

Exploring the Effects of Viewer Enjoyment of *The Apprentice* on Perceptions and Voting Intentions for President Trump

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Abstract

This research explores how viewer enjoyment of *The Apprentice* and *The Celebrity Apprentice* as entertainment media impacted attitudes toward Donald Trump and voting intentions in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Data from an online survey with 537 responses including viewers and non-viewers of the shows were collected. The results showed no differences between viewer and non-viewer perceptions of Trump's charismatic leadership and their voting intentions for him. However, for viewers, a path analysis indicated that enjoyment of the shows significantly affected positive perceptions of Trump's charismatic leadership, which in turn influenced voting intention. Affective dispositions and perceived meaningfulness in watching the shows significantly contributed to enjoyment. Mere exposure and perceived realism were not of impact. Implications for media entertainment are discussed.

Keywords: reality shows, enjoyment, disposition theory, perceived realism, media effects

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Before Donald J. Trump won the 2016 presidential election, he was familiar to U.S. citizens as a media celebrity and star of *The Apprentice*, a reality television series. Campaigning unconventionally and connecting with populist sentiment, Trump channeled voter feelings of anger and desire for change with an outsider perspective (Berenson, 2016). Trump challenged the status quo with comedic performance that was at times bawdy – atypical of presidential candidates but consistent with his persona on *The Apprentice* (Hall, Goldstein, & Ingram, 2016). Wiegand (2016) argues that Trump's *Apprentice* role framed the election as a reality TV event, building on escalating media trends of entertainment as news in coverage of the candidates and issues. Trump's personality and actions on *The Apprentice* aligned similarly with his demeanor and public communications as he entered office with confrontational style and mannerisms (Teitell, 2017). Schultz (2004) argues that entertainer personas are fictitious even in other venues like politics where citizens “elect the persona rather than the person” (p. 216). Did entertainment experiences from *The Apprentice* – where Trump was the center of the show – contribute to perceptions of Trump's leadership on the campaign trail, and in turn favorably influence voting intentions for him?

Many Americans first knew Trump as a reality TV star. Millions of viewers consumed his media programming arguably for enjoyment during the 14 seasons of *The Apprentice* and *The Celebrity Apprentice*. Media exposure literature connects positive emotion with entertaining experiences (Vorderer, Klimmt, & Ritterfeld, 2004), as well as attitudes that include or contribute to affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses (Nabi & Krcmar, 2004). This research explores viewers' enjoyment of watching *The Apprentice* series and the associated effects related to its leading reality star, Trump, as a political candidate.

Enjoyment is a broad concept that is framed in relation to affective dispositions for Trump. Further, how the show brings meaningful experience and perceived realism in this TV genre is evaluated. These aspects of enjoyment are studied for attitudinal influence on perceptions of Trump as a charismatic leader in his role as political candidate and behavioral intention to vote for him.

Data were examined from an online survey administered before the

election with responses from 537 participants. Findings are based on exploring exposure effects from watching the shows, and with path analysis, enjoyment effects. This study builds on extensive work in media enjoyment studies, connecting to reality TV programs that relate to viewer perceptions of celebrities that move from entertainment media to politics. Significantly, this study demonstrates how viewers' positive dispositions and feelings of meaningfulness in enjoying entertainment content may impact their perceptions of political leaders and intentions for civic action.

Literature Review

This study's examination of pertinent literature starts with understanding charismatic leadership, which may help frame perceptions of Trump as a political candidate and not solely as a reality TV star. Cultivation effects that may impact viewers of *The Apprentice* series are explored. Enjoyment from the viewing experience is examined. Affective dispositions, perceived meaningfulness, and perceived realism related to enjoyment of the shows are reviewed.

Charismatic Leadership and Cultivation Effects

In organizational and political settings, the concept of charismatic leadership centers on success through demonstrated behaviors of leaders and their impacts on followers based on charismatic qualities (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Charismatic leaders are a special group, set apart "by their ability to formulate and articulate an inspirational vision and by behaviors and actions that foster an impression that they and their mission are extraordinary" (Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000, p. 748). The idea of their extraordinary nature originates with Max Weber in 1920 (Weber, 2009), which Conger and Kanungo (1998) credit with leadership seen as earned through exceptional powers and qualities, and possibly viewed as divine or exemplary.

Studies in political behaviors have found a strong and positive relationship between perceived leaders' charisma and voting preferences (e.g.

Pillai, R., & Williams, 1998; Shamir, 1994). Charismatic leaders inspire positive emotions in followers (Ilies, Judge, & Wagner, 2006), which can influence their moods and feelings of leader effectiveness and attraction (Bono & Ilies, 2006). Michel, Wallace, and Rawlings (2013) found charismatic political leaders evoked emotions, such as admiration, that inspired people to align actions with leaders when they were motivated to embrace change. In a study of perceptions of candidates in the 2004 U.S. presidential election, attributed charisma was a predictor of voting behavior (Williams, Pillai, Lowe, Jung, & Herst, 2009).

Some studies suggest that charismatic leadership helps citizens in the decision-making process about political candidates. In a deeper look at psychological mechanisms in U.S. presidential elections, Jacquart and Antonakis (2015) found that charisma significantly improved a candidate's success particularly when performance was not clear. Grabo, Spisak and van Vugt (2017) built on these findings in defining charismatic leadership as a signaling process to citizens related to evolutionary psychology that includes attracting attention, arousing emotions, and articulating a vision with shared values, norms, and collective identity.

Since research has demonstrated the importance of charismatic leadership in voting consideration, this study first was interested in exploring whether the amount of exposure to *The Apprentice* and *The Celebrity Apprentice* affected viewers' perceptions of Trump's leadership and their voting preference. In these reality TV shows, Trump performed as a billionaire business leader with a decisive management style as he trained apprentices to be entrepreneurs.

Media research has suggested a positive relationship between levels of media exposure and associated effects. Evidence is seen in cultivation analysis where levels of television viewing may affect viewers' perceptions of social reality, which is categorized as first-order effects (e.g., Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Larry, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980; Carveth & Alexander, 1985). Cultivation analysis research has expanded to second-order effects that found media exposure could influence content-related attitudes, beliefs, or even behaviors. For instance, Holbert, Kwak, & Shah's (2003) study found that the viewing of public affairs and nature documentary

programs were positively associated with viewers' levels of environmental concern. Further, viewing these programs predicted pro-environmental behaviors in product purchases and recycling efforts. Studies have found cultivation effects may be affected by a variety of factors such as demographics (e.g. Eschholz, Blackwell, Gertz, & Chiricos, 2002), personality traits (e.g. Authors' names withheld for review; Nabi & Riddle, 2008), and viewing experiences (e.g. Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011).

Reality programming may evoke stronger attitudinal and/or cultivation effects than other genres. For instance, compared to overall television programming, reality programs had a stronger effect on predicting viewers' materialistic values (Authors' names withheld for review). Grabe and Drew (2007) also found stronger effects of reality programming on behaviors. Their study showed that the viewing of crime drama was not associated with cultivation effects on crime estimates and fear but instead associated with defensive behaviors such as owning a gun.

Trump's reality shows aired on television networks for more than a decade prior to the 2016 election. His cultivated persona of being a brash and successful businessman on *The Apprentice* series may influence the way viewers perceived him as a presidential candidate. Reality television is scripted to appear authentic but is edited for dramatic effect (Allen & Mendick, 2013). Charismatic leaders use narrative and storytelling to manage impressions that followers develop (Sharma & Grant, 2011). As a reality TV star, Trump was able to control key aspects of his image, crafted for compelling entertainment effects that intersect with political ambition (Serazio, 2018). Marshall (2014) describes the structures in creating legitimizing personas of political leaders as similar to those in developing celebrities as providing "exceptionality and hierarchial distance" (p. 324). Cultivation effects in terms of viewer attitudes and associated behavioral intention were proposed:

H1: Compared to non-viewers and light viewers, heavy viewers of The Apprentice series will show more positive attitudes toward Trump's charismatic leadership.

H2: Compared to non-viewers and light viewers, heavy viewers of The Apprentice series will be more likely to vote for Trump.

Media Enjoyment

Media research has shown the effects of media exposure are not straightforward. Viewing experiences, motivations, and individual differences play important roles in mediating or moderating media effects (e.g. Potter, 1986; Shrum & Rindfleisch, 2002). For entertainment media, enjoyment is not only key for consumption (Zillmann, 1988) but also can cause or mediate the media effects (e.g. Authors' names withheld for review; Oliver, 1993a; Ledbetter, Taylor, & Mazer, 2016).

The effects of enjoyment obtained from *The Apprentice* and *The Celebrity Apprentice* on the perception of Trump's charismatic leadership might be even more important than mere exposure because of the conflicting images between Trump's norms-breaking persona and the traditional behaviors of modern U.S. presidential candidates. In the shows, Trump enforced harsh consequences without showing care for others. He appeared to be "decisive, averse to bullshit, impossible to swindle, and guided in all decisions by brash, plainspoken common sense" (Friedersdorf, 2011).

The appeal of reality shows and the uniqueness of Trump's performance in *The Apprentice* and *The Celebrity Apprentice* provided Trump with a platform to establish himself as a "politainer" who was a popular entertainer first and then also a politician so that he could be immune to the qualifications expected of a politician (Schultz, 2004; Hall, Goldstein, & Ingram, 2016). Hall et. al (2016) emphasized that to understand Trump's success in his presidential campaign, one must consider the protective benefits of entertainment value – that is, "entertainers have license to disobey rules" (p. 73). Broadly, the viewer's emotional response to politics in entertainment media may factor into political attitudes and choices as a quicker path of information about candidates (VanZoonen, 2005). Serazio's (2018) study of political strategists' efforts to promote candidates in entertaining formats within popular culture suggests Trump's success "might be a more natural evolution of pre-existing political communication designs

on infotainment” (p. 131). Thus, to understand the impacts of *The Apprentice* and *The Celebrity Apprentice* on Trump’s presidential election, it is important to examine the relationship between entertainment experiences from the shows and viewer perceptions of Trump as a political leader.

A variety of content-related effects associated with or predicted by media enjoyment are evident in media research, such as persuasion (e.g., Gillespie & Joireman, 2016), knowledge recall (e.g. Schneider, Weinmann, Roth, Knop, & Vorderer, 2016), and aggression (e.g., Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998). However, the concept of enjoyment varies. Some studies consider it as a pleasurable or entertaining experience that contributes to media consumption (e.g. Carveth & Alexander, 1985; Hall, 2015; Oliver & Raney, 2011). Some researchers use media enjoyment to see both positive and negative emotional valences toward the media content (e.g. Oliver, 1993b). Other studies consider media enjoyment as the core of media consumption, particularly with entertainment media, which should be more theoretically conceptualized (e.g. Vorderer, et al., 2004; Nabi & Krcmar, 2004; Tamborini, Bowman, Eden, Grizzard, & Organ, 2010).

To conceptualize media enjoyment, we first adapted Vorderer et al.’s (2004) model of media enjoyment. In this model, enjoyment is the launch point once the prerequisites are met (such as audience’s readiness and ability to suspend disbelief, empathize with characters, engage in parasocial interactions and relationship with the personae, etc.). When enjoyment is obtained, in turn the associated media effects might be achieved. The term enjoyment in the model is used to capture the manifestations of the entertainment experience. Either negative emotions, such as sadness and fear, or positive emotions, like exhilaration and escape, derived from media use could achieve the state of enjoyment. Further, enjoyment of entertainment media could result in affective and cognitive effects, such as excitation transfer, catharsis, and learning. Learning via media enjoyment actually corresponds to cultivation analysis, articulating that the audience learns social reality or social-political values from television viewing (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999).

Nabi (2004) also provided a framework to understand media enjoyment. Instead of articulating enjoyment as a state of entertaining experience

(Vorderer et al., 2004), Nabi and Krcmar (2004) conceptualized media enjoyment as an attitude that is formed through the rise of and the interaction among affective (such as positive mood and arousal), cognitive (such as judgments of the characters and storylines), and behavioral components (such as selective exposure and talking about the shows). By incorporating uses and gratifications theory, social cognitive theory, and cultivation theory, Nabi and Krcmar's (2004) conceptualization of media enjoyment also proposed that enjoyment of media could predict affective, cognitive, and behavioral media content-related effects.

Based on the above research regarding media enjoyment effects, (e.g. Gillespie & Joireman, 2016; Roth, Weinmann, Schneider, Hopp, & Vorderer, 2014), frameworks of media enjoyment (Vorderer et al., 2004; Nabi & Krcmar, 2004), and charismatic leadership research (e.g. Pillai, R., & Williams, 1998; Shamir, 1994), two hypotheses are proposed:

H3: Enjoyment of The Apprentice series is positively associated with favorable attitudes toward Trump's charismatic leadership.

H4: Favorable attitudes toward Trump's charismatic leadership are positively associated with intentions to vote for Trump.

Disposition-Based Theories and Media Enjoyment

Disposition-based theories that examine viewers' affective and cognitive responses to characters and storylines of entertainment media are often used to understand the phenomenon of media enjoyment. Disposition-based theories emphasize that "media enjoyment starts with and is driven by viewer's feelings about characters" (Raney, 2006, p. 145). Moreover, Vorderer et al.'s (2004) and Nabi and Krcmar's (2004) models of media enjoyment incorporated disposition-based theories, which suggest enjoyment is largely explained by the viewer's affective and cognitive responses to characters and story outcomes. Enjoyment increases when viewers develop affective affiliations (such as liking, identification, etc.) and cognitive judgments (such as to suspend disbelief and feel perceived realism). Numerous studies have supported the notion that affective dispositions

toward the characters predict media enjoyment, such as in drama (e.g. Chuang & Lee; Weber, Tamborini, Lee, & Stipp, H. 2008), sport (e.g. Hall, 2015), political talk shows (e.g. Weinmann, Schneider, Krämer, Hopp, Bindl, & Luck, 2017), and news (e.g. Zillmann, Taylor, and Lewis, 1998). In alignment with the distinguished features of *The Apprentice* series and Trump's performance in the shows, admiration and identification are examined for affective dispositions and perceived realism for examining the cognitive component of enjoyment.

Affective Dispositions. In *The Apprentice*, Trump was presented as a successful and determined billionaire who not only had the power to say "You're Fired!" but also acted as a role model for business success. Therefore, two dimensions, admiration and identification, regarding affective dispositions toward Trump were considered most pertinent to this study. Admiration toward celebrities was found to be an important affect that explained audience bonds to celebrities (Leets, De Becker, & Giles, 1995). Hall's (2015) study of sports programs found that viewer respect and admiration for the athletes contributed to feelings of suspense, which in turn predicted enjoyment of the games. For advertising, admiration for celebrity endorsers was associated with positive attitudes toward the endorsers and advertised products (Silvera & Austad, 2004). Admiration for celebrities can impact political endorsement as well. Corner (2003) argues that via 'mediated personas' – public images formed through entertainment media – celebrities create new forms of identification in which they attain public admiration and authority to effect political expression.

Additionally, when audiences feel similarity or an identification with mediated personas, enjoyment increases and the associated effects may be enhanced. Identification or similarity is often adapted in disposition-based theories research as an affective component toward characters (e.g., Tsay & Krakowiak, 2011; Raney, 2003). Throughout identification, the viewer "empathizes with the character and adopts the character's identity" (p. 252). In media studies, identification generally has been understood to describe feelings of affinity, friendship, or similarity of a character by audiences (Cohen, 2001). The effect of identification on increasing enjoyment was supported via various entertainment media studies, such as video games

(Hefner, Klimmt & Vorderer, 2007), films (Igartua, 2010), TV drama (Janicke & Raney, 2015), and reality programming (Godlewski & Perse, 2010). The effects of identification could be explained through the lens of parasocial interactions (PSI) and parasocial relationships (PSR). PSI and PSR suggest the level of audience emotional involvement with personas affects viewers' interests and enjoyment of the media content (Klimmt, Hartmann, & Schramm 2006). In addition, social learning theory suggests through the modeling process, that identification could result in cognitive or attitudinal effects (Bandura, 1986). For instance, Moyer-Guse' examined how entertainment-education messages achieved a persuasive objective. The author found that parasocial interactions, such as identification with the characters of media messages, could overcome viewers' resistance, such as selective avoidance and counter-arguing to increase persuasion. Two hypotheses are proposed based on the above studies:

H5: Affective dispositions (admiration and identification) toward Trump on The Apprentice series is positively associated with enjoyment of the shows.

H6: Affective dispositions (admiration and identification) toward Trump on The Apprentice series is positively associated with favorable attitudes toward Trump's charismatic leadership.

Perceived realism. Perceived realism often increases enjoyment for various media content. For instance, Bilandzic and Busselle (2011) found perceived realism contributed to enjoyment, which enhanced audiences' narrative experiences (transportation, identification, telepresence, and immersion). Some studies suggest perceived realism is associated with gratifications and impactful for cultivation effects (Potter 1986; Robin & Perse, 1987). Lin and Peng (2015) found perceived realism not only increased enjoyment of video games but also game engagement. van Leeuwen, Renes, and Leeuwis (2013) studied the effects of an entertainment-education show on the prevention of alcohol consumption for adolescents. Though perceived realism failed to predict behavioral change in terms of alcohol consumption, it significantly predicted enjoyment. Slater and Elliott (1982) found perceived realism of law enforcement programs was a stronger

factor than the amount of viewing time in order to predict cultivation effects of these programs for perceptions of societal safety and understanding law enforcement. Effects of perceived realism on content-related effects also was supported in experimental studies. Busselle (2001) showed perceived realism lowered participants' response time to perform social judgments. Additionally, mere media exposure did not increase the accessibility of exemplars in social judgment, which again, supported the notion that media effects are not universal but affected by various factors.

In short, perceived realism is expected to enhance entertainment experiences and contribute to media effects. The following hypotheses are suggested:

H7: Perceived realism of The Apprentice series is positively associated with enjoyment of the shows.

H8: Perceived realism of The Apprentice series is positively associated with favorable attitudes toward Trump's charismatic leadership.

Perceived meaningfulness and media enjoyment. Oliver and Raney (2010) articulated that the use of entertainment media is not merely a pursuit of happiness, or hedonic motivation, but also could be driven by eudaimonic motivations, such as seeking inspiration or meaningfulness. Tamborini et al. (2010) argued that media enjoyment is a need based on both hedonic and eudaimonic factors. Tsay-Vogel and Krakowiak (2016) examined the relationship between hedonic motivation (pleasure), eudaimonic motivation (perceived meaningfulness), moral disengagement, and enjoyment of films. Findings showed pleasure had an indirect effect on enjoyment but perceived meaningfulness had both a direct and indirect effect on enjoyment. Viewers' enjoyment increased when the perceived meaningfulness increased. Perceived meaningfulness might further increase the use of media content or content-related effects. Bartsch and Mares' (2014) experimental study suggested that besides suspense, viewers' interests in watching violent movies increased when they experienced meaningful or thought-provoking feelings. Roth, Weinmann, Schneider, Hopp and Vorderer's (2014) study of political talk indicated eudaimonic entertainment experiences with thought-provoking content had stronger effects than hedonic entertainment

experiences. Viewers' eudaimonic entertainment experiences were positively related to the feeling of being informed but hedonic experiences were not significantly influential in this way.

The Apprentice featured how to succeed in the contemporary business world. The American Management Association, the world's largest membership-based training organization, even sponsored the shows and posted tips learned from *The Apprentice* per episode on the show's website (Franko, 2006). Numerous articles featured "lessons learned" from *The Apprentice* and *The Celebrity Apprentice* since the shows gained popularity (e.g. Robin, 2005; Marr, 2013). Lair (2011) argued that viewers of *The Apprentice* might perceive the show as equipping them for the work world. Viewers' enjoyment of *The Apprentice* might increase while they perceive gained meaning, learning, and inspiration from the shows. Thus, based on the above studies, hypotheses formed included:

H9: Perceived meaningfulness of The Apprentice series is positively associated with enjoyment of the shows.

H10: Perceived meaningfulness of The Apprentice series is positively associated with favorable attitudes toward Trump's charismatic leadership.

In summary, guided by research in media enjoyment and disposition theory, this study proposes affective dispositions, perceived meaningfulness, and perceived realism will be positively associated with enjoyment of the shows and perception of Trump's charismatic leadership as a political candidate. Enjoyment also is expected to be positively associated with the perception of Trump's charismatic leadership, which in turn, will affect viewers' intentions to vote for Trump (see Figure 1 for the hypothetical model).

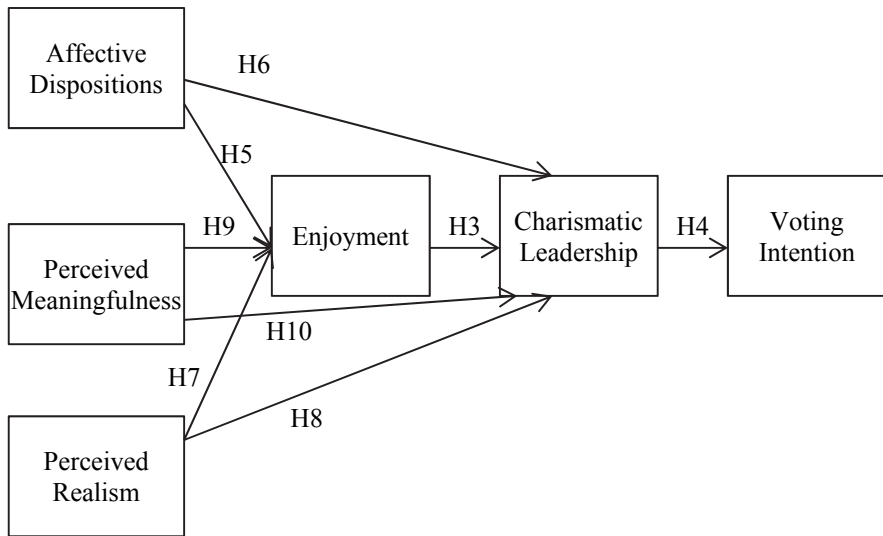


Figure 1. Hypothetical model for the effects of affective dispositions, perceived meaningfulness, and perceived realism on charismatic leadership and voting intention.

Method

This study, approved by an institutional review board, was based on a questionnaire using 7-point Likert scales to assess audience responses to *The Apprentice* series and Trump. Several existing Likert scales were used or modified to assess enjoyment, charismatic leadership, and intention to vote for Trump. The online survey was administered via email in March, April, and October 2016 to a convenience sample of students and alumni at a Midwestern university. No compensation was offered to participants but students received extra credit for taking the survey. A total of 537 valid responses was gathered. Of them, 315 (58.7%) were female and 222 (41.3%) were male. The average age of respondents was 44.2 years old ($SD = 18.8$) and 94.8% were white. The median family income was \$75,001 and above (55.7%).

Independent Variables

Consumption of *The Apprentice* and *The Celebrity Apprentice*.

Because *The Apprentice* and *The Celebrity Apprentice* were off-air during the time of survey, it would significantly affect the validity of measurement for respondents to report their viewing time on the shows. Thus, this study developed four 7-point Likert-scale items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$, $M = 3.46$, Median = 4.50) to measure viewers' consumption of the shows such as "I frequently have watched one or both of these shows" and "I am familiar with one or both of these shows." Of the 537 responses, a total of 259 responses were non-viewers who reported never watching *The Apprentice* and *The Celebrity Apprentice* and 278 had watched *The Apprentice* or/and *The Celebrity Apprentice*. For the 278 viewers, 164 (59%) were female and 114 (41%) were male. The average age of viewers was 45.3 years old ($SD = 17.6$) and 96% were white. The median family income was \$75,001 and above (62.2%). Based on the median of the consumption (Median = 4.50), the viewers of the shows were divided into light viewers ($N = 140$) and heavy viewers ($N = 138$).

Political Leaning. A 7-point Likert-scale question of "How would you describe your political leaning?" was used to measure political preference (1 indicates very conservative and 7 indicates very liberal). The sample mean was 4.18 ($SD = 1.63$). The mean of viewers was 4.34 ($SD = 1.52$) and non-viewers was 4.02 ($SD = 1.74$).

Affective dispositions, perceived meaningfulness, and perceived realism. Adapted from previous studies (e.g. Auter & Palmgreen, 2000; Bartsch & Mares 2014; Bilandzic & Busselle, 2011; Hall 2009; Nabi et al., 2006; Potter, 1986; Robin, 1981), 16 7-point Likert-scale items were developed to measure admiration, identification, and perceived meaningfulness about *The Apprentice* series. Based on previous research and the interests of this study, two dimensions – admiration and identification – were measured for the factor of affective dispositions (Hall, 2015; Krakowiak & Tsay, 2011). To reduce multicollinearity, a principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was performed to identify the underlying relationships

between measured items. The principal component analysis grouped the measures of admiration and identification together. Thus, *affective dispositions* included four items to measure admiration (such as “There are certain characters on *The Apprentice* that I admire”) and identification (such as “On *The Apprentice*, Trump acts like someone I know in my real life”) (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .97$, $M = 3.29$). The result of combining admiration and identification together corresponded to previous studies that argued the concepts of affects “are often not very clearly defined and are difficult to separate from one another” (Konijin, 2008, p. 128). A total of eight items were grouped to uncover the dimension of perceived meaningfulness (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$, $M = 2.77$). The items included the measurement of feeling meaning, being moved, experiencing thought-provoking content, and learning from the shows. Five items such as “The events in these shows resemble ones in the real world” and “The shows reflect problems people encounter in their careers” were grouped for the concept of *perceived realism* (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .86$, $M = 3.51$).

Dependent Variables

Enjoyment. Based on Hall’s (2009) and Nabi et al.’s (2006) studies, enjoyment was measured with five 7-point Likert-scale items such as “The shows were entertaining” and “If the show will be on screen, I will watch it” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$, $M = 3.78$).

Charismatic leadership and intention to vote for Trump. Charismatic leadership was measured by the Conger-Kanungo Scale of Charismatic Leadership (Conger, Kanungo, Menon, & Mathur, 1997). Respondents were asked to rate Trump as a presidential candidate on the 20 items of the scale. The items, which reference leadership of an organization, were modified to identify leadership for the United States, such as “Provides inspiring strategy and goals for the U.S.” and “Showing sensitivity for the needs and feelings of U.S. citizens” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .97$, $M = 3.16$). Three items with 7-point semantic differential scales were developed to measure voting intention. Respondents were asked to rate the degree to which it was unlikely/likely, very improbable/very probable, and very impossible/very possible they

would vote for Trump in the 2016 presidential election (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .99$, $M = 2.64$).

Results

H1 proposed the impact of the amount of exposure to Trump’s shows on attitude toward Trump’s charismatic leadership. To account for the effects of political preference on the evaluation of Trump’s leadership and viewer voting intention, political leaning was included as a covariant in the statistical analysis model. An ANCOVA analysis controlling for political leaning showed no difference among non-viewers, light viewers, and heavy viewers for the evaluations of Trump’s charismatic leadership, $F(2, 533) = .13$, $p = .87$ (Table 1). H2 proposed the effect of the exposure to Trump’s shows on the intention to vote for Trump. The ANCOVA analysis controlling for political leaning also showed no difference among non-viewers, light viewers, and heavy viewers, $F(2, 533) = .71$, $p = .49$ (Table 2). H1 and H2 were not supported. Mere exposure to Trump’s reality shows appeared to have no effect on viewer evaluations of charismatic leadership or voting intention. Instead, political leaning was significantly associated with viewer perception of Trump’s charismatic leadership ($p < .00$) and voting intention ($p < .00$) in a positive direction for more conservative viewers.

Table 1: ANCOVA results and descriptive statistics for the perceptions of Trump’s leadership among non-viewers, light viewers, and heavy viewers of *The Apprentice* series.

	Perceptions of Trump’s Leadership			
	Mean	SD	N	
Non-viewer	3.37	1.58	259	
Light viewer	3.05	1.55	140	
Heavy viewer	3.28	1.48	138	
Source	SS	df	MS	F
Political leaning	529.44	1	529.44	380.41***
Viewing condition	0.373	2	0.187	0.134

Note. $R^2 = .42$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .42$), * $p < .05$, ** $p < .00$, *** $p < .000$

Table 2: ANCOVA results and descriptive statistics for voting intention for Trump among non-viewers, light viewers, and heavy viewers of *The Apprentice* series.

	Voting Intention			
	Mean	SD	N	
Non-viewer	2.89	2.42	259	
Light viewer	2.33	2.26	140	
Heavy viewer	2.5	2.26	138	
Source	SS	df	MS	F
Political leaning	1320.51	1	1320.51	439.30***
Viewing condition	4.25	2	2.12	0.49

Note. $R^2 = .46$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .46$), * $p < .05$, ** $p < .00$, *** $p < .000$

H3–H10 proposed affective dispositions, perceived meaningfulness, and perceived realism would positively associate with enjoyment, and enjoyment would contribute to the positive evaluation about Trump’s leadership. Further, the viewer evaluation of Trump’s charismatic leadership would predict the likelihood of voting for Trump. Table 3 shows the correlations between independent variables and dependent variables. Affective dispositions, perceived meaningfulness, perceived realism, enjoyment, perception of Trump’s charismatic leadership, and the intention to vote for Trump were significantly correlated with each other. In particular, perceived meaningfulness was highly correlated to most other factors. A path analysis via AMOS 21.0 structural equation modeling was used to examine the hypotheses (see Figure 2). To account for the effect of political preferences, viewers’ political leaning was included as a control in the analytic model. The model fit was evaluated by the criteria: (1) higher probability value, (2) the values of standardized RMR and RMSEA are 0.05 or less for good fit and 0.08 for acceptable model fit, and (3) NFI, CFI, and IFI are larger than 0.90 (Byrne, 2001). The value of chi-square and other indices showed the hypothesized model was a good fit [$\chi^2(4) = 6.895, p = .14, CFI = .997, NFI = .994, IFI = .997, RMSEA = .051, SRMR = .017$] (Byrne, 2001).

Table 3: Correlations between independent variables and dependent variables

	Affective Dispositions	Perceived Meaningfulness	Perceived Realism	Enjoyment	Leadership	Voting Intention
Affective Dispositions	—					
Perceived Meaningfulness	.66***	—				
Perceived Realism	.53***	.63***	—			
Enjoyment	.49***	.64***	.39**	—		
Leadership	.38***	.51***	.33**	.44***	—	
Voting Intention	.28***	.40***	.26**	.30***	.84***	—
Political Leaning	-.25***	-.36***	-.26***	-.29***	-.63***	-.65***

Note. N = 278 (viewers), * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

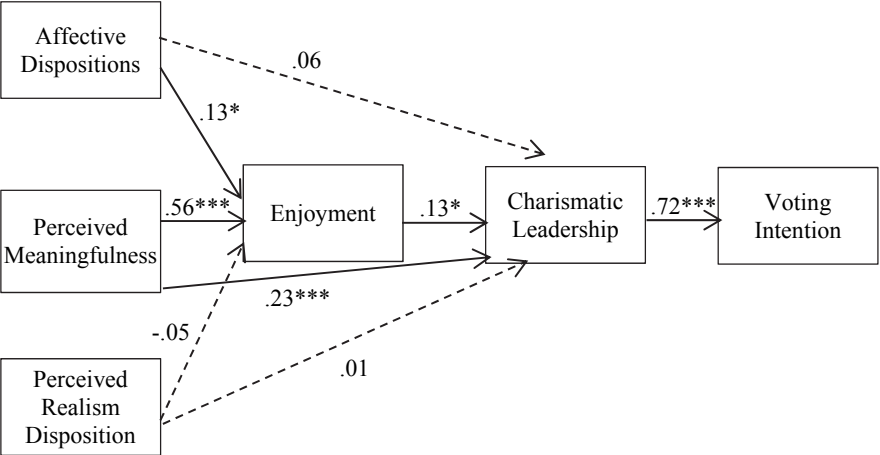


Figure 2. The results of path analysis for the effects of affective dispositions, perceived meaningfulness, and perceived realism on charismatic leadership and voting intention.

- Note. (1) N = 278 (viewers), β values were standardized, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.
- (2) Political leaning was included as a control in the analytical model.
- (3) The analysis model included correlations between affective dispositions, meaningfulness, perceived realism, and political leaning.

First, the results showed that enjoyment appeared to be positively associated with evaluation of Trump’s charismatic leadership (standardized $\beta = .13$, $p = .02$). Second, the evaluation of Trump’s charismatic leadership

appeared as a strong factor to predict intention to vote for Trump (standardized $\beta = .72, p < .001$). H3 and H4 were supported. Further, political leaning was a significant factor for both charismatic leadership (standardized $\beta = -.51, p < .001$) and intention to vote for Trump (standardized $\beta = -.20, p < .001$). Viewers who identified as more liberal were less likely to have higher evaluation for Trump's leadership and intention to vote for Trump.

Affective dispositions were positively associated with enjoyment of Trump's reality shows ($\beta = .13, p = .04$) but not significantly associated with the perception of Trump's leadership. H5 was supported but H6 was not supported. With controlling for political leaning, a mediation test based on Baron and Kenny (1986) showed enjoyment is a full mediator for the effect of affective dispositions on the evaluation of Trump's leadership. The findings showed that enjoyment was a full mediation because enjoyment remained significant (standardized $\beta = .13, p = .02$) after controlling for affective disposition but affective disposition was no longer significant when enjoyment was controlled (standardized $\beta = .05, p = .42$). In addition, a bootstrapping method using AMOS 21.0 showed the indirect effect of affective dispositions on the perception of Trump's leadership was significant, $\beta = .02, p = .03$, 95% CI [.001, .049] (Keith, 2006; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). The results showed the effect of affective dispositions, including admiration and identification, on the perception of Trump's leadership was entirely indirect. As well, perceived realism was not significantly associated with either enjoyment ($p = .41$) or the evaluation of Trump's charismatic leadership ($p = .61$). Thus, H7 and H8 were not supported.

Perceived meaningfulness was a significant factor for enjoyment (standardized $\beta = .56, p < .001$) and was also directly associated with the perception of Trump's leadership (standardized $\beta = .23, p = .002$). H9 and H10 were supported. The mediation test (Baron & Kenny, 1986) including political leaning as a control variable showed enjoyment partially mediated the effect of perceived meaningfulness on the perception of Trump's leadership because perceived meaningfulness remained significant after controlling for the level of enjoyment (standardized $\beta = .21, p = .002$). Further, the bootstrapping method using AMOS 21.0 showed a significant

indirect effect of perceived meaningfulness on the perception of Trump's leadership (standardized $\beta = .11$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.016, .146]). The above tests indicated perceived meaningfulness had a large effect (total effect standardized $\beta = .46$) on the perception of Trump's leadership, which included both a direct effect and an indirect effect mediated by enjoyment.

In short, affective dispositions toward Trump and perceived meaningfulness of the shows were directly and positively associated with enjoyment of the shows. Moreover, perceived meaningfulness and enjoyment were positively associated with the evaluation of Trump's charismatic leadership, which in turn predicted intention to vote for Trump. Affective dispositions appeared to have small and indirect effects on the perceptions of Trump's charismatic leadership but the perception of meaningfulness showed a strong and direct effect on the evaluation of Trump's leadership.

Discussion

This study examined ways in which the entertainment experience of *The Apprentice* series impacted viewer attitudes toward Trump's charismatic leadership and intention to vote for him. Exploration was centered on the concept of media enjoyment. Findings suggest viewer feelings of enjoyment from watching the shows positively affected their evaluations of Trump. Enjoyment for these viewers stemmed from favorable feelings toward the show and perceived meaning derived from the show's content. Mere exposure and perceived realism did not factor into viewer evaluations of Trump as a presidential candidate. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Theoretical Implications

Simply viewing *The Apprentice* did not lead to cultivation effects that influenced perceptions of Trump as a charismatic leader and preferred political candidate. Instead, the experience of enjoyment from meaningful content in the shows and positive feelings about the program gave viewers the feeling that Trump is a charismatic leader, which led to their voting

intention for Trump. Enjoyment from a presidential candidate on a candidate-centered reality TV show is unique compared to other entertainment experiences with celebrity politicians who once starred in movies or candidates appearing on late-night talk shows or comedy programming. Arguably, watching *The Apprentice* inspired viewers and provided thought-provoking content, which heightened enjoyment and fueled viewer perceptions of Trump's persona to advance from a reality TV program into the real-world political realm of the U.S. presidential election.

First, a few reasons are proposed for the lack of effect for cultivation. Viewer perceptions of Trump were not impacted after watching the show perhaps due to individual differences and viewing experiences, which may operate as mediating or moderating factors in cultivation effects (e.g. Authors' names withheld for review; Nabi et al., 2006; Potter, 1986; Shrum & Rindfleisch, 2002). An inherent issue in analyzing cultivation effects is accounting for broader media exposure, such as to overall viewing of TV content, which is difficult to separate from genre-specific exposure (Lee & Niederdeppe, 2011). However, the lack of effect could reflect viewer experiences in watching Trump's celebrity persona on the show as limited in affecting decisive attitudes toward him politically, or exposure for non-viewers to show content without actually watching the show, such as content on televised previews of the prime-time series, network promotions, news coverage, and other exposure opportunities. Studies finding confounding cultivation effects consider possibilities of content factors such as heightened awareness of issues that may distort actual perceptions of those issues (Shanahan, Scheufele, Yang, & Hizi, 2004). Further, the measure of viewing consumption, which was not total viewing time as often seen in TV cultivation studies, evaluated four 7-point Likert scales. Even though some cultivation studies (e.g. Shrum, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2005) show the merits of using Likert scales to measure consumption, the limits of this subjective measure could not be ruled out. This study controlled for political leaning, but did not delve into deeper cultivation factors given other goals of the research. Additional factors could further explain the complexities of cultivation for reality program consumption related to the unique application of a celebrity's role outside of the show.

An interesting finding of this study is that instead of affective dispositions, perceived meaningfulness appeared to be the strongest factor that affected viewer enjoyment and perception of Trump's leadership. Research on persuasion shows meaningfulness is one of the essential factors for persuasion. The effectiveness of message persuasion increased when the receivers perceived the meaningfulness of the messages, such as matching receivers' goals and providing inspiring and useful messages (Rimer & Kreuter, 2006; Slater, 1997). Eisend and Langner's (2010) study also suggested that the expertise of celebrity endorsers resulted in stronger persuasion effects long-term. This study showed that perceived meaningfulness and entertainment were essential for persuasive communication. Even though the mean value of perceived meaningfulness from the shows was not high, compared to the effect size and path in the statistical analysis, this study found eudaimonic experiences could be more powerful than an affective factor in persuasive communication.

Perceived realism was not significant for effects on both enjoyment and charismatic leadership, which was unexpected but aligned with related studies. Some research suggested that the effects of perceived realism were not robust and perceived reality was not a significant factor for greater consumption of reality shows (e.g., Nabi et al., 2006; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007). To feel entertained or obtain enjoyment, "reality" or "factuality" is not an indispensable criterion (e.g., Huston, Wright, Alvarez, Truglio, Fitch, & Piemyat, 1997; Potter, 1986; Pouliot & Cowen, 2007). Numerous theories have been proposed to explain this phenomenon in the consumption of entertaining media, such as "suspension of disbelief" or "actively create belief" (Worth, 2004, p. 447). Pouliot and Cowen (2007) questioned "does perceived realism really matter in media effects?" and found perceived realism was not a compelling factor influencing viewers' memory of and emotional reactions toward entertainment media.

Also, another possibility is that the measure of perceived realism used in the present study did not fully correspond to the shows and the characters. The concept of perceived realism is multifaceted and it has not been measured and tested consistently in the field of media effects. For instance, Hall (2003) suggests that the construct of perceived realism includes

plausibility, typicality, factuality, narrative consistency, and production quality. For Busselle and Bilandzic (2008), the dimensions of perceived realism include external realism (match with external reality) and narrative realism (coherence with a story). Each individual dimension could result in different effects and the magnitudes of the effects would be varied by different types of media content. The finding that perceived realism had no effects on enjoyment and the perception of Trump's leadership corresponds to the notion of the need to further conceptualize the construct of perceived realism (Busselle & Greenberg, 2000; Peter & Valkenburg, 2010; Potter, 1988).

It is worth noting that compared to the effect sizes and path, political leaning was the strongest factor affecting the perceptions of Trump's charismatic leadership and voting intention. It is not surprising that political leaning has a strong and direct effect given political studies that show party predisposition as an influential factor in evaluations of U.S. presidents (Newman & Gronke, 2009). And, increased American political party polarization further polarizes views of the president (Newman & Gronke, 2009). This situation supports why values of voting intention ($M = 2.64$, Mode = 1) and charismatic leadership ($M = 3.16$, Mode = 1) obtained in this study were low. The responses collected in this study were more liberal ($M = 3.16$, Mode = 5). The more liberal the political leaning, the lower the evaluation of Trump's charismatic leadership and the less likely viewers would vote for him. Thus, based on the effect sizes, it is fair to say that entertainment experiences of *The Apprentice* series were not necessarily a major force directly contributing to Trump's win, but an additional boost for him to establish his public persona.

The findings presented here are novel. It is increasingly common for political figures to use entertainment media for promotion (Serazio, 2018). Previous studies on this phenomenon primarily investigated the relationships between exposure and learning political knowledge, impressions about the political figures, and political engagement (e.g. Hollendar, 2005; Prior, 2005). The core of entertainment media viewing experiences – enjoyment and relevant factors – has received less attention. This study contributes to the body of knowledge about entertainment media and political

communication that suggests positive viewing experiences including both hedonic and eudaimonic experiences are a key component to initiate effects.

Practical Implications

Findings of media enjoyment influencing perceptions of presidential leadership and voting intention support inquiry about how entertainment content impacts civic attitudes and actions. Turner (2006) notes how cultural influences of reality TV's behaviors and identity can affect society, though these effects are not factored into the traditional success measures of commercial viability. Reality TV programs that gain ratings will continue to air, and enjoyment is central to their success. Researchers have asked why citizens focused on celebrity culture, including reality TV, engage less in civic and political matters (Couldry & Markham, 2007). Or, if reality TV broadly does not turn viewers away from democracy issues but instead translates sociopolitical currents with ways to help citizens navigate them (Oullette, 2010). These different perspectives could be at work in this study.

The *Apprentice* audience in these findings experienced meaningful content in watching the shows, which led to feeling enjoyment. In turn, viewers developed perceptions of Trump's charismatic leadership as a politician, which made them prefer him as a presidential candidate. Practically, per Serazio's (2018) work, these approaches of using entertainment and other media to reach and compel citizens in new ways in popular culture may be employed for future political campaign strategies because of beliefs, and evidence in studies like this one, that they work. This study shows that more enjoyment from compelling content can lead to attitudes that a reality TV star persona is a charismatic leader for U.S. president. Charisma leadership is an evident influencer of intentions at the ballot box (Williams, Pillai, Lowe, Jung, & Herst, 2009; Jacquart & Antonakis, 2015) and these findings show how that leadership can be conveyed for a celebrity that crosses over from reality TV to real life.

Trump as entertainer provided extended compelling content from his show to the campaign trail as his "comedic media appearances over the course of the Republican primary season built momentum in a celebrity and

mediatized culture” (Hall et al., 2016, p. 72). These findings show that program enjoyment has societal implications for viewers. Beyond being entertained, they may be influenced toward making important decisions about political leaders.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations are evident in this study. The survey was administered to a convenience sample, and participants were not as diverse as the U.S. population. Self-reports were used for participants to identify the degree to which they were exposed to *The Apprentice* series. The shows had run for more than a decade. Participants may have viewed the series at different time periods and with varying memories for recall, which could impact reports. Future work could evaluate other viewer factors that may influence cultivation effects.

Other aspects of enjoyment may be further analyzed in future studies related to motivating factors in reality TV show consumption. For connections to political views and actions, self-concepts of participants in terms of perceptions of charismatic leadership and outcomes of those perceptions could be studied. Participants may be more likely to connect qualities of charismatic leaders, and respond with attitudes or behaviors related to leadership perceptions, based on personality or individual traits.

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探討《誰是接班人》的收視愉悅感 對於支持川普 2016 總統大選的影響

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摘要

本研究探討觀眾對《誰是接班人》和《名人接班人》的收視如何影響他們對川普的評價以及在 2016 年美國總統大選的投票意向。本文共收集 537 份有效問卷，包括節目的收視者和非收視者。結果顯示，收視者和非收視者對川普的領袖魅力（charismatic leadership）評價及其投票意願並沒有差別。以路徑分析進一步對收視者分析發現，收視者對節目所產生的情感傾向（affective dispositions）和意義性的認同可增進收視的愉悅感，且對川普的領袖魅力產生正面的影響，進而影響投票意向。相對的，收視量（exposure）和對於節目真實性程度的感知（perceived realism）這兩項因素並沒有影響效果。本文也討論了這些效果對娛樂媒體和文化的影響。

關鍵詞：實境節目、愉悅、情感傾向、真實性感知、媒體效果