seek out amusing programs.

While insightful the uses and gratifications theory does possess several limitations. The following section will delve into the criticisms and restrictions of this theoretical framework.

Criticisms. While exploring the critiques of the uses and gratifications theory Ruggiero (2000) noted:

The earliest researchers for the most part did not attempt to explore the links between the gratifications detected and the psychological or sociological origins of the needs satisfied. They often failed to search for the interrelations among the various media functions, either quantitatively or conceptually, in a manner that might have led to the detection of the latent structure of media gratifications (p. 5).

Past research needed to take a step back and evaluate the important factors of this field of study in order to gain more accurate results as well as formulate a more complete picture of uses and gratifications. Ruggiero (2000) noted that:

Criticisms of early U&G research focus on the fact that it (a) relied heavily on self-reports, (b) was unsophisticated about the social origin of the needs that audiences bring to the media, (c) was too uncritical of the possible dysfunction both for self and society of certain kinds of audience satisfaction, and (d) was too

captivated by the inventive diversity of audiences used to pay attention to the constraints of the text (p. 5).

Scholars Elliott (1974), Lometti, Reeves and Bybee (1977) and Swanson (1987), have critiqued this theory and suggested that it continues to be plagued by four critical theoretical issues. These theoretical drawbacks include: “(a) a vague conceptual framework, (b) a lack of precision in major concepts, (c) a confused explanatory apparatus, and (d) a failure to consider audiences’ perceptions of media content” (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 6). For researchers implementing this theoretical framework these criticisms highlight important concerns that should be taken into account. Necessary measures need to be taken by the researcher in order to make sure that they have a solid conceptual framework, accuracy when it comes to their major concepts as well as concrete and refined research questions in which to ground their study.

Several modern-day critiques of this theory challenge the assumptions that “(a) media selection initiated by the individual; (b) expectations for media use that are produced from individual predispositions, social interaction, and environmental factors; and (c) active audiences with goal-directed media behaviour” (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994, cited in Ruggiero, 2000, p. 11). One of the most criticized aspects of this theory is its assumption of an active audience. The uses and gratifications theory assumes that audiences are free to select the media and the interpretations they want.

This theory presumes that audiences are aware of the reasons behind their media use and when asked can provide them. This theory seems to be too individualist and does not adequately reflect the influence of the media environment in general. This theory does not take into account that audiences are not the same and that age may be an important factor to consider since audiences of a certain age may have differing reasons

for using media as well they may possess differing gratifications. The concept of audiences of different ages in relation to this theory will be elaborated on in the following sections, notably looking at generation Y.

With the key tenets and critiques of this theory in place, the following section will examine the literature on how generation Y acquires as well as seeks out information through their media use.

Generation Y's Media Use

Hooghe (2004) noted that the media use among this generation was skewed to more non-traditional news media when it came to garnering political information.

Hooghe (2004) examined the current pattern with regard to this generation and politics, which showed:

A trend toward lower degrees of partisanship, increasing voter volatility, a greater reliance on electronic mass media to obtain political information, and probably (although the evidence is not yet entirely conclusive on these two accounts) lower turnout figures and lower institutional trust (p. 339).

Hooghe's (2004) study is vital to this thesis in that it provides a Canadian perspective on generation Y's unique upbringing in this technological era and their political interests. Hooghe's (2004) study will prove to be quite invaluable when looking to draw parallels between the small sample size of generation Y in Canada in this thesis to the demographic in Hooghe's (2004) study when looking at media use and political interests.

As mentioned by Hooghe (2004), a defining characteristic of generation Y is that this generation is the first to grow up in the technological era and the majority of information that they gain comes from some form of new media (Hollister, 2013).

When it comes to selecting sources for political news and updates, this generation appears to favour political satire shows. Generation Y seems to be more familiar with this brand of comedy and appreciates the humourous stance these shows take on current issues. For example, “many generation Y individuals even cite Colbert and Stewart as their main source for news reporting” (Hollister, 2013, p. 164).

This thesis is looking at both traditional and non-traditional news media use by members of generation Y with respect to political news. The study conducted by Hollister (2013) is crucial to this thesis because it presents a comparable stance of generation Y favouring non-traditional news media, specifically in the form of political satire shows, when attempting to obtain political information.

It was mentioned by Gangadharbatla, Bright and Logan (2014), however, that while this generation does turn to mass media for news rather than traditional news media, it does hold traditional news media on a high pedestal when it comes to the issue of credibility. In reference to their study, Gangadharbatla, Bright and Logan (2014) declared that:

This study confirmed the popular notions in trade press that young adults are increasingly turning to social media for news rather than using traditional media such as print newspapers, magazines, and radio. Interestingly, however, despite their preference for using social media for news gathering, young adults still perceive traditional media as more credible news sources than social media (p. 60).

Generation Y seeks out traditional news media sources for credible content over non-traditional news media. Gangadharbatla, Bright and Logan (2014) stated “that young adults are more likely to perceive news content from traditional sources as more credible than news content on social media”(Gangadharbatla et al., 2014, p. 57).

In relation to cognition, members of generation Y with an increased need for learning or apprehension of the news tend to be more likely to seek out traditional news than those with a decreased need. It was stated that “results suggest that individuals with a high need for cognition are likely to choose newspaper websites and individuals with low need for cognition are likely to choose print magazines” (Gangadharbatla et al., 2014, p. 59).

Gangadharbatla, Bright and Logan’s (2014) research puts forth the notion that this generation does tend to gravitate more toward non-traditional news media; however, with respect to credibility and cognition this generation tends to lean more toward traditional news media to be informed. This research will be important to this study, because how this demographic perceives traditional and non-traditional news media in relation to credibility ties back to a key sub-research question of this thesis.

Ultimately concepts related to media use by generation Y are not definitive and depend on members of the cohort being studied as well as what they seek to gain from the media in question. With respect to this study, understanding generation Y’s media use connects to the idea of political socialization. Through the lens of the uses and gratifications theory the following sections of this literature review will explore how members of generation Y form political attitudes and participate politically.

Political Socialization

It is important when discussing the uses and gratifications theory that one also considers the notion of political socialization. As noted by Atkin (1975), political socialization is “a developmental process by which children and adolescents acquire cognitions, attitudes and behaviors relating to their political environment” (p. 2). Political

environment can include political media; this relates to the concept of seeking out certain media in order to become more political informed or gain political knowledge.

Atkin's (1975) study will be beneficial to this thesis because it expands on the uses and gratifications theory to examine the political socialization of generation Y, especially through media, and how this in turn shapes generation Y's ability to become politically informed.

Young people cite media as key sources of their political information and even state that the media do have a considerable influence on their political views (Chaffee & Yang, 1990). In terms of political socialization, this demographic uses media to connect interpersonally, to groups and to the political system at large (Chaffee & Yang, 1990).

Chaffee and Yang's (1990) research is important because it looks at the ability of the media to facilitate the connection between generation Y and the political realm, which is a key component of this thesis. Chaffee and Yang's (1990) study is important to this thesis because it explores the extent to which the media is seen as a source for political information and its ability to shape the political views of this generation, both of these elements are at the core of this thesis.

With regard to the idea of political satire and younger generations, it has been noted that while this demographic does consult traditional news media for political knowledge, they have an affinity for sensationalism. This demographic, therefore also seeks out media that can provide this thrill that they desire (Arnett, 1995).

Arnett's (1995) study is significant because it addresses the fact that while this generation does look to traditional news media to become politically informed non-traditional news media provide an element of excitement that this generation craves. This

concept illustrates one of the fundamental principles of the uses and gratifications theory, which suggests that people look to certain media to fulfill their needs. This study highlights a unique facet of this demographic which can be compared with the cohort of this thesis.

Shah, McLeod and Yoon (2001) elaborated on the notion of media use and civic engagement, illustrating the importance of patterns of media use and the complexities of modern media:

Research on the topic of media use and civic engagement must be attentive to patterns of use, not simply hours of use...given today's multifold media environments, communication variables must be conceptualized and operationalized with increasing care (p. 465).

Ultimately, it is how people use certain media and the reasons behind their usage that affects their civic engagement.

Qin (2008) explored the uses and gratifications and political information that young adults derive from traditional news media as well as late night comedy programs.

When examining the notion of political information it was noted that:

Young watchers of comedy news programs who have the intention to learn and gain knowledge will be more inclined to get involved with the show and elaborate on the information it presents for surveillance purposes. Their cognitive processing might be at a higher level, they are more affectively involved, and are more likely to demonstrate a behavioral response (Qin, 2008, p. 9).

Through the exploration of this theory in relation to political socialization among generation Y, there seems to be indications which suggest that, when it comes to media the extent of audience activity is ingrained in the gratifications wanted and achieved.

There seems to be indications which imply that the reasons behind media use determine the amount of audience engagement; thus levels of audience activity would then decide how much media is used and the degree to which gratifications are achieved (Qin, 2008).

Qin's (2008) research is important since it relates the theoretical framework to the political information that this generation acquires from traditional and non-traditional news media. Much like this thesis Qin's (2008) study explores the motives behind media use and audience engagement.

Curnalia and Mermer (2013) examined how uses and gratifications motives forecasts media use. They explored how the political attitudes and norms of generation Y were connected to political news usage:

Most notable, younger groups felt more normative pressure but less efficacy to follow political news. The older respondents reported using traditional news more, reported spending more time following political news, and reported using more types of news media to follow politics, though they used newer forms of political news media less often than the younger demographic (Curnalia & Mermer, 2013, p. 75).

Through exploring the uses and gratifications theory as it pertains to political socialization, it seems as though this generation seeks out newer non-traditional news media sources more for their political information. This theory is critical to the study because it fosters the proper framework needed to understand the rationale behind an individual's media choices and usage, as well as how this contributes to their political participation.

Curnalia and Mermer's (2013) study is important to this thesis because it observes the theoretical framework in relation to the political socialization of generation Y. This study also provides an account of how this demographic looks toward non-traditional news media for political information, which can be compared with the findings from the sample in this thesis.

Rankin (2013) contends similarly that this generation "continues to demonstrate much higher levels of community volunteerism than engagement in the very national

level issues that appear to captivate their attention, presenting a potential disconnect between community involvement and active political participation” (p.14). While there is more civic engagement at the micro-level, there seems to be less at the macro-level of politics. On the macro scale, this generation does not seem to be as involved as other generations.

Rankin’s (2013) research discusses the notion of political involvement and engagement, which links back to a significant sub-research question posed in this thesis. This sub-research question deals with the political attitudes of members of generation Y.

The following section will expand on this idea of political socialization beginning with the Canadian context. The subsequent literature pertains to the diffusion of political culture to generation Y in the Canadian context.

Political Socialization and Generation Y in Canada. Hooghe (2004) described how this generation seems to be less interested and informed about politics than generations that have come before them. Hooghe (2004) stated that “in this Canadian study, young people do not seem to be more cynical about politics than older citizens. What does seem to matter, however, are political interest and political knowledge, as both of these indicators clearly show lower scores for young people” (p. 338). While cynicism toward politics is not greater among generation Y than their elders, in contemporary society this generation does show signs of distrust and cynicism toward political intuitions as well toward politicians (Hooghe, 2004).

This generation generally does not tend to deeply identify with certain parties over others. Hooghe (2004) noted that partisanship and party affiliation tends to become more intrinsic to people’s lives as they age due their lived experiences.

When it comes to the political participation of this generation, they do not seem to possess the same involvement as previous generations did when they were their age. It was mentioned that:

Young people are not just less interested in voting and in party politics, they are also less likely to get engaged in various other forms of civic engagement, and they are more distrusting toward political institutions. Not only are they less civically engaged than older age groups, but they are also less likely to participate than the generation of their parents were 20 or 30 years ago (Hooghe, 2004, p. 332).

A relationship does exist between generation Y and the political realm. Unlike previous generations, this generation is a lot less formal when it comes to their civic involvement. Hooghe (2004) argued that it “should not be taken to mean that young people have lost interest in politics and public affairs. Rather, they prefer more informal ways of participating in politics, espousing more lifestyle-related and loosely structured forms of civic engagement” (p. 332). This generation is unique in that they take politics into account in everyday activities, for instance when shopping for goods.

In this instance, Hooghe’s (2004) research is important because it examines the political interest and political knowledge levels of generation Y in Canada. This research also explores the role that politics plays in the lives of members of generation Y, which is what this thesis hopes to evaluate as well by assessing the meanings that members of this generation attach to the political satire program *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*.

The following section will narrow the focus of political socialization in relation to generation Y by examining generation Y and political satire shows. This section will be further segmented into four key themes: perceptions of credibility; information processing and acquisition; media effects; and media effects in relation to political participation.

Generation Y and Political Satire Shows

The subsequent literature is based on examples from the United States, therefore one must bear in mind that, due to cultural as well as societal differences, these cases do not necessarily reflect those of the Canadian landscape. The first concept that will be explored will be the perceptions of credibility.

Perceptions of Credibility. Becker, Xenos and Waisanen (2010) sought to comprehend why young people turn to political comedy shows and understand their perceptions of these programs. “As young Americans increasingly turn to political comedy programs like *The Daily Show*, scholars should seek to understand viewers’ perceptions of these shows” (p. 144). The central purpose of this study was to increase the level of understanding concerning younger generations’ opinions and perceptions about political satire shows. Political satire programs such as *The Daily Show* were perceived by the sample in the Becker et al., study as a partisan program. Results seemed to suggest that people perceived this show as being more aligned with democratic or liberal views and this alignment seemed to impact viewers’ perceptions of this show. Those whose views match up with those of these types of shows seem to have favourable perceptions in relation to these types of programs.

Much like one of the key sub-research questions of this thesis, the study by Becker, Xenos and Waisanen’s (2010) also looked at trying to comprehend the opinions and perceptions regarding political satire shows from the point of view of members of generation Y. Furthermore, this study is important when examining the reasons behind these perceptions.

Shanks's (2010) study dealt with how credible young people perceive political satire shows. Shanks touched on the idea of credibility while analyzing audiences' perceptions of political satire in comparison to traditional news. Shanks commented on the current level of distrust that people have toward traditional news media and how they are seeking alternative sources for information. The study focused on the fact that shows like *The Daily Show* seem to have emerged as credible sources for news information. *The Daily Show* was rated fairly similar to traditional or mainstream news and in general was not rated as being less credible.

Another significant finding of the Shanks (2010) study was the fact that, based on the political affiliation of the participants (most of which were of the conservative viewpoint), this show was still considered as reliable as traditional news. An intriguing finding that emerged from this study was that participants of this experiment did not exhibit any bias towards the show. It was stated that this could be due to the fact that "opinions of the show are either unformed or formed by outside stimuli that do not necessarily undermine *The Daily Show's* credibility as a news source" (p. 36). Ultimately, *The Daily Show* is regarded as possessing the same degree of credibility as any other news source. Shanks's (2010) research is vital because it evaluates the credibility of non-traditional news media in comparison with traditional news media. This concept touches on a fundamental sub-research question presented in this thesis.

Vraga, Edgerly, Bode, Carr, Bard, Johnson and Shah (2012) wanted to address the issue of credibility as it relates to political satire programs. They sought to question whether "a host as correspondent alter perceptions of (a) host credibility, (b) program credibility, (c) general media trust, and (d) program information value compared to the

host as comic and host as combatant” (Vraga et al., 2012, p. 10). They wished to examine how young people perceive these shows and if they find them to be a credible source of information. A strong correlation exists between the approach used by the host and the audiences’ perception of the show’s credibility. It was noted that:

Even young audiences have developed their expectations about the host’s role in accordance with this ideal, which they apply when judging media performance. It seems political talk shows sustain perceptions of media credibility when hosts remain dispassionate in advancing the debate between their partisan guests (Vraga et al., 2012, p. 15).

It seemed that younger demographics associated credibility to political satire shows that resembled traditional news media styles, with the host remaining impassive or maintaining an air of professionalism.

Vraga, Edgerly, Bode, Carr, Bard, Johnson and Shah’s (2012) study is valuable to this research’s examination of credibility. This study is relevant when looking at how members of this generation classify *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* based on its style and layout; thereby echoing two of the sub-research questions outlined in this thesis.

The concept of credibility is closely tied to how generation Y acquires and processes political information. The following section will investigate further into the information processing and acquisition of this generation.

Information Processing and Acquisition. Baum (2003) argued that one must broaden the definition of learning or acquiring political knowledge and not simply limit it to people’s ability to retain information. This study’s central purpose was to delve into the notion that political satire shows or soft news do have an effect on viewers’ information processing and acquisition of new information when it comes to politics. Research suggested that consuming soft news increases viewers’ interest in learning more

about the issues. Soft news does have an effect on the acquisition of political knowledge mostly when it comes to well-known issues. Baum (2003) did contend however, that consumption of hard news is more widespread when it comes to increasing political knowledge, whereas soft news is more limited and selective in its coverage.

Baum's (2003) research is imperative to this study because it examines the elements of political knowledge and acquisition of generation Y. This reiterates the central tenets of the uses and gratifications theory and one of the vital sub-research questions of this thesis, which deals with *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*' ability to speak more toward the informative needs of generation Y.

Kim and Vishak (2008) investigated the issue of political information processing and acquisition in media by comparing traditional and non-traditional news media outlets. The purpose of this study was to see if different patterns of political information processing and acquisition were formed when comparing these two types of news media. The study also wanted to assess how these patterns affected generation Y's ability to form political judgements. Findings indicated that non-traditional news media outlets were less effective in comparison to traditional news when it came to acquisition of factual information. Traditional news was ranked as being more successful vis-à-vis retention and processing knowledge. Results indicated that when promoting memory-based political information processing, traditional media fared a lot better while non-traditional news media seemed to promote online-based political information processing (Kim and Vishak, 2008). Pertaining to the issue of political judgements, watching non-traditional news media do not significantly impact the way in which respondents formed accurate judgments or made sound decisions concerning politics.

The study by Kim and Vishak (2008) is crucial because it touches on two of the sub-research questions presented in this thesis. One of the sub-research questions which concerns the educational needs of this generation and the other which concerns *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*' ability to shape the political attitudes of this generation.

Young and Hoffman (2009) also addressed the issue of information processing and political knowledge acquisition by uncovering how much political knowledge young people acquire from watching political satire shows as opposed to traditional news shows. Knowledge gained from *The Daily Show* was restricted to the information viewed and did not extend beyond the parameters of the show. Young and Hoffman's (2009) study is important to this thesis because it illustrates the political information and acquisition of generation Y when exposed to traditional and non-traditional news media, which is a concept that will be analyzed in this thesis.

Traditional news media outlets are more effective with regards to information processing and acquisition than their counterparts. The first two studies argued that with traditional news media viewers' retention of factual political knowledge is higher. It was also argued that political knowledge is increased due to traditional news media's extensive coverage of the issues taking place. However as Baum's (2003) study pointed out soft news does have an affect on viewers' acquisition of political knowledge albeit less than traditional news and only concerning popular issues, this point could be explored further in this current study.

Perhaps the gap that this thesis could fill in the existing literature could be to understand how members of generation Y in Canada process and acquire political

information, specifically with relation to *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. This study can also evaluate the show's effectiveness in this area of study.

By understanding how this cohort acquires and internalizes the media in relation to politics, one must also examine the effect that this has over their attitudes toward politics. The following section will delve into the existing literature on the effect of political satire shows with respect to generation Y.

Media Effects. Baumgartner and Morris (2006) examined the implications of political satire or infotainment shows on young Americans in terms of political attitudes. They wanted to observe if there was a correlation between viewing these types of programs and the public opinion of this group with respect to politics. They found that political satire shows' influence over attitudes or opinions only occurred to the students within their sample who had never watched the show prior to the time of the study. These shows can alter the attitudes or public opinion of this group with regards to the political system or political candidates, but only if they are recent viewers. They suggested that other shows such as *The Daily Show* can have the same effect on this demographic. They noted that viewing shows such as *The Daily Show*, which express political satire and humour, can decrease this group's support for candidates, as well as enhance their pessimism toward politics, especially for newer viewers. The research by Baumgartner and Morris (2006) explored the ramifications that political satire shows had on this generation with respect to political attitudes. This notion is essential because it relates heavily to the fourth sub-research question of this thesis.

Qin (2008) examined the political attitudes of members of generation Y. There was a positive link between watching traditional news media and political attitudes. The

more they were exposed to this form of programming, the more positive their attitudes were toward politics. Qin (2008) noted:

That network news programs are still considered trustworthy and credible sources of political information that help bring about a healthy national discourse about politics. In contrast, the data showed no significant correlation between attitude toward politics and exposure to late night comedy shows. These two variables were found to be unrelated, suggesting that more exposure to comedy shows may not have any influence on attitude toward politics (p. 57).

Being exposed to political satire shows did not yield the same positive results when it came to political attitudes. Continued exposure to these shows did not really ameliorate this generation's political attitudes in fact it was discovered that there was no data to support the claim that the more people watch late night shows the more positive their attitudes with regard to politics will become (Qin, 2008). In this instance, Qin's (2008) study is pertinent to this thesis since it touches on two key sub-research questions. One question which concerns the idea of credibility and the other which explores the political attitudes of this generation.

Becker (2011) observed political satire shows' ability to alter viewers' political trust in order to gain a more concrete understanding of how exposure to these types of shows could impact this demographics' view toward politics in terms of trust and internal political efficacy. In lieu of just examining the exposure of these shows, Becker (2011) probed deeper into the effects that these shows have on political efficacy. This study wanted to provide a more complete view of this issue by looking at the correlations between political satire shows, traditional news media and political trust, as well as the political attitudes of young viewers. Becker (2011) stated that watching political satire shows and watching traditional news positively impacts the political trust of younger viewers. When young viewers were exposed to either traditional news media or political

satire programs, the exposure had a positive influence on their political efficacy. By watching these programs, younger viewers feel they have a better understanding of politics and as a result participate in politics. The influence that these shows have on this demographic seems to foster a healthier democracy.

Becker's (2011) research is significant because it expresses the concept of how this generation's political attitudes and efficacy are being shaped through exposure to political satire shows. This concept is reflective of the fourth sub-research question brought forth in this thesis.

Roth (2012) looked at attitude changes among younger audiences while watching political satire shows or infotainment programs in comparison to watching traditional news media in order to see if younger audiences thought about politics or world issues differently after viewing either one. Roth (2012) believed that there was no evidence to suggest that young people's attitudes toward politics were swayed by either. Ultimately, this demographic does not seem view events taking place in the public sphere in a negative light due to watching these shows.

The study conducted by Roth (2012) examined the attitude changes of this generation through viewing traditional and non-traditional news media. This study is important especially when comparing the findings of this study to those that will be obtained in this thesis. This study is also significant because it touches upon the fourth sub-research question presented in this thesis.

Andreycak (2013) attempted to explore the issue of political satire's influence over young viewers' political attitudes by taking it a step further and exploring if these shows make these viewers more sceptical about politics, as well as the media. Andreycak

(2013) poses the question of whether *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* make audiences more cynical about politics and the media. Andreycaak (2013) concluded that those who viewed these shows regularly appeared to be more sceptical rather than cynical about issues within the political realm, conspiracy theories and events in the scientific community. Those who were fans of these programs specified that they were cognisant of political events, read the news and were even more politically involved than their counterparts. This result seemed to suggest that people were questioning, getting more involved and looking to improve society, thereby fostering a better democracy.

Andreycaak's research connects directly to the fourth sub-research question of this thesis.

Fans of these programs were able to feel that they were aware of the events taking place in politics and within the government as opposed to those who were not fans of the show. With regards to shifts in attitude due to viewing these shows, Andreycaak (2013) found that those who watched these programs and those who did not had not exhibited any negative attitudes toward the government or politics in general as a result of their viewership. This conflicts with the results of Baumgartner and Morris's (2006) study, which denoted a negative change in attitude in those who were newer viewers of *The Daily Show*.

In terms of the media organizations, both those who watched these shows and those that did not seemed to trust these organizations. It is important to note however, that those who did watch those shows tended to be more trusting of journalists and would watch the news for political information or developments within the government.

Overall, studies seem to vary in their stance on political satire shows' influence over the political attitudes of younger viewers. Baumgartner and Morris (2006) and

Andreycak (2013) agreed that political satire shows did impact the attitudes of this demographic more so than those who did not watch these types of shows. Baumgartner and Morris (2006) also noted a positive effect by way of this generation questioning, getting more involved and wanting to improve areas in the political system that seem to be lacking. Through internal political efficacy and a healthy sense of scepticism brought on by these shows, a better democracy can unfold. Becker (2011), however, found that both political satire and traditional news media shows impact the political trust of younger viewers. Roth (2012) felt that this generation's attitudes toward politics were not influenced by traditional news nor political satire shows. This current study would like to observe if there is a potential prominent link between Canadian political satire shows and their influence over generation Y in Canada with respect to their political attitudes.

While exploring the media effects and influence of political satire shows over the attitudes of this demographic, it is also imperative to investigate how this influence translates into action such as political participation. The subsequent literature will examine the attitudinal effects of these programs on political involvement.

Media Effects in Relation to Political Participation. With respect to the effect of infotainment on political participation, there are examples to suggest that a positive correlation exists between these two entities. It has been argued that “soft news creates a more knowledgeable citizenry by educating an inattentive public that would not otherwise follow traditional hard news” (Baum, 2003, p. 342). These types of shows help to reach those who perhaps do not watch the news and are unaware of the issues taking place. Baum (2003) suggested that, “even inattentive viewers receive valuable information as an ‘incidental by-product’ of exposure to soft news” (Baum, 2003, p. 30).

As a result of simply watching these programs, people can become informed and acquire useful knowledge about current events.

The research done by Baum (2003) explores the concept of how political satire shows alter the political participation of generation Y and educate members of this generation who do not adhere to traditional news media. This study is crucial because it relates to the third sub-research question of this thesis which examines if viewers of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* believe themselves to be alienated from traditional news media and how this show more adequately addresses their needs. This study also reiterates the key elements of the theoretical framework.

Prior (2003) proposed that infotainment programs have a modest impact on soft news knowledge and that traditional or hard news formats possess a higher capacity of informing people. This seems to be the case because, in comparison with traditional news, infotainment does not seem to adequately communicate the hard news information to viewers. An inclination toward soft news may not be the most ideal choice if one wishes to constantly acquire the most accurate political knowledge (Prior, 2003). It is important to note that “this low knowledge informing level of infotainment programs does not necessarily mean that viewers do not learn anything from soft news programs” (Qin, 2008, p. 11).

Prior’s study (2003) looked at how traditional and non-traditional news media inform members of generation Y. This study tends to align with the theoretical perspective in this thesis, because it examines the motives behind viewership of these programs and the desired outcomes being achieved.

Cao and Brewer (2008) noted a positive link between those who watched political satire or infotainment shows and going to a campaign event, as well as becoming part of a political association. This illustrates that there is evidence indicating that there is a relationship between these shows and certain aspects of political engagement, which is important for this study's attempt to answer its fourth sub-research question regarding how *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* shapes the political attitudes of members of generation Y, notably in terms of political involvement.

Hariton (2011), as well, discussed the trend of political satire shows or infotainment shows and their impact on political participation rates. Hariton (2011) examined if there was a connection between these types of shows and of whether or not they promote an increase in political participation among younger viewers. Viewers are the ones who decide how influential these programs are on politics. Hariton (2011) noted that partisanship, possessing high levels of political knowledge and interest are all vital causes of political activism. The programs are encouraging devoted viewers of these shows to participate, but there is no palpable data suggesting that viewing these shows brings about political participation.

Kwak, Wang and Guggenheim (2011) examined if political satire shows, entertainment talk shows and political satire programs were effective when it came to political engagement. They sought to establish if these shows mattered for young people where political participation was concerned. They observed that these shows were important to young people's political participation. They found that the cynical representation of political news and information expressed by these shows seemed to impact younger viewers' participation since they look to these shows to be informed and

hold these shows in high esteem. This heavy reliance could potentially decrease this demographics' willingness to go out and exercise their right to vote.

Fu, Mou, Miller and Jalette (2011), on the other hand, addressed the issue of cynicism in relation to politics to see how political satire shows transform this cynicism into a call for action among young people. They explored the relationship between cynicism toward politics and political engagement. These types of shows stir emotions of cynicism among this target population more than traditional news media. Fu, Mou, Miller and Jalette (2011) found that political cynicism was closely tied to voter turn out among young people; they contend that, although cynical, this population can be politically stimulated under the right circumstances. These cynical people can be engaged politically because they are distrustful, making them spirited enough to take action as opposed to being indifferent and being politically inactive (Fu, Mou, Miller, & Jalette, 2011). Being cynical is positive in that it means that they still show some signs of interest toward politics.

Jacobs (2013) wanted to discover if a significant link was present between viewing political satire programs like *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* and an enhancement in political participation with respect to college-aged viewers. They found that those who watched these programs were generally more engrossed in politics and were more aware of the government campaigns. Students are more engaged politically through volunteering for a campaign and voting. Jacobs (2013) noted that those who were introduced to these programs showed signs of increased interest in politics and a willingness to get involved. According to Jacobs (2013), after unexpectedly being exposed to political satire shows young people seem to be more excited to become

politically involved, especially when compared to being suddenly exposed to traditional news media.

All in all, the majority of the literature presented on this theme of media effects in relation to political participation seems to suggest a prominent correlation between viewership and certain aspects of political activism among young people, as evidenced by Cao and Brewer (2008) and Jacobs (2013). This thesis hopes to somewhat bridge the gap within the existing literature and uncover if political satire shows within the Canadian context could have similar implications on the political involvement of generation Y. Using the program *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, this study would like to carefully examine the meanings that this generation associates with these types of shows and how that in turn affects their political engagement. This study would like to see if there are particular aspects of these shows that have more of an influence over political participation than others, such as the content, the hosts, etc.

As discussed by Kwak, Wang and Guggenheim (2011) and Fu, Mou, Miller and Jalette (2011), cynical portrayals of politics presented on these shows can have a positive or negative influence on the participation of young people. Using the Canadian framework, this current study would like to see if political satire shows' political cynicism translates into poor political turnout or can inspire political action among generation Y.

Generation Y and the Significance of Political Satire Shows

Finally, to illustrate what is at the heart of this research thesis, one must look at Sohar's (2005) study, which conducted a similar investigation to that of this study but focused on generation X. This study looked at what nuances and significance this cohort

placed upon *The Daily Show*. This study looked at similar elements explored above in this literature review. This study discovered that due to the conflicting information related to *The Daily Show* this cohort of generation X seems to have acquired an elevated intellect for assessing the information being presented to them. Sohar's (2005) findings also indicated that respondents seek out programs that align with their viewpoints. Sohar (2005) noted that the show "is a cost-effective method of acquiring political information, which is also in line with research on Gen X media habits" (p. 111). The cohort studied by Sohar (2005) seemed to view *The Daily Show* as more opinionated than objective and considered this program to be media satire or a news parody program. It is crucial to note that Sohar (2005) could not find clear indicators to distinguish *The Daily Show* from traditional news media among the cohort. Some of the participants regarded the show as entertainment while others felt it was a new brand of news programming.

Ultimately, this study hopes to examine aspects similar to those present in Sohar's (2005) study. This study hopes to acquire findings that reflect the perspective of members of generation Y and the meanings they associate with *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*.

This chapter examined the fundamental definitions of generation Y, infotainment, participation and engagement, which are at the core of this study's research questions. This section presented literature on the theory framing the central and sub-research questions of this study. This chapter investigated relevant fields of study such as the media use of generation Y and their political socialization. These areas of study were explored because they pertain to the questions evaluating this cohort's perceptions of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, their relationship to the program and how this particular medium shapes their attitude toward politics. This chapter analyzed previous literature which has

explored generation Y's relationship to political satire shows in order to help answer the overarching question concerning the meanings this generation associates with *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

Research Design

This study embraces a phenomenological approach in that it aims to understand the impact of and the meanings attached to Canadian political satire shows from the standpoint of generation Y. Data was derived using focus group discussions with students at the University of Ottawa who were members of generation Y in order to observe this topic from the perspective of this generation.

Phenomenology as stated by Moustakas (1994) is “the empirical phenomenological approach which involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience” (p. 13). Using this research design will yield a rich amount of data that can be analyzed in order to comprehend the fundamental nature of the chosen topic. This method will allow for personal accounts of Canadian political satire’s influence and an overall connection to this age bracket that would have not otherwise been achieved using another methodology.

Creswell (2013) noted “the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence. To this end, qualitative researchers identify a phenomenon” (p. 76). This method will allow for this study to condense generation Y’s experiences with Canadian political satire programs to a garner a more comprehensive description.

Phenomenology dictates that “the inquirer then collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence

of the experience for all of the individuals. This description consists of “what” they experienced and “how” they experienced it” (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). This methodology is instrumental to this thesis, given that it seeks to understand how generation Y experiences Canadian political satire programs.

There are two main approaches with regard to phenomenology: hermeneutical, which focuses more on the interpretations of the researcher, and transcendental; however, for the purpose of this study the transcendental form was applied. Transcendental phenomenology is “focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants” (Creswell, 2012, p. 80). This approach was used for this particular study because this thesis attempts to understand the meanings behind the participants’ experiences with Canadian political satire shows.

Creswell (2012) also added that:

Moustakas focuses on one of Husserl’s concepts, *epoche* (or bracketing), in which investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination. Hence, “transcendental” means “in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (p. 80).

This is precisely what this study aims to do. This study seeks to examine this phenomenon from a new angle and to mitigate the researcher’s personal experiences or judgements that may compromise the integrity of the study.

This form of phenomenology dictates that the researcher collects the data from the participants who experienced the phenomenon, processes and analyzes the information by compressing them into themes (Creswell, 2012). The study will gather the responses from members of generation Y, thoughtfully examine the data and organize them into themes from which to draw meanings.

Ultimately, this study decided to utilize a qualitative design – and specifically this phenomenological approach – because it will provide a fuller understanding of the topic. Moustakas (1994) noted that this approach is guided by the garnering of information through first-hand descriptions, through qualitative means such as interviews or focus groups. Through this method, one can seek meaning as well as essence of experience and view these descriptions of experience as essential clues to comprehending people’s behaviour. With respect to qualitative studies and methodologies, Moustakas stated that “they focus on the wholeness of experience rather than solely on its objects or parts” (p. 21). Thus one can see how these approaches evaluate certain latent and meaningful aspects of experiences, which are not reached through quantitative measures.

It is important to mention that this methodology possesses a few weaknesses, one of which relates to time. Phenomenology can be time consuming, especially when coding the data, categorizing the findings and analyzing the results. This researcher will make every effort to be as efficient as possible with regard to this limitation.

Another limitation of this method is that there is a risk that the researcher may not always observe a clear pattern when analyzing the data. This research will strive hard to delve deeper into the data in order to discover meaningful connections.

A crucial weakness of this method is researcher bias. It can be difficult for the researcher to curb their own personal biases, especially during the data collection stage. Some researcher biases include: hypothesizing about the results based on the researcher’s point of view and interviewer bias. In order to overcome biases and ethical issues certain strategies as well as considerations will be made. The researcher will avoid making assumptions prior to and during the data collection phase. The researcher will not use any

leading language, body language or tone of voice that may sway the responses of the participants. This research will aim to monitor for any signs of bias made by the researcher.

Methodological Approach

Focus group discussions were chosen as the appropriate method for this study because they allowed for detailed answers to be given and encouraged the expression of different points of view regarding the topic, thereby facilitating a thoughtful dialogue.

This study conducted two separate focus groups as suggested by Morgan (1997), who noted that when using focus groups it is recommended that a minimum of two focus groups be carried out in order to offset any prospective biases within one specific setting.

There are many definitions of focus groups, but this study will utilize the definitions of Krueger (1994) and Powell and Single (1996). Krueger (1994) noted that a focus group was “a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (p. 6). This study was committed to having meaningful discussions in a safe and welcoming setting. Powell and Single (1996) defined focus groups as “a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research” (p. 499). This study will involve these principles and will seek to achieve a discussion regarding the topic of political satire shows, as well as the participants’ views of them.

Powell and Single (1996) stated that “a focus group is composed of individuals with shared key characteristics pertinent to the study and comprises between six and ten

participants who are strangers to each other” (p. 500). The focus groups in this study contain all of these aspects in order to yield the best possible results.

This study involved focus groups made up of students from the Integrated System of Participation in Research Program who have seen *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. This study set out to have eight participants per session, with each session lasting approximately one hour. Open-ended questions were posed in order for participants give in-depth responses. These sessions focussed on discussing perspectives of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* in a lively manner, as well as in a safe and neutral classroom setting.

Focus groups possess numerous strengths and benefits, especially with regard to this study. One of the benefits of focus group research is that it is versatile in nature and can be used in combination with other research methods (Powell & Single, 1996). Focus groups also “elicit information in a way which allows research to find out *why* an issue is salient, as well as what is salient about it” (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 11). This will be critical to this study in that these focus groups will uncover why the Canadian political satire show *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* is important to this generation and what about it is so significant.

In addition, focus groups can facilitate interaction between participants, which can produce data that would otherwise have not been obtained. Kitzinger (1995) noted how valuable and open this aspect of interaction is in this method. She stated that:

Focus groups are a form of group interview that capitalises on communication between research participants in order to generate data. This means that instead of the researcher asking each person to respond to a question in turn, people are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each others’ experiences and points of view (p. 299).

Through these interactions, particular elements of participants' experiences are brought to light, thereby enriching the data collection.

Other methods like interviews were not used because the primary goal of focus group research is to render people's attitudes, feelings, reactions and experiences in a manner that would not be possible using any other methods like questionnaires or individual interviews (Kitzinger, 1995). As previously alluded to, elements such attitudes or feelings can only be revealed through interaction with others.

Focus groups allow for the expressions of multiple attitudes, beliefs, feelings and points of views regarding the topic as opposed to one-on-one interviews, which only allow for individual accounts (Kitzinger, 1995). Unlike interviews, focus groups allow one to gain more data in a shorter amount of time due to the fact that all participants are present together.

This method possesses some limitations, one of which, as noted by Kitzinger (1995), is that the researcher has less control over the focus group because the participants generate most of the discussion with one another. This study will aim to structure the focus groups as much as possible, maintain some order to allow each participant the chance to share yet still allow for fruitful discussions or debates between participants to organically come about.

The limited number of people within the focus groups may not allow for the results to be generalizable to the general population (Kitzinger, 1995). Although the sample size in this study is too small to yield generalizable results it can nonetheless be indicative of possible trends in the population.

Confidentiality may be an issue, since participants within the group may share what was discussed with others outside of the focus group (Kitzinger, 1995). This study will not deal with anything sensitive or embarrassing but will ask those who decide to participate to abstain from revealing what was discussed within these focus groups with others.

In the end, since this study aims to gain a greater comprehension regarding the meanings that members of generation Y attach to *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, one can see why focus groups were chosen. Given that this study seeks to examine how generation Y perceives this show and ultimately how this program could affect this generation, it is evident that selecting focus groups as the means for exploring these experiences is warranted.

Sampling. Using twelve students from the University of Ottawa, this study conducted two focus group sessions. This sub-section will also explore and justify how research participants were recruited.

This study employed a convenience sample; this sampling method involves the researcher selecting participants due to their availability and willingness to participate (Creswell, 2013). The participants of this study were members of generation Y, were close by and readily available at the University of Ottawa. The convenience sample encompassed those who were aware of the political events and watched traditional news, as well as *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*.

Other forms of sampling such as simple random sampling could not be used because simple random sampling states that all participants have the same probability of being selected whereas this study needed a particular demographic (Creswell, 2013).

This study specifically looked for generation Y students in the Integrated System of Participation in Research Program (ISPR); therefore, not all those wanting to participate could be chosen. Stratified sampling would not have been appropriate either because it is predominantly used in statistical survey research (Creswell, 2013) unlike this study which was qualitative in nature. Cluster sampling is largely useful in survey research and is commonly used in conjunction with simple random sampling (Creswell, 2013); however, this study required a sampling style that was more flexible in nature as well as capable of providing this study with the ideal participants. Being a qualitative study, this project required a specific demographic that was easy to access; thus, one can see how this sampling method complemented this research.

Selection Criteria. Participants needed to be students at the University of Ottawa, specifically from the Integrated System of Participation in Research Program (ISPR) and part of generation Y. Only those who were registered in this program could be selected as part of the participant pool.

Students recruited for this study needed to be aware of the events taking place in the political arena and watch traditional news as well as *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. They needed to identify themselves as politically aware and familiar with this program since they would be required to describe their feelings, as well as attitudes toward the show.

The researcher posted a description of the study and requirements for the ideal participants on the Integrated System of Participation in Research Program (ISPR) website (see Appendix A). Students who then wished to participate in this study and who met the requirements signed up in order to state their interest. Once all the participant spots were filled and confirmed, the study was closed. At the commencement of each

focus group, participants were given a consent form (see Appendix B) that they needed to sign and return to the researcher.

The Design of Research Tools. Participants received instructions regarding the structure of the focus group, were told that everyone needed to be respectful of one another and that everyone would be allowed to express their thoughts without interruption or judgement. Students were told that they should refrain from sharing what was discussed in these sessions in order to avoid disclosing any personal information given by others in the group. Students were reassured that their answers and their identities would remain confidential.

All participants were posed the same questions from the list of focus group questions (see Appendix C) and their responses were captured on an audio-recording device. These questions, which were open-ended in nature, allowed for more descriptive answers as well as prompted dynamic discussions from members of these focus groups. The questions were centered on four key themes: perceptions of credibility, information acquisition, media effects and media effects in relation to political participation. The questions were designed to lead into one another and address the central research question as well as the sub-research questions. This smooth transition between questions would allow for a steady and natural progression, thereby avoiding abrupt or leading questions.

It is important to mention that, before the focus groups were conducted, the researcher carefully reviewed the questions for biases. The researcher then enlisted the supervisor's help in ensuring that these questions were not leading or contained any bias language that may skew the results gathered by these focus groups. These questions were

examined by both parties to make sure that these questions both met with proper research standards and had the potential to stimulate the best results possible.

The responses recorded during the focus group sessions were then immediately transcribed by the researcher. It is important to note that no words were changed, thus allowing for the authentic essence of the discussion to emanate. These answers were transcribed electronically in order to clearly observe and analyze the data. As suggested by Creswell (2013), the researcher began by conducting an initial read-through of all the transcripts, trying not to categorize the data. This technique was done multiple times so that the researcher could familiarize herself with the data and try to perceive any emerging themes. Once the initial reading was completed, the transcripts were reviewed carefully line-by-line and coded.

Firstly, coding was conducted with special attention to themes and descriptions, then to seeing how they overlap and the meanings behind any patterns. In order to validate the emerging themes in this phenomenological study, “significant phrases or sentences that pertained directly to the experience” needed to be acknowledged and “meanings were formulated and clustered into themes common to all of the participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 115). The responses from the participants were codified based on a descriptive coding scheme. The descriptive coding entails summarizing the main topic of the responses (Creswell, 2013). The data was then examined for emerging themes that would provide greater insight into the research topic.

In order to categorize the data, charts were created to represent the emergent themes. The transcripts were dissected, then coded and placed into their respective column. If there was some overlap, this data would be placed into multiple categories.

The information was categorized into these themes in order find and bring about meaning from the data.

This study also looked for patterns in these codes by repeatedly going through the answers. The researcher looked for repetition in the participants' answers in order to see what the participants agreed on. The study also looked for variations and explored why certain discrepancies occurred. This study looked for similarity, difference and frequency in order to extract the most meaning from the responses.

Role of the Researcher.

Validation Strategies. Validity plays an important role in qualitative studies because it is a powerful component that is used to determine the accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2013). In terms of the validity strategies of this study, the description of the study posted on the Integrated System of Participation in Research Program (ISPR) website (see Appendix A) did not contain any biased language.

The questions posed during the focus group were carefully reviewed to ensure that they were not misleading. The researcher made every effort to avoid wording, tones and facial expressions that may have influenced the participants' responses thereby causing skewed results.

The data collection techniques were re-examined to verify that they were valid and trustworthy. This study evaluated the possibility of environmental influences, for instance, checking to see if the location where the participants took part in the study had any bearing on their responses. This research attempted to illustrate that the findings generated transcend the confines of the project and that they had real practical applicability.

Throughout the course of the data analysis, an evaluative validity was employed, which attempted to see whether the researcher was able to describe and understand the data without being evaluative or judgmental (Creswell, 2013). Ultimately, this study aimed to identify possible internal and external validity threats such as researcher bias as well as the environmental aspects respectively.

Ethical Considerations. Participants were made clearly aware that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the project any time they wanted. Confidentiality was respected and participants were notified that all the information gathered from them during the study would be kept private and only seen by the researcher, along with the thesis supervisor. Participants did not have to divulge student numbers or any identifying attributes. Students were only asked to provide the researcher with their Integrated System of Participation in Research Program (ISPR) numbers so that they could obtain their credit. Students were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix B), but it is important to note that these forms were only seen by the researcher and the supervisor and that they were kept highly secure. All of the data from the study remained highly protected by the supervisor.

Ultimately, prior to the commencement of this study approval needed to be granted by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa, by submitting ethics application forms. Their approval was vital since this study enlisted the participation of students.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

The purpose of this section is to present the data gathered from the focus groups. As part of the data analysis process, the results have been broken down into five themes. Each of the themes relates back to the theories and concepts illustrated in the literature review; as well, the research questions are embodied through each of these themes.

The first theme that emanated from the data was the overall perception and understanding of the program *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. The second theme that stemmed from the data analysis related to the classification of the show in terms of genre (e.g., political satire versus entertainment). The third theme to be derived from the data analysis was credibility, which speaks to how participants regarded the show in terms of its reputability. The fourth theme that emerged from the data analysis was how relatable this show was to the participants. The fifth theme that arose from the data analysis dealt with how motivational this program was to the participants, especially in terms of civic participation. It is significant to note that all these themes are interconnected.

Theme One – Perception of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* as Media Satire

The participants perceived the program as generally being a political satire show that takes a unique comedic spin on real news events. The majority of participants seemed to suggest that the show had the ability to be very topical in nature and provide a distinctive perspective on the issues occurring domestically. Participant 1 said, “I would say it’s a comedy show that kind of pokes fun at popular Canadian culture and showcases political views, political events that are going on at the time”. Participant 7 agreed adding, “it’s a political satire show in which they take things that are currently happening and

have been on the news headline recently and they poke fun at them”. Participant 2 elaborated on the show’s undeniable humorous quality by saying:

I like the type of humour that the show presents through their skits. I like how the show makes fun of recent events and is quite topical. The program always deals with very recent events. It’s a really good vehicle for raising awareness about certain issues and political events.

Participant 5 shared similar sentiments, saying, “I would say it’s a lighter version of the media because they give you the topic but at the same time they keep your attention.”

While discussing the program’s humour, participants noted its similarities to *The Rick Mercer Report*, which was a spin-off of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. Participant 12 expressed the program’s amusing imitations of various politicians by noting:

I think it’s funny [...] I like any TV program that has people doing impressions instead of just talking about something and making jokes about it. It’s funny when the person playing that role does all the little quirks that the person would actually do in real life and this is what keeps the show entertaining.

While discussing the humour of the show, a large number of participants drew comparisons between the program and its American counterparts such as *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, *John Oliver* and *Saturday Night Live*. Some participants even criticized *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*’ lack of edginess compared to its US equivalents. With regard to *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*’ US counterparts, Participant 4 had some suggestions for the program in terms of appeal: “To really connect with audiences I think *22 Minutes* needs to get edgier [I think they are not as edgy] because the Canadian political landscape isn’t rife for satire”. Participant 5 critiqued the show and suggested it take on traits comparable to its American counterparts. “If it was a little bit harsher it could be funnier. Bill Maher is definitely funnier”. Participant 3 shared a similar outlook of the show’s evolution and restrictions:

Well, they had funnier jokes before. Some of their big jokes came in the mid-2000s but the viewership has decreased and they're not coming up with such good ideas these days. Being on the *CBC* they can't do all that much as far as satire goes. There are some limits and sometimes they don't make the best of it within the limits that they have. They'll do some jokes that are a little less funny and not offensive. The show really doesn't go out of bounds [with their comedy] whereas some of the American shows go out of bounds and they're still extremely funny.

Even though the program did lack grit, participants credited the show for its unique ability to present current issues and make politics more approachable. Participants such as Participant 6 said,

Usually politics is really a heavy topic and I find that a show with skits and is about comedy is more accessible to people who feel more comfortable watching this than reading articles.

Participant 11 remarked about the simplicity of the show:

I guess that when you watch it, it makes politics a little less intimidating because I know a lot of people have trouble getting into politics because they think it's so complicated and the show kind of makes things a little easier to understand.

Participant 4 discussed the show's ability to reach members of this generation who are not all that aware of current politics:

Millennials make up an ever-growing portion of the constituency and maybe the only way they will be exposed to these politicians is by seeing them on *22 Minutes* because they're probably more likely to watch *22 Minutes* than to watch *The National*. Unfortunately that's where they're going to get their political opinions. We live in an increasingly media-centered environment and we all have very short attention spans so at least with comedy it kind of keeps our attention.

The commentary turned to the political stance of the program. There seemed to be dividing views from the participants. Participant 6 said:

They tend to be quite against Harper; therefore, they've been quite against the Conservative government as of late and their policies. They haven't brought up the good things that he's done.

Participant 3 countered saying,

There is a pretty balanced level when they poke fun at politicians because they all screw up and *22 Minutes* picks up on pretty much all of their screw ups without any political bias towards one or the other.

Participant 6 began to express agreement:

It kind of seemed like they only had one stance and they were completely anti-Conservative but if it was a Liberal government they would probably poke fun at them too. That's their job to be satirical and to criticize the government and their policies.

Participant 3 made an interesting observation regarding the show in relation the current political climate in Canada:

As far as the political situation goes it's a majority government so I would say it was more fun when it was a minority situation because then they can poke fun at both governments but in the majority situation it's mostly the government that's going to get poked fun at. Now we're getting into the political campaign season so now everyone's going to get made fun of but I would say in the last few years it's mostly the Conservative government that's been the target of most of the satire.

Throughout the dialogue regarding overall perception of the show, participants touched on the program's relevance and appeal in today's media environment. Participant 3 said, "It's not the entire show. If there's one skit that's really funny it's going to be more popular on YouTube". Participant 10 brought up the notion of accessibility by stating "it's accessible, it's on YouTube so it's easy to watch". Participant 12 added: "Everything nowadays ends up on YouTube and lands online. If it's controversial or really talked about it will be on YouTube".

While members of this cohort were discussing their overall perceptions of the show, there were instances where they were attempting to classify the show. The following theme elaborates on this dilemma.

Theme Two – Entertainment Program or News Program

Even though all of the participants felt that *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* was a political satire show, there were instances where participants were divided about whether it was solely an entertainment program or a hybrid of news and entertainment. The majority of the participants agreed that the show was primarily entertainment. Participant 4 and 2 noted that “first and foremost it’s comedy”. As Participant 2 said,

I would probably just consider it entertainment. I wouldn’t go to it to really learn about a political issue. If I saw something that interested me I would go research it elsewhere.

Participant 1 also highlighted the entertainment aspect of the program and noted that she did not view it as a news program or news source,

I would say it’s entertainment but it does give you an impression that it’s giving you the news but it’s just poking fun at it. It does give you the topics but I wouldn’t consider it news [...] I feel like their objective is to make you laugh and not to actually give you the facts.

Several participants who regarded the program as an entertainment show were familiar with other political satire shows and news programs. Participants primarily got their information from those sources. Participant 4 said, “I watch more American political satire shows like John Oliver, Jon Stewart and Bill Maher”. Participant 5 noted that he would also consult other sources like the news “*This Hour Has 22 Minutes* doesn’t really give you in-depth news about what’s happening, it just kind of gives you an idea and you’d have to go somewhere else to learn more”.

There were occurrences where some participants felt that the show bordered somewhere in the middle between news and entertainment. As Participant 7 said,

It’s like *Saturday Night Live* meets *CBC News*. I feel like it hits the line almost directly in the middle because it’s funny and it makes me laugh but it’s provoking thoughts that I might not have considered in the first place. The show gets so into

politics that I would have to say it's almost more news but perhaps more biased because they take more of a stance than the news seems to.

Participant 12 agreed and alluded to the fact that its classification depended on the viewer:

I think it's in the middle too. I feel like it serves a purpose for those not knowledgeable on the topic that the show's talking about but for the majority who watch it and already know what's going on it's more entertaining. For people who don't know what's going on like me then I will quickly Google what's going on so it's more political news for me.

Participant 8 suggested that it was educational and entertaining at the same time but leaned more toward entertainment stating,

I feel like it's in the middle because you can actually learn from the stories and look online to make sure that they're right but at the end of the day they're funny too, so they are definitely entertainment.

Participant 6 agreed by saying "like Participant 8 said they make jokes but if you don't know something about the news you have to go and Google it". Participant 10 suggested "I think it's both, it's entertaining but it's also very political". Participant 11 agreed with the majority of participants but noted that the show differed from entertainment programs because it was slightly political much like the news. Participant 11 said, "It's in the middle, it's a little political but it's also extremely entertaining so I would say it's in the middle".

While considering how to classify the show, several participants noted that it depended how much importance viewers were placing on the show. In terms of the classification of the show, a significant number of participants noted that they were worried if viewers who were taking this show too seriously and using it as a primary source of news for political information.

Participant 4 expressed his concern, “I really hope nobody is getting their political opinions from *22 Minutes*”. Participant 2 expressed similar concern, “I agree with Participant 4 it’s a very media-centric society that we’re in, the show is really good for raising awareness of certain political issues and such but people don’t take it all that seriously well at least we hoped they don’t”.

Participant 3 even claimed that the show was not even on par with news programs due to its lack of examination. Participant 3 stated,

well I don’t think we can compare it with news as we said before it’s entertainment it’s not news. It’s not on the same level of comparison [...] there’s no analysis there it’s just distorted facts.

The terms subjectivity and objectivity were introduced by Participant 2.

Participant 2 brought about these terms in order to illustrate the key difference between news and this program,

obviously the show tends to make politics quite subjective whereas most news media tries to be far more objective. I mean obviously there is always going to be some subjectivity in the media but it’s not like they’re wildly exaggerating everything like *22 Minutes*.

Participant 3 echoed the sentiments of some of the other participants by advocating that people who look to this program for information need to consult other sources. In order to get a more comprehensive idea of politics and the issues taking place in the political sphere, one needs to look to other mediums as well. Participant 3 said:

I guess it depends on how you define political information. If you want to know who to vote for it’s definitely not a good source of political information because then you’re just going to get sick of politics and you’re not going to vote. It can’t be the only source political information that one person has or else they’re going to get the wrong idea about what’s involved in politics or what issues are at stake.

Through this discussion of classification of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, the concept of credibility began to emerge. The following section will investigate this theme of credibility further.

Theme Three – Credibility

As echoed by the participants' responses earlier regarding the issue of bias exhibited by *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*; this section will explore how reliable participants felt this program to be. The section will examine how credible participants believed this program was when it came to acquiring political information.

There was a strong consensus among some of the participants that the program was not as reliable as it seemed. Participant 6 shared her sentiments about how the show's entertainment aspect undermines its ability to be a truly legitimate source for political information. Participant 6 noted,

I think something that you need to bear in mind is it's a comedy show even though it's informing you to some degree it's main focus is to entertain. If you're just going off it just for information then it's not the most credible source, you can't cite it on an essay or anything.

Participant 6 reinforced that the show was not credible by remarking on its inaccuracy when it comes to reporting on politics abroad. Participant 6 said,

On Canadian issues it is more bang on. I find that some of the segments they do about politics outside of Canada is a little sketchy. It doesn't line up with other sources that I've read.

When discussing how comfortable they feel conversing about what they heard from the program with others, many felt that they did not consider it a trustworthy source. Many of the participants' viewpoints mirrored these subsequent quotes. Participant 3 noted, "If you want to say something intelligent then it's not a reliable source".

Participant 10 interestingly enough claimed that she would consult other sources but

noted that she would comment on the satire portion. Participant 10 stated “If I was going to talk about serious issues I would source other news channels. The satirical part is the only aspect I would trash on”. Comparable opinions about only feeling comfortable discussing the comedic portions of the program were expressed by other participants.

A significant portion of participants noted that the show was credible in the sense that it offered a starting point. Participants noted, however that one would then need to research the topic or issue further to get a better sense, especially if they were not informed viewers. As stated by Participant 1,

I would say it’s not a reputable source, you shouldn’t get your of information from there. I feel like the show is good at bringing up the topics but you should form your own opinions and go research the topics for yourself. I have done that in the past, where they brought up a topic and I didn’t really understand what they were talking about but then I’d go look it up to kind of get an idea about what’s going on.

Similar outlooks were shared by Participant 6 and 11 who noted that while generally informative one should not put so much faith in the show and should look to other outlets for more concrete information. Participant 6 said, “I think if you’re looking solely at that TV show to keep yourself in the loop about politics you need to take it with a grain of salt for sure”. Participant 11 remarked, “I prefer to look on the internet or newspapers or the news to find information. *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* just gives you background”.

Participant 8 agreed and noted that while somewhat helpful when it comes to formulating one’s own opinion one should look elsewhere. Participant 8 cautioned “it helps you to know about the topics but at the end of the day you have to do your own research. Don’t base your opinion on that show”. Participant 9 added to this idea by stating that the concept of the show is predicated on the fact that the program presupposes that its viewers are up-to-date on the issues being discussed. Participant 9 stated,

I think the show just assumes that everyone is informed about the topics so you would have to be on top of current Canadian politics to be able to enjoy a show like this. By itself I wouldn't say it's reputable but with a context behind it then yes.

An important perspective that arose from the discussion of credibility was how the program needed to be somewhat reputable since it is broadcast to the masses.

Participant 7 expressed the thoughts of many of the participants by stating,

I think it [the show] is reputable to an extent because they have to do their research. They can't just be bringing false information to the general public. They can't lie about the issues or else the show wouldn't have the reputation that it does and it's pretty positive as far as I know at least among my family.

The issue of bias was brought up and seems to echo the responses concerning *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*' political stance, which were brought up earlier in the perception section. The participants seemed to be fairly split on whether they felt the show was biased and seemed to favour certain groups or issues over others. When asked if the show was a credible political news source, Participant 2 replied, "no mainly because it's satire it has a definite spin on the issues. I usually go to other less biased news sources". Conversely, on the issue of biased news sources, Participant 4 commented that, "there's no such thing as unbiased journalism; everyone kind of has their own spin when they hear something".

The idea of opinions being at the heart of the show and playing a role in how the information is presented was discussed by several participants. Participant 6 mentioned, "It can be pretty biased; I don't find them to be very neutral with their opinions. They take things to the extreme". Participant 5 talked about the subjectivity of the show by saying,

I agree that it's an opinionated source; it doesn't really give you anything objective. You are going to have to research the information. The show can give you an idea but you have to watch the real news to see the topics being presented in an objective way.

Some participants did feel that the show was unbiased and that, if someone was not properly informed about current events, they would sense that the show was being biased.

Participant 4 stated the informed unbiased perspective,

I've never thought that it was biased, their job is to poke fun at the powerful and I think they do a good job of making fun of every party. I never thought that they were definitely being pro Conservative or pro Liberal or NDP.

Although in agreement Participant 11 made a thought provoking comment regarding bias and the media in general by stating, "I agree, I think you have to be aware of the slant that each media has and you have to go to different sources to make sure that the facts are consistent".

The various opinions regarding the credibility of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* stem from how each individual connects to the program in his or her own way. This idea leads to the theme of relatability.

Theme Four – Relatability

The participants generally perceived the program to be a political satire show which resonated more with other demographics. When asked who they thought would be viewers of the show other than themselves, participants seemed to suggest that more mature age groups were the target audience for the show. Participant 2 said,

I would say probably people who are a bit older than us, because on average people older than us are more politically involved and into politics. I know back in my family, my parents were into politics but I always just sort of watched a little bit but the show never really interested until later on.

A popular demographic that participants cited as viewers of the program were their parents. Participant 2 noted, "my parents are viewers of the show but not really my peers". Participant 12 stated a similar outlook "I think adults; I know my dad used to

watch it. Adults interested in politics or adults affected by politics or the issues going on or students interested in politics”. Participant 11 remarked, as well, that the program resonated with her parents by saying, “people who are politically involved I know my mom and my dad are really into politics so they enjoy watching satire shows a lot like *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*”. Some such as Participant 12 put forth a potential reason by saying, “my dad watches it but I think he just likes to keep in the know about everything that’s going”. Participant 11 noted how it was more encompassing in her household she said, “I know my whole family kind of watches it. I like to watch it with my parents and my sisters. We just like looking at how they analyze some of the social issues”.

Participant 1 agreed that adults were the main demographic but added the element of social class in her response,

I would say people who are older. White-collared people who pay their taxes and have an idea of how the government works will actually understand the jokes and why they are funny. It wouldn’t be as funny to someone who doesn’t really know about the government like a highschooler or something.

Participant 3 seemed to share similar thoughts when he stated, “I would say white-collar older people that work in government or follow politics. Usually people that don’t follow politics won’t really get the jokes”. Participant 4 seemed to differ in his opinion, of which social class was the target audience by saying,

I don’t know if I necessarily agree with that. Obviously white-collared people watch the show but I don’t think they are necessarily the target demographic. I think blue-collard people would enjoy it too. If you understand Canadian politics or just want to know what’s going on in the world generally you will get a deeper meaning from it. I still think there is something there for people who maybe aren’t as politically literate because it’s still fun to watch.

Several participants noted that people their age were not keen viewers of the show as much as older audiences. Participant 1 stated “many of my peers don’t watch it. I

watch it from time to time when it's on TV. Sometimes I find it funny sometimes I don't".

Participant 4 said that:

Nobody our age really watches *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* [...] personally I used to watch it more but now I watch more American political satire shows like John Oliver, Jon Stewart, Bill Maher because I think they're funnier.

Participant 10 agreed with this comments by stating, "actually I don't know anyone who watches it". Participant 1 was somewhat in agreement but did note, "I watch it pretty frequently, I know a few of my friends and peers who watch it but generally people in my class do not watch it all that much". Participant 7 presented a contrasting opinion by saying, "I know some of my friends who want to get into politics and are quite interested in it and they enjoy the program".

Participants presented aspects of the show that were most relatable to them. Participant 2 stated, "I like the type of humour that they have and the skits making fun of recent events that I find can really pertain to me". Participant 3 said, "I think it's funny. If I want a good laugh I go and look at some of the funniest clips like the *Talking to Americans* clips were quite funny". Participant 7 commented, "I like when they bring in people who I am familiar with because it helps me to relate to the show. I like seeing popular figures who I am familiar with that might not be political". Participant 4 also commented on the guest spots,

I like when they have a guest on or when they do an interesting remote. I watch the show for that because it's kind of nice to see a Canadian politician being a bit more candid and doing something kind of funny which reminds us that our politicians are somewhat human.

Some participants noted their preference for the topical aspect of the show. Participant 5 said, "the only thing I like about it is if I'm not up to date with what's going

on in the news I can watch the show and it gives me an idea of what's happening”.

Participant 1 added,

sometimes it is funny when I know what they are talking about. For example, when they were making fun of those ads that were attacking Justin Trudeau. It was kind of funny how they were just making fun of those ads.

Participant 2 elaborated on the pros and cons of the topical feature of the show by saying,

for me it's quite hit or miss [...] because quite often I'll know exactly what they're talking about because I've been following it. Then there's always the odd one where I'm not quite as knowledgeable about the topic they're poking fun at or if it's something that happened recently that I haven't heard about then I won't really enjoy it because I won't quite get the jokes. If I do know what they are talking about then their jokes are quite often are very funny.

Participants like Participant 11 spoke about how the show made politics enjoyable and interesting for them. While participants connected with the show's ability to make politics more amusing, others took pleasure in the show's capacity to mock the media. Participant 10 remarked, “I like how they poke fun at mainstream media's attempts to kind of sensationalize stories and over-dramatizes the stories”.

A few participants did articulated that the program's informal tone was notably the only element which connected more to people their age or those who are overwhelmed by the information presented by traditional news media. Participant 7 stated, “It's funny, it appeals to the younger generation more than the news might”. Participant 12 was in agreement and said, “It doesn't complicate the issue, so even if you're not that involved with what's going on you can still kind of pick up on what's happening”.

Participants also shared their thoughts as to why the show is not relatable to them in comparison to other news media. Participants mentioned how they were more attracted to American political satire shows and how their humour was more relatable. Many

participants mentioned how they connected more so with the news because it provided them with real information.

Some participants believed that, as they have gotten older, they seem to connect less with the show. Participant 4 said that *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* resonated more with him when he was younger but now he prefers hard hitting American political satire shows.

Participants noted how American satire shows were on private networks and therefore were allowed to be offensive without worrying about offending the network. *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, on the other hand, is on the *CBC* and is government owned since it is a Crown Corporation.

When asked why they watched the program as opposed to traditional news programs, some participants seemed to agree with Participant 4's insight which stated, "the news today is far too depressing so it's fun to get a laugh". The show seemed to provide an escape from the pessimism that traditional news shows seem to emit by providing entertainment or a funny take on the current events

Many participants critiqued the program and offered up some suggestions that might make the show more relatable to them. Participants suggested that the show stay true to its roots and focus more on politics rather than on pop culture. Participants also advocated that the program become "edgier" and trendier.

How the participants connect and relate to *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* is substantially linked to their political incentives. This point that leads into the following theme of motivation.

Theme Five – Motivation

There were many instances in which participants explored the idea of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* as affecting or motivating their political attitudes and beliefs. Some believed the program was influential with regard to their political attitudes. Many participants felt that the show's ability to take a more analytical approach when examining the issues can be very convincing. Participant 6 noted,

When the show puts a critical view on Canadian politics it might not be their intention but sometimes the show makes me feel guilty that I'm blindly accepting all the messages displayed on news programs. *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* helps me to become more of a critical thinker through their coverage.

Due to the show's persuasive nature, some participants felt that through viewing the program their viewpoints began to align with those of the show.

Some thought that the show had no influence over their political attitudes or beliefs. Participant 4 who declared,

I have my own political beliefs and *22 Minutes* does nothing to change that. The stereotype surrounding politicians is that they're inept they're not aware of what their constituents want. *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* jumps on that bandwagon but I know better and I hope other people know better that most politicians are quite educated and they're not as clueless as the program would have you believe.

Some participants stated that the show did nothing to change their political views but understood how the program could be influential to some people. Participant 3 stated,

The show does not change my political views whatsoever. I don't think it affects my view of politics in general either. I could see how it would affect someone who doesn't stay as informed though, because they pick up on everything. Most of the jokes that they do are on negative aspects such as corrupt politicians. Someone who actually takes that as what's going on could get pretty disgusted with politics.

Participants felt that because the show was seen more as entertainment that it was not viewed as a highly critical source. Several participants felt that the show's lack of dependability and grit seemed to affect its ability to sway opinions.

Some participants were neutral and noted how the show mainly emphasizes their current points of view. Participant 10 noted, "It just reinforces my political beliefs". Interestingly, Participant 7 confessed she did not possess strong political views and while the show did nothing to sway her it did encourage her to conduct further research then form her own opinions.

The idea of seeking out information and becoming more politically informed ties into the notion of the program's possible influence on political engagement in all its forms. Participant 8 felt that the show motivated her to become more informed, she stated, "It definitely helps me to do my research and learn". The notion of the program promoting political literacy resonated with other participants such as Participant 11 who noted, "It encourages me to get more into Canadian politics". Participant 6 stated how the show encouraged her to do further research and become more involved in politics.

When it came to the topic of physical political participation, Participant 1 seemed to articulate the majority's opinion. Participant 1 said,

The show makes me more aware of my responsibility as a voter and that I should go vote and it makes me aware of the different political groups. The program makes me want to go vote and be involved with the Canadian political system and have a say in which group is leading our country right now.

Conversely, some participants felt that the show did not motivate its audience to participate in the political sphere as much as American political satire programs did.

Participant 4 noted,

I don't think *22 Minutes* really does anything to connect with their audience. John Oliver at the end of his rants puts some sort of hashtag or does something to try and get people socially involved. *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* provides jokes and commentary but suggests no solution to help alleviate the problem.

Some felt that the show was too passive to really motivate its younger viewers. Several participants noted how militant and polarizing the political satire programs are in the United States compared to Canada.

The following section will examine the results derived from the findings of this study. This section will focus on illustrating the connections between these results and elements from the literature review.

Discussion of Results

With respect to the first research question pertaining to credibility, the vast majority of the participants felt that the show's main goal was to be entertaining and, if this is one's sole source for political information, it is not the most credible resource. This idea of looking to be entertained through these programs but still acquire some information ties into the notion presented by Brewer and Cao (2006) who noted that audiences of these shows can inadvertently become informed about politics in their effort to seek out entertainment programs.

The vast majority of the focus group members stated that the show did provide a good starting point by introducing the topics but viewers needed to research the issues or subjects further. This aspect of generation's Y ability to become politically educated ties back to Atkin's (1975) as well as Chaffee and Yang's (1990) studies which both suggest that media shapes generation Y's ability to become politically informed and connected to politics. The issue of credibility with respect to the show from the perspective of this cohort touched on the idea about the usage of these shows and the effects one expects to

obtain. The vast majority felt that the show was a good source for bringing up the topics but one should not form their opinions based on what they see. One would need to search the issues further using a more reliable source.

This idea of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* providing a stepping stone for further research into the issues seems to correlate to the study by Gangadharbatla et al., (2014) on cognition. Those with a higher need for cognition seek out traditional media, while those with a lower need for cognition are more prone to choose non-traditional media for information.

The vast majority of the cohort used in this study believed that *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* provides a good basis for further research but was not viewed as a highly credible source. The findings drawn from this cohort regarding credibility are in contrast with Shanks's (2010) study, which found that members of generation Y were distrustful of traditional news media and sought out alternative sources for political information, thus allowing political satire shows to become more reputable.

The majority of participants did not perceive this show to be a reliable source for political information as traditional news media. The majority of this cohort noted that they preferred to watch traditional news media or seek out other reputable sources for their information if they wanted to be truly informed. The majority of participants of this study mentioned that individuals should mainly look to this show if they want to get a laugh and be entertained while getting a very brief idea of the issues, this coincides with Prior's (2003) study which examined the motives behind media use. Depending on an individual's need for learning, they will seek or not seek the appropriate medium to meet their needs.

It is important to note, however, that much like the findings of Andreycaak's (2013) study; some of members of the focus group who watch *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* tended to be more trusting of journalists and would watch the news for political information or developments within the government. Some of the participants addressed the fact that, due to the program being topical in structure, one needed to be well-versed in contemporary politics in order to understand what is being discussed. A surprising finding to emerge out of this study is that the program's humour and entertainment were mentioned as reasons for its lack of trustworthiness.

There were instances where some participants did feel that the program was unbiased because the show tended to target all parties equally. Some members of this cohort were in agreement with Becker's et al., (2010) study when it came to the issue of bias in relation to political satire shows but unlike Becker's et al., (2010) study this cohort overall did not feel that they were in alignment with the biases of the show.

The minority believed that the show did possess a few biases but thought that people needed to be informed so that they would not be influenced by these biases. This concept of bias relates back to Qin's (2008) viewpoint which suggests that members of generation Y find traditional news media more reliable and look to these sources to be more informed. Someone informed about the issues being discussed will not be swayed by the program and just obtain the desired outcomes from watching the show such as amusement.

Ultimately, this notion of credibility links back to the theoretical framework, specifically Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch's (1974) idea of how people (in this case generation Y) use the media to meet certain needs and goals, which for this cohort is

political news. Overall members of the focus groups did not fully perceive the show as being credible, a finding that contradicts those of Vraga's et al., (2012) study, which argued that political satire programs that seem to mirror their traditional counterparts were viewed as credible sources for political information.

In terms of the second research question, participants were unsure how to classify the genre of the show. This links to Sohar's (2005) findings, which concluded that the lines were blurred in terms of genre when it comes to comparing political satire shows and traditional news media. A large majority thought that the program was exclusively an entertainment program while the majority regarded it as both a news and entertainment program. Those who believed the show to be a hybrid cited the fact that the show had elements (such as their thought provoking insights and facts) that made the program seem like a regular news program but that there was an undeniable comedic quality that made it entertaining.

The categorization of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* among the vast majority seemed to lean more towards the idea that the show was entertainment and at most infotainment. Participants believed that it was entertaining and educational at the same time. Participants noted that the show conveyed information in a manner that was lighter than the news but provided a general idea of the current issues for people. These results correspond with Baum's (2003) study, which noted that when it came to popular issues, soft news had less of an influence on viewers' attainment of political information compared to traditional news media.

Although the majority thought that the program was somewhere in the middle of the spectrum due to its infotainment status; they agreed that it all came back to what the

viewer wanted to gain from watching the program. Participants believed that the classification depended on the viewers and their needs. That is, if they were looking for humour and a general view of the issues, the show would prove useful. If viewers needed to be deeply informed, on the other hand, they would need to consult other sources such as regular news programs and that this show would only serve as a springboard for further research. Much like the study of Kim and Vishak (2008), the results obtained from this cohort seem to suggest that if one seeks to retain more knowledge about politics, this program would not be regarded as a regular news program. Participants mentioned that, when it comes to forming sound opinions or making thoughtful decisions regarding politics, they consider this show entertainment and would gravitate more toward news programs for information.

These results are in direct accordance with the study by Turner and West (2010), which explored how individuals use the media for their own specific purposes and needs. The results from this cohort, suggesting that the impetus for watching the program lies somewhere in the middle, is in alignment with Miller and Landau's (2005) idea that the motivation behind using media is for information and entertainment.

Ultimately, the majority of the members of these focus groups seem to agree that if one is seeking out more in-depth information, then this program is not perceived as a regular news program. This idea links back to Gangadharbatla's et al., (2014) notion that the news is seen as more reliable for those wishing to gain more comprehensive coverage of current events. The majority of the members felt that the show offered a very brief and limited view of the issues; therefore, one needed to seek out other sources in order to gain a more complete picture of the events transpiring in the political realm. This idea aligns

with the study conducted by Young and Hoffman (2009) which suggested that if users are looking to extend the confines of show and gain more knowledge on the issues, they need to consult other sources.

Speaking to the third research question, the vast majority of participants did not perceive themselves as being alienated by the mainstream news media. Surprisingly, a vast majority of the members of the focus groups did not recognize themselves as being excluded by the mainstream news media.

A large majority of these participants connected more with the news and found that *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* was too humourous to genuinely inform them of the issues. It is important to note that those who viewed the show as entertainment were viewers of other political satire shows like those in the United States and the news, which is where they claim to receive most of their information. These findings support the study by Young and Hoffman (2009), which suggests that traditional news media outlets are more valuable for gaining political information than non-traditional news media sources with respect to this generation.

The vast majority agreed that they did not rely solely on this show for their political information; rather they looked to traditional news media to fill in the gaps. This idea opposed the study of Hollister (2013), which found that this generation cites political satire shows as their main sources for political knowledge.

The majority of the members of this cohort said that due to their personalities, education and interests; they did seek out more traditional news media for information. This connects back to the findings of Miller and Landau (2005), as well as Shah et al., (2001), on the uses and gratifications theory. These two studies suggested that social

status and personality have some bearing on what media individuals seek out. These members expressed their affinity for traditional news media, which directly contradicts the findings of Curnalia and Mermer (2013) as well as those of Hooghe (2004), which stated that this generation did not favour traditional news media as their key choice for acquiring political knowledge.

The findings from the majority of these participants correspond to with the results from the study conducted by Gangadharbatla et al., (2014), which stated that while members of this cohort look to mass media for information, they have a higher regard for traditional news media as their primary reliable source for political information. The majority claim to turn to mainstream news for political information, with a few even commenting that they tend to remember the information that they hear on the news more than the information they gather from *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. These results are in agreement with those in Kim and Vishak's (2008) study, which concluded that, when it comes to memory-based information retention and processing among this demographic, traditional news media tended to yield better results in comparison with non-traditional news media.

The fact that the majority participants admitted to seeking out traditional news media in order to become effectively informed about politics and the issues taking place in the political sphere appears to contradict Hooghe's (2004) study. Hooghe (2004) found that, in comparison with older generations, this generation seems less concerned and informed on politics. The majority of participants said that they were or yearned to become even more informed about politics and would look to traditional news media for more conclusive knowledge on the issues.

The minority of participants said that the program is more relatable to those their age, people who find the news too convoluted, those who feel inundated by the news and those who are just unaware of the issues. This corresponds to the studies by Miller and Landau (2005), as well as Shah et al., (2001) which stated that the media that individuals seek out can be related to age. Certain attributes such as age can account for the media that young people choose to use due to the fact that it adequately meets their needs. The idea that *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* is more enjoyable ties back to Arnett's (1995) study which found that non-traditional news media provide an element of excitement that this generation craves.

With regard to the fourth research question, everyone agreed on the point that the show affected their attitudes toward politics in general by encouraging them to be more politically literate and informed about all the issues taking place. More specifically, when it came to political thoughts and beliefs there was a divide, some thought that the program did not affect their views toward politics at all citing the show's passivity and humour as reasons.

Everyone agreed that they possessed the desire to become more involved politically through becoming more knowledgeable about the issues and through that being empowered to be more active. This healthy attitude towards gaining knowledge about the political system would help them find their place within it. This finding directly corresponds to Shah et al., (2001), who stated that the motives behind and how people use media has an influence over their political participation. The findings from this study seem to contradict those of Cao and Brewer (2008), who seemed to observe a strong positive connection between viewing political satire shows and active political

participation. The vast majority of this cohort mainly adhere to traditional news media and seem to use political satire programs to begin further investigation via traditional news media, which may then lead to active political involvement.

A large majority of the participants in this study seemed to watch *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* in order to become introduced to the topic, which they would research further, thereby fostering a positive attitude toward political awareness and involvement. This notion is in disagreement with Curnalia and Mermer's (2013) study, which found that this generation felt less of a need to follow political news.

The majority of the participants noted that watching this show did not result in any negative opinions or attitudes concerning the government or politics as whole. This finding parallels that of Andreycaak (2013), who found those who were viewers of political satire shows did not display any negative attitudes toward the government or politics in general, on account of their viewership. Participants as a whole did not seem to attribute their regular viewership of this program to favourable attitudes regarding politics. This result is similar to that of Qin (2008), who did not find any evidence to suggest that continued exposure to political satire shows would translate into positive attitudes toward politics.

The majority of participants adhere to traditional news media, while some tend to watch traditional news media and political satire programs. Several participants felt that they could better understand politics and their role within it as a result of viewing their chosen media. This idea correlates to the study conducted by Becker (2011), which found that exposure to traditional news media or political satire had a positive impact on the political efficacy of this demographic.

In terms of political efficacy, the majority of participants wanted to increase their political knowledge and noted how *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* provides a good stepping stone for further research on the topics. This finding is similar to those of Qin (2008), who found that members of this generation who watched political satire shows were more apt to expand on the information they learned from the show.

The majority of this cohort looks more to the news to get their political information and form their opinions. This seems to conflict somewhat with the study done by Baum (2003), who discovered that political satire fosters a more knowledgeable citizenry since they are educating a group that is unaware and does not follow traditional news media. The majority of this cohort looks more to the news or watches both but cross-references what they hear on political satire shows with more reliable sources like the news.

Some did say the program affected their political attitudes through its convincing style and critical take on the current issues. This finding seemed to oppose the study of Roth (2012), who discovered that there was no evidence to suggest that young people's attitudes toward politics were swayed by either traditional news media programs or political satire programs. It is pertinent to note that members of this cohort who felt that the show influenced their attitudes were relatively new to the program. This finding coincides with the study by Baumgartner and Morris (2006) which determined that political satire shows had an influence over the attitudes or opinions of participants who were not exposed to the show prior to the study or were recent viewers of the program.

Some members of this cohort who were viewers of this program noted that they were aware of the events taking place in the political sphere but attributed this awareness

solely to their consultation of other sources and not the show. This finding somewhat opposes that of Andreyca (2013) whose study found that those who were regular viewers of political satire programs were conscious of the political issues.

Regarding the issue of political involvement, the majority of the members of these focus groups mentioned that they are civically engaged through political literacy. They did not show any real signs of political distrust as a reason for their involvement; nor did they display any indications of disinterest in politics. This seems to counter Hooghe's (2004) study, which found that this generation was less interested in politics, in voting, less politically involved and were distrustful of political institutions. By following politics and becoming engaged, this cohort exemplifies that they are participating in politics on a macro-level unlike the results suggested in Rankin's (2013) study. Rankin's (2013) study noted that generation Y tends to be more involved at the community level. The majority of the members of this study's cohort stated that they seek out higher levels of political knowledge and possess an interest which they credit to *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* since it provides a basis for further research. This corresponds to the findings to Hariton's (2011) study, which found that these qualities were connected to political activism and that members of generation Y who watched political satire shows seemed more encouraged to participate politically.

Those members of the focus groups who were newly introduced to the program were keen on becoming more politically involved and aware. This finding corresponds to Jacobs's (2013) study, which found that participants who were newly exposed to political satire programs seemed to be more interested in politics and displayed an eagerness to participate politically. One of the findings in Jacobs's (2013) study stated that this

generation seemed to be more motivated by political satire shows than by traditional news media when it came to being more politically involved. This finding sharply contrasts the results of this cohort which found that the majority of participants were motivated more by traditional news media, which they felt were more reliable sources.

It is important to note that the majority of this cohort did not seem to display any signs of pessimism toward the government or politics due to *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. This seems to be in disagreement with the study of Kwak, Wang and Guggenheim (2011), as well as the study of Fu, Mou, Miller and Jalette (2011). Kwak, Wang and Guggenheim (2011) suggested that pessimistic representations of political news conveyed by political satire shows seem to decrease the political involvement of generation Y because this demographic is primarily informed by these shows and has a high regard for their opinions. Fu, Mou, Miller and Jalette (2011) suggested that this pessimism can, under the appropriate circumstances, cause this generation to take action and better the situation.

Going back to the central research question, members of generation Y who participated in this study seem to think the show was a good stepping stone for more in-depth research and still regarded traditional news as a more convincing source of information. This cohort believed that *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* was humorous, convincingly analytical and fair but could be biased at times, which to those not properly informed could be misleading. As evidenced by this chapter, only in particular instances did the participants of this study believe the show connected more to certain people than traditional news media. Relating back to Turner & West's (2010) study, this cohort uses the media for the specific purposes, which is to be politically knowledgeable and

attentive. Overall, if one wants to formulate factual opinions and be politically involved, traditional news media seem to be his or her primary avenue to achieve this goal.

Overall the findings of this qualitative study seem to indicate that the uses and gratifications theory was an instrumental lens by which examine the question of media effects. The findings express how and why this particular cohort seeks out certain news media to fulfill their specific needs, which is a central tenet of the uses and gratifications theory.

By using this theory, this study was able to suggest that, when it comes to politics, members of this cohort strive to become politically informed and may thus actively seek out traditional news media to satisfy their needs for accurate political information on which to formulate their attitudes. This notion of members of generation Y becoming more politically involved and aware validates the findings raised in the literature review, which suggest that this generation does possess an interest in engaging with the world of politics. The classification of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* by members of this cohort validates the findings of the studies presented in the literature review. Much like those studies of political satire shows, this study's cohort also agrees that the lines are blurred when it comes to clearly defining the show and that it depends on what the viewer hopes to gain from the program.

It is important to mention that there were slight contradictions with the studies presented in the literature review when it came to issues of credibility and reliability. In general, when it came to the issue of credibility concerning *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, the results from this cohort seem to agree with some of the studies pertaining to this topic. These studies also suggested that political satire shows are not seen as entirely credible

for the purposes of information and cognition. The findings of this study show a stronger trust toward traditional news media, however, contradicted with other studies which suggested that members of this generation were more distrustful of traditional news media.

Concerning the topic of relatability the studies brought forth in the literature review as well as the findings of this cohort all seem to suggest that members of this demographic are more news oriented and look to traditional news for their political information. The contradiction, however, lies in the notion brought about by the studies that seem to presume that only older audiences are more concerned and informed when it comes to politics. This was not the case since members of this cohort vocalized their desire to become more politically involved and thus sought out sources that would aid them in achieving their goal to become more politically informed.

The following section will examine the importance of this study by presenting the contributions it makes to the existing knowledge base on this area of study. The subsequent section will also briefly review the theoretical and practical implications derived from the findings of this thesis.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Significance of Study

This research study is important for future studies looking to analyze how members of generation Y relate to Canadian political satire shows like *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. This study is significant through its attempts to understand what meanings this particular generation attach to this program. Addressing the central research question has provided a greater understanding of how generation Y in Canada views Canadian political programming. While research has been done on generation X's attitudes toward political satire and in turn their political participation, thus far few studies have been conducted on generation Y in relation to the political satire show *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*.

The findings from this project will add to the existing research conducted on political satire shows, but they will also contribute new information since these findings reflect the views of a unique demographic. The findings extrapolated from this thesis are important because they show possible indications that this cohort of generation Y is critical about the information presented to them and see the need to research further the issues examined by these shows. The findings seem to possibly contradict expected outcomes, which would suggest that they felt disenfranchised by traditional news media and looked a lot more to these shows to fulfill their needs, believing that these shows spoke more to their interests.

The findings could indicate that many members of this cohort of generation Y strive to become more politically aware or in some cases remain politically aware. Some

become knowledgeable about the issues by consulting the news or other media sources deemed reliable, while others look to *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* in order to be introduced to the issues which they will research further. The findings seem to suggest that this cohort is eager to gain knowledge of the events occurring in the political sphere and to take initiative to become more civically responsible.

The realistic ramifications of these findings include a possible surge or continuation of political participation in its countless forms: cognitive, active or otherwise. The constructive criticisms presented in the results section regarding the show indicate that this cohort of generation Y know what elements need to be reworked so that the program can better relate to them and influence them to bring about actual change in their society. In the end, the pragmatic effect of these findings is to explore the meanings this generation attach to shows like this and to use this newfound knowledge to help them to feel empowered enough to become politically engaged.

The subsequent section will address the limitations of this research study. The study will then conclude by suggesting possible future paths of research on this particular area of study.

Limitations

There are two limitations of this study that need to be highlighted. This study employed the participation of members of the Integrated System of Participation in Research Program (ISPR). This program allows for several studies to be available to students continuously throughout the academic year. Students needed to participate in a study before the completion of the term in order to receive their credits resulting in a compressed timeframe for this research study. Due to the sheer volume of studies which

the students could choose from and a few no-shows this study was not able to recruit a large number of participants. Greater numbers would perhaps have allowed for more concrete generalizations but not beyond those who watch both forms of media presented in this thesis.

Another limitation of this study centers on time and resources available to the researcher. Due to this being a master's thesis, there were not many resources available to help increase the number of participants in the limited time allotted to complete this study. Perhaps with more time and more extensive resources, this study could have solicited the participation of other members of generation Y across a broader scale thus yielding a more widely diverse sample.

These limitations could conceivably be ameliorated by prospective research on this topic. This leads into the subsequent portion of this thesis which will consider avenues for future research.

Implications for Future Research

Ultimately, this research serves as a helpful source for future research avenues in the area of generation Y's experiences and relationship with Canadian political satire programs compared to traditional news media. There are however, improvements that can be implemented by related research studies such as an expanded sample size and an increased sample criteria.

Potential research studies may want to widen their sample size in order to receive a sufficient number of participants, thus yielding more generalizable results. Perhaps conducting a study similar to this but on a larger scale to include members of generation

Y from across Canada could provide some insight as to whether location, culture or society have any bearing on this generation's views of the program.

Forthcoming studies on this area may wish to consider looking at all ages within the spectrum of generation Y. By observing the wide range of this generation, future research can look for any discrepancies or similarities. Through investigating these differences and parallels future research studies can discover what possible factors are at play to render these findings. Prospective research may also wish to identify the various perspectives with regard to the meanings that this demographic attach to this show or others like it in Canada.

This study only examined those with a university background, but in order to perhaps gain a more comprehensive picture, future research could also look into recruiting members of generation Y who come from all educational backgrounds. This notion could present interesting findings as to whether education plays an important role when it comes to the meanings this generation attach to Canadian political satire programs such as *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. Looking at all levels of education within this demographic will shed some light on how much of a role education has over the creation of these meanings.

Overall, it is apparent that this research study is of some value to the field of communication, specifically political communication, since it examined political satire and traditional news media in relation to generation Y. By exploring this relationship through the use of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* this study was able to discover the kinds of meanings this cohort of generation Y attach to these shows. Through this understanding of meanings and comprehension of this cohort's overall internalization of the information

presented to them, one can gain some indication of how this cohort of generation Y implements these aspects into concrete actions.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

The Description of Study for ISPR

“Let’s Talk Political Satire!” A Political Communication Research Study



LOOKING FOR: Enthusiastic and opinionated Undergraduate or graduate students at the University of Ottawa who are in the ISPR program and are members of generation Y (born between 1980 and 2000) to participate in a communication master’s thesis study. It is important to note that students need to be familiar with *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* as well as traditional news media.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be invited to take part in a lively and fruitful focus group discussion that will last for approximately 60 minutes. Students will be asked a series of open-ended questions regarding *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and traditional news media. On the part of the researcher all information and identities will remain anonymous. Please note that all participants will be asked to keep all information discussed in these focus groups confidential. As per the regulations of ISPR those who participate will gain 1 point of their final mark in participating courses.

CONTACT INFORMATION: For those who wish to participate please email Jessica at:
xxxxx@uottawa.ca

Appendix B.

Consent Forms



Consent Form

Title of the study: Canadian Satire and the Political Attitudes of Generation Y

Jessica Attalla (Researcher)

Professor Evan Potter (Supervisor)
Department of Communication
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

Université d'Ottawa
Faculté des arts
Communication
University of Ottawa
Faculty of Arts
Communication

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Communication Master's student Jessica Attalla and Professor Evan Potter.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this master's thesis research project is to understand how generation Y views Canadian political satire shows like *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of taking part in a focus group outside of class hours. This focus group will last approximately one hour during which participants will be asked a series of open-ended questions which will be audio recorded by the researcher.

Risks: My participation in this study will entail that I share information that may be personal with others in the focus group and this may cause me to feel self-conscious. Although responses will be recorded I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize this risk since all the data gathered will not contain any names, student numbers or other distinguishing signifiers. All participants will be anonymous when it comes to the study they will only be referred to by a number ex: participant 1.

Benefits: My participation in this study will contribute to the advancement of knowledge regarding generation Y and Canadian political satire shows. This study will be beneficial because it will seek to fill a gap in the research of Canadian political satire since much has been done regarding generation X but not generation Y.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share should remain confidential and that the researcher will strive to encourage that all participants keep all the information shared from these discussions to themselves. I am aware, however, that due to the nature of focus group discussions there are conditions under which the researcher

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cannot concretely guarantee the anonymity of participants and the confidentiality of their information. I understand that the contents will be used only for this master's thesis and that my confidentiality will be protected because this study will keep all of its participants' identities anonymous and only refer to them by an alias such as participant 1.

Anonymity will be protected in the following manner; all participants will remain anonymous and will only be referred to by an alias when referenced to in the transcripts.

Conservation of data: The data collected (in this case the recording of the participants' responses and the electronic copy of the transcript) will be kept in a secure manner. The responses will be typed up and saved onto a secure USB key. Along with a USB key the recording will be safely kept in a locked office cabinet belonging to the supervisor. Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the data. The data will be conserved for a minimum of five years and will not exceed twenty years following the completion of the project.

Compensation: By participating students will gain 1 point of their final mark in participating courses.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. Given that the data in focus groups is highly dependent on overall group discussion and dynamic, it will not be possible to remove my data should I withdraw from the study.

Acceptance: I, _____ agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Jessica Attalla of the Department of Communication, of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ottawa, whose research is under the supervision of Professor Evan Potter.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or his supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-5387
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

Participant's signature:

Date:

Researcher's signature:

Date:

Appendix C.

Focus Group Questions

Overarching Research Question

1. In your own words describe *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*.
2. Who would be the typical viewer of this program? Describe.
3. Do you know other viewers of this show? Describe them
4. Why do you watch the show?
5. What do you like and dislike about the program?

RQ1

6. Do you understand the jokes, references, topics or themes discussed? How or why?
7. Do you look to this program to be informed? Why or why not?
8. Do you think this program is a reputable source of political information? Why or why not?
9. Is the show reliable enough that you feel confident discussing with others what you heard on the program.

RQ2

10. Describe how would you classify this show?
11. Explain how this program fits into Canada's current political environment?
12. Explain how does this show fit into Canada's contemporary media environment?
13. Do you consider this show a news program or an entertainment show? Explain.

RQ3

14. In your opinion, what makes this show different from any traditional news programs?
15. How does this show measure up against traditional news shows? Describe.
16. What does this show provide you with that traditional news programs do not?
17. How does this show connect with you more so than regular news programs? Explain.

RQ4

18. How does this show resonate with you politically?
19. Does *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* have any bearing on how you view Canadian politics? Describe.
20. Does this program influence your views toward politics? Explain.
21. Does this show alter the way in which you perceive your role in politics? Explain.
22. Are there any other comments or opinions you would like to make regarding *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*?