



MEDIA@LSE

Department of Media and Communications

MEDIA@LSE Electronic MSc Dissertation Series

Compiled by Professor Robin Mansell, Dr. Bart Cammaerts

The Colbert Nation: A Democratic Place to Be?

Kristen Boesel,

MSc in Global Media and Communication

Other papers of the series are available online here:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/mediaWorkingPapers/>

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, September 2007, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MSc in Global Media and Communication. Supervised by Dr. Panagiota Alevizou.

Published by Media@lse, London School of Economics and Political Science ("LSE"), Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE. The LSE is a School of the University of London. It is a Charity and is incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act (Reg number 70527).

Copyright in editorial matter, LSE © 2007

Copyright, Kristen Boesel © 2007.
The authors have asserted their moral rights.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing of the publisher nor be issued to the public or circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published. In the interests of providing a free flow of debate, views expressed in in this dissertation are not necessarily those of the compilers or the LSE.

The Colbert Nation: A Democratic Place to Be?

Kristen Boesel

ABSTRACT

The objective of this dissertation is to examine the American political discourse within cable television's political comedy program *The Colbert Report*. The program, a spin-off of *The Daily Show*, features comedian Stephen Colbert portraying a politically conservative pundit character and seems to satirize political pundit-centered commentary programs (like Bill O'Reilly's *The O'Reilly Factor*) that appear on cable's Fox News network. While many contemporary academics find that lines of distinction between information-based and entertainment-based television are becoming blurred and programs formerly considered trivial now hold an important place in the political education of viewers, very little research focusing on discursive messages within comedy yet exists.

In order to conduct this dissertation's research, a variety of theories and methodologies were implemented. Linguistic and literary theory helped to formulate a framework for the analysis of the satire within the program, while Critical Discourse Analysis and intertextual theories provided a perspective from which to interpret the visual and verbal elements of the television program. The research questions, "How does Stephen Colbert create political discourse within *The Colbert Report*?" and the narrower "What does it mean to be a member of the Colbert Nation?" guided analysis and helped to identify themes and rhetorical strategies within the program. To conduct the research, the author transcribed and analyzed four episodes of *The Colbert Report* from the week of November 6, 2006—the week of the US midterm elections. The analysis concluded that *The Colbert Report* utilizes binary oppositions to satirize mainstream media's tendency to oversimplify political issues and situations. Furthermore, The Colbert Nation represents an idealized community of media literate, politically active citizens and provides a model for healthy democratic practices.

INTRODUCTION

While the (secular progressive) brigades clamor for legalized drugs, unfettered destruction of human fetuses, euthanasia, rehabilitation instead of criminal punishment, vastly more freedom for minors, parity for alternative lifestyles, forced sharing of personal assets, a 'one world' consensus on foreign policy, banishment of spirituality from the marketplace, and other 'enlightened' social policies, the (traditional warrior) understands the erosion of societal discipline that those policies would cause, and thus, rejects them.

Bill O'Reilly, *Culture Warrior*, 2006

Tomorrow, you're all going to wake up in a brave, new world. A world where the Constitution gets trampled by an army of terrorist clones, created in a stem cell research lab by homosexual doctors, who sterilize their instruments over burning American flags! Where tax and spend Democrats take all your hard-earned money and use it to buy electric cars for National Public Radio, and teach evolution to illegal immigrants! Oh, and everybody's high!

Stephen Colbert, November 7, 2006

Stephen Colbert first emerged as a blip on America's political comedy radar in 1997 when he became a correspondent at Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, then hosted by Craig Kilbourn (Sternbergh, 2006). Over the course of six seasons, Colbert submitted playful news pieces and evolved his now well-honed politically conservative character. By the time he left *The Daily Show* to helm his own television program in 2005, he'd become second-in-command to the show's present host Jon Stewart, providing a conservative "ying" to Stewart's liberal "yang" (Sternbergh, 2006). By spring of 2006, *Time* magazine took note of his solo work and listed him as one of the year's most influential people (*Time 100*, 30 April 2006). He cemented his place in the political landscape later in 2006, however, when he was invited to "lightly roast" president George W. Bush at the White House Correspondent's Association dinner. Never breaking his Republican-to-the-bone character, he deadpanned,

I stand for this man because he stands for things. Not only for things, he stands on things. Things like aircraft carriers and rubble and recently flooded city squares. And that sends a powerful message: that no matter what happens to America, she will always rebound with the most powerfully staged photo ops in the world... (quoted in Sternbergh, 2006).

Two days later, clips of the speech had been viewed 2.7 million times on YouTube and Stephen Colbert had officially registered on the American political consciousness (Sternbergh, 2006).

Today, Colbert continues to use his conservative character to satirize the current president and his administration as well as the news media themselves on his Comedy Central program *The Colbert Report* (pronounced "Coal-bear Re-pore") which airs weeknights after *The Daily Show*. But why study Stephen Colbert? Why is what he says important? In this dissertation, I will explore a few of the discourses created within *The Colbert Report* and contribute to the legitimization of satirical television as valid realm of political discussion. With American youth increasingly turning to "fake news" programs such as *The Daily Show* and other late-night comedy programs for their political information (2004 Pew Survey, quoted in Baym, 2005: 260), the impact of such programs can no longer be discounted as mere "infotainment."

While previous communication scholars have treated televised entertainment and political news content as two separate entities (for example, Bennett, 1998) more current researchers have identified blurred lines between television genres. In 2001, Mutz succinctly assessed the contemporary atmosphere for the study of political communication, claiming, "the traditional distinctions between news and entertainment content are no longer very helpful" (2001: 231). Holbert added, "Not only is the study of entertainment television relevant to the basic tenets of political communication scholarship, but many scholars argue that there is a *need* to study this particular type of content from a political perspective because messages being

offered via entertainment outlets are qualitatively distinct from those provided through news” (2005: 438, emphasis mine). According to Williams and Delli Carpini, “the political relevance of a cartoon character like Lisa Simpson¹ is as important as the professional norms of Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, or Peter Jennings” (2002: B15). Thus, while the structure of entertainment-related discourse differs from that of traditional political news reporting, the discourses found within them remain important to the political education of the audience.

To guide my analysis of *The Colbert Report*, I will employ the following research questions: “How does Stephen Colbert create political discourse within *The Colbert Report*?” and with a further interest to identify the production of identity discourses, “What does it mean to be a member of the Colbert Nation?” While discourse analysis will be complicated by the program’s satiric and parodist elements, my research will add to the body of “infotainment” related research and provide groundwork for potential studies on audience reception of political satire. As Paul Simpson (2003) argues, the audience is a key factor in the analysis of satire. However, the scope of this dissertation is not large enough to include a detailed analysis of audience response to *The Colbert Report*. By creating a solid analysis of the production of meanings and rhetorical structures that are used to create discourse, further research on the interpreting satirical discourse within *The Colbert Report* may later emerge.

¹ From the animated series *The Simpsons*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical approaches to the study of television

Let us turn now to summary of theories and research relevant to my *Colbert Report* analysis. Because television emerged from a tradition of popular/mass media, scholars who studied television content in its early stages initially disregarded TV's merits and social importance (Hartley, 1998, Newcomb, 2000). John Hartley claims that early academics viewed such media as "a threat to traditions of culture," and thus, "the textual tradition in television studies set out with the avowed intention of denouncing television and all its works" (1998: 33). However, Charlotte Brundson provides a more optimistic history of television studies explaining, "Television studies emerged in the 1970s and 1980s from three major bodies of commentary on television: journalism, literary/dramatic criticism and the social sciences" (1998: 97). The first two veins of the field focus on the content of television programming as distinct texts in keeping with an "arts/humanities academic tradition" while the social sciences vein of television studies addresses the "social function and effects" of television (Brundson, 1998: 99).

Brundson explains that as the field of study evolved, the perspectives of each distinct discipline became entwined. It is, she claims, "difficult to separate the development of television studies from that of cultural studies for it is within cultural studies that we begin to find, in the 1980s, sophisticated theorizations and empirical investigations of the complex, contextual interplay of text and 'reader' in the making of meaning" (Brundson, 1998: 107-8). Stuart Hall's essay "Encoding/Decoding" (originally published, 1974) falls within the cultural studies realm of television studies. Hall contested the classical Marxist view of television as "an ideological and hegemonic monolith," instead claiming that television texts are encoded with multiple messages or "discourses" which result in "polysemic" texts bearing multiple meaning (Butler, 2002: 350). The decoding portion of the process occurs when viewers choose the meanings that align with their own ideologies from amidst the variety of

discourses (Butler, 2002, 350-1). This dissertation will focus primarily on the encoding side of television's discourse, but decoding remains relevant, for the viewer must interpret the satirist's intended message correctly in order to achieve satiric uptake (Simpson, 2003: 153-186).

From ideology to discourse

Before continuing, allow me to elaborate on some important terms (first mentioned above) that will be used further in this dissertation. Jeremy G. Butler perhaps makes an understatement when he claims, "Ideology is a slippery term" (2002: 348). Sturken and Cartwright define ideology as "The shared set of values and beliefs that exist within a given society and through which individuals live out their relations to social institutions and structures. Ideology refers to the way that certain concepts and values are made to seem like natural, inevitable aspects of everyday life" (2001: 357). John B. Thompson takes the term one step further by implying a disparity of power, explaining that ideology "can be used to refer to the ways in which meaning serves, in particular circumstances, to establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical—what I shall call 'relations of domination'" (1990: 7). In other words, social institutions and structures employ ideology to maintain or create power over people, yet ideology seems so natural, people are not aware they are dominated.

Despite some theorists' emphasis on ideology, Myra Macdonald comments, "'Ideology' has increasingly been spurned by cultural critics as being too abstract and rigid to cope with the rapidly changing formations of social thinking in turn-of-the-century western societies" (2003: 27). She claims Michel Foucault's notion of "discourse" provides a better model for the functioning of power and meaning. Television scholar John Fiske explains that a discourse is "a language or system of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings

about an important topic area" (1987:14). At first glance, Fiske's definition seems remarkably like the above definitions of ideology. However, the key distinction here is the emphasis on *language* and *representation*. Ideology cannot be conveyed without discourse. Thus, television texts employ discourse to circulate ideologies.

From dialogism to intertextuality

But how did the Foucauldian concept of discourse emerge? Before Foucault critiqued culture and society in 1960s France, Mikhail Bakhtin used semiotics to analyze literature in 1930s Russia. According to Bakhtinian scholar Robert Stam, "Bakhtin shares with Marxism the assumption that cultural processes are intimately linked to social relations and that culture is the site of social struggle" (1989: 8). Expressing sentiments that would later be echoed by Thompson and Foucault, Stam explains, "Bakhtin locates ideological combat at the pulsating heart of discourse, whether in the form of political rhetoric, artistic practice, or everyday language exchange" (1989: 8). Foucault elaborated upon the idea of "discourse" as a power struggle in his analysis of various social concepts such as sexuality, madness, and discipline. Sturken and Cartwright summarize his findings stating, "discourse is a body of knowledge that both defines and limits what can be said about something...It is fundamental to Foucault's theory that discourses produce certain kinds of subjects and knowledge, and that we occupy to varying degrees the subject positions defined within a broad array of discourses" (2001: 354).

In addition to discourse, Bakhtin's works describe "dialogism," i.e. the idea that every utterance is related to other utterances and previous knowledge. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*², states that any verbal performance, "inevitably orients itself with respect to previous performances in the same sphere, both those by the

² The authorship of this work is disputed among Bakhtinian scholars. It has been accredited to Bakhtin, but was published under Volshinov's name. See Meinhof and Smith, 2000a: 3.

same author and those by other authors, originating and functioning as part of a social dialogue" (Voloshinov, 1986: 95). Thus, television texts, using genre and other conventions draw upon previous texts to convey meaning. Bakhtin's dialogism also supports Hall's concept of the polysemic nature of television messages, and provides theoretical ground for the study of parody and satire. John Frow helps take the notion of dialogism to another level of "intertextuality" (1990). According to Meinhof and Smith, Frow's essay "Intertextuality and ontology" "replaces the superficial and somewhat obvious observation that all texts contain traces of other texts with a much more complex conception of the interaction between texts, producers of texts and their readers' lifeworlds" (2000a: 3). Thus, Frow brings Bakhtin's ideas from the realm of semiotics to a place more in keeping with the cultural studies side of television analysis.

Meinhof and Smith, in their discussion of intertextuality, explain that media texts employ "several different semiotic modes at the same time. Among these different semiotic modes, spoken, and written text, visual images, and music are the most clearly defined" (2000a: 11). Therefore, an intertextual analysis of a television text would not be based purely on its spoken/linguistic element. Visual elements like body language, set design, icon graphics, convey meaning, just as dialogue linguistically creates meaning. Furthermore, in a parody text like *The Colbert Report*, a viewer's previous knowledge of the genre being parodied or knowledge of the current events discussed by Colbert and his guests affect the perceived meanings of the television text. Meinhof and Smith also use the term to describe "the process of viewers and readers interpreting texts which exhibit the dynamic interactivity of several semiotic modes, and interpreting them in ways that are partially controlled by this multimodality" (2000a: 11). Thus, audience reception continues to be an important part of television analysis, even within the intertextual realm of analysis.

Satire as discourse

Now that I have established a broader theoretical background for my study, I will now narrow my focus to the more specific theories behind the study of satire. Though the term "satire" can be challenging to define, Griffin succinctly explains academics' traditional view of satire:

A work of satire is designed to attack vice or folly. To this end it uses wit or ridicule. Like polemical rhetoric, it seeks to persuade an audience that something or someone is reprehensible or ridiculous; unlike pure rhetoric, it engages in exaggeration and some sort of fiction. But satire does not forsake the 'real world' entirely. Its victims come from that world, and it is this fact (together with a darker or sharper tone) that separates satire from pure comedy (1994: 1).

Thus, unlike more straightforward forms of humor, satirical texts create a fictional realm in order to critique "real world" figures and institutions. For example, Colbert's character is exaggerated and fictitious, but draws inspiration from "real life" commentators like Bill O'Reilly. According to this definition, satire contains tremendous possibility for creating political commentary and social awareness. The fictional quality of the address makes the attack seem "safer" but does not necessarily undermine the effectiveness of the critique.

In *On the Discourse of Satire*, Paul Simpson proposes a unique methodology for the study of satire (2003). He claims that most satire research stems from two academic traditions: linguistics and literary theory (Simpson, 2003). His comments on the literary tradition of humor studies pertain more to my research than his review of linguistic research, as my object of study (*The Colbert Report*) is a concrete text consisting of scripted words and visual images rather than impromptu humorous banter. However, the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) originally put forth by Attardo and Raskin (1991) provides an interesting platform for the verbal analysis of

humor. According to this theory, a comic text requires three segments: "setup, incongruity (or script opposition), and resolution" (Simpson, 2003: 37-8). Because script opposition is central to this approach, it operates under the assumption that humor stems from the reverse of expectations. Puns could easily be analyzed using this approach, because the double meaning of words operates to subvert expected outcomes. Yet, Simpson concludes his chapter on linguistic analysis of humor claiming, "humorologists seem almost to have gone out of their way to avoid satire. That so endemic and culturally valorised a mode of humorous discourse should receive so little academic attention is indeed strange" (2003: 45).

Simpson devises his own framework for satirical analysis by drawing on several other authors. He claims "The construction of a satirical text involves the combination of and opposition between two elements: a *prime* and a *dialectic*" (2003: 88, his emphasis). Catherine Emmott (1997) is used to define the concept of "prime" which "functions by echoing some sort of 'other' discourse event, whether that be another text, genre, dialect or register, or even another discursive practice" (Simpson, 2003: 89). Thus, the prime provides a familiar frame from which the audience views the satirical text. For example, to a knowledgeable viewer, *The Colbert Report*, echoes the genre of pundit/personality focused television news programs. In this way, the prime refers intertextually to other texts with which the audience is familiar.

The "dialectic," on the other hand, is "a text-internal (as opposed to intertextual) element" which provides "an opposing idea of movement" to viewer expectations (Simpson, 2003: 89). To explain the dialectic, Simpson draws upon Popper:

Popper argues that there is first 'some idea or theory or movement which may be called a "thesis"' which then produces an opposing idea or movement, realized through opposition, negation or contradiction, called an antithesis (Popper 1963: 313-314). He further contends that because we determine not to accept the contradiction between thesis and antithesis, we seek to resolve

the conflict by reaching a synthesis, which marks the third stage of the dialectic triad (317) (Simpson, 2003: 89).

For example, when Colbert claims to stand behind President George W. Bush, because he “stands on things...like aircraft carriers” (see above) he evokes the intertextual prime/memory of 2004 news coverage depicting Bush delivering a victory speech on an aircraft carrier (beneath a premature “Mission Accomplished” banner) to declare the end to the current Iraq war. When Colbert says that America “will always rebound” with the help of staged photo ops, an antithesis is created in the minds of listeners who know that American military operations in Iraq are still far from finished and far from successful. The intended synthesis that forms as a result of these contradictions is the understanding that the president’s actions are hollow, orchestrated, and unhelpful.

To analyze *Private Eye*, a British satirical newspaper, Simpson employs Foucault’s questions regarding authorship to locate satire “as a discursive practice within orders of discourse” and also “drawing up the triad of subject positions for satire” (2003: 212). These questions include: “What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it? What placements are determined for possible subjects? Who can fulfill these diverse placements of subject?” (Foucault, 1986: 148). The “triad of subject positions for satire” identified by Simpson includes A) Satirist, B) Satiree/Addressee, C) Satirized/Target. (2003: 86, see Figure 2 below). As mentioned before, my research will not be particularly audience-oriented and will thus focus more on the discursive relationship between A and C. However, understanding the subject position of the satiree is important for proper discourse analysis.

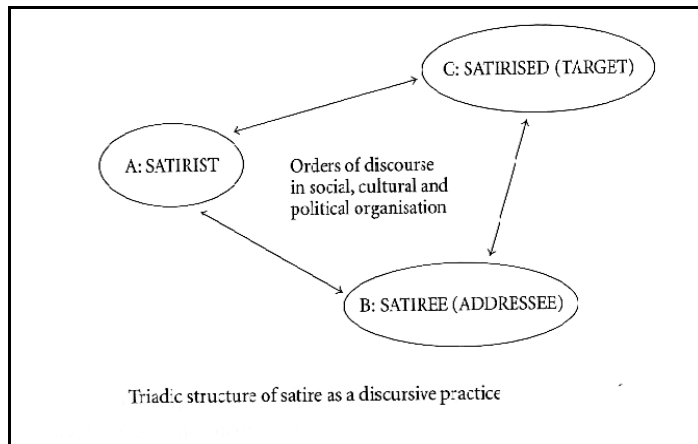


Figure 2 (Simpson, 2003: 86)

Recent empirical studies of entertainment-based comedy programs

As mentioned above, some recent scholars have studied the political impact of television programs previously considered purely “entertainment based.” In 2003, Niven *et al* conducted an impressive content analysis of over 13,000 political jokes told during the opening monologues of *The Tonight Show* (with Jay Leno), *The Late Show* (with David Letterman), *Late Night* (with Conan O’Brien), and *Politically Incorrect* (with Bill Maher) from 1996 to 2000. They found that while President Clinton, those directly associated with him, or top presidential nominees were targeted more than other public figures, the humor of the jokes addressed these figures’ personal shortcomings and foibles more often than actual political content. While Niven *et al*’s findings are not particularly helpful for this dissertation’s research, the study is worth noting because of its methodical exploration of the television content.

Another more relevant piece by R. Lance Holbert proposes a typology to provide better structure to the research of political entertainment television (2005). Holbert divides entertainment television into nine categories (see Figure 2) including fictional political dramas (*The West Wing*), satirical situation comedies (*The Simpsons*, *King of the Hill*), and traditional satire (late night comedy monologues, as well as *The Daily*

Show) (2005: 443-448). *The Colbert Report* would fall into the “traditional satire” section of Holbert’s typology, as its political content is primary while the satirical delivery makes the political messages more implicit than explicit. Holbert comments, “One underdeveloped line of research is the analysis of political satire. This is unfortunate given that political satire is prevalent within the medium of television...” (2005: 441). The article astutely points out that not all entertainment television delivers the same forms of political discourse, and his schema does clarify what could be a murky research terrain. However, his analysis stems from an “audience studies” perspective and his citations of previous research tend to focus on media effects/cultivation theory (see Young, 2004 and Moy et al., 2005) rather than a discursive approach

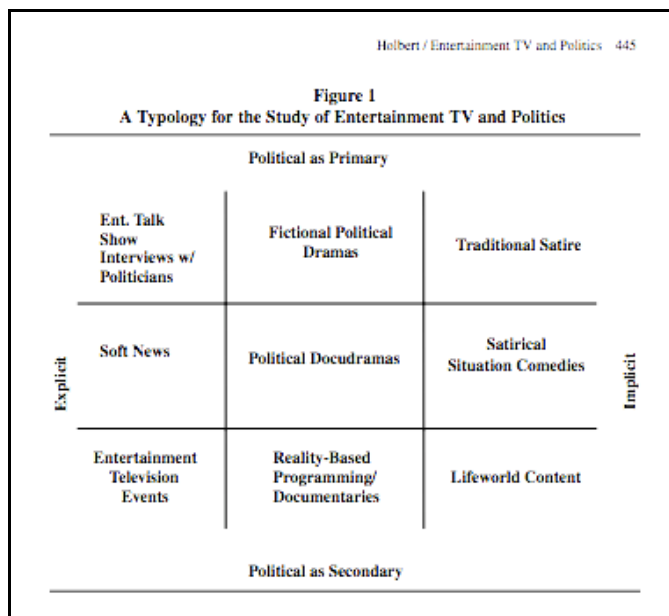


Figure 2 (Holbert, 2005: 445)

Similarly, in 2000, Meinhof and Smith analyzed episodes of Britain’s *Spitting Image* a political satire television program that depicted public figures as grotesque latex puppets. They claim “by the 1990s *Spitting Image* did not regularly privilege political subject matter, and therefore could not be appropriately classified as political satire”

(Meinhof and Smith, 2000b: 52). This statement assumes that political satire is easily defined. I agree with Simpson's view that "satire is *not* a genre of discourse but it does things *to* and *with* genres of discourse" (2003: 214, emphasis his). Approaching the program from an intertextual perspective, the researchers concluded that while the program lacked political satire, by drawing upon a variety of television genres, it used pastiche primarily to parody "television itself" (Meinhof and Smith, 2000b: 59). Their claim that *Spitting Image* "is better understood if approached from the vantage point of popular culture and entertainment" (2000b: 60) frames entertainment programming as incapable of political commentary and downplays the political impact of the show's satirical elements. Because *The Colbert Report* parodies only one television genre, Meinhof and Smith's findings are not particularly helpful to my analysis.

More useful to my research, however, were two articles on the unexpected social commentaries of a program widely considered purely "entertaining." In their assessments of the political nature of the satirical situation comedy cartoon *The Simpsons*, Paul A. Cantor (1999) and Brian L. Ott (2003) turn their attention towards textual content rather than audience response. While each proposes interesting ideas: that *The Simpsons* makes political issues more accessible by focusing on the importance of the nuclear family unit and a small-town community setting (Cantor, 1999) and that the characters of Bart, Lisa, and Homer Simpson provide models for three forms of postmodern identity (Ott, 2003), neither writer specifies a particular method for his analysis. Ott manages to draw upon Baudrillard's *Simulations* (1983), but both articles seem more like the works of highly educated fans than academic researchers. This could be because both writers emerge from an American perspective, which tends to focus more on anecdotes and sources of corporate control than the more critically-oriented research agendas of European or Australian scholars (van Dijk, 1985:73 – in Matheson). However, unlike other research in television comedy, they do attempt to engage with the discursive elements of *The Simpsons*.

Finally, perhaps the most pertinent study to this dissertation is Geoffrey Baym's analysis of *The Daily Show*. Claiming that since the events of September 11, 2001, America's commercial television news no longer represents "journalism-as-public-inquiry" and increasingly aligns itself with "the White House and the apparatus of state security" (Baym, 2005: 259, see also Hutcheson et al., 2004) Baym praises *The Daily Show's* ability to combine multiple genres of television to create a site of public discourse and critical journalism (2005). He writes, "Unlike traditional news, which claims an epistemological certainty, satire is a discourse of *inquiry*, a rhetoric of challenge that seeks through the asking of unanswered questions to clarify the underlying morality of a situation" (Baym, 2005: 267). While he, too, fails to specify a methodology for his analysis, his exploration of various forms of discourse provide an interesting starting point for an analysis of *The Colbert Report*.

Conceptual framework for analyzing *The Colbert Report*

In my analysis of *The Colbert Report*, I shall approach television as capable of creating valid and compelling political discourse and raising awareness of political issues. Despite the show's status as "entertainment" programming, I will assume that the messages put forth within *The Colbert Report* are as legitimate as messages found within contemporary news and political commentary programming. I will consider *The Colbert Report* as a text consisting of written, spoken, and visual elements. Thus, my unit of analysis will include a combination of scripted language, improvised language, visual graphics on the television screen, and the sound of the studio audience's responses. While I acknowledge the importance of audience reception in television studies and intertextuality based research, I will focus primarily on the discourses created within the television text. Therefore, my approach will be more textually based than reception based.

Because I seek to explore discourses within *The Colbert Report*, I will make use of the work of Michel Foucault and the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis. I will approach discourse as forms of language and representation used to circulate ideologies and maintain or contest power dynamics. However, because my text utilizes satire to convey its messages, an additional framework of analysis is needed. To identify the discourses within *The Colbert Report*, I will draw heavily upon the framework established by Paul Simpson (2003) to address satire as a unique form of discourse. Like Simpson, I will use the Foucauldian subject positions of Satirist, Satiree/Addressee, and Satirized/Target. Furthermore, the concepts of prime and dialectic as conceptualized by Emmott and Popper respectively will be used to identify the oppositions in expectations necessary for satire.

I will not, however, approach my research from a Marxist or political economy perspective. *The Colbert Report* is produced by Comedy Central, which is owned by the Viacom media conglomerate—the same organization that owns MTV Networks. Presumably, one could do an interesting analysis by exploring what Viacom stands to gain, in terms of power and financial profits, by the discourses put forth within *The Colbert Report*. I will assume, however, that the program operates independently from its corporate owner. As long as the show remains popular, Viacom would be ill-advised to tamper with the “goose that lays the golden eggs” with regard to advertising revenue. For example, *The Simpsons* takes occasional sarcastic shots at its corporate parent the Fox Network and its programming, and yet the show has continued to run for over a dozen seasons. Thus, instead of extending to the macro-discourses of corporate control, I will focus my analysis on the micro messages within *The Colbert Report's* texts.

Statement of Research Question

Simpson claims, “no devolved, comprehensive theoretical framework for the study of satirical discourse has yet emerged from the scholarly literature” (2003: 45). Thus, my research will be venturing into uncharted theoretical waters. While I would not presume to create a “comprehensive theoretical framework for the study of satirical discourse” within the modest context of a master’s dissertation, I will attempt to employ the framework suggested by Simpson. In doing so, I aim to contribute to a burgeoning field of “infotainment” research. As the lines of distinction between news/political television content and entertainment television continue to blur, programming like *The Colbert Report* will continue to grow in political significance. If televised political satire has the power to shape political opinions and create discourse, it is important that we understand the nature and content of the messages put forth by satirical programs. Ideally, my research will provide the first step towards further analysis of audience reception of television satire.

Thus, I will attempt to answer the following research question: “How does Stephen Colbert create political discourse within *The Colbert Report*?” and with a further interest to identify the production of identity discourses, “What does it mean to be a member of the Colbert Nation?” By analyzing subject positions and political ideologies within the satire of *Colbert Report* content, I will examine power structures and assumed political ideologies conveyed by Stephen Colbert. Based on Baym’s analysis of *The Daily Show*, I initially suspected that while *The Colbert Report* seems to convey a dominant discourse of political liberalism, it also goes beyond critiquing politics to skewer contemporary news media practices. Furthermore, by addressing the audience as “heroes” or “members of The Colbert Nation”, Colbert creates an inclusionary imagined community of viewers. This raises questions about nationhood and democracy.

METHODOLOGY

Because I am interested in the qualitative content of the messages within television texts, I will approach my research from a discourse analysis perspective. Following the example of Niven et al, content analysis could have been used to examine the satirized objects of attack within *The Colbert Report*, but such an approach would have omitted an examination of the rhetorical and discursive devices Colbert uses to construct his texts. Future research examining audience reception of *The Colbert Report* might employ questionnaires or qualitative interviewing. For example, it could be quite interesting to compare the satirical uptake of a diverse range of audience members. Do liberally minded youth interpret Colbert's satire differently than women, senior citizens, or minority viewers? I suspect so. However, the scope of this dissertation is not broad enough to conduct a detailed discourse analysis *and* include a proper evaluation of audience response.

However, simply using "discourse analysis" to approach the research questions is not enough. Within the realm of this methodology, there are several forms of analysis. MacDonald notes, "Discourse, historically, refers to verbal communicative strategies. Within media studies, work identified as being about discourse has tended to replicate this emphasis" (2003:3). Thus, the frameworks created by analysts like van Dijk (1988, 1991) and Fowler (1991) place emphasis on use of language, the nature of verbal interaction, and other linguistic properties, while overlooking the importance of additional elements of media texts like visual signs and sound effects (MacDonald, 2003: 3-4). MacDonald notes that while these approaches are valuable, "they are becoming increasingly artificial as interaction between visual and verbal signifiers becomes a condition of all media apart from radio" (2003: 3-4).

Matheson continues this argument, claiming, "there is clearly a case that media discourse analysis needs an expanded theory of meaning to include other modes, and particularly to engage with arguments about the changing status of the visual" (2005: 103). Kress and van Leeuwen propose a "multi-modal" approach to semiotic

analysis based on the assumption that “common semiotic principles operate in and across different modes” (2001: 2). To accomplish their analysis, Kress and van Leeuwen first analyze visual images as if they were a language with their own grammar, then, further analyze the way the images blend with language to form meanings (Matheson, 2005: 103). One form of grammar they propose is the use of “vectors.” They explain,

The vectors may be formed by bodies or limbs or tools ‘in action’, but there are many other ways to turn represented elements into diagonal lines of action. A road running diagonally across the picture space, for instance, is also a vector, and the car driving on it an ‘Actor’ in the process of ‘driving’. (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 57)

While this approach might be helpful for analysis of television programs that depict a variety of characters participating in a variety of activities (like fictional drama or reality-based television), for the most part, visual images within *The Colbert Report*, simply show Colbert sitting at his desk. The program does employ humorous visual captions and graphics, but overall, the computer-animated bald eagle provides the majority of the show’s action. Thus, for my research, a method of analysis that emphasizes the importance of language is still more useful than a “multimodal” approach.

Another, more narrow form of discourse analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), draws upon Foucauldian conceptions of subject positions and discursive practices to examine the nature of power relations within a discourse. While researchers frequently employ CDA to analyze spoken conversations and written political documents, many theorists agree that it is possible to use CDA for television analysis. Fairclough references Bakhtin (1986) to explain that because scripted texts are consciously constructed for specific audiences they are technically “interactive”, and thus, “a conversation and a television programme can both be seen as ‘texts’” (Fairclough, 2001, p.240). He and Chouliaraki also state, “The first texts were of

course written, but the texts of contemporary mediated interaction and quasi-interaction are also spoken (radio), televisual (so combinations of speech, image, and sound effect), or electronic (for example, email)" (Fairclough and Chouliaraki, 1999, p.46). Therefore, because *The Colbert Report* is scripted with an audience in mind, it falls within the definition of "contemporary mediated interaction" and is appropriate for a Critical Discourse Analysis.

After reviewing a variety of literature on the subject of discourse and critical discourse analysis, I employed an analytical framework for CDA based on Fairclough's interpretation of Roy Bhaskar's (1986) "explanatory critique" (2001, pp.235-239, see also Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, pp.59-68). Fairclough explains, "CDA begins from some social perception of a discourse-related problem in some part of social life" (2001, p.236). He advises starting analysis (1) by identifying a "social problem," to add focus to one's research question. Through its use of satire, *The Colbert Report*, addresses the issue of "inadequate or imbalanced political coverage within the mainstream American media" as a "discourse-related problem." The following steps within Fairclough's model include (2) "identifying obstacles to the problem being tackled," (3) "considering whether the social order (network of practices) 'needs' the problem," and (4) "identifying possible ways past the obstacles," followed by (5) reflection on the analysis (Fairclough, 2001, p.236).

However, CDA is further problemized because the implied meanings of satirical texts are often the opposite of the words that are actually spoken. Thus, a straightforward analysis of a satirical script would not yield an accurate assessment of the intended discourse. Paul Simpson reports a dearth of CDA studies addressing humor generally or satire specifically. In his assessment of critical discourse analysis, he argues:

...there is no study which I know of which attempts, within those frameworks, to identify humour, let alone satirical humour, as a form of social praxis. In view of satire's aggressive function, this omission is all the more striking, especially when many of the individual studies in CDA seek to uncover and

challenge repressive discourse practices of powerful interested groups, or to challenge the hegemonic authority of political institutions and organisations (Simpson, 2003, p. 84).

In other words, because satire operates as a critique of dominant beliefs and practices, it is the perfect vehicle for CDA. However, it remains a largely unstudied area. His comments are enough to strike simultaneously fear and motivation into the heart of this researcher: fear that an analysis of *The Colbert Report* may go where few researchers have ventured before and motivation to do the job justice. Simpson concludes his denigration of CDA claiming, "The simple truth is that there seems to be no recognition anywhere in the more theoretical critical discourse analysis literature of the capacity of ordinary (non-academic) people to use humour to resist ideologically insidious discourse..." (2003: 85). Therefore, I will attempt to use Simpson's proposed discourse analysis methodology to examine *The Colbert Report*. As explained above, the key features of this methodology include the concept of a discursive triad of subject positions (determined by using Foucault's questions of authorship) within satire and the necessity of a prime and dialectic within satirical texts. Thus, I will not be using a traditional form of CDA because I will take into account Simpson's model for the analysis of satire and the question of visual modes of representation.

Research Design

In order to answer the question "How is political discourse constructed within *The Colbert Report*?" I first needed to decide what elements of the program to analyze. Ideally, one would analyze all parts of every episode to get a full sense of the patterns of discourse used within the show. However, four new episodes of *The Colbert Report* air each week, and the program has been running since 2005. Thus, the ideal researcher would require a tremendous amount of time for a thorough analysis, as there are already hundreds of existing episodes and new ones appearing all the time. Presumably, during the first year of *The Colbert Report*, Stephen Colbert

and the show's writers were still developing their satirical style and mode of address, and thus, the discourses within early episodes might not be consistent. Therefore, I chose to analyze more recent episodes. After viewing a sampling of episodes from October 2006 to March 2007, I decided that while the bulk of the show's content is politically oriented, the strongest political discourse occurred during the weeks of America's mid-term election on November 7, 2006. I, therefore, decided to analyze four episodes that originally aired November 6-9, 2006.

To aid my analysis, I transcribed each episode, noting the time code, visual image on the screen, music and sound effects, dialogue, and audience response. The transcript for the entire Monday, November 6, 2006 episode is included as Appendices A-E at the end of this dissertation, with segments from the other episodes included as subsequent appendices. I found that a variety of discursive approaches were used. For example, each episode contains a segment in which Colbert interviews a guest, usually politicians, journalists, and intellectuals promoting their recently written books. While Colbert admirably manages to maintain his conservative character during most of every interview, these segments are clearly unscripted. The improvisational dialogue in the interviews complements the scripted commentary segments in which Colbert addresses the camera to give his views on news stories and political issues.

Though I used entire episodes as my units of analysis, I paid close attention to a regular segment of the program called "The Word." During this portion of the show, a word or phrase is identified and Colbert delivers a monologue--in character--on the given topic. "The Word" uses written word captions that often counter Colbert's monologue with snarky liberal comments and references. Thus, "The Word" often becomes an ideological dialogue between the often-outlandish claims of the Colbert character and the more liberal captions. Furthermore, the verbal play that occurs within "The Word" makes for rich analytical ground when using a form of language-oriented discourse analysis.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

In my research, I set out to answer two major questions: "How does Stephen Colbert create political discourse within *The Colbert Report*?" and "What does it mean to be a member of the Colbert Nation?" While my analysis was fruitful, I was surprised to find that the messages within the program were not always consistent. This made it more difficult to identify prevailing discourses. While shows earlier in the week showed strong political content and media critique, the Thursday episode contributed far less to any kind of political discussion or hegemonic attack. Furthermore, Colbert's address was not consistently satirical in nature. Some segments were humorous, but did not appear to critique any figure or institution or require a *synthesis* to be formed in the mind of the viewer. Finally, while (as expected) a liberal discourse could often be identified, it was often contradicted by another message of "reaching across the aisle" and "healing divisions" within the nation.

The most obvious reading of Colbert's satire reveals a critique of the Bush administration and its policies, as well as the dominant beliefs of vocal, high profile conservative news critics. However, a closer analysis reveals that the policies and politicians of both political parties are scrutinized. The most interesting "vice or folly" (according to Griffin's definition of satire) lampooned by *The Colbert Report*, however, were the ways the mainstream media present politicians and political news coverage. The Colbert Nation, therefore, emerges as a fictional world (again, according to Griffin's definition) created by the show, which serves as a metaphor for more responsible journalism and increased political action among citizens. By satirizing the ways in which the media reduce political parties and issues to oversimplified binaries, Colbert emphasizes the lack of in-depth coverage of issues. Finally, humorous segments like "Better Know a District" and "What to Expect When You're Electing" subtly create awareness among viewers and create a model for other news programs to follow.

Imbalanced news coverage as a social problem

Following Fairclough's framework, I began my analysis by identifying the "social problem" of inadequate or imbalanced news coverage. The power of the media is highlighted in the post-election day (November 8, 2006) episode. During the opening segment in which Colbert reviews the day's major headlines, he deliberately omits reporting the fact that the Democrats won control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, focusing instead on the announcement that Britney Spears and Kevin Federline had announced their divorce. This strategy reveals the way media outlets possess the ability to report only the news items that serve their own interests. It isn't until the episode's interview with Jeff Greenfield of CNN, over halfway into the episode, that the Democrats' victory is actually uttered... by Greenfield. In response, Colbert quips, "Everybody's covering that (story). People come to me for the stories nobody else wants to cover. Like the Britney and Kevin Federline thing. That has political ramifications, too... in Louisiana." While this statement appears to be an attack on voters from Louisiana (who can easily be stereotyped as uneducated), it is actually a jab at news outlets that continuously fill their airwaves with "celebrity news" at the expense of political coverage.

Labeling and binary representations

The Colbert Report more consistently attacks media practices by emphasizing the way news commentary often reduces political parties and issues to oversimplified binary oppositions. Sturken and Cartwright explain "binary oppositions" as, "The oppositions such as nature/culture, male/female, etc., through which reality has been traditionally represented" (2001: 350). They cite Umberto Eco's analysis of James Bond spy novels as a fundamental contribution to the "structuralist" movement of the 1960's. Eco found that the structure of the Bond stories always revolved around the same binary oppositions of Bond/villain or good/evil (Sturken

and Cartwright, 2001: 367). However, “poststructuralist” scholars have developed “theories of difference” that demonstrate “the ways in which these oppositional categories are interrelated and are ideologically and historically constructed” (Sturken and Cartwright, 2001: 350). In other words, contemporary scholars agree that some scenarios do not divide easily into “black and white” categories... or red and blue categories, as in the satire of *The Colbert Report*.

Traditionally, American political coverage uses the color red to denote the Republican party and the color blue to represent the Democratic party. *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* use these colors to a great extent. While both shows’ sets are predominantly blue, Jon Stewart and Colbert appear wearing blue and red neckties in the election night “Midterm Midtacular” episode (November 7, 2006).³ In the run-up to the election results, Colbert also promises a balloon drop of red balloons if the Republicans win and prepares a cake with a map of the US in red with the words “Congratulations, Republicans!” Similarly, the color scheme of the digitally generated “Spin Zone” depicted during the opening credits is mostly shades of red, perhaps indicating that the atmosphere of the show has a Republican bias. (See Appendix A.) The use of color to distinguish between the two political parties within the show contributes to the glorification of the Republicans and denigration of the Democrats, as when the graphics in the “What to Expect When You’re Electing” segment (November 6, 2006, see Appendix B) depict the sodomization of the blue icon representing a generic “voter” by a polling place campaigner in the famously democratic leaning state of Massachusetts.

According to Matheson, news texts rely on labels to sort “people into often quite rigid social categories...because they compress so much meaning into a few words” (2003: 24). Labels contribute to *The Colbert Report’s* creation of binary divisions. For example, in a post-election day interview with newly elected congressman from New

³ Colbert wears a dark grey necktie during the post-election show (November 8, 2006), perhaps to symbolize mourning the loss of the Republican congressional majority.

York, Democrat John Hall, Colbert says, "...I don't agree with your politics. You're one of those super lefty, crunchy granola, run our cars on human waste kind of guys." Matheson explains further, "The act of labeling a person (or a group or thing) defines how members of the society can understand and judge any action done by that person and allows them to generalize..." (2003: 24). Within *The Colbert Report*, negative labels are consistently assigned to Democrats (cowards, terrorists, quitters) and their policies are labeled in negative terms. For instance, Colbert uses the phrase "crunchy granola" more than once to negatively categorize politicians who support environmental protection issues.

By using binary oppositions, complicated policies and beliefs are reduced to simplistic "good" versus "bad" dichotomies. *The Colbert Report* employs rhetorical strategies to create the binary opposition categories of "liberals" and "conservatives." The Colbert character is conservative, and thus, casts his Democratic political opponents in negative terms. During an election night interview with Congressman Robert Wexler (a Democrat from Florida who ran unopposed) Colbert asks Wexler, "So what's it going to be? Tax and spend, cut and run, or man on man?" Reducing Democratic platforms (increased taxation, the withdrawal of Troops from Iraq, and homosexual rights—specifically the right of gays to marry) to three negatively phrased essences, presents a framework in which Colbert's opponent has little chance of achieving a fair conversational footing. This unflattering portrayal of liberal beliefs purposefully casts the democrat in a negative light, and places democrats in the "bad" side of the good/bad binary.

The most obvious example of placing the Republicans and Democrats within a good/bad binary within *The Colbert Report* is the likening of the Democratic Party to terrorists. Members of the Democratic Party may not be terrorists themselves, but the implication is that if the democrats gain power within the Congress, they will implement policies that allow "The Terrorists" to win. The graphic used during the "Midtacular" (See Figure 3) to gauge which political party leads the polls reduces the

two parties to an image of Jesus on a field of red and an image of Osama Bin Laden on a field of blue.



Figure 3

Colbert similarly prepares an election night cake in the event the Democrats win. In elaborate frosting, it shows the image of a bearded man with a turban holding a lighted bomb above the words, "Congratulations, Terrorists!" (See Appendix F, page 65.) This comparison is so outlandish; it seems easily recognized as satire. Anyone familiar with the tenets of Christianity knows that Jesus Christ traditionally represents the salvation of (Western) mankind. One familiar with Western media coverage of the events of September 11, 2001 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that followed knows that Osama Bin Laden traditionally represents a force of destruction against the West. By using these two personalities to represent political parties not officially associated with them, Colbert exaggerates to the point of ridiculousness.

Labeling the democrats as "terrorists" serves the interest of the prevailing discourse of the presidential administration and its policies. Robert Fisk, a Middle East correspondent for *The Independent* writes:

'terrorism' no longer means terrorism. It is not a definition; it is a political contrivance. 'Terrorists' are those who use violence against the side that is

using the word. The only terrorists whom Israel acknowledges are those who oppose Israel. The only terrorists the United States acknowledges are those who oppose the United States or their allies (Fisk, 1990: 441).

In other words, "terrorism" has become a label for those who violently oppose the figures and institutions of power. Karim explains further, "Dominant discourses support the actions of hegemonic powers to preserve themselves from threats that they themselves name as violent and terroristic" (2002: 102). Colbert's exaggerated "Catastrophometer" visually emphasizes Karim's point: by applying the negative label of "terrorist," those in power establish a discursive framework from which to maintain hegemony.

The role of parody

However, the metaphor hits closer to home when the viewer is aware of the political crusade of Bill O'Reilly, a major object of Colbert's satirical attacks. Conservative pundit O'Reilly hosts a Fox News program entitled *The O'Reilly Factor*. He holds firm to the stance that American media bears a liberal bias and often divides the American public along strongly moralistic lines. In his book *Culture Warrior* he explains that a "war is currently under way in the United States of America" (2006: 2). While he claims that the two sides of the dispute "are more complicated" than a liberal versus conservative divide, he defines the warfront as follows,

On one side of the battlefield are armies of the traditionalists like me, people who believe the United States was well founded and has done enormous good for the world. On the other side are the committed forces of the secular-progressive movement that want to change America dramatically: mold it in the image of Western Europe (O'Reilly, 2006, p. 2).

The implication seems to be that the United States is perfect as it is, and those who want to change America are anti-American. Despite O'Reilly's claims to the contrary, "traditionalists" (or "T-warriors" as he calls them later in the book) tend to fall into conservative/Republican categories and "secular progressives" fall into more liberal/Democratic categories. By using the metaphor of a battlefield, O'Reilly creates blatant binaries and suggests that "secular progressives" hate America.

Colbert's equating Democrats with terrorists echoes O'Reilly's implication that leftists are anti-American. This brings us into the tricky question about the distinction between parody and satire. Simpson claims "parody is undeniably the closest form of verbal humor to satire, in terms of its overall texture, design, and delivery" (2003: 123). Some scholars claim that parody possesses the ability to subvert or even obliterate the original parodied text (Dentith, 2000, p. 36). However, a valid point can also be made that parody can also operate as an homage without any intention of attack (Simpson, 2003, p. 123). Since parody requires outside knowledge of an additional text being referenced to accomplish its full impact, and because satire can operate independently of outside texts, I will delve no further into the theoretical framework of parody. Presumably, the average viewer can gather the impact of Colbert's satire without additional knowledge of Bill O'Reilly. In keeping with Griffin's definition, satire does make reference to the "real world", but *The Colbert Report*, refers to the "real world" institutions of media and their practices. Knowing the extent of O'Reilly's outrageousness merely adds to one's enjoyment of *The Colbert Report*.

"Better Know a District" (and a congressperson)

While a straightforward reading of Colbert's discourse would imply the "othering" and vilification of liberals/democrats, studio audience response and a satirical analysis reveals the contrary. While the Colbert character clearly wants the Republicans to win the election, he never admits to being a Republican himself. On two separate occasions, he claims to be "Independent," a statement that draws laughter from the audience. Yet, in clips from past "Better Know a District" segments, both Republican and Democratic politicians are made to look foolish, or at least human. For example, Brad Sherman, a Democrat from California, is shown using a robotic sounding voice to speak of a "robot uprising." Similarly, Democratic New York representative Eliot Engel, a middle-aged man with glasses and a large moustache, delivers the sound byte, "I thought the moustache would kind of make me more sophisticated." Graphics inform viewers that both men were reelected and returned to Congress, as did Lynn Westmoreland, a Republican from Georgia, who is shown struggling to name the Ten Commandments.

The playfulness of the segments helps to tear down the painstakingly crafted façades of politicians and exposes them to be "real people." Furthermore, by manipulating representatives into saying things like "I enjoy cocaine because it's a fun thing to do" as Colbert did with Democrat Robert Wexler of Florida, or convincing Democrat John Hall to read aloud a "smear card" stating "My opponent smokes marijuana", Colbert reveals the way sound clips and statements can be manipulated by the media and placed into unintended contexts. During the "Midtacular" election night coverage, he announces that every congressperson interviewed in the "Better Know a District" segment was reelected to the House of Representatives. He claims, "They owe their victories to me" and the "free face time" he gave them on *The Report*. "The Colbert Bump," Colbert's term for the boost in voter popularity as a result of appearing on *The Colbert Report*, benefits both Democrats and Republicans alike.

The Colbert Bump, draws attention to the role media coverage plays in election outcomes. In addition, it adds legitimacy to satirical comedy's place in political news coverage. However, because the segment does not provide in-depth political discussion of issues or policies, The Colbert Bump is also a testament to the need for more responsible journalism. Obviously, the *Colbert Report* audience is impressionable and responds to what they see on the program, but the question that begs to be asked is "what do the voters *really* know about the candidates profiled on "Better Know a District"? Perhaps viewers find an awkward looking man who longs for sophistication endearing, but do they know where he stands on political issues? If this seemingly trivial cable news segment can create such a difference in voter response, imagine what the outcome might be if mainstream media altered their approach to voter education. Colbert's subtle critique of media practices echoes Robert McChesney's fear that the American media system ignores its role in creating well-informed citizens (1999).

The phrase "Better Know" also bears a double meaning. It stresses the importance of "better knowing" about the political process, specifically the role of the House of Representatives. With most political coverage focusing on presidential candidates, it becomes easy to forget that other branches of the American government exist. The segment's title also bears an implied threat that one had "better know" the district "or else" there will be dire consequences. For example, a schoolyard bully may threaten, "you better give me your lunch money, or else... (I'll punch your face in.)" Presumably, the segment's title harnesses an elliptical expression to imply negative consequences for those who remain uneducated. The advice to "better know" about the political process serves to foster educated citizens who participate in the democratic process, and creates a foundation for the creation of a Colbert Nation. Colbert claims that the congressional districts that have been profiled on the program "have become members of the Colbert Nation" which brings us to my second research question, "What does it mean to be a member of the Colbert Nation?"

What is the Colbert Nation?

Within the discourse of the show, the term “Colbert Nation” is brandished about, but never fully defined. During the end credits of the November 6, 2004 episode (Appendix E, page 63), Colbert promotes the colbertnation.com website. He says, “Folks, I’m here to salute the heroes over at colbertnation.com, the number one Colbert fan site. You folks at colbertnation.com have made me a labor of love...” Thus, the Colbert Nation is constructed as a community of überfans. Those who contribute to the site are deemed “heroes” worthy of Colbert’s admiration. The November 7, 2006 election night coverage (Appendix F) ends with Colbert angrily storming out of his studio after announcing the democrats’ victory in the House of Representatives. He sits in his chauffeured car, demands to be taken home, and (in an absurdly funny twist) his driver, Uncle Sam, tells him, “You *are* home, Stephen. The Colbert Nation *is* your home, and it needs you now more than ever.” In this context, the Colbert Nation takes on a more nebulous definition and could constitute the audience members left behind in the studio, the amassed viewers at home, or the United States as a whole.

Perhaps the clearest definition of the Colbert Nation comes from a comment made during an interview with Mark Halperin, political director of ABC News (Appendix D). Halperin states, “The Left hates the media. They hate ABC. They hate *The Washington Post*. The Right hates ABC, *The Washington Post*. It’s the one thing that unites the Colbert Nation. Everybody thinks the media does a bad job.” This implies that there is a political division within the metaphorical Colbert Nation, but its members are media savvy and discontented with mainstream political news coverage. Halperin’s comment must be taken with a grain of salt, as his dialogue is unscripted, and may not be in keeping with the *Report’s* intended definition of Colbert Nationhood. However, the notion that *Colbert Report* viewers are frustrated with mainstream media echoes Baym’s findings about *The Daily Show*: that the program’s greatest strength was to reveal the shortcomings of major news journalists and coverage.

If we extended Halperin's Colbert Nation definition to be a metaphor for the United States itself, divided along political lines, but united by a feeling of frustration about dominant powers, Stephen Colbert becomes the Commander in Chief of his nation of "heroes." In other episodes not included in this analysis, he dictates commands to his supporters, and they act in droves. In the past, Colbert fans have been responsible for following his commands en masse to add false information to Wikipedia and vote online to name a bridge in Hungary (The Stephen Colbert Bridge) and the mascot of a junior league hockey (Steagle Colbeagle the Eagle) in his honor (Sternbergh, 2006).

In the live election night show, deemed the "Midterm Midtacular" and co-hosted with Jon Stewart and *The Daily Show*, there are three segments in which Stewart and Colbert interact. Towards the end of the show, Stewart claims that the outcome of the election will still not be known for several hours. Colbert replies, "Why don't you ask America now, Jon....I am America. This is the mouth of the people. In fact, I embody our great nation, Jon." He goes on to explain how the left side of his body ("everything this side of my left nipple") represents the East coast. Stewart asks about the "ethnic vote", to which Colbert replies, "Oh, you mean the 12% of me that's black?"⁴ Thus, *The Colbert Report* strives to draw parallels between the United States as a nation and the community of *Colbert Report* viewers. This discursive strategy suggests that the Colbert Nation, in which citizens actively participate by voting and voicing their opinions, can represent America itself. The Colbert Nation provides a model for a healthy democracy.

⁴ Stewart informs Colbert, "You do know you're the whitest person I know." Colbert retorts, "Well sure, on the outside. Somebody's got to get us into the country club."

Theories of nationalism and patriotism

Within the show, there seems to be a message of urgency. The fact the Colbert Nation needs Colbert “now more than ever” combines with references to the “unwinnable” situation in Iraq to create an atmosphere of trying times for both the United States and the Colbert Nation. Silvio Waisbord explains:

Nationalism, a quintessential modernist narrative, continues to mediate 'our being in the world', to use Heidegger's phrase. In a messy, uncertain, and violent world, patriotism provides a ready-made discourse of safety. When risk and insecurity are pervasive, the nation allegedly offers a safe haven and warmth in a cold, menacing world (2002: 215).

In other words, citizens look to the nation for comfort and strength in times of threat and uncertainty. Thus, the Colbert Nation creates an imaginary realm of truth in a world of media inadequacy. Waisbord references Anderson's ‘imagined communities’ (1991) to illustrate how patriotism “provides the dream of a unified identity” (2002: 215). Rantanen also notes that ‘nationalism’ is an imagined concept, for all citizens in a nation could never see or know everyone else within the nation's borders (2005, p.137).

Billig adds to the discussion of nationalism, stating, “Nationalist thinking involves more than commitment to a group and a sense of difference from other groups. It conceives ‘our’ group in a particular way” (1995: 61). Thus, the necessity of binary oppositions: “us” versus “them” emerge to create solidarity within a national community. He goes on to explain that to acquire a positive identity, communities will compare themselves to other groups within a framework that casts them in a positive light. For example, “nations will produce flattering stereotypes of themselves, and demeaning stereotypes of other nations, with which they compare themselves” (Billig, 1995: 66). Featherstone further differentiates nationalism from patriotism calling nationalism “respect for the state” relating to the abstract concept

of governance, and patriotism "love of country" tied to constructions of place (2002: 5). While the two concepts seem similar, patriotism bears slightly more positive theoretical connotations. Featherstone explains, "love of one's own country is not incompatible with commitment to humanity... Love of country should be seen as a preparation for love of others" (2002, p.5). Thus, it is possible to love one's country and feel patriotic, while respecting the views and beliefs of others. Contrary to O'Reilly's divisive construction of the battlefield between traditionalists and progressives, one can love one's homeland and still want it to change for the better.

The Colbert Nation as a "safe haven"

It seems easy to view the Colbert Nation in modernist, binary terms. A straightforward reading presents a realm in which Republicans/conservatives are valorized and Democrats/liberals are vilified. A satirical reading would generally produce a similar reading but reversing the Republican/Democrat, good/bad binaries. However, an in depth analysis reveals a more potent satirical attack of mainstream media practices. The "us" of the Colbert Nation are those savvy enough to recognize the lack of balanced media coverage in American media content. Members of the Colbert Nation are encouraged to educate themselves about political processes and be aware of the way the media manipulates and presents information. Colbert's use of binaries actually satirizes other journalists' tendency to reduce more complicated arguments into a matter of "black and white" or "red and blue." Colbert fosters awareness of the potential for an educated public to act, and demonstrates the dangers of an uneducated public.

Thus, to be a member of the Colbert Nation is to be an independent thinker. Halperin may claim that the uniting force behind the Colbert Nation is the belief that "the media is doing a bad job," but it could (as mawkishly idealistic as this may seem) actually be a hope for an improved America through the democratic process. The

Colbert Nation mirrors America itself. People are divided by political views and what they think is best for America, but despite divisions, most people probably want what they believe is best for the nation as a whole. In Colbert's interview with newly elected Congressman John Hall, he first jokes that the best way for the new Democratic majority to "reach across the aisle" would be to reelect former Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert, a Republican who stepped down from the Speaker position prior to the election because of political scandals surrounding the Republican Party. The audience laughs as Hall promises to "think about it."

Then, Colbert makes another, more serious proposal, "I've got another great way, I think, that we can heal the divide in this country. There may be people on the left, or on the right, or independents like me, okay, but we all love music. Will you join me for our national anthem?" Hall replies, "I'd be honored, sir." In a poignant moment void of irony, the two men—who supposedly possess opposing political views—stand to sing a rather beautiful rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner." After some initial nervous giggles from the audience, the crowd erupts into applause and cheers at the song's conclusion. While Colbert's use of satire (especially in "The Word" segments) can be biting and critical, this non-satirical moment with Hall makes a powerful statement about what it means to be an American, as well as a media literate member of the Colbert Nation. The us/them of the Colbert Nation does not divide along political lines, but along the line of those who want (whether they realize it or not) citizenship-enhancing media.

CONCLUSION

Before I summarize my research and findings, I must acknowledge that my research was far from perfect. My time at the London School of Economics has influenced my political views. I do believe the United States could benefit from mirroring some Western European political practices, but unlike the “secular progressives” in O’Reilly’s binary, I also love my country. Discourse analysis, for all its attempts at objectivity, still remains a qualitative method of research. *The Colbert Report* holds the potential for myriad interpretations, and my analysis could not emerge without a hint of influence from my subjective subconscious. The possibility exists for projecting the discourse I wanted to find onto the text. Because I approached this project from a media studies perspective, it seems inevitable that I would uncover a commentary on inadequate media coverage. However, upon viewing current summer 2007 episodes, I find the same themes from the November 2006 episodes emerging. Thus, my findings, if not the intended discourse of *Colbert Report* producers, are at least consistent.

That being said, despite the methodological limitations of discourse analysis, my research found that *The Colbert Report* attacks mainstream media practices more aggressively than it attacks conservative or liberal ideologies. Through the rhetorical strategies of labeling and the creation of binary oppositions, Colbert highlights the tendency of journalists to frame political situations and beliefs in overly simplistic terms. Surprisingly, though he satirizes the modernist tendency to categorize the world through the use of dichotomies, he relies on the modernist conceptions of nationhood, to formulate the imagined Colbert Nation. Within the Colbert Nation, Democrats and Republicans are both made to look foolish, and viewers of opposing political views are united by a belief that mainstream media are inadequate. To counter media inadequacy, the Colbert Nation not only provides a “safe space” but also constructs a model for improved political coverage and commentary. Thus, the ideal member of the Colbert Nation is well educated about the American political

process, media literate enough to recognize biased or unsubstantial news content, and an active participant in the democratic process.

The Colbert Report and other contemporary political satire “entertainment” shows still hold fertile ground for future researchers. Those wishing to continue the discourse analysis vein of my research may wish to address questions of parody. As mentioned before, very little theoretical research on the power of parody to challenge prevailing discourse or educate citizens. However, the most interesting future research probably lies in the field of audience studies. My analysis found that media literacy is a key component to membership within the Colbert Nation. A study using Simpson’s concept of “satiric uptake” among a variety of demographic groups could address the extent to which echoic references are important to understanding of a political message. Does one need to be familiar with Bill O’Reilly’s *No Spin Zone* to fully appreciate *The Colbert Report*? How would non-American, or even non-Western audiences react to American political satire? How would the “us/them” of the nationalist paradigm affect their interpretation of the text? Finally, a larger scale study might seek to examine the extent of *The Colbert Report*’s effect on the democratic process, asking the question “Are members of the Colbert Nation better citizens?”

In conclusion, today’s corporate media landscape of increasing quantities of information at the seeming expense of quality, combine with difficult times for the United States domestically and globally to paint a bleak representation of contemporary America. Luckily, Stephen Colbert and *The Colbert Report* provide viewers with a safe, fantasy realm in which to question what they believe about politics and the media and imagine a unified citizenry. “Sugar-coating the pill” with comedy masks the subtle messages about the need for educated citizenship and unbiased media. By providing a glimpse of the democratic potential of appropriate political news coverage, Colbert provides hope for future improvement and makes the Colbert Nation an ideal place to call home.

REFERENCES:

- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Attardo, S., & Raskin, V. (1991). Script Theory Revis(it)ed: Joke Similarity and Joke Representation Model. *Humor: The International Journal of Humor Research*, 4, 293-347.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (M. Holquist, & C. Emerson, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Baudrillard, J., Foss, P., Patton, P., & Beitchman, P. (1983). *Simulations*. New York: Semiotext(e), Inc.
- Baym, G. (2005). The Daily Show: Discursive Integration and the Reinvention of Political Journalism. *Political Communication*, 22, 259-276. Retrieved July 4, 2007, from Informa World database.
- Bennett, S. E. (1998). Young Americans' Indifference to Media Coverage of Public Affairs. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 31, 535-541. Retrieved July 8, 2007, from JSTOR database.
- Bhaskar, R. (1986). *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation*. London: Verso.
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage.
- Brunsdon, C. (1998). What is the 'Television' of Television Studies? In C. Geraghty, & D. Lusted (Eds.), *The Television Studies Book* (pp. 95-113). London: Arnold.
- Butler, J. G. (2002). *Television: Critical Methods and Applications* (Rev. ed.). Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cantor, P. A. (1999). The Simpsons: Atomistic Politics and the Nuclear Family. *Political Theory*, 27, 734-749. Retrieved July 3, 2007, from SAGE Journals Online database.
- Chouliaraki, L., & Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in Late Modernity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Dentith, S. (2000). *Parody* [The New Critical Idiom Series]. London: Routledge.
- Emmott, C. (1997). *Narrative Comprehension: A Discourse Perspective*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). The discourse of new labour: critical discourse analysis. In S. Yates, S. Taylor, & M. Wetherell (Eds.), *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis* (pp. 229-266). London: Sage.
- Featherstone, M. (2002). Cosmopolis: An Introduction. *Theory, Culture, and Society*, 19, 1-16.
- Fisk, R. (1990). *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

- Fiske, J. (1987). *Television Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1986). What is an author? In H. Adams, & L. Searle (Eds.), *Critical Theory Since 1965* (pp. 138-148). Gainesville, Florida: University Presses of Florida.
- Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London: Routledge.
- Frow, J. (1990). Intertextuality and ontology. In M. Worton, & J. Still (Eds.), *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* (pp. 45-55). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Griffin, D. H. (1994). *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.
- Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/Decoding. *Culture, Media, Language* (pp. 128-138). London: Hutchinson.
- Hartley, J. (1998). Housing Television: Textual Traditions in TV and Cultural Studies. In C. Geraghty, & D. Lusted (Eds.), *The Television Studies Book* (pp. 33-50). London: Arnold.
- Holbert, R. L. (2005). A Typology for the Study of Entertainment Television and Politics. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49, 436-453. Retrieved July 4, 2007, from SAGE Journals Online database.
- Hutcheson, J., Domke, D., Billeaudeaux, A., & Garland, P. (2004). U.S. National Identity, Political Elites, and a Patriotic Press Following September 11. *Political Communication*, 21, 27-50. Retrieved July 5, 2007, from Informa World database.
- Karim, K. H. (2003). Making Sense of the 'Islamic Peril'. In B. Zelizer, & S. Allan (Eds.), *Journalism After September 11* (pp. 101-116). New York: Routledge.
- Kress, G. R., & Van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, G. R., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Arnold.
- Macdonald, M. (2003). *Exploring Media Discourse*. London: Arnold.
- Matheson, D. (2005). *Media Discourses*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.
- McChesney, R. W. (1999). *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New York: The New Press.
- Meinhof, U. H., & Smith, J. (2000). Spitting Image: TV Genre and Intertextuality. In U. H. Meinhof, & J. Smith (Eds.), *Intertextuality and the Media* (pp. 43-60). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Meinhof, U. H., & Smith, J. (2000). The media and their audience: intertextuality as a paradigm. In U. H. Meinhof, & J. Smith (Eds.), *Intertextuality and the Media*

- (pp. 1-17). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Moy, P., Xenos, M. A., & Hess, V. K. (2005). Communication and Citizenship: Mapping the Political Effects of Infotainment. *Mass Communication & Society*, 8, 111-131. Retrieved July 8, 2007, from Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. database.
- Mutz, D. C. (2001). The Future of Political Communication Research. *Political Communication*, 18, 231-236. Retrieved July 8, 2007, from Informa World database.
- Newcomb, H. (2000). Television and the present climate of criticism. In H. Newcomb (Ed.), *Television: The Critical View* (pp. 1-113). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Niven, D., Lichter, S. R., & Amundson, D. (2003). The Political Content of Late Night Comedy. *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 8, 118-133. Retrieved July 5, 2007, from SAGE Journals Online database.
- O'Reilly, B. (2006). *Culture Warrior*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Ott, B. L. (2003). "I'm Bart Simpson, who the hell are you?" A Study in Postmodern Identity (Re)Construction. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 37, 56-82. Retrieved July 3, 2007, from SwetsWise database.
- Popper, K. (1963). *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Rantanen, T. (2005). *The Media and Globalization*. London: SAGE.
- Simpson, P. (2003). *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humor*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Stam, R. (1989). *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Sternbergh, A. (2006, October 16). Stephen Colbert Has America by the Ballots. *New York Magazine*. Retrieved February 13, 2007, from Lexis Nexis database.
- Sturken, M., & Cartwright, L. (2001). *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Thompson, J. B. (1990). *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Time 100: The People Who Shape Our World*. (2006, April 30). Retrieved July 8, 2007, from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1189247,00.html>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1985). Structures of news in the press. In T. A. Van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse and Communication: New Approaches to the Analysis of Mass Media Discourse and Communication*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1988). *News as Discourse*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum

Associates.

- Van Dijk, T. A. (1991). *Racism and the Press*. London: Routledge.
- Voloshinov, V. N. (1986). *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (L. Matejka, & I. R. Titunik, Trans.) (Rev. ed.). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Waisbord, S. (2003). Journalism, Risk, and Patriotism. In B. Zelizer, & S. Allan (Eds.), *Journalism after September 11* (pp. 201-219). New York: Routledge.
- Williams, B. A., & Delli Carpini, M. X. (2002, April 19). Heeeeeeeeeeeere's Democracy! *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, B14-B15. Retrieved July 5, 2007, from Lexis-Nexus News database.
- Young, D. G. (2004). Late-night Comedy in Election 2000: Its influence on candidate trait ratings and the moderating effects of political knowledge and partisanship. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 48, 1-22. Retrieved July 8, 2007, from Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. database.

Appendix A

The Colbert Report Transcript, Part 1
Original airdate November 6, 2006: Episode 117

Time Code	Visual	Music/ Sound Effects	Dialogue	Audience Response
0:01	Animated Comedy Central logo on a field of light blue with gray "paint spatters"	Lively, jazzy trumpet and drums		
0:08	Camera zooms in to medium shot from stage right on Colbert who looks up at camera in sync with eagle sound. Graphic caption spreads across the bottom of screen from left to right. <i>CR</i> logo in left corner, words "Occupational Hazard" to the right.	Eagle screaming, "newsy" sounding music with snare drums plays lightly in background.	<i>Tonight, Iraq is the number two issue in America. Number one? Borat. That guy is everywhere.</i>	Light chuckle
0:17	Cut to new, medium high angle shot of Colbert. New caption, "Haggard the Horrible". Colbert points with pen to add emphasis to "didn't gay marry anyone."	Music continues	<i>Plus, evangelical minister Ted Haggard steps down over allegations of sex with a male prostitute. He is not a hypocrite; he didn't gay marry anyone.</i>	Chuckle
0:27	Cut to head on medium shot of Colbert. New caption, "Poll My Finger." Colbert points with pen to emphasize "Don't vote for them."	Music continues	<i>Then, I give you the run down on how to vote. That little "D" by a candidate's name, stands for "Don't vote for them."</i>	Laugh
0:35	Cut to camera zoom in from stage left	Music continues.	<i>I'm Stephen Colbert, and I approve this</i>	

	to medium shot of Colbert, who points into camera like Uncle Sam. No caption.		<i>message. This, is the</i> Colbert Report.	
0:40-0:59	Visual		1. Audio	

	CGI eagle flies directly into the camera, talons bared, beak open.			Eagle screams, guitars play the five notes which form the program's signature jingle	
Time Code	1.1.1.1. Visual	Music/ Sound Effects	Dialogue	Audience Response	
0:60	Camera swoops in from stage left. Colbert sorts through papers at his desk. Smiles at audience. Lighting effects cast white stars on floor.	Punk tune continues.		Wild cheers and applause	
1:04	Cut to Colbert seated at desk from stage right. He smiles at audience. The LCD TV mounted to the front of his desk plays bald eagle footage.	Music stops		Wild cheers and applause	
1:05	Camera zooms in to medium shot of Colbert from the waist up. He turns to look at camera, taps papers on desk, and opens and closes mouth like a ventriloquist dummy.		<i>Oh, yeah.</i>	Wild cheers and applause	
1:15	Colbert points at audience with both hands. Then, raises and lowers his hands like a symphony conductor.		<i>(laughter)</i>	Cheers increase, decrease with Colbert's gestures	
1:22	Straightens glasses, gestures with right hand to emphasize line about Iraqi courts.		<i>Wow, that is a rush. Welcome to the Report, everybody. I know what you're excited about. Great news everyone, the Iraqi courts have decided Saddam Hussein's fate and the verdict is... AWESOME!</i>	Chuckles	

1:37	Points with pen in right hand to emphasize "not the only one"		<i>We are gonna have us a good ol' fashioned hanging. And I'm not the only one excited about this. Here's what the President had to say...</i>	
1:45	CUT to clip from CNN. President Bush on airport tarmac in front of camouflage-painted Air Force One. CNN caption below, "Waco, Texas, Sunday, 4:33aPT American Morning". CR caption, upper left, "Nov. 5, 2006"		President Bush, " <i>Saddam Hussein's trial is a milestone (pause) in the Iraqi people's efforts to replace the rule of a tyrant with the rule of law.</i> "	
1:53	CUT to medium shot of Colbert at his desk. He gestures with his pen.		<i>That law, of course, 19th century frontier justice. (Pause for laughter.) My only regret, is Iraq's post-war shortage of guillotines.</i>	Laughter
2:02	Colbert reaches behind desk to produce <i>New York Post</i> .		<i>And, of course, the Post covered it with the usual restraint...</i>	
2:09	Cut to close up of Colbert holding the <i>New York Post's</i> front page. Headline reads "GOOD NOOSE: Saddam sentenced to hang" with photo of a suit-clad Hussein with (digitally inserted) image of a hangman's noose around his neck.		"Good noose!"	Laughter
2:12	CUT to medium shot of Colbert at desk. He puts the newspaper behind his desk.		<i>Personally, I'd have gone with "Aww, Snap!"</i>	
2:14	CUT to still of digitally altered <i>New York Post</i> front page. The headline reads, "AWW, SNAP!: Saddam sentenced to hang" with photo of suit-clad Hussein with rope around his neck, head tilted			Laughter, some groans

	as if his neck is broken.			
2:22	CUT to medium shot of Colbert at desk. He restrains a smug smile and holds his papers vertically, tapping the edges on the desk. Puts down pen on "now", holds up fingers crossed on both hands on "Christmas hanging." Looks up and mouths "Please."		<i>Now, obviously, there's going to be an appeals process, but by Iraqi law, that has to be over within two months. Now, I don't want to get my hopes up, but could it be a... Christmas hanging?</i>	Smattering of applause Shrieks of laughter, applause
2:42	Uncrosses fingers, holds up right hand. Holds a hand to his right ear on "What's that sound?"		<i>Imagine folks, Christmas morning, the kids are asleep, visions of vertebrae snapping in their heads. Suddenly, what's that sound... it's the clickity clack of the trap door being tested. Wake up children, wake up! The hangman's arrived!</i>	Still applauding Laughter
3:00	Gestures with both hands on "gathers around" to indicate the family coming together. Raises right hand and grins excitedly on "Right here."		<i>Then the whole family gathers around the TV to the heartwarming sight of Saddam Hussein, painted green and wearing a Grinch costume, being strung up from a Christmas tree by a popcorn garland noose. Now, some people are going to say, "Who's going to broadcast that on Christmas morning?" Whispers, "Right here!"</i>	Small laugh Small laugh Big laugh, applause
3:17	Looks down, straightens papers, nods slightly, pushes up glasses. Gestures with both hands on "simulcast." Holds up pen on "Iraq", points pen for emphasis.		<i>Maybe simulcast with Fox, I don't know. Iraq is the central front in the War on Christmas. This will be a real victory in my blitzkrieg against "grinchitude."</i>	Small laugh Chuckle

3:34	Cut to 2D digital animation of full moon with silhouettes of Santa's reindeer flying across it. ZOOM OUT to reveal a WWI style biplane approaching Santa's sleigh from behind.	Sleighbells, Santa's voice, "Ho ho ho!" Airplane propeller		
3:39	CUT to head on view of red biplane. Adolph Hitler is the pilot. Automatic guns on each side of the cockpit fire.	Propeller, gunfire		Giggles
3:41	CUT to long shot of full moon. Santa's sleigh goes down in flames. Red biplane is a silhouette. Santa's silhouette falls from the sleigh. Another, blue, biplane flies below towards Santa.	Santa's voice, "Ooooooooooh!" Propellers		Laughter
3:44	CUT to close up of blue plane's side. Jesus Christ sits in the pilot's seat, with halo and aviator goggles. Santa falls into the seat behind Jesus.	Angelic voices, sustained "Hallelujah!" Propellers		
3:48	Jesus turns towards the camera and gives a "thumbs up." Plane flies out of the frame. The US Flag is painted on the blue plane's tail. Against the starry sky the words "The Blitzkrieg on Grinchitude" appear in a green, 80s computer font.	Propellers "Hallelujah" continues Propellers fade "Hallelujah" ends		Laughter applause
3:53	FADE to medium shot of Colbert at desk giving a "thumbs up" with his right hand. Straightens papers on desk during applause. Tries to restrain smile.		<i>Alright</i> (pauses)	Cheers, applause

4:04	Holds pen in both hands. Emphasizes "live."		<i>We are getting all geared up for our special election show tomorrow night, The Daily Show and The Colbert Report "Midterm Midtacular." It's live. We're going to be up til midnight, so I've ordered a pony keg full of Red Bull.</i>	Laughter
4:15	Gestures with right hand upwards. Looks up.		<i>And, Nation, we have prepared a balloon drop for when the winner of Congress is announced. Can we get a shot of that there, Jim?</i>	
4:21	CUT to low angle shot of studio ceiling. A net full of red balloons hangs above Colbert's desk. The set is lit with red lights. Camera ZOOMS IN on balloons.		<i>There ya go. There they are. (As if addressing a child) Whooo likes baalloons?</i>	Laughter
4:26	CUT to medium shot of Colbert at desk. He raises eyebrows, bites lower lip, nods. Gestures from side to side with both hands.		<i>That's right. Right.</i> <i>Now, originally our plan was to have two balloon drops. Red one for the Republicans, if they keep Congress, a blue if the Democrats take it. But, we did not have any blue balloons.</i>	Cheers, applause
4:41	Holds palms together, moves hands from side to side. Holds up both forefingers for emphasis.		<i>Uh, I placed my order back in January and I didn't think I'd need them. So as a result of this completely innocent mistake, if the Democrats win Congress tomorrow, no balloons. If you want to see an exciting, fun, happy balloon drop, Republicans have to win.</i>	Building laughter Applause
5:01	Turns in chair towards stage right.		<i>But I'm certainly not telling you how to vote. Ooooh, hi! Who's this?</i>	Chuckle
5:06	CUT to long shot of a young boy and			"Awwwww"

	girl walking towards desk from stage right. The girl covers her ears with her hands.			
5:08	CUT to view of Colbert's desk from stage right. The children walk up to the desk.		To boy, <i>Hi there, what's your name?</i> Boy, quietly, "John." Girl, <i>"I don't want the balloons to pop."</i> To girl, <i>What's your name?</i> Girl, <i>"My name is Scarlett."</i> <i>Scarlett, hi! Do you guys like balloons?</i>	
5:18	CUT to close up (from stage left) of children.		John, "Yes."	
5:19	CUT to long shot (from stage right) of children facing Colbert's desk.		<i>Oh, how would you feel if I told you, you couldn't see any balloons tomorrow?</i>	Chuckle
5:22	CUT to close up of children		Scarlett, "Sad!"	
5:24	CUT to long shot of children facing Colbert Colbert points towards stage left.		<i>Yeah, sad. Yeah. Can you tell the people what they can do to make you happy? Whippers, "Look right over there and say it."</i>	
5:27	CUT to close up of children		Both children, "Vote Republican!"	Laughter
5:32	CUT to long shot of children facing desk. Colbert throws his arms out to his side. He claps.		<i>Adorable!</i> <i>I hope we get to see you tomorrow, kids.</i> <i>Bye-bye.</i>	Applause, cheering
5:39	CUT to long shot (from stage left) of kids running off, stage right.		<i>Bye, Johnny. Bye, Scarlett.</i>	Applause
5:42	CUT to medium shot of Colbert at his desk. He faces stage right. He turns, and points his pen at the camera, threateningly. He brings his pen to his lips to conceal a smile. Points with pen		<i>America</i> (pause) I'm just saying... vote your conscience. Moving on,	Applause Laughter

	to emphasize "your conscience."			
6:00	CUT to long shot from stage left. ZOOM in on Colbert. He turns to face camera.		<i>You know, everyone is trying to make this year's election a referendum on Iraq. All anyone's talking about is "Iraq, Iraq, Iraq," and most of the time, it's not in a good, "John Kerry thinks our troops are stupid" kind of way.</i>	Laughter
6:10	He gestures with right hand on "beg."		<i>They say we're not getting the job done. Well, I beg to differ...</i>	

Appendix B

The Colbert Report, "The Word" Segment
November 6, 2006

Time Code	Spoken	Visual	Audience Response
6:12	"Which brings us to tonight's Word" <i>audience cheers</i>	<i>Screen splits: Colbert sits behind desk on left side of screen, points to his left. Entire right half of the screen is blue with "WØRD" logo at top, phrase "Happy Ending" center right, blue world map with row of stars below</i>	<i>Applause</i>
6:24	"Folks, Iraq <i>is</i> a success story."	"Grim Fairy Tale."	<i>Chuckles</i>
6:30	"We know we won the war. Saddam is going to be put to death."	"Doubling Value of Saddam Playing Card"	<i>Laughter</i>
6:35	"Fact is... we won the peace, too."	"First Prize: More War"	<i>Varied giggles from audience.</i>
6:40	"Just consider the evidence"	"Bush Never Did"	<i>Cheers, shouts, and applause</i>
6:44	"Iraqi Prime Minister NAME is increasingly turning his back on the United States."	Headshot of PM , then, words " <i>Giving Us The Purple Finger</i> "	Chuckles

6:51	"Two weeks ago, when the president said there would be a timeline for withdrawal, Al Maliki came out and said he never <i>agreed</i> to the plan."	"Al-Maliki No Ma-Likey"	Delayed laughter from audience
7:00	"Then, last week, he <i>forced</i> the US army to dismantle checkpoints it had set up in <i>Baghdad</i> to find a missing American serviceman."	"Shafting Private Ryan"	<i>Groans/chuckles,</i>
7:08	" <i>Then</i> , he told Zalmay Khalilzad, the US ambassador to Iraq that he was, quote	"Shafting Private Ryan"	
7:12	"Not America's man in Iraq."	<i>Entire screen changes to black and grey striped background, black and grey photograph of the PM, on left side of screen words "...NOT AMERICA'S MAN IN IRAQ" – October 27, 2006</i>	
7:16	"Of course, when he's with the President, it's a totally different story. Just a day before he said he wasn't America's man, Maliki and President Bush held a video conference and issued a joint statement that said	<i>Divided screen returns, Colbert on left, blue background on right</i>	
7:28	We are committed to the partnership our two great	<i>Screen changes to black and grey striped background, black and white photo of Bush</i>	

	countries and two governments have formed"	<i>on left, black and grey photo of Maliki on the right, words "We are committed to the partnership our two great countries and two governments have formed..." – October 27, 2006 come into focus from top to bottom</i>	
7:33	"All this is great. It proves we've established an <i>American</i> -style democracy in Iraq. You agree with President Bush when you're <i>with</i> him, but when you get back home to your <i>voters</i> , you shake him like a case of crabs."	Screen returns to split with Colbert on right side, blue graphics on left side <i>Colbert straightens his eyeglasses</i>	Chuckles Audience laughs uproariously
7:48	"And... ...Folks..."	<i>Colbert straightens the papers on his desk, adjusts eyeglasses.</i>	<i>Audience laughter turns to applause and cheers</i>
7:55	"We have done more than just establishing a stable democracy in Iraq...again, consider the evidence."	Colbert looks at audience sternly, holds up hands for emphasis "We've Also Legalized Torture"	A few audience members hoot, clap
8:00	"Companies like Bechtel that went to Iraq to rebuild power, water and sewage services are now coming <i>back</i> ."	"Unlike Power, Water and Sewage services"	Audience laughs quickly
8:10	"The twenty-one <i>billion</i> dollars allocated for reconstruction is almost gone, and there's no more money in the pipeline"	"Or A Pipeline"	Audience laughs quickly
8:18	"And... President Bush has shut	"Halliburton"	

	down the agency that oversees Iraq reconstruction. That makes sure the money goes where it's supposed to."	<i>Colbert pushes up eyeglasses</i>	<i>Groans and then laughter</i>
8:30	"All of this, folks, leads to one obvious conclusion. We..."	"Fire Rumsfeld" <i>Colbert looks down, pushes up glasses, adjusts papers on desk</i>	Cheers and wild applause
8:42	"We finished rebuilding Iraq."	Colbert looks up at camera	
8:46	"We must have, otherwise, we'd keep rebuilding."	"Fire Rumsfeld" <i>disappears</i>	
8:48	So, anyone who wants to make this election a referendum on Iraq, let me remind you, we've won on every front."		
8:55	"All this means is that we should be bringing our boys home soon. And, by soon, I mean before the polls close tomorrow... Please"		Chuckles
9:04	"That way this war and these elections can both have a happy ending."	"Happy Ending" Colbert points at camera with pen	

9:08	"And that's the Word. We'll be right back."	"Happy Ending"	Cheers and applause
------	---	----------------	----------------------------

Appendix C

The Colbert Report,
November 6, 2006 Transcript: Part Two

Time Code	Visual	Music/ Sound Effects	Dialogue	Audience Response
9:15	Return from advertising break with low angle PAN from stage left. Colbert sits at his desk.	Newsy trumpet music		Cheers, applause
9:20	CUT to ZOOM to medium shot of Colbert at desk. He adjusts papers while he waits for audience to stop cheering.		<i>Welcome back, everybody. Now... thank you. Thank you very much.</i>	Cheers, applause
9:30	CUT to video clip of Haggart standing at a clear glass podium. He waves. Caption in upper left hand corner "Prescott News Group."	No audio on video clip. Colbert voice over.	<i>We all know about Rev. Ted Haggart. How he was dismissed from the New Life mega-church because he</i>	
9:36	CUT to medium shot of Colbert at his desk. A photo of Haggart's face is in the upper left hand corner of screen. Colbert holds his pen in both hands with a serious look.		<i>admitted he bought crystal meth and got a massage from a male prostitute, but claimed he did not have sex and threw the meth out.</i>	Laughter
9:44	He gestures with both hands on "field day".		<i>Of course, the press is having a field day, as if there's something wrong with NOT having sex with a male prostitute and NOT taking the meth you just bought. Who hasn't NOT done that before?</i>	Laughter Laughter
9:57	Gestures with pen in right hand, left hand		<i>As for the massage, do you know how</i>	

	open, palm up.		<i>stressful it is running a mega-church? It is mega-stressful. And he's supposed to get a massage from a woman?</i>	Laughter Laughter
10:04	Still holds pen in right hand. Gestures with both palms facing up. Points with pen to emphasize "men know what men like."		<i>Any kinesiologist will tell you that big muscular men get deep into your tissues. A woman doesn't have the strength. Getting a massage from a guy doesn't make Haggart GAY; it makes him an educated consumer. Men know what men like.</i>	Laughter Laughter Applause
10:24	Colbert adjusts glasses during applause. Gestures with both hands from left to right to emphasize "to get it off the streets..." During applause, Colbert adjusts papers and nods slightly with a smug/serious look. He looks into the audience to his right.		<i>As for the meth, I buy that stuff all the time and toss it out, to get it off the street and protect the kids. Even if (Pause for applause)</i> <i>You're welcome.</i>	Applause
10:45	Colbert looks into camera. On "drop this one", he points menacingly with his forefinger.		<i>Even if Haggart did these things, so what? Christians are supposed to hate the sin, but love the sinner, which is exactly what Haggart was doing with that male prostitute. Media, drop this one, you've been warned. Moving on,</i>	Snickers/ groans
10:58	CUT to ZOOM in from stage right to medium shot of Colbert at desk. He turns to face camera. Graphic appears at bottom of the screen with icon of a voting booth and the name of the segment in capital letters.		<i>Some of my younger viewers may never have voted before, so tonight, I'll get everyone comfortable with the voting process, in Stephen Colbert's "What to expect when you're electing."</i>	Laughter
11:10	Caption remains at bottom of the screen. Colbert gestures with pen and hands.		<i>Folks, when you approach your local polling place, you may see campaigners with pamphlets trying to influence your vote. Now</i>	

			<i>states have different laws about how far from the polling stations these voters must stay.</i>	
11:21	CUT to graphic within a large circle of a voting booth with red curtains and a blue "man" figure (like the symbol for male restrooms) entering the booth. A dotted line between the voter figure and another "man" figure outside the circle is labeled "600 Feet."		<i>In Louisiana, they must keep a distance of six hundred feet.</i>	
11:25	CUT to new graphic with a smaller circle of two blue figures joined by a dotted line that reads "300 Feet."		<i>In Iowa, it's three hundred</i>	
11:28	CUT to a new graphic with a small circle and a short line that reads "10 Feet."		<i>In New Hampshire, it's only ten feet, and in Massachusetts,</i>	
11:31	CUT to graphic of two blue men within a small circle engaging in anal intercourse outside a voting booth. Though the "men" are icons and not photographs, a black rectangle covers the behind of one man and the front of the other.		<i>they're allowed full penetration.</i>	Shrieks of laughter. Applause. Cheering.
11:34	CUT to medium shot of Colbert at desk. He makes a warning gesture with his hand. Adjusts glasses.		<i>Be careful.</i> <i>Once inside the polling place, you will report to the poll workers to sign in. Some states require ID</i>	Applause continues
11:47	Image of state ID zooms into the left corner of the screen. Personal information on the card is blurred. Colbert's photo shows him grinning goofily.		<i>some do not. So, bring it along, just in case. And, don't worry if you're black and poor and don't have any ID, I'm sure we'll pick somebody you'll like.</i>	Audience laughs at ID Groans
11:59	Image if ID remains in corner.		<i>There are five different kinds of poll workers</i>	

			<i>out there:</i>	
12:04	Photo in left corner of smiling Asian man with gray hair.		<i>the well meaning</i>	
12:05	Photo in left hand corner of a glum middle aged man with glasses holding a cardboard box full of office supplies.		<i>the unemployed</i>	
12:06	Photo in left hand corner of a smiling elderly woman with glasses wearing a red sweater.		<i>the elderly</i>	
12:08	Photo in left hand corner of unhappy old man in a wheelchair wearing plaid bathrobe with oxygen tubes in his nose		<i>the very elderly</i>	Laughter
12:10	CUT to photo of the Crypt Keeper, a puppet from the early 90s television show <i>Tales from the Crypt</i> . The Crypt Keeper looks like a decaying corpse with long white hair, wearing a tuxedo with a red carnation boutonniere and reading from an ancient book.	Digital effects make Colbert's voice echoic	<i>and the Crypt Keeper</i> In a high pitched, Crypt Keeper voice, "Once you step into the booth, it's <i>CURTAINS</i> for you! If you're not sure how to vote, just take a <i>STAB</i> ! I hope you're going to stay the <i>CORPSE</i> ! Ah, ha ha ha ha ha"	Laughter Laughter Laughter
12:29	CUT to medium shot of Colbert at his desk. He straightens the papers on his desk, takes a sip from a bottle of water behind his desk, pinches his throat with his thumb and forefinger. He puts the bottle back behind his desk.		<i>Ha ha. Oh, hello.</i>	Cheers, applause
12:40	Photo of a tall glass of beer appear in left hand corner of screen.		<i>After you're done voting, treat yourself to a celebratory drink. Unless you vote in Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, or Utah, where bars are closed on election day. This is</i>	

			<i>presumably done to prevent people from voting with "beer goggles" on. And it makes sense; you don't want to wake up in the morning next to some fat-ass bond proposition whose docket number you don't even know.</i>	Laughter Laughter, clapping
13:07	Beer photo disappears. Points finger on "we'll be right back."		<i>Keep these tips in mind, and you should have an uneventful election day. We'll be right back.</i>	Applause, cheering
13:12	CUT to zoom out across entire set. Colbert straightens the papers at his desk. Fade to black.	Guitar theme music plays		Cheering, applause
13:19	Return from advertising break. CUT to low angle shot of Colbert standing in his "Spin Zone" from opening credits. CGI eagle flies into camera.	Guitar theme music plays		Cheers, applause
13:24	CUT to a ZOOM in to medium shot of Colbert at his desk. Points to himself on "get my endorsement". Points at camera on "Please welcome..."		<i>Tonight's guest is ABC political director who knows the way to win in 2008. Step one, get my endorsement. Please welcome Mark Halperin.</i>	Applause
13:36	CUT to long shot of Colbert at desk. He stands, holds arms out to his sides and runs across the set to the interview area. He gestures with his hands for more applause from audience. He smiles, points at audience with alternating hands, holds hand to his left ear to hear the applause. Mark Halperin sits at table behind standing Colbert.	Guitar theme music plays		Audience cheers wildly

13:49	Colbert steps on to platform where Halperin sits at table. The backdrop behind the table shows the spikes of the Statue of Liberty's hat, part of her torch, and twinkling lights of a city. Halperin stands, bumps Colbert's elbow with his own elbow.		<i>There you go, my friend. Someone taught you the secret handshake.</i>	Applause
-------	---	--	--	----------

Appendix D

Colbert Report, November 6, 2006
Interview with Mark Halperin Transcript

Time Code	Visual	Colbert's Dialogue	Halperin's Dialogue	Audience Response
13:52	Both men stand at table, bump elbows. As they speak, both men sit down.	There you are, my friend. Someone gave you the secret handshake.	The World Health Organization recommends that rather than shaking hands.	
13:57	Colbert stands again, grasps Halperin's forearm. Halperin awkwardly tries to follow suit.	You know what I do? I do this one. I do this one. The Roman one. Where you grab like this, you grab right here, "Hail fellow, well met."	Very pretzel-like	
14:04	Colbert initiates a variety of bizarre handshakes that involve crossing both arms and holding hands and forearms. He finishes by raising his crossed arms over his head, and twisting out from underneath them, like in a square dance move.	Or we can do this, we can do this one. Or this one. You grab that one and then we do this...	A little do-si-do...	Cheering, applause
14:15	Colbert sits. Over Halperin's shoulder shot of Colbert. Colbert gestures nonchalantly.	Well, I grew up in South Carolina, and so I know how to shag.		
14:20	CUT to medium shot of Halperin.		And do-si-do (sniffs)	

14:21	CUT to Medium shot of both men at table. CUT to medium shot of Colbert at table.	Um, you are ABC News's political director, correct?	With you so far	
14:26	Colbert gestures with hands for emphasis. CUT to medium shot of Halperin smiling.	Okay, how many seats to the Republicans pick up tomorrow?		
14:32	CUT to over the shoulder shot of Colbert. He holds up both forefingers on "nobody."	I know everyone, everybody's saying like "oh, the democrats pick up to 15, 20" <i>everybody's</i> saying that. If you say that, nobody remembers this interview. Say the Republicans do, and they do, this interview is <i>history</i> .		
14:42	CUT to medium shot of Halperin. He smiles.		Stephen, it could be a late night, but you'd have to wait up <i>really</i> late to see Republicans pick up seats tomorrow.	Cheers, applause
14:47	CUT to medium shot of both men at table. Colbert holds up two fingers.	Like two years?		Applause continues
14:52	CUT to medium shot of Halperin.	Let's go against the tide here.	Even, even, even the people at the White House acknowledge they're going to <i>lose</i> some seats the question is how many, and I think, again, if you want to	
14:57	CUT quickly to medium shot of Colbert, then back to Halperin.	Without losing Congress. They're not losing Congress.	Well, they might. I've talked to a lot of Republicans who think they might.	Laughter
15:01	CUT to medium shot of Colbert.	Ya see, that kind of talk, loses you congress.		Chuckles

15:04	CUT to medium shot of Halperin, then to medium shot of both men at table. Colbert physically recoils at Halperin's suggestion.		How do you feel about <i>Speaker</i> Pelosi?	
15:08	CUT to medium shot of Colbert acting disgusted. CUT to medium shot of both men, then, back to Colbert.		(offscreen) If we get a tight shot, we can see you have hives right here on your hands. It's a possibility, possibility.	
15:14	Colbert puts down notecards.	Ewww, okay. But what about, what about Saddam being hung, I mean that's gotta be five points for the Republicans right there.		
15:21	CUT to medium shot of Halperin.		As long as, you suggested, as long as it's scheduled for <i>tomorrow</i> at like 9:00am,	
15:26	CUT to medium shot of Colbert.	I mean all you have to do, uhhh, all you have to do is say to a democratic candidate tonight, uhh "So, you would rather Saddam <i>not</i> hang?"		
15:35	CUT to medium shot of Halperin. Caption appears below, <i>Colbert Report</i> logo in lower left hand corner, words "Mark Halperin, Political Director, ABC News" to its right.	(offscreen) Exactly.	Are we safer with him unhung? Yeah, uh, eventually he'll get his just desserts, but I don't' think it's gonna make a <i>huge</i> impact between now and election day.	
15:45	CUT to medium shot of Colbert looking at notecards.	Let's talk about some other things that happened late in this campaign	(offscreen) Sure.	

		that had an effect. Uhh, Michael J. Fox,		
15:49	CUT quickly to over the shoulder shot of Halperin, then back to medium shot of Colbert.	You said, uh, you have said that celebrities that speak out on the issues like, you know, Michael J. Fox, don't get a free ride, just because they have a disease. (Pause) They don't get a free ride anymore just because they have this disease.	Right. Right. Well...	Laughter
16:02	Cut to medium shot of Halperin.		Fact is, we say in <i>The Way to Win</i> , that Republicans understand you can't let people come into the arena. George Bush and Karl Rove, they have a lot on the line tomorrow. They don't let people come in, Michael J. Fox, just have a free ride. He's got ideas, he's got his personal story, but he can't just let him go unchallenged.	
16:17	CUT to over the shoulder shot of Colbert. He looks at notecards, then Halperin.	Right. Okay, let's slam Lou Gherig, right here. Okay. Umm, "Iron Horse", "Luckiest Man Alive"	Hardly.	Chuckles Chuckles
16:25	CUT to medium shot of Halperin.		But a good player. Um, I mean, I think, look if Lou Gherig had been around during Karl Rove's time, he might've taken some shots.	
16:31	CUT to medium shot of both	Alright. Now you, you, you, you		

	men at table. CUT to medium shot of Colbert.	have said that there IS a liberal media.		
16:35	Cut to medium shot of Halperin. He nods sheepishly. CUT to medium shot of Colbert.	You said there's the old liberal media, and part of your job is to make sure that ABC is <i>balanced</i> , and not a liberal media.		
16:45	CUT to medium shot of Halperin.		Just like the staff of the <i>Colbert Report</i> , gotta be balanced.	Cheers
16:46	CUT to medium shot of Colbert. CUT to medium shot of both men at table. Colbert holds up <i>How to Win</i> book.	Oh, exactly! We're very independent over here. So you admit that there is, and in the book, let's talk about the book, in the book <i>The Way to Win</i> , you admit that there is a liberal media.		Sustained applause
16:52	CUT to still frame of book cover. On blue background. Cut to medium shot of Halperin with caption "Mark Halperin: Co-Author, " <i>The Way to Win</i> "		Well, there's two big problems. The Left hates the media. They hate ABC. They hate <i>The Washington Post</i> . The Right hates ABC, <i>The Washington Post</i> . It's the one thing that unites The Colbert Nation. Everybody thinks the media does a bad job. We've gotta do a better job.	
17:05	CUT to medium shot of Colbert. CUT to medium shot of both men at the table. CUT to Halperin with dry smile.	Give me the best proof of the liberal media out there. Like in the elections.	Well, probably... Probably, that not a lot of reporters watch your show.	Chuckles
17:13	CUT to medium shot of Colbert. He acts surprised.		I think that's a problem. You gotta, you gotta, you're endorsement	

	CUT to medium shot of smiling Halperin.		matters, you gotta make people understand that.	
17:19	CUT to slow medium pan across both men at table.	No, but what about in a previous election. Has there been evidence of a liberal media bias?		
17:24	CUT to medium shot of Halperin.	(offscreen, shouting) C'mon!	Well, again, there's problems with the press on both sides. Everybody's gotta, we gotta do better	
17:28	CUT to medium shot of Colbert, tapping hand on table for emphasis. CUT to medium shot of smiling Halperin.	(shouting) You said there was a liberal media bias! Stand by it! Don't run away from this one, Mark. You said it on the air.	I think, I think	Laughter, some clapping
17:35	Medium shot of Halperin.		I think in the last election, I think what happened to President Bush and his National Guard records with CBS was a big mistake and shouldn't have happened.	
17:42	CUT to medium shot of both men at table. CUT to medium shot of Colbert.	Thank God, that non-partisan Swift Boat Veterans for Truth stuck it to Kerry. They balanced things out, right?		Laughter
17:47	CUT to medium shot of Halperin. He makes gestures with two open hands to indicate balance.	Exactly, exactly right.	They reached the equilibrium.	
17:51	CUT to medium shot of Colbert.	Now, things like Mark Foley and Ted Haggart. Is the best way for the objective media to cover these scandals is to ignore them?		Laughter
17:58	CUT to medium shot of		Umm, sweep them under the	

	surprised Halperin.		carpet. That's one strategy. Or...	
18:02	CUT to medium shot of Colbert. CUT back to Halperin.	Because if they report them, isn't that biased against the Republicans?	Well, I think the way to win is to get your side to have those out there as much as possible. Anything that hurts you, and the press let the chips fall where they may, or the crystal meth, fall where it may.	Cheering
18:15	CUT to medium pan of two men at table	In the book <i>The Way to Win</i> , if somebody reads this, uh, uh, they could win, right, if they read this?		
18:22	CUT to medium shot of Halperin. He points at Colbert. CUT to Colbert examining the cover of the book. CUT back to smiling Halperin. CUT to smiling Colbert waving hand to silence the audience.	Please, guys, guys	It's almost a "how to" manual. If you read that carefully enough, Stephen, you might be able to go, like Ronald Regan, from hosting your own show to sitting in the White House.	Wild Cheers
18:38	CUT to medium shot of both men at the table. Colbert keeps his palm extended.	May I remind you, you have to be 36 to run for president.		Cheering continues
18:46	CUT to medium shot of Colbert holding up book.	Could Hillary Clinton read this book and become president?	Sounds like Iowa, New Hampshire ground troops right here.	
18:51	CUT to medium shot of Halperin. He points at the book.	(offscreen) But will this book help	Well, we say in the book, she's as well-positioned as anyone to be the next president.	

		her?	Well, there's a lot in there about her. But, she knows, she knows already a lot of the stuff that is in there.	
18:59	CUT to medium shot of both men at the table.	So this would NOT help her to read? Do you wanna sell some books or not?	She knows what's in there already.	
19:03	CUT to medium shot of Colbert, pointing at book cover. Then, cut to Halperin.	Will this book help her to read?	It'll help Hillary Clinton and anybody else who wants to either be president or figure out who to support in the next election.	
19:08	CUT to medium shot of Colbert looking at book cover thoughtfully.	Alright. (Pause) I hope she doesn't read it. Mark, thank you for coming by.		Laughter. Applause
19:13-19:26	CUT to medium shot of Halperin as Colbert tries to shake his hand. Halperin adds a second hand and the bizarre, awkward handshaking begins anew. CUT to medium shot of both men at table shaking four hands. CUT to medium shot of Colbert pointing at camera on "We'll be..." He looks down and laughs. CUT to medium shot of a slightly relieved Halperin. CUT to crane ZOOM out from men at table. Fade to black.	Mark Halperin. We'll be right back.		Sustained cheering, applause

Appendix E

The Colbert Report, November 6, 2006
Part Three Transcript

Time Code	Visual	Music/ Sound Effects	Dialogue	Audience Response
19:27	Return from advertising break. ZOOM out from the set's bookshelf which holds an old globe and a few books. Zoom reveals Colbert, stage left. He sits in a leather armchair by a fireplace.	Slow guitar music plays		Cheering, applause
19:33	CUT to crane shot from stage right. ZOOM in on Colbert at fireplace. The fireplace contains an LCD screen playing footage of a burning fire. To Colbert's right, a brown cardboard box labeled "ABSENTEE BALLOTS" in permanent marker. Colbert acts surprised. ZOOM continues until 19:42		Oh, hello. Folks, absentee voting is a time-honored tradition, ensuring that the voices of all Americans are heard. In this case, the ones who can't put their country first for one day and find the local elementary school gym to vote.	Applause Laughter
19:49	Colbert picks up a few pieces of paper from the box to his right, folds them, and holds them in his lap.	Occasionally, the pop and crackle of a wood fire is heard	It takes true courage to mail in that absentee ballot with the knowledge that it probably won't even be counted unless the race is close. Sadly, in Ohio this year, the absentee voting process has been perverted. Hundreds of thousands of people have voted early with absentee ballots as a protest against the state's dibold voting machines. They claim the machines can't be trusted just because you	

	He rolls his eyes at "paranoid ramblings."		can hack them with the key to a hotel minibar. And the official overseeing the election is also a candidate for governor. Paranoid ramblings.	Laughter Chuckle
20:20	Gestures with folded ballot on "true spirit".		Now I hope Ohio will rediscover the true spirit of election eve, and put those ballots where they belong. Or, send them to me. I'll count them for you.	Chuckle
20:30	He grabs the box and dumps its contents into the fake fire. After, "happy voting", the CGI eagle flies past the camera to create wipe cut.	The rustle of paper	Goodnight. Happy voting.	Applause, cheering
20:42	ZOOM OUT from close up of painting over the fireplace. It shows Colbert standing in front of a fireplace. Above the painted fireplace hangs a portrait of Colbert standing in front of a fireplace with yet another portrait of himself hanging over it. (Three Colbert's, one painting.)	Lively guitar theme music plays.		Applause, cheering
20:47	CUT to end credits. White titles scroll on a field of black on the left side of the screen, while a clip of Colbert leaning against a shelf plays in the upper right corner of the screen. The game "Rock 'em Sock 'em Robots" sits on the shelf. Below the video clip is the Comedy Central logo on a field of blue. Holds up little finger on "number one".	Somber trumpet music plays.	Folks, I'm here to salute the heroes over at ColbertNation.com. The number one Colbert fan site.	
20:54	Video clip cuts to pan across website.	Somber	You folks at ColbertNation.com have made me a	

	CUT back to Colbert.	trumpets, Eagle scream	labor of love. So, like a mother eagle soaring over her young, I'll be watchin' ya. (winks)	
21:01	Video clip CUTS to CGI eagle flying through a blue sky full of clouds. Credits continue on left side of screen.	Lively guitar music resumes		
21:35	CUT to Spartina production company logo: black and white pencil animation of an egret standing near a body of water. A small fish leaps out of the water and devours the egret in one bite.	Biting sound		
21:37	Busboy production company logo: a white "B" slides across a black screen. The B stops, and the word "Busboy" appears underneath it	Sound of glass clinking, whispered, "Sorry."		

Appendix F

The Colbert Report, November 7, 2006
 "Midterm Midtacular" Segment Transcript

Time Code	Visual	Music/ Sound Effects	Dialogue	Audience Response
37:42	ZOOM IN from stage left. Lighting effects cast moving white stars on the blue floor. CUT to ZOOM IN head on to medium shot of Colbert sitting at his desk. He looks down at some papers, frowning, and taps his pen on the desk. He looks up, acting vaguely surprised.	Newsy sounding trumpets play Colbert theme	Oh, welcome back. Well, it's just about midnight. Show's almost finished. Uhhh, Jimmy, let's take one last look at the chart up there.	Cheers Applause
38:06	CUT to graphic headed "The House of Representatives," It shows a diagram of the seats in the House. Seats to the left are red, seats in the middle are grey, and seats to the right are yellow. A caption reads "Republicans 146" in red, "Cowards 183" in yellow.		Uh, okay. Red is for Republicans, yellow is for cowards who voted for Democrats.	Chuckle
38:14	CUT to medium shot of Colbert at desk. He rests his head in his left hand, sadly.		Wow, that's a lot of yellow. Uhhhhhhh, so I guess I'm going to have to call this thing (sigh) for the Democrats.	Cheers Applause
38:27	He spins his pen sarcastically with "Who-hoo!"		"Who-hoo!" The people have spoken, and apparently, they're tired of freedom. Don't get me wrong, I'm not angry, just disappointed. I thought this country would last longer than 230 years. That's it, folks. America's over. At this point, we might as well give it back to the God	Chuckle Chuckle

39:29	He points menacingly at the camera.		And you Republicans who turned your backs on the President are going to wander in the desert for the next two years. Literally. Someone's going to have to replace those troops in Iraq.	Laughter
39:39	Continues to point at camera angrily. When he finishes speaking, he grabs papers from the desk and angrily throws them on the ground behind the desk.		And don't think you're off the hook, voters. You're the ones who made this bed. Now, you're the ones who are going to have to move over so a gay couple can sleep in it.	Laughter, cheering, applause
39:54	Points angrily at the camera again. At the end of his angry tirade, he pantomimes smoking a marijuana joint.		Tomorrow, you're all going to wake up in a brave, new world. A world where the Constitution gets trampled by an army of terrorist clones, created in a stem cell research lab by homosexual doctors, who sterilize their instruments over burning American flags! Where tax and spend Democrats take all your hard-earned money and use it to buy electric cars for National Public Radio, and teach evolution to illegal immigrants! Oh, and everybody's high! Whoooo!	Building laughter, culminates in cheering and applause
40:27	ZOOM OUT. Colbert stands, points at audience.		You know what, I've had it. You people don't deserve a Republican majority. Screw this! I quit!	Laughter turns to "awwww"
40:34	CUT to long shot from stage left. Colbert walks from behind his desk towards the audience. He points angrily at the audience with both hands. CUT to a view of Colbert's back as he angrily walks past the audience bleachers and out a door marked by a hanging American flag. ZOOM IN on flag.		See ya, suckers! No! Too late! It's too late!	Audience continues to "awww" at him leaving, some applause

40:45	CUT to exterior shot of a building. Colbert storms out of a door under a marquee that reads <i>The Colbert Report</i> . He pauses to shout then opens the door of a black livery car, gets in, and slams door.		(angry muttering) To Hell with all of ya!!	chuckles
40:53	CUT to medium shot of Colbert sitting in the back seat of the car.		Take me home, Sam. (offscreen) You are home, Stephen.	
40:57	CUT to reverse shot of a white man dressed as Uncle Sam in the driver's seat.		Sam: The Colbert Nation <i>is</i> your home. And it needs you now more than ever.	
41:03	CUT to angry Colbert in back seat.		No it doesn't.	Chuckles
41:05	CUT to Sam in the driver's seat.		Sam: Yes it does. The Democrats have only been in power for a few minutes and they've already got us stuck in this unwinnable war.	Laughter
41:11	CUT to Colbert in back seat. His eyes widen in realization. He points on "democratic majority."		Yeah, they really screwed the pooch on that one. That Democratic majority has had a free ride for too long. Thanks, Sam!	Laughter
41:19	CUT to Sam in driver's seat. He turns back to the steering wheel.		You're welcome.	
41:20	CUT to Colbert getting out of the car. He turns, and sticks his head back into the car. He points at the camera.		Oh, by the way. There was no sparkling water in my drink caddy. (angrily) You forget that again, and I will fire you're fat ass. You got me, old man?	Laughter
41:29	CUT to Sam		Sam: Yes	
	CUT to Colbert		Yes, what?	
	CUT to Sam		Sam: Yes, sir.	
	CUT to Colbert		(Pause) (cheerfully) Night, Sam!	Laughter
41:34	CUT to medium shot of Colbert walking away from the car. He enters the door under the <i>Colbert Report</i> marquee.			

41:41	CUT to Stephen walking into studio. The camera follows him. He holds both arms over his head. He stops in front of the audience, and faces them. Medium shot of Colbert. He points at the audience with both hands, then, one hand. Points, looks into camera on "Goodnight, America."		Alright. You people have one more chance. Don't screw it up this time. Goodnight, everybody. Goodnight, America!	Wild cheers and applause
42:05	CUT to crane shot of audience. Many stand as they applaud. CUT to side view of Colbert pointing at audience with both hands.	Newsy sounding trumpets play "Midtacular" music	Let's go get these bastards! Let's go get 'em! Whooo!	Cheers, applause
42:15	The screen divides. White credits roll on a field of black on the left hand side. Action continues in upper, right hand corner. "The Midterm Mitacular now available on iTunes" and "comedycentral.com" appear on a field of blue in the lower right corner.	Trumpets play a combination of <i>Daily Show</i> and <i>Colbert Report</i> theme music		Cheers, applause
42:17	Upper right corner shows clips of politicians voting, including senator and former President Clinton, Arnold Swartzenegger, and footage of senator Allen of Virginia throwing a football.	Trumpets continue		Audience applause continues
42:46	Spartina and Busboy production company logos (See Appendix E)			

Appendix G

The Colbert Report, November 8, 2006
 “The Word” (“Sigh”) Segment Transcript

Time Code	Spoken Dialogue	Visual	Audience Response
2:22	Says, “Which brings us to tonight’s Word” Colbert slowly sits behind desk on left side of screen, looks down at desk.	Screen splits: Entire right half of the screen is blue with “WøRD” logo at top, phrase “Sigh” center right, blue world map with row of stars below	Applause, cheers
2:30	Sighs	Sigh	Chuckles
2:40	Throws hands up, looks upwards defeatedly	I Thought Rove Was A Genius	Chuckles
2:43	Leans forward with elbows on desk, massages temples with eyes closed	What Do I Do Now?	Chuckles
2:48	Snaps fingers, holds up forefinger, reaches under desk	What Do I Do Now?	Silence
2:54	Holds up a pencil, begins writing on paper	Send Flowers To Rumsfeld	Laughs
2:58	Throws pencil down, covers face with fist	I Need A Freaking Drink	Chuckles
3:04	Reaches under desk, produces bottle of brown liquor and a glass tumbler with ice, pauses, frowning	Fight It	Cheers, claps

3:14	Begins to put the bottle back under desk, but stops and opens the bottle, pouring it into the tumbler. Closes the bottle and places it back under desk.	Fuck It	Cheers and claps more wildly
3:20	Drinks entire contents of tumbler without stopping	Fuck It	Howls, claps
3:28	Slams tumbler onto desk, grimaces	Oh, Sweet Brown Medicine, Take Away The Pain	Claps
3:31	Bangs fist on desk, holds fist to forehead again	What The Hell Happened?	Chuckles
3:34	Gags, makes retching sounds	Do I Really Have To Say The Words, "Speaker Pelosi?"	<i>Cheers</i>
3:47	Leans away from desk with palms on face, then	What Idiot Gave Mark Foley A Blackberry???	Cackles, claps
3:55	Holds arms out to his sides and looks up	Why Did So Many Black People Have To Live In New Orleans?	<i>Claps, laughs</i>
4:00	Places palm on top of his head, stares blankly	What Do You Wear To A Gay Wedding Anyway?	Laughs, smattering of applause
4:08	Angrily grabs papers off his desk, swipes hand across desktop, throws papers down, lets out a bitter "Ha!"	Well, Now It's The Dems' Turn To Have Iraq Blow Up In Their Face	Nervous chuckle
4:18	Hunches over desk, shakes head	They Can't Fix It.	Small chuckle
4:22	Looks up hopefully, arches left eyebrow	They Can't Fix It. They Can't Fix Anything.	Bigger chuckle
4:26	Holds forefinger to lips and squints thoughtfully	They Can't Even Shut Kerry Up	2. Silence
4:29	Folds hands in front of him, arches left eyebrow, squints slyly	And When We're Still In Baghdad In 2008	Nervous chuckle
4:33	Smiles, chuckles sinisterly	Hello, President Jeb	Boos

4:38	Rests chin in hand, sighs dreamily	Sigh	Laughs
4:40	Says, "And that's The Word."	Sigh	Applause, cheers

Appendix H

The Colbert Report, November 9, 2006
 "The Word" ("Putin '08") Segment Transcript

Time Code	Spoken Dialogue	2.1.1.1. Visual	Audience Response
5:17	The Russian president has announced that he will step down in 2008, but plans to stay involved in politics. Great example for us to follow. But it's more than that, it's tonight's Word.	Medium shot of Colbert at his desk. He points with his pen on "great example."	Cheering, applause
5:25	Putin '08.	"The Word" graphic appears. Right half of the screen is blue with "The Wørd" logo at the top, "Putin '08" in the center, and a blue tinted world map at the bottom. Colbert fills the left side of the screen. He adjusts glasses.	Cheering, applause
5:34	Let's face it, folks. The future's looking pretty grim for the Republicans. They not only lost the midterms, they lost two of their brightest stars.	"Lobbyists Won't Return Calls."	
5:45	According to <i>The Washington Post</i> , "the midterms effectively ended the Presidential ambitions of two Republican senators: Rick Santorum and George Allen."	CUT to black and white quotation graphic reading "Next Race For President Gets In gear 'The midterms effectively ended the Presidential ambitions of two Republican senators – Rick Santorum and George Allen.' – November 8, 2006" <i>The Washington Post</i> logo appears vertically on the right side of the screen.	Some clapping
5:52	Santorum and Allen were the Republicans' great white hopes.	CUT to Colbert with Word graphic. Words "Can't Get Much Whiter" appear.	Laughter

5:57	And, they had exactly what it takes to be the next president.	"Nice Brown Hair And A Penis"	Laughter
6:04	Now the field is wide open.	"To Lose to McCain"	Chuckles
6:08	The Republicans need someone with proven leadership experience to take over, once Bush has retired to the ranch.	"To Fight War On Brush"	
6:15	That is why I say we draft Valdamir Putin. He knows how to deal with the hostile newsmedia.	"Chloroform, Burlap Sack"	Laughter
6:24	And, he is not afraid to get tough on terror.	"Or Civil Liberties"	Chuckles
6:28	Folks, he also believes in a strong executive branch.	"He's The Decider-ovich"	
6:33	Plus, the Russians have experience fighting an unpopular war against a guerrilla army of Islamic insurgents.	"Russia's Afghanistan: Afghanistan"	Groans
6:41	And, best of all, he knows judo.		
6:45	Look at that! Who's going to listen to Hillary when Putin's breaking a dozen bricks with his forehead?	CUT to clip of Putin dressed in white judo uniform throwing another man to the mat. Caption in corner, "Prescott News Archive".	Laughter
6:51	Of course, technically, our president must be an American citizen, but I'm sure there's a way around that.	CUT to Colbert with Word graphic. Words "Mr. Scalia, Tear Down This Constitution!" appear.	Chuckles
6:58	Nation, if there's one thing I've learned from this past election it's that victory is not guaranteed, even if you have the best candidates.	"And The Most Hackable Voting Machines"	Small laugh
7:06	But, by nominating Putin, the GOP would be making a clear statement that they're willing to win by any means necessary. If the Republicans do that, we'll be well on our way to turning this entire nation red.	Graphic appears on the right side of the screen: a map of the USA in red, with a yellow hammer, cycle, and star emblazoned upon it. He points with his pen on "the Word."	Laughter Applause
7:20	And that's the Word. We'll be right back.	Graphic disappears. CUT to crane ZOOM OUT of Colbert at his desk. Fade to black.	Applause, cheering

Electronic MSc Dissertation Series

Media@lse Electronic MSc Dissertations will:

- Present high quality MSc Dissertations which received a mark of Distinction (70% and above).
- Selected dissertations will be published electronically as pdf files, subject to review and approval by the Editors.

Authors retain copyright, and publication here does not preclude the subsequent development of the paper for publication elsewhere.