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Regulatory Focus Theory and Reactions to Anti-Egalitarian Humor

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Regulatory Focus Theory and Reactions to Anti-Egalitarian Humor
An Honors Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Psychology
Bates College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
By
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Abstract

Regulatory focus theory examines the ways people seek pleasure and avoid pain by proposing two different styles: promotion focused (eager to make positive things happen) and prevention focused (vigilant in avoiding negative situations). Studies have shown that high regulatory fit, when a person's actions or experiences match their regulatory focus orientation, increases a person's enjoyment of an action. The current study examines the role one's regulatory focus and the framing of egalitarianism (positively or negatively) play in reactions to anti-egalitarian humor. It was hypothesized that those experiencing regulatory fit would react more negatively to anti-egalitarian humor. To investigate this hypothesis, two studies were conducted in which participants' regulatory focus was primed with a regulatory focus priming task after which they were asked to complete a survey and rate their reactions to different videos, including a public service announcement framing egalitarianism positively or negatively and two anti-egalitarian jokes. While results from Study 1 did not support the regulatory fit hypothesis, results from Study 2 did. A significant effect was found for promotion focused participants where participants who viewed the positive PSA reacted more negatively to the anti-egalitarian humor than those who viewed the negative PSA. By contrast, there was a nonsignificant trend in the prevention focused group in the opposite direction so that participants reacted more negatively to the humor after seeing the negative PSA. Reasons for why the regulatory fit hypothesis was found for Study 2, but not Study 1, and implications of this finding on other fields are discussed.

Chapter 1: General Introduction

“Analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog. Few people are interested and the frog dies of it.”

- E. B. White (Thinkexist.com, 2012)

We experience humor in multiple facets of our lives and encounter it in a variety of media, usually multiple times a day. Defined as the “psychological state characterized by the appraisal that something is funny, the positive emotion of amusement, and the tendency to laugh,” humor has many beneficial social and coping uses (McGraw, Warren, Williams, & Leonard, 2012, p. 1). Dacher Keltner and George A. Bonanno (1997) examined the functionality of humor as it relates to bereavement. They explained that laughter helps us distance ourselves from distress and encourages the promise of happiness. This can be classified as a “laughter-as-dissociation hypothesis,” which means that when one distances themselves from an upsetting instance, they laugh to positively reframe what had previously been upsetting (Keltner & Bonanno). Keltner and Bonanno also explained how laughter helps to enhance social relationships by giving positive feedback to others’ actions and sharing in the common contagious experience. However, as we all know from personal experience, using humor does not guarantee a positive outcome. Simply stated, jokes do not always go over well. When told in inappropriate situations, jokes can be considered offensive and crude and raise a negative reaction instead of laughter. Those jokes that are offensive are often referred to as “politically incorrect” and can often be seen as insensitive and taboo. However, the appeal of comedians and television shows that use crude and potentially offensive humor demonstrates that what we will call “anti-egalitarian” humor (defined as humor that is

offensive and targets a specific group) can often be perceived as humorous. The popularity of *Family Guy*, despite its offensive and oftentimes cringe-worthy humor, is just one testament to this. For example, one memorable joke made on *Family Guy* is about Helen Keller. This joke begins with a character named Stewie saying that another character's date will be "more pathetic than that game of Marco Polo I played with Helen Keller" (TV Fanatic, n.d.). It then cuts to the swimming pool where Stewie, wearing water wings, swims around in circles and repeatedly asks, "Marco?" for approximately 17 seconds while Helen Keller stands about a foot away from Stewie wide eyed and motionless. Another *Family Guy* joke is about Michael J. Fox and Parkinson's disease. This joke begins with Peter (the father figure) declaring, "I've screwed up worse than Disney did when they cast Michael J. Fox in that Zorro remake" (Family Guy Wikia, n.d.). It then cuts to the Zorro remake where two men stand talking. One man says, "who was that masked man who saved us?" The other replies, "I don't know. But he left his insignia." The focus then shifts to the wall where there is a large scribble written in shaky handwriting. Though *Family Guy* is a popular show, sometimes jokes like these fail to receive positive reactions and instead receive overwhelmingly negative reactions. For example, in the 2013 Academy Awards, host Seth MacFarlane (the creator of *Family Guy*) performed a bit called "We Saw Your Boobs." This consisted of MacFarlane singing about all of the actresses present whose breasts were shown in movies. The musical number was met with scores of criticism, especially from women (Weisman, 2013). Another example of when anti-egalitarian humor was not perceived as funny is Victoria Wright. Wright, who has a facial disfigurement, wrote an article explaining how she was offended by comedians' (such as Ricky Gervais) jokes about her appearance

(Wright, 2010). She explained that even though she “would describe [her] sense of humour as dark, and liberal,” she still felt hurt by Gervais’ joke five years later (Wright). So, clearly anti-egalitarian humor sometimes elicits positive reactions, while at other times it elicits negative ones. What are the conditions under which people respond positively and negatively to “anti-egalitarian” humor?

Theories of Humor

Prominent Past Theories. To begin discussing what affects people’s responses to anti-egalitarian humor, we must first ask the broader question, what makes something funny? Popular theories of humor over the years include superiority theories, incongruity theories, psychoanalytic theories and cognitive theories. Let us first discuss superiority theories. Superiority theories of humor are based on the idea that humor derives from disparaging the members in the “lower” levels of society in a way that makes us feel superior (Berger, 1987). Hobbes and Aristotle both expressed this idea stating, respectively, that comedy is “an imitation of men worse than average” and “the passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly” (Berger, p. 7). In other words, humor always has a social or cultural component, and always consists of some sort of juxtaposition between individuals or groups (Berger).

Incongruity theories have traditionally been the most widely endorsed theories of humor (Berger, 1987). These theories, predictably, dictate that humor consists of an incongruity, “some kind of difference between what one expects and what one gets”

(Berger, p. 8). Immanuel Kant was a proponent of this idea and stated that “laughter is an affectation arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing” (Berger, p. 8). Jokes are manifestations of this theory due to the surprise element of the punch line and the incongruity it creates.

Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, one of the original and most important, states that, though humor is a complex, nuanced occurrence, one characteristic that can be associated with it is that it aids disguised aggression (Berger, 1987). In Freudian terminology, this is done by providing an outlet for the id, but concealing it as humor and thus avoiding a conflict with the superego (Berger). Cognitive theories of humor focus on how the brain perceives and understands information, concluding that it is the paradoxical nature of instances that makes them humorous (Berger). These theories say that humor involves “the resolution of logical paradoxes and other logical problems” (Berger, p.10).

Benign Violation Theory. More recent explanations of what makes things funny (including jokes, irony, tickling, etc.) have turned to benign violation theory. The belief that violations lead to humor goes back centuries to Aristotle (McGraw & Warren, 2010). A violation can occur in many ways (e.g., moral violations, language violations, and physical violations), so long as the situation goes against what “ought” to happen (McGraw & Warren). However, it is not enough for something to simply be a violation. The idea that there must be some sort of safety in the situation has also been prevalent in humor studies over the past few decades (Apter, 1982; Gervais & Wilson, 2005; Ramachandran, 1998; Rothbart, 1973). For example, Mary K. Rothbart (1973), in reviewing literature on laughter in children, explained the arousal-safety model of laughter. This model says that there is an arousal or tension aspect that occurs before the

laughter (Rothbart). If the arousal level is too high, one may react negatively (Rothbart). However, if one judges the situation to be safe, laughter can ensue (Rothbart). Other theories of humor have suggested an “interpretive process labeled simultaneity, bisociation, synergy, or incongruity” (McGraw & Warren, p.1142). In other words, a person must simultaneously interpret the situation in two antithetical ways. Benign violation theory puts these three previous theories together to explain humor as a situation that is simultaneously perceived as being benign and as being a violation (McGraw & Warren).

A violation can be benign in three different ways. McGraw and Warren (2010) use the following joke to explain:

A man goes to the supermarket once a week and buys a dead chicken. But before cooking the chicken, he has sexual intercourse with it. Then he cooks the chicken and eats it.

One way in which this violation can be benign is if there are two competing norms that apply to the situation and one norm says the violation is wrong, while the other norm says it is acceptable. For example, in this situation, the violation can be considered benign because, while it violates one norm (bestiality is wrong), another norm says it is acceptable (actions are wrong if someone is harmed, but no one in this case is harmed). Second, the violated norm may not be a norm that people are generally very devoted to, as is likely true in the joke above. The third way a violated norm can be labeled as benign is if it is perceived as psychologically distant. Psychological distance is how one feels either close to or far away from something. The four widely acknowledged types of psychological distance are spatial, social, temporal, and hypotheticality (McGraw et al., 2012). One can feel psychologically distant from something in spatial terms if the object

or event is physically far away (e.g., four miles instead of one city block). Social psychological distance comes from familiarity, so one may feel more psychologically distant from an acquaintance than a close family member. One may feel psychologically distant from something in temporal terms if there is more time between it and the person (e.g., a 30 year-old would experience more psychological distance from high school than from their 25th birthday). An example of this as it relates to humor can be seen in a joke made by Gilbert Gottfried when the Friars Club roasted Hugh Hefner weeks after 9/11. Gottfried joked that he had a flight into New York from California, but he couldn't "get a direct flight—they said they have to stop at the Empire State Building first." (Holt, 2011). This joke was met with negative reactions on behalf of the audience. Illustrating the fact that this was too temporally close to the event, one audience member yelled, "too soon!" (Holt). Hypotheticality comes from the credibility of an event. One would feel more psychologically distant from a fictional event than one that is based in fact. If one of these three situations holds (competing norms, unimportant norms, or psychological distance) and the violation is therefore perceived as benign, the situation should be perceived as humorous. In the case of the chicken joke, the situation is hypothetical, and thus feels psychologically distant.

However, the role that psychological distance plays in humor is not so straightforward as it may seem. In fact, there occurs a paradoxical effect in which some jokes are perceived as more amusing when they are psychologically distant, whereas others are perceived as more amusing when there is less psychological distance (McGraw et al., 2012). This effect stems from the benign aspect of the benign violation theory, and the role that psychological distance has in the perception of whether the violation is

benign or not. It seems logical that if a situation is perceived as either too threatening or not threatening enough it will not be perceived as humorous (McGraw & Warren, 2010). So, how does psychological distance affect this? Research has shown that as psychological distance increases, the threat level of the violation decreases and as psychological distance decreases, the threat level of the violation increases (McGraw & Warren). Therefore, more aversive stimuli (i.e., threats) are perceived as funnier if one is more psychologically distant from the situation, but may be perceived as too threatening when viewed from a close psychological distance (e.g., Gottfried's 9/11 joke) (McGraw & Warren). Conversely, less aversive stimuli (i.e., mishaps) are perceived as more humorous if there is less psychological distance because one needs to be psychologically closer to the mishap to perceive it as a violation (McGraw & Warren). Therefore, when one has more psychological distance from a mishap, the event may be so benign that it might not be perceived as a violation at all (McGraw et al.). In other words, psychological distance influences how threatening one believes a violation to be and whether they perceive it to be benign or not (McGraw & Warren). This effect has been tested and held true across the four categories of psychological distance: spatial, temporal, social, and hypotheticality (McGraw & Warren).

Offensive Humor

If we follow benign violation theory, offensive humor should generally be less funny to the group that the joke targets, than to someone outside the targeted population, because the targeted group would experience the violation of the norm as less distant and, therefore, more threatening (i.e., less benign). The disposition theory of humor addresses this by explaining that when positive disposition toward those that the joke offends

increases, the less it will be enjoyed (Moore, Griffiths & Payne, 1987). If one has positive thoughts regarding women, they are likely to disapprove of sexist jokes and not find them funny. In keeping with this, it is theorized that group membership is not the only, or even the most important, factor that affects one's reactions to jokes. Rather, one's "attitudinal disposition" may be a better indicator of whether someone will find an anti-egalitarian joke funny (Moore et al.). One study found that both men and women with traditional views on women's roles preferred sexist jokes to nonsexist jokes more than those with less traditional views (Moore et al.). This reflects the finding that attitudinal disposition matters more than group membership because those with traditional views on women's roles presumably regard women less favorably than those with less traditional views and enjoyed sexist jokes more, regardless of their sex and affiliation with the targeted group.

Additional research on sexist jokes confirms the importance of attitudinal disposition. In a study about dumb blonde jokes, it was found that participants with higher hostile sexism found the jokes more amusing than others (Greenwood & Isbell, 2002). However, the study also demonstrated that group membership does play a role. It was found that male participants with high benevolent sexism perceived jokes as significantly more amusing and less offensive than both women who were also high in benevolent sexism and men with low benevolent sexism did (Greenwood & Isbell). In contrast, later research found no relationship between benevolent sexism and likelihood to repeat the joke (Thomas & Esses, 2004). In this study, males were divided into groups based on measurements of sexism (modern sexism, ambivalent sexism, right-wing authoritarianism) and it was found that those with higher hostile sexism were more likely to say they would repeat the sexist joke than those with lower hostile sexism (Thomas &

Esses). However, perceived funniness of the joke was found to be a mediator of this relationship.

Though there has been research done on some causes of why anti-egalitarian humor is perceived as funny in some circumstances, but not in others, there are still other factors that may play a role that have not been researched. Regulatory focus theory can help us examine how people's outlooks may be related to whether they perceive anti-egalitarian jokes as funny or not. Perhaps one's approach, either promotion or prevention, plays a role in how they react to controversial humor. Additionally, can moral ideals that would generally categorize anti-egalitarian jokes as inappropriate, offensive, and not funny be framed in different ways to change how people react to these types of jokes? And how would these two factors interact to influence people's perceptions of anti-egalitarian jokes as humorous?

Regulatory Focus Theory

The idea that people naturally approach pleasure and avoid pain is widely accepted. Regulatory focus theory examines the different ways in which people do this by proposing two different approaches: promotion focus and prevention focus (Higgins, 1997). Promotion focused people are eager to make positive things happen. On the other hand, prevention focused people are concerned about threats and vigilant to detect them and ward them off. Promotion focused people are concerned about achieving hopes, wishes, and aspirations - in other words ideals (Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002). They will seek to approach matches (situations similar to the final result they aspire to), whereas prevention focused people will seek to avoid mismatches (situations that are

different from the final result they aspire to) (Higgins). Prevention focused people are more concerned about safety, protection, responsibility, and think more in terms of what they ought to do (Lockwood et al.). Though one's regulatory focus can vary in different situations, everyone has a general default regulatory focus (Lockwood et al.). In other words, regulatory focus is continuous, and though a person's level fluctuates, there is an average focus that can be said to be a characteristic of the person.

Research regarding regulatory focus and role models has found that people are more motivated by role models who fit their regulatory concerns (Lockwood et al., 2002). Promotion focused people are inspired by positive models who put more emphasis on achieving success (Lockwood et al.). Prevention focused people are fittingly more motivated by role models who put the emphasis on avoiding failure (Lockwood et al.). Lockwood et al. demonstrated these phenomena in three studies. In Study 1, Lockwood et al. primed participants' regulatory focus by having them fill out a questionnaire that asked them to either "think about a positive academic outcome that you might want to achieve" and come up with possible strategies "to successfully promote this outcome" (promotion focused) or to "think about a negative academic outcome that you might want to avoid" and come up with possible strategies "to successfully prevent this outcome" (prevention focused) (Lockwood et al., p. 856). Participants then read a paragraph that was presented as having been written by a previous student and either depicted the student as a positive or negative role model. Participants then answered questions where they rated their own motivation to complete tasks. Lockwood et al. found that participants were only motivated by role models who fit their regulatory focus. In other words, participants primed to be promotion focused were only motivated by positive role

models, and participants primed to be prevention focused were only motivated by negative role models.

In Study 2, Lockwood et al. (2002) primed participants to be promotion or prevention focused by giving them a word categorization task that used words connected to promotion or prevention. Participants then read about a positive, negative, or no role model as in Study 1 and were asked to rate their motivation. Again, Lockwood et al. found that when participants' regulatory focus matched the condition of the role model, they were more motivated. This time, results also showed that participants in incongruent conditions (i.e., whose regulatory focus did not match the condition of their role model), participants' motivation decreased.

In Study 3, Lockwood et al. (2002) assessed participants' regulatory focus using the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire rather than priming regulatory focus. They then asked participants to recall a time when they had been motivated by another person's success or failure. Participants were instructed to write about this experience. After participants' written responses were coded, results showed that participants who were more promotion focused recalled positive role models more often while prevention focused participants were more likely to recall negative role models (Lockwood et al.). Not only do these results indicate that role models congruent with people's regulatory focus leave a more lasting impression, but these findings also suggest that people may actually seek out role models who fit their regulatory focus (Lockwood et al.).

In keeping with this finding that people remember, and presumably value, role models more when their regulatory focus fits the role model's motivational style,

research has found that people enjoy actions more when the action fits their regulatory focus. Freitas and Higgins (2002) conducted three studies in which they investigated the relationship between participants' regulatory focus and the character of their actions (categorized as either eager or vigilant). In Study 1, Freitas and Higgins manipulated participants' regulatory focus. This was done by giving participants a brief writing task, in which they were asked to write about how their "hopes and aspirations" (promotion) or "duties and obligations" (prevention) had changed (Freitas & Higgins, p. 2). Participants then rated their anticipated enjoyment of strategies provided by the experimenters. In Study 2, Freitas and Higgins manipulated regulatory focus by administering an experimental questionnaire, in which participants were asked to think about a "hope or an aspiration" or a "duty or an obligation." Participants were then asked to create either an "eagerness-related" or a "vigilance-related" strategy. Following the creation of such a strategy, participants rated their anticipated enjoyment of the strategy plan. Results showed that regulatory fit had an effect on participants' reports of how much they would enjoy the actions. In both studies there was a significant interaction between the regulatory focus priming and the strategy type. In Study 1, participants who were primed to think of hopes and aspirations (promotion focus) rated eagerness strategies as more enjoyable than vigilance strategies. There was no significant difference in the participants who received the prevention priming. However, the trend was in the direction of the hypothesis, so that those primed to think of duties and obligations (prevention focus) rated enjoyment of vigilance strategies somewhat higher than those rating eagerness strategies. Similarly, in Study 2, the results showed that regulatory focus served as a moderator for the effect that strategy type had on participants' enjoyment ratings. Those

who were asked to think about hopes and aspirations (promotion) said they would enjoy eagerness-related strategies more whereas those asked to think about duties and obligations (prevention) said they would enjoy vigilance-related strategies more.

Study 3 focused not on participants' anticipated enjoyment of strategies, but on their actual engagement in them. The same priming task as Study 1 was used. Participants were asked to complete a task either framed in eagerness ("maximizing helpful elements") or vigilance ("eliminating harmful elements") terms. Participants then answered questions assessing their enjoyment of the task, how well they thought they had done, and their willingness to do the task again. It was found that participants who were primed with prevention focus said the vigilance task was more enjoyable than participants who did the eagerness task. No significant effect was found for the promotion prime on ratings of enjoyment, though those in this condition tended to enjoy the eagerness task more. The same results were found for perceived success on the task and for the willingness of participants to repeat the task.

Freitas and Higgins's (2002) finding that regulatory fit increases a person's enjoyment of an action and Lockwood et al.'s (2002) finding that people are more motivated by role models who fit their regulatory focus have many interesting implications. For example, what if we apply this theory to how people perceive anti-egalitarian humor? Will priming a person's regulatory focus, and then presenting the concept of egalitarianism in either a positive (congruent with promotion focus) or negative manner (congruent with prevention focus) affect the way that people react to anti-egalitarian jokes in keeping with Freitas and Higgins' and Lockwood et al.'s findings? And what would this entail? Would people in a condition where regulatory fit is

increased (either promotion focused and positive framing of egalitarianism or prevention focused and negative framing of egalitarianism) find the anti-egalitarian joke more amusing? Or will this regulatory fit condition increase people's sense of morality and cause them to find anti-egalitarian jokes more threatening and therefore less funny?

The potential to frame egalitarianism in positive and negative ways has been established by studies such as Plant, Devine, and Peruche's (2010) examination of interracial interactions. Plant et al. investigated this topic in terms of two scales they created to assess people's drive to treat others equally: External Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice (EMS) and Internal Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice Scale (IMS). Plant et al. predicted that internal motivation (i.e., personal) was of most importance when participants were more focused on positive approaches to egalitarianism. On the other hand, external motivation (i.e., normative) indicated a more important goal to avoid appearing prejudiced. Results from both Study 1 and Study 2 supported this hypothesis and showed that white participants who were high on the IMS predicted that they would "pursue goals and strategies" more than participants who were low on the IMS (Plant et al., p. 1143). On the other hand, in keeping with Plant et al.'s predictions, participants who scored high on the EMS predicted that they would "focus on avoiding prejudice" in an interracial interaction more than those who were low on the EMS (Plant et al., p. 1143). In Study 3, Plant et al. found that participants' predicted behaviors were consistent with their actual behaviors when participants engaged in an interracial interaction. Most important to the current study, Plant et al.'s study indicates that egalitarianism can be framed in both positive and negative ways.

Current Study

This study seeks to look at the role one's regulatory focus and the framing of egalitarianism play in reactions to anti-egalitarian humor. By looking at the interaction of these two factors, I will look at the role that regulatory fit plays in one's enjoyment of anti-egalitarian humor. This will be done by manipulating participants' regulatory focus through the priming technique used in Freitas and Higgins (2002) and framing egalitarianism in positive and negative ways. Participants' reactions to anti-egalitarian jokes will be measured and analyzed in the context of regulatory fit. I predict that when participants' manipulated regulatory focus is congruent with the framing of egalitarianism (i.e. with increased regulatory fit), participants will be more attentive and committed to the ideal of equality, and therefore find anti-egalitarian jokes less funny and more offensive and inappropriate, than participants in conditions where their regulatory focus is not congruent with the framing of egalitarianism (i.e. decreased regulatory fit).

Chapter 2: Study 1

Introduction

In order to test the hypothesis that fit between regulatory focus and the way that equality is framed would decrease the extent to which one thinks an anti-egalitarian joke is funny and increase one's ratings of anti-egalitarian jokes as inappropriate and offensive, regulatory focus was operationalized. The manipulation of participants' regulatory focus was based on a method used by Freitas and Higgins (2002). Freitas and Higgins primed participants' regulatory focus by having participants do a writing task in which participants wrote an essay "describing how their personal standards (described as either ideals or oughts) had changed as they had matured" (Freitas & Higgins, p. 2). The promotion focused, "ideal," prime was phrased, "describe how your hopes and aspirations are different now from when you were growing up," while the prevention focused, "ought," prime used the words "duties and obligations" in place of "hopes and aspirations" (Freitas & Higgins, p. 2). This method was used in the current study, and participants were given a writing task that either primed them to be promotion focused or prevention focused. These prompts employed the wording of Freitas and Higgins.

In order to manipulate the framing of egalitarianism, two versions of a public service announcement were created. These PSAs framed equality either in accordance with a promotion focus (positive framing), or in accordance with a prevention focus (negative framing). The positive framing generally stated that we should "create a sense of equality" while the negative framing stated that we should "avoid creating any sense of inequality." It was hypothesized that participants in conditions with corresponding

regulatory focus primes and equality framings would react more strongly to the anti-egalitarian jokes and therefore rate them as less funny and more inappropriate and offensive.

Method

Participants. Participants consisted of 100 undergraduate students at Bates College.¹ Participants were recruited via campus-wide emails and Psychology classes offering credit. Participants not eligible to receive course credit were awarded \$5 upon completion of the study. Participants consisted of 73 females and 27 males. This included 46 first years, 18 sophomores, 10 juniors, and 25 seniors. (One participant did not report her class year.) A total of 69 participants identified themselves as White/European-American, 11 identified as Black/African-American, 6 identified themselves as Asian/Asian-American, 6 identified as Latino/Latina/Hispanic, 5 identified as Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Racial, and 2 identified as Other. (One participant did not report ethnicity.)

Materials. The materials used in this study included a writing prompt distributed to participants upon completing the informed consent form. The purpose of the prompt was to manipulate participants' regulatory focus, and so there were two versions. The first version, intended to prime participants to be promotion focused read, "Please take the next 7 minutes to describe how your hopes and aspirations are different now from when you were growing up. When you have finished please wait for the instructor to come over." The second version, intended to prime participants to be prevention focused,

¹ Promotion/positive frame condition (n=27), promotion/negative frame condition (n=23), prevention/positive frame condition (n=23), prevention/negative frame condition (n=28).

read, "Please take the next 7 minutes to describe how your duties and obligations are different now from when you were growing up. When you have finished please wait for the instructor to come over."

Immediately after finishing this task, participants completed an online survey with the following instructions:

This survey consists of 7 video segments. Each segment contains a video consisting of 2-3 clips. Please watch the ENTIRE video before answering the questions that follow. Please do not move on to the next page until you have answered all of the questions.

Each page consisted of a video segment ranging from about 50 seconds to 3 minutes in length and consisting of two or three clips. There were seven video segments as described in Table 1.

Table 1. Storyboard for Study 1.

Segment	Description
Block 1: Drama	Clips from <i>Grey's Anatomy</i> , <i>The West Wing</i> , and <i>The Sopranos</i>
Block 2: Commercial A	Commercial for Geico and the PSA on equality that was created (described in more detail below).
Block 3: News	News stories on riots in Egypt, a meteor in California, and the fall of the Berlin Wall.
Block 4: Commercial B	Commercials for 1-800 Contacts and the iPod.
Block 5: Comedy	Stand-up routines by Louis CK, Ellen DeGeneres, and Jimmy Carr (described in more detail below).
Block 6: Commercial C	Commercials for Burger King and for Gap.
Block 7: Sports	Clips from basketball, soccer, and football games.

Below each video block was a series of questions which participants were instructed to answer on 11-point rating scales. For example, one question read, “did you find the speech in the 2nd clip (*The West Wing*) inspirational?” Participants answered on the 11-point rating scale, ranging from 0 (*Not At All Inspirational*) to 10 (*Extremely Inspirational*). The anti-egalitarian humor clips in the comedy section were the critical clips. The first was Louis CK on laughing at gays and the second was Jimmy Carr on abortions. The transcript of the Louis CK bit reads as follows:

The only thing that bums me out though is that you're not supposed to laugh at gay people when they're funny, because sometimes they just are, they're funny. Like, I lived in New York for a lot of my life and in my neighborhood everybody was gay. And you know, some guys are just a guy

walking down the street, but some gay guys are a guy in little shorts and a half shirt, and, you know, combat boots spray painted green ... a whistle, and he's standing there on the corner going, '[*high pitched*] Hello! It's fucking hot outside!' That's not a stereotype. Those guys fucking exist by the thousands. And when I see them, I laugh really loud, I just do. People are like, 'Don't laugh at him because he's gay.' No I'm not! I'm laughing 'cause he's fucking weird and silly! He's hilarious. How am I supposed to react? '[*high pitched*] Hello!' '[*deep voice*] Oh hello, hello, yes. Seriousness ... yes.' It's stupid.

The transcript of the Jimmy Carr bit reads:

A lot of people support a woman's right to choose, but I think, if I'm paying for it.... I'm joking I'd never pay. Doesn't cost anything to fall down the stairs does it? Some of these girls, I swear, they think I'm made of coat hangers.

These two clips were separated by a clip of Ellen DeGeneres on airplanes which was assumed to be inoffensive. In this clip, Ellen comments on how people sitting next to each other on airplanes are always very friendly and willing to make small talk. She then imitates how, as soon as the plane lands, everyone elbows and pushes each other out of the way to get their bags out of the plane. Three questions were asked about both the Louis CK and Jimmy Carr clips in order to measure participants' reactions to the anti-egalitarian humor and were analyzed in the results section. These questions took the format of the above example and asked, in order, how "funny," "offensive," and "inappropriate" participants found the clip to be. The rest of the questions in the survey were fillers. A complete list of the clips used can be found in Appendix A, and the questions asked after each video segment can be found in Appendix B.

In order to frame egalitarianism either positively or negatively (and therefore corresponding with either a promotion or prevention regulatory focus, respectively) a public service announcement was included in Commercial Section 2. There were two

different versions of the survey, one in which the PSA framed egalitarianism positively, and one in which egalitarianism was framed negatively. In all other aspects, the surveys were identical. The positive framing of egalitarianism stated, “it is important that in society we create a sense of equality” while in the negative framing it was stated, “it is important that in society we avoid creating any sense of inequality.” The PSAs were about 30 seconds long and showed people walking on a sidewalk in New York City as the person holding the camera walks down the street. The content of the two PSAs had the same structure, while referring to egalitarianism in the distinct ways exemplified above. Their structure and content was based on the scripts found at <http://simplycontentinc.blogspot.com/2012/01/psa-script.html>. Complete scripts for both the positive and negative PSAs can be found in Appendix C.

After the final video segment, a memory check item was included which asked, “During one of the commercial segments, you might remember that you saw a public service announcement. This was a clip that did not advertise a product, but rather expressed an idea. What was the idea presented in the PSA? (Please be as specific as possible.)” Following this page, demographics were collected. Finally, a suspicion check was included which asked, “Did any aspects of this study seem strange, unusual, or suspicious? If so, please briefly explain.” and “In your own words, what do you understand the purpose of the study to be?”

Procedure. Upon arrival participants were told that this experiment was examining “personality and media, and the way that different personalities reacted to the media we experience in everyday life, such as television, magazines, billboards, etc.” Participants then read and signed the consent form. Alternating participants, the

promotion or prevention writing assignments were distributed. Participants were given seven minutes to complete the writing assignment. Upon completion, writing assignments were collected by the experimenter. Once the experimenter entered participants' participation number into the online survey, participants were permitted to begin. Participants were randomly assigned to the positive or negative framing of egalitarian condition. Participants took the online survey and were thanked, debriefed, and allowed to leave when finished.

Pretest

In order to identify jokes to be used as the anti-egalitarian jokes, a pretest was conducted. The pretest consisted of a sample of Bates students who were presented with many anti-egalitarian jokes and then evaluated how humorous they found them. The pretest was necessary to determine what kind of humor should be used with the Bates population. This was done in order to avoid a floor effect that might arise from Bates students finding all of the jokes too offensive and not at all funny because of the liberal student body. This pretest was an online survey that consisted of 20 video clips (about 1 minute or less). All of these clips were jokes, however a few filler (i.e., not anti-egalitarian) clips were also included. Each clip in the survey was followed by five questions in the following order: "How funny was this clip?" "How offensive was this clip?" "How inappropriate was this clip?" "To what extent did you feel this clip targeted a well-defined group?" and "If it does, which group?" Participants responded to the first four questions on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (*Extremely _____*) to 10 (*Not At All _____*). The fifth question was free response.

The pretest was taken by 13 Bates undergraduates, recruited by word of mouth and e-mail. No demographic information was collected. Descriptive responses were run on participants' responses to all questions for all clips. Data were analyzed and jokes that were both offensive and funny were identified. From those, the Jimmy Carr clip on abortions was chosen because of its ratings, in addition to its length. After reviewing the pretest data, it was decided to include two anti-egalitarian clips. However, only one of the tested clips was assessed as suitable for the main study. Therefore, a clip featuring Louis CK doing stand-up, similar to the Jimmy Carr clip, was added.

Table 2. Ratings of Anti-Egalitarian Clips in Pretest

Clip Title	Funny		Inappropriate		Offensive	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Brendon Burns – Scottish Muslims (0:56) (http://youtu.be/TtqR0FAVCrY)	3.85	2.27	5.38	2.84	5.54	2.37
Family Guy – Disabled Boy (0:20) (http://youtu.be/UWKfsH-DFIY)	2.85	2.48	6.23	2.77	7.15	2.34
30 Rock – Kim Jong Il (0:16) (http://youtu.be/OhohteHuyPM)	6.31	1.70	4.62	2.36	5.23	2.28
Family Guy – Soufflé (0:16) (http://youtu.be/4EsITSxnKwA)	5.23	2.55	3.92	2.63	5.92	1.80
Family Guy – Parkinson’s (0:16) (http://youtu.be/QZ-si9_fwq0)	4.54	2.85	6.23	2.72	7.08	2.33
Jimmy Carr – Abortions (0:32) (http://youtu.be/CwXpJvGvORQ)	4.30	2.81	7.23	2.28	7.08	2.43
Family Guy – Rednecks (0:29) (http://youtu.be/hE_OehRLH3s)	7.23	1.69	4.62	2.47	6.23	2.20
Family Guy – Iraq Lobster (0:27) (http://youtu.be/YZ7PfdKRSNQ)	5.31	2.56	4.00	2.38	5.00	2.35
Monty Python – Dachau (1:13) (http://youtu.be/5VH4c0-p-CY)	5.08	2.53	5.23	3.11	6.31	2.50
Family Guy – Autistic Lady (0:19) (http://youtu.be/PxNuvMEDz8o)	4.54	3.36	8.00	1.53	8.31	1.38
Get Smart – Slave (1:07) (http://youtu.be/ZYG2fZK0e4E)	2.54	1.81	5.62	2.99	5.38	2.84
Family Guy – Speaking Italian (0:43) (http://youtu.be/9JhuOicPFZY)	5.38	2.29	3.62	2.10	5.00	1.63
Family Guy – Tuba (0:15) (http://youtu.be/d0aIqx1McVI)	5.15	3.13	4.77	2.05	5.77	1.83

Note. Rated on Likert-scale from 0 (*Not at All* _____) to 10 (*Extremely* _____)

Results

In total, 103 participants took part in this experiment. One participant's responses had to be discounted because the online survey malfunctioned during his session. Two participants attempted to take the survey twice. The first stopped after watching the first videos and his results on the second attempt were not recorded. The second completed the survey and submitted responses, but their second set of data was identified by handwriting and content analysis on the writing prompt and discounted. Both of their first responses were kept. In the end, 100 survey responses were usable.

The two independent variables were whether participants were primed to be promotion or prevention focused (regulatory focus) and whether participants saw a positively or negatively worded public service announcement (framing of egalitarianism). The dependent variable was participants' evaluations of the anti-egalitarian comedy clips (Louis CK and Jimmy Carr separately).

For purposes of data reduction, participants' "funny" ratings were reverse scored and a new variable was created to represent participants' overall evaluation of the anti-egalitarian humor clips. The variable was created across reactions for each comedian because the funny, inappropriate and offensive ratings were highly correlated for each comedian. As can be seen in Table 3, there were strong correlations for ratings within each comedian (e.g., funny and offensive for Jimmy Carr). This new reaction variable was calculated for both the Louis CK clip and the Jimmy Carr clip and was created by taking the means of the reversed "funny" scores, "inappropriate" scores, and "offensive" scores for the clips. Therefore, higher reaction scores indicated that participants had more

negative reactions to the clips, whereas lower scores indicated a more positive reaction.

These new reaction variables were found to be reliable (Carr: $\alpha = .82$, CK: $\alpha = .76$).

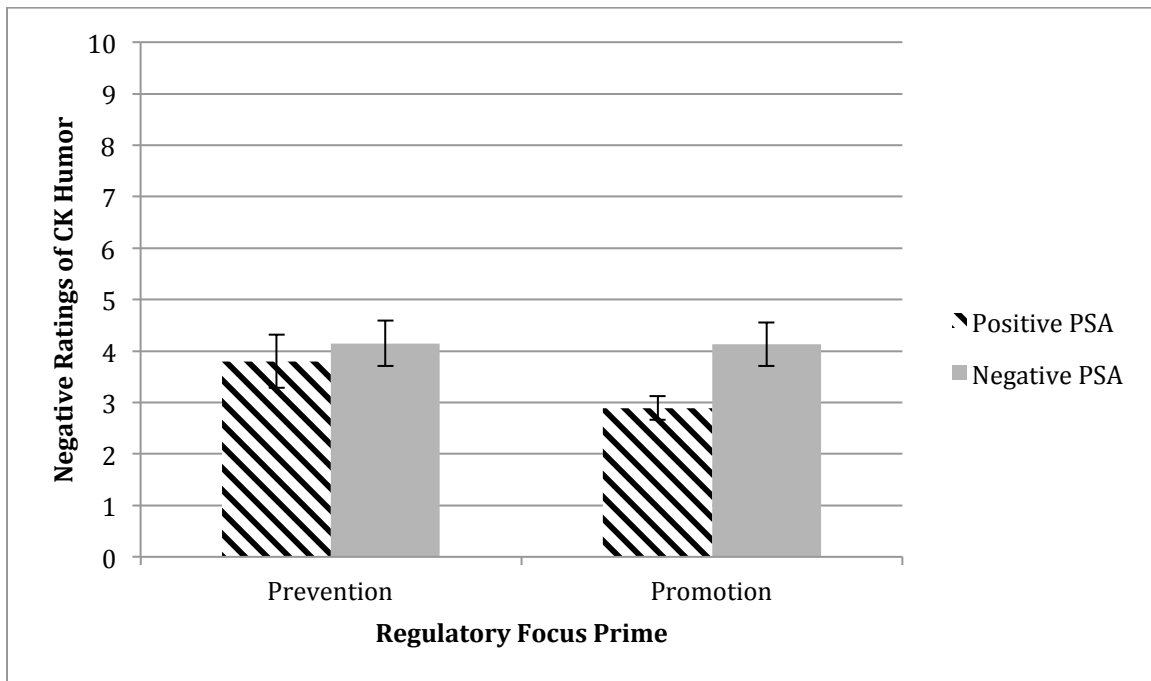
Table 3. Summary of Intercorrelations of Ratings of CK and Carr for Study 1.

Ratings of Comedians	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Funny CK	-					
2. Funny Carr	.22*	-				
3. Inappropriate CK	-.42*	-.32*	-			
4. Inappropriate Carr	-.12	-.47*	.54*	-		
5. Offensive CK	-.45*	-.26*	.71*	.39*	-	
6. Offensive Carr	-.15	-.45*	.52*	.87*	.42*	-

Note. * $p < .05$.

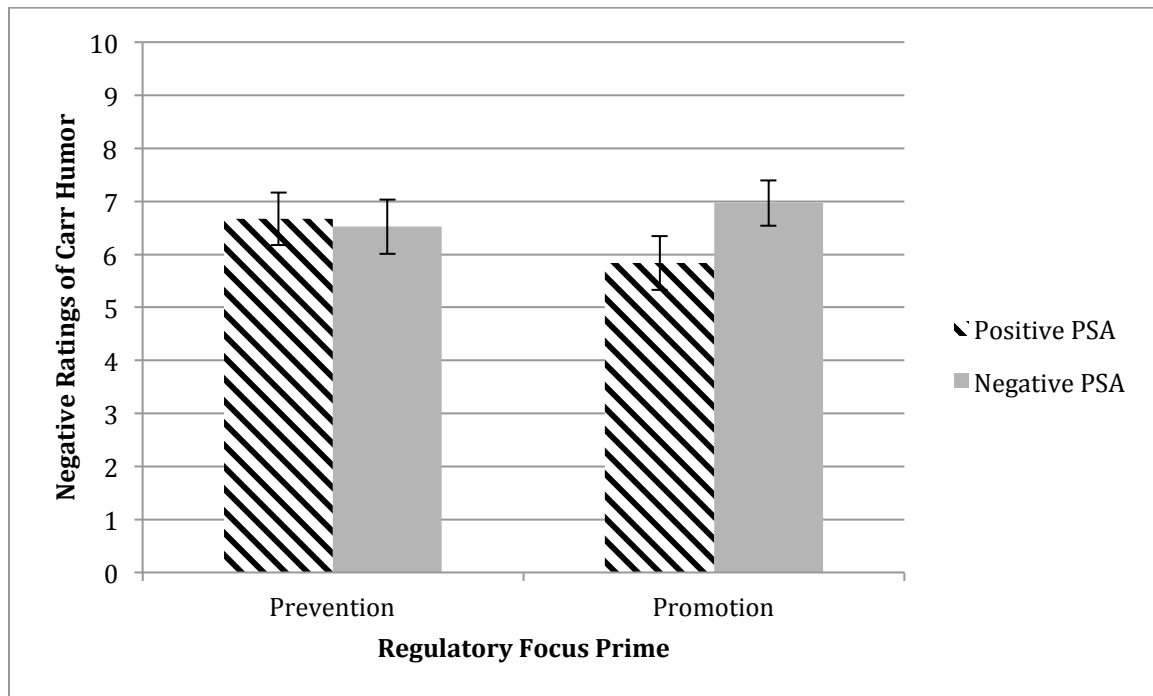
A 2 (Regulatory Focus: promotion, prevention) x 2 (Framing: positive, negative) independent groups ANOVA was run. The main effect for participants' regulatory focus on ratings on the Louis CK clip was nonsignificant, $F(1, 96) = 1.31, p = .26$. The main effect for participants' PSA framing on ratings on the Louis CK clip was marginally significant, $F(1, 96) = 3.79, p < .10$; participants tended to react more unfavorably to CK after the negative PSA than after the positive PSA. Contrary to predictions, there was no significant interaction, $F(1, 96) = 1.18, p = .28$. Indeed, as seen in Figure 1, although the interaction is nonsignificant, participants primed to be promotion focused reacted more negatively after the negative PSA than the positive PSA.

Figure 1. Reactions to CK in Study 1.



The main effect for participants' regulatory focus on ratings on the Jimmy Carr clip was nonsignificant, $F(1, 96) = 0.14, p = .71$. The main effect for participants' PSA framing on ratings on the Jimmy Carr clip was also nonsignificant, $F(1, 96) = 0.98, p = .32$. Again, contrary to predictions, there was no significant interaction, $F(1, 96) = 1.67, p = .28$. As seen in Figure 2, though nonsignificant, participants primed to be promotion focused reacted more negatively after the negative PSA than the positive PSA and participants primed to be prevention focused reacted more negatively after the positive PSA.

Figure 2. Reactions to Carr in Study 1.



Subsequently, an internal analysis was run to provide another test of the regulatory fit hypothesis. A new variable was created to describe participants' memory of the message of the PSA. Participants' responses were coded into three categories: positive recollection ($n = 78$), negative recollection ($n=10$), and other ($n = 12$). Of those who remembered a positive or negative message, all participants assigned to the positive PSA recalled it as positive. However, there were 32 participants in the negatively framed PSA group who recalled a positively worded message when prompted with the surprise memory test at the end of the survey. It was predicted that a regulatory fit effect might be found amongst those remembered seeing the PSA as positive. That is to say, out of the participants who recalled a positively worded message about egalitarianism ($n=78$), those who had the promotion focus prime should have reacted to the anti-egalitarian clips more negatively than those who were in the prevention focused prime. However, contrary to

this hypothesis, no significant difference in ratings was found between those in the promotion focused and prevention focused conditions for Louis CK, $t(76) = 0.65, p = .52$, or for the Jimmy Carr clip, $t(76) = -0.45, p = .66$. Therefore, even when including only members who remembered a positively worded PSA, no regulatory fit effect was found.

Discussion

Results did not indicate any significant effect of either the regulatory focus manipulation or the framing of egalitarianism manipulation on the way that participants perceived anti-egalitarian humor. In fact, for ratings of the Jimmy Carr clip, the results were in the opposite direction as predicted, so that participants in incongruent conditions rated clips more negatively. However, this interaction fell short of significance. There are many possible explanations for this, including flaws within the experimental design and the population used.

After looking at participants' reactions to the anti-egalitarian humor presented to them, the data collected were checked to assess how well participants remembered the wording of the primes. In the survey, a memory check to test the resonance of the positive or negative message in the egalitarian public service announcement was included. After coding, it was found that an overwhelming majority reported the message of the PSA in positive language, despite approximately half having seen a negative version and half having seen a positive version. This implies that the negative message of the PSA may not have been sufficiently absorbed by participants.

For what reason did the PSA not succeed in impressing a positive or negative perspective on the value of egalitarianism on participants? Perhaps watching a video is

too passive and something must be done to involve participants more and grab their attention. Also, the impact of the PSA may have been diluted by the multiplicity of video clips that participants were watching and did not leave a stronger impression than any of the other scenes viewed. It may also be that the PSA was placed too far ahead of the comedy section, and by the time that participants reached the Louis CK and Jimmy Carr jokes, the message was no longer salient. Additionally, maybe participants were engaged by the PSA, but the distinction between the positive and negative versions may not have been great enough. Finally, it may be that the Bates population used is inherently optimistic and promotion focused and, therefore, is resistant to framing the value of egalitarianism in a negative way. There is evidence on age and regulatory focus relating to healthy behavior, that supports this idea. A study by Lockwood, Chasteen, and Wong (2005) explains that, at least regarding health, college age people are generally more promotion than prevention focused. On the other hand, as one ages, the imbalance between promotion and prevention orientations evens out (Lockwood et al.). If this was the case, and Bates students in the current study were more promotion focused by nature, this could have undermined the prevention focused prime and made participants resistant to hearing a negatively framed PSA. In light of these concerns, a second experiment was conducted, the primary purpose of which was to address these issues. The next chapter describes it.

Chapter 3: Study 2

Introduction

In order to address Study 1's limitations, a number of modifications were made to the survey. These adjustments reflected concerns about grabbing participants' attention with the egalitarian public service announcement, strengthening the PSA manipulation, and the potentially overly optimistic Bates population.

In order to catch the attention of the audience before the PSA, additional screens with text were added. These called attention to the PSA by asking thought provoking questions relating to egalitarianism and its practical effect in the business world and in universities. Additionally, a screen was added that attempted to catch participants' attention by stating that its message was in keeping with the message of Martin Luther King, Jr, a well-known and admired figure by most.

In order to address the concern that the PSA's impact was diluted because it was embedded among so many other clips, the arrangement of the video clips was changed slightly. The PSA was moved to the segment just before the comedy. This was done in an attempt to make the PSA more prominent in participants' minds when they viewed the comedy section.

To address the potential problem of a population that tends to be promotion focused and therefore might be resistant to absorbing a negatively worded PSA, a new population was used. This was accomplished by configuring the survey to be completely online and using Amazon's Mechanical Turk to host the survey. Mechanical Turk (or

“M-Turk”) is an online marketplace where “requesters” can put online tasks that they pay “workers” to complete. As in a growing number of social science studies, respondents in the present experiment were paid M-Turk workers. This allowed us to reach a new and potentially more diverse population than that at Bates.

Method

Participants. After dropping participants who took less than 15 minutes completing the experiment, expressed suspicion, failed to follow the instructions, and failed the check on memory for PSA content, this experiment had 229 participants.² Participants included 92 females and 137 males. Participants were recruited via M-Turk and were offered \$0.75 compensation. After recruitment stalled short of our target sample size, the compensation was increased to \$1.00. The Study 2 sample was notably older and had an average age of $M = 35.83$, $SD = 11.63$. When asked about ethnicity, 182 participants identified themselves as White/European-American, 15 identified themselves as Asian/Asian-American, 14 identified as Latino/Latina/Hispanic, 12 identified as Black/African-American, and 4 identified as Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Racial. The political orientation was measured on a 7-point scale from 1 (*Extremely Liberal*) to 7 (*Extremely Conservative*). The population of Study 2 was slightly more conservative than that of Study 1 with $M = 3.37$, $SD = 11.63$ and $M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.34$ respectively.

Materials. The materials for this study were very similar to that of Study 1, but updated to reflect changes based on the results of the first study. In order to host the

² Promotion/positive frame (n = 61), promotion/negative frame (n = 62), prevention/positive frame (n = 61), and prevention/negative frame (n = 45).

survey on M-Turk, it was necessary to put the entire experiment into the online survey. To do this, a page with the regulatory focus priming writing task was added to the beginning of the survey. Additionally, because the experimenter could not regulate the time participants spent on this task and in an effort to shorten the survey overall, the instructions for the writing task were changed from “Please take the next 7 minutes to describe how your hopes and aspirations (or duties and obligations) are different now from when you were growing up. When you have finished please wait for the instructor to come over,” to “Every individual has duties and obligations, things they must do. Please write 4-6 sentences describing how your hopes and aspirations (or duties and obligations) are different now from when you were growing up. Please click the button below when you have finished” (A. Scholer, personal communication, February 11, 2013).

Additionally, the storyboard for the video clips was modified, as can be seen in Table 4. The genre blocks remained the same, apart from the removal of the last block (sports). Similarly, the last commercial block was removed so that the last video participants viewed was the comedy block. The structure of the remaining two commercial segments was altered as well. In Study 1, the commercial blocks had consisted of 2 commercials, with the first block including the manufactured PSA after a commercial. For Study 2, the remaining commercial blocks took on the format of PSA, infomercial, and commercial. This was done to reduce the suspicion that the critical PSA seemed out of place among a collection of other commercials. Instead of being placed in the first commercial block, the critical PSA was included in the second commercial block (before the comedy block) to increase its proximity to the anti-egalitarian jokes.

However, it was still distanced from the comedy section by an infomercial and a commercial. The first commercial block also featured a PSA. This PSA was found on YouTube and was an informative PSA about eating disorders by the National Eating Disorder Information Centre in Toronto. It was chosen because it did not include a call to action. This was done because any call to action could be positively or negatively worded, and might interact with the manipulated message of the critical PSA.

Additionally, the questions about the commercial blocks were changed and made to look more similar by asking about the effectiveness of the PSA, the likelihood they would purchase the product from the infomercial, and the likelihood they would use the product in the commercial. Responses were rated on the same 11-point scale used in Study 1.

Table 4. Storyboard for Study 2.

Segment	Description
Block 1: Drama	Clips from <i>Grey's Anatomy</i> , <i>The West Wing</i> , and <i>The Sopranos</i> .
Block 2: Commercial A	PSA on eating disorders, infomercial for OxiClean, and a commercial for Geico.
Block 3: News	News stories on riots in Egypt, a meteor in California, and the fall of the Berlin Wall.
Block 4: Commercial B	Critical egalitarian PSA, infomercial for ShamWow, and a commercial for 1 800 Contacts.
Block 5: Comedy	Stand-up routines by Louis CK, Ellen DeGeneres, and Jimmy Carr (described in more detail below).

In addition to the storyboard being altered, the PSA itself was slightly changed. Four black screens were added to the beginning of the PSA with the purpose of capturing the participants' attention and reinforcing the positive or negative wording. The positive slides read as follows:

Slide 1: Have you ever thought about how much **more successful businesses would be if every business had to treat people equally in hiring?**

Slide 2: ... Or about how much universities **would gain by selecting the most talented students?**

Slide 3: The following message is influenced by the profound and ever-relevant lessons of Martin Luther King Jr.

Slide 4: These are words that we should all take the time to reflect upon.

The negative slides read as follows:

Slide 1: Have you ever thought about how much **businesses lose if they treat people unequally in hiring?**

Slide 2: ... Or about how much universities **lose when they discriminate in the admissions process?**

Slide 3: The following message is influenced by the profound and ever-relevant lessons of Martin Luther King Jr.

Slide 4: These are words that we should all take the time to reflect upon.

The demographic information collected at the end of the survey was slightly altered to reflect the new population. This was done by changing the question which had asked about what class year participants were in, to asking participants to enter their age. The consent form and debriefing form were also adjusted to reflect the new population.

In the end, the entire survey was shortened by deleting the last commercial block and the sports block, and changing the writing task to 4-6 sentences instead of 7 minutes. This was done to make the survey briefer and thus more appealing to potential participants.

Procedure. The survey was posted on M-Turk. Participants found the survey through this service and upon completion of the survey, received a small compensation. Participants clicked on the link to the survey, read the consent form, which stated that “The purpose of this study is to look at personality and media. That is to say, how different personalities react to different kinds of media we encounter in everyday life - including television, magazines, billboards, etc.” They then completed the writing task and moved on to the video portion of the survey. Participants watched the blocks of videos one at a time, and answered the corresponding questions before moving on to the next block. Participants then completed the manipulation check, demographic information, and the suspicion check. They were presented with a debriefing form further

explaining the purpose of the experiment, and instructed on how to proceed to receive their compensation.

Results

In total, 261 participants took the survey on Amazon's Mechanical Turk. After analyzing the data, participants who spent fewer than 15 minutes on the survey were dropped. Additionally, participants who did not write at least four sentences for the regulatory focus prime were dropped. Lastly, participants who indicated a specific suspicion of the purpose of the experiment were discounted. This brought the number of usable participants down to 229.

As in Study 1, a new variable was created to represent participants' overall reactions to the anti-egalitarian humor clips. Participants' within comedian ratings were highly correlated again, as can be seen in Table 5. The new reaction variable was calculated for both the Louis C.K. clip and the Jimmy Carr clip and consisted of the means of the reversed "funny" scores, the "inappropriate" scores, and the "offensive" scores for the clips. As in Study 1, higher reaction scores indicated that participants had more negative reactions to the clips, whereas lower scores indicated a more positive reaction. These new reaction variables were found to be reliable (Carr: $\alpha = .79$, C.K.: $\alpha = .79$).

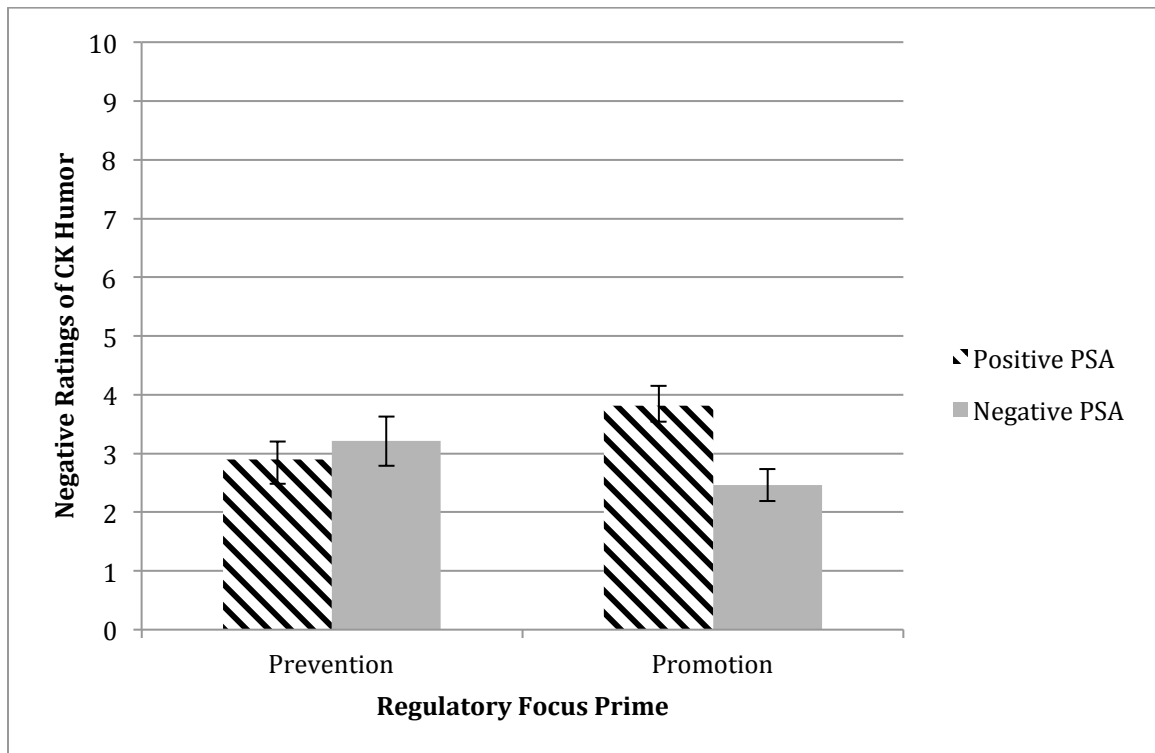
Table 5. Summary of Intercorrelations of CK and Carr for Study 2.

Ratings of Comedians	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Funny CK	-					
2. Funny Carr	.49*	-				
3. Inappropriate CK	-.42*	-.23*	-			
4. Inappropriate Carr	-.23*	-.41*	.46*	-		
5. Offensive CK	-.44*	-.23*	.84*	.44*	-	
6. Offensive Carr	-.15*	-.41*	.47*	.86*	.49*	-

Note. * $p < .05$.

A 2 (Regulatory Focus: promotion, prevention) x 2 (Framing: positive, negative) independent groups ANOVA was run. The main effect for participants' regulatory focus on ratings on the Louis CK clip was nonsignificant, $F(1, 225) = 0.06, p = .80$. The main effect for participants' PSA framing on ratings on the Louis CK clip was also nonsignificant, $F(1, 225) = 2.46, p = .12$. There was, however, a significant interaction between participants' regulatory focus and the framing of the PSA on their reactions to the anti-egalitarian clips, $F(1, 225) = 6.31, p < .05$. As expected, and as shown in Figure 3, simple effects tests showed that among promotion focused individuals, participants reacted more negatively to the humor after viewing a positive PSA than they did after watching a negative PSA, $t(121) = 3.10, p < .01$. By contrast, among prevention focused individuals, there was a nonsignificant trend in the opposite direction where participants rated the clips more negatively after viewing the negative PSA than after viewing the positive PSA, $t(104) = -0.62, p = .54$.

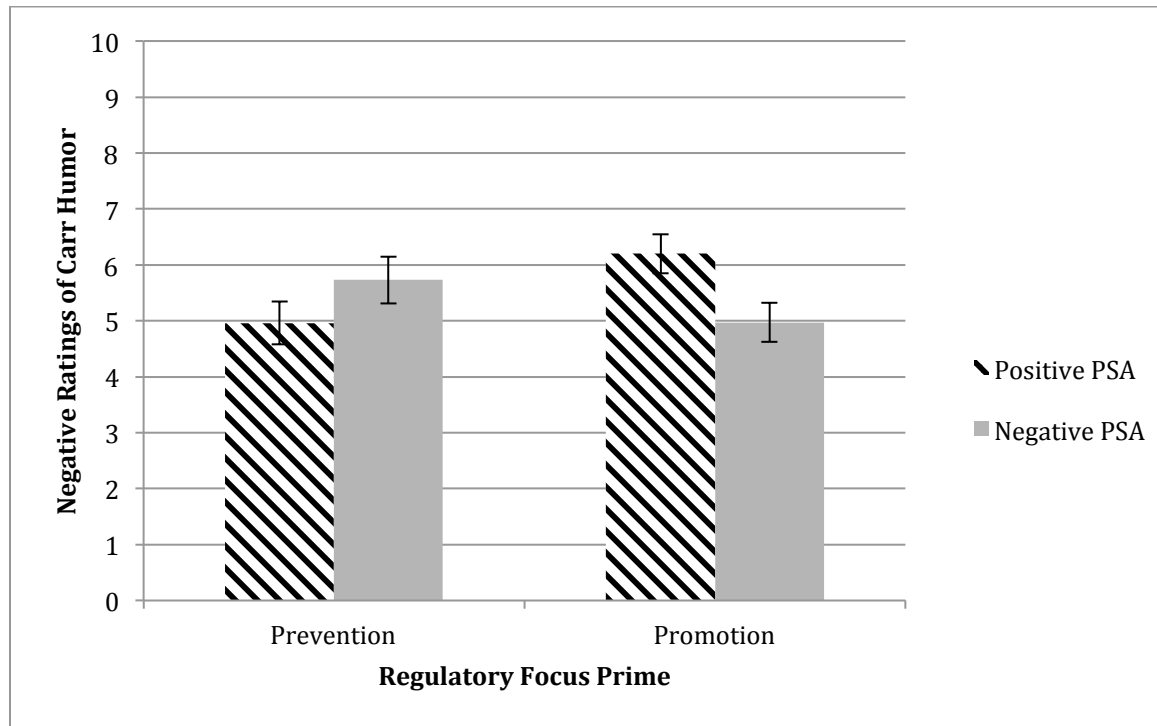
Figure 3. Reactions to CK in Study 2.



Another 2x2 independent groups ANOVA was run for reactions to the Jimmy Carr clip. The main effect for participants' regulatory focus on ratings on the Jimmy Carr clip was nonsignificant, $F(1, 225) = 0.39, p = .53$. The main effect for participants' PSA framing on ratings on the Jimmy Carr clip was also nonsignificant, $F(1, 225) = 0.38, p = .54$. Again, as predicted, there was a significant interaction between participants' regulatory focus and the framing of the PSA on their reactions to the anti-egalitarian clips, $F(1, 225) = 7.08, p < .01$. As can be seen in Figure 4, simple effects tests yielded the same results as those done for the Louis CK clip and showed that among promotion focused individuals, participants reacted more negatively to the humor after viewing a positive PSA than they did after watching a negative PSA, $t(121) = 2.47, p < .05$. By contrast, there was a nonsignificant trend for prevention focused participants in the

opposite direction so that participants reacted more negatively to the anti-egalitarian jokes after viewing the negative PSA, $t(104) = -1.36, p = .18$.

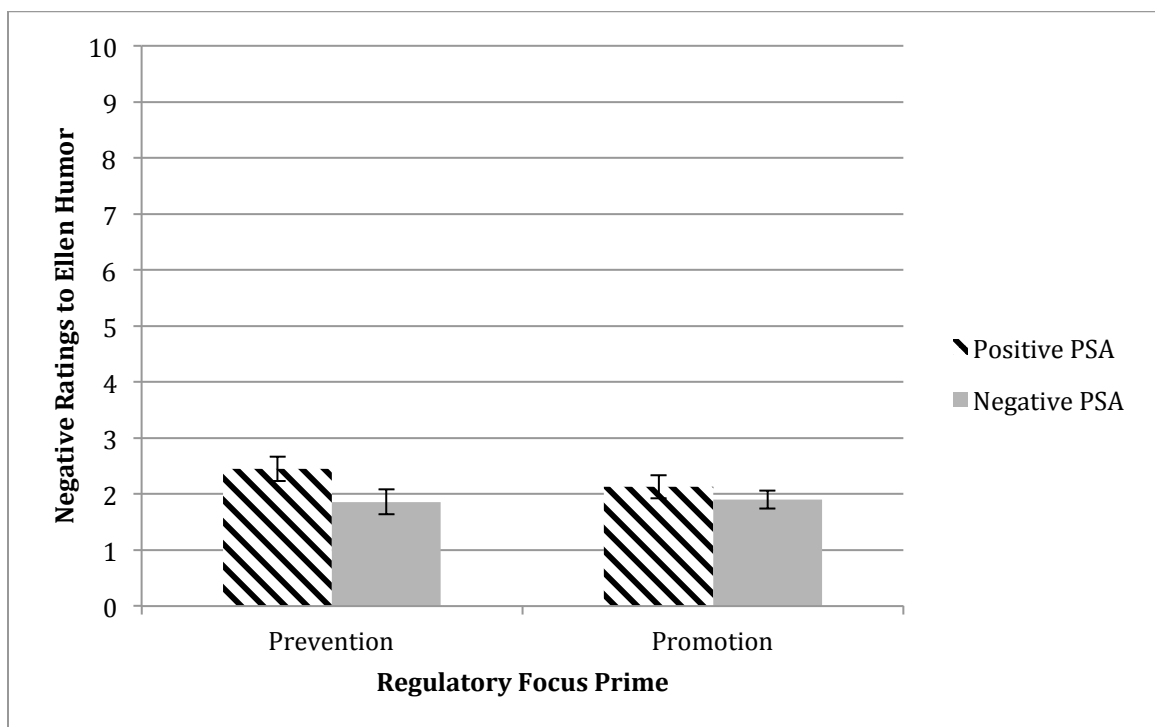
Figure 4. Reactions to Carr in Study 2.



After analyses were run on the reactions to the Louis CK and Jimmy Carr clips, a 2x2 independent groups ANOVA was run on participants' reactions to the Ellen DeGeneres clip to confirm that the interaction found was limited to anti-egalitarian humor, as predicted. The same composite variable was created consisting of the means of reversed funny scores, inappropriate, and offensive scores. The main effect for participants' regulatory focus on ratings on the Ellen DeGeneres clip was nonsignificant, $F(1, 225) = 0.50, p = .48$. There was a significant main effect of participants' PSA framing on ratings on the Ellen DeGeneres clip. As can be seen in Figure 5, participants who viewed the positive PSA reacted more negatively to the clip than those who had seen the negative

PSA, $F(1, 225) = 4.13, p < .05$. Most importantly, the interaction between participants' regulatory focus and the framing of the PSA on their reactions to the anti-egalitarian clips was nonsignificant, $F(1, 225) = 0.75, p = 0.39$. This indicates that the interaction found for the Jimmy Carr and Louis CK clips was limited to those instances of anti-egalitarian humor.

Figure 5. Reactions to DeGeneres in Study 2.



In order to see how robust the interaction found on the Louis CK and Jimmy Carr clips were, additional analyses were run with extra restrictions. First, cases in which participants responded to the memory task at the end of the survey (about the message of the equality PSA) by saying they did not remember the message of the PSA and

participants who responded by talking about the eating disorder PSA were dropped. This brought the sample size down to 200 participants.

A 2x2 independent groups ANOVA was run for the Louis CK reactions. The main effect for participants' regulatory focus on ratings on the Louis CK clip was still nonsignificant, $F(1, 196) = 0.02, p = .89$. The main effect for participants' PSA framing on ratings on the Louis CK clip was also still nonsignificant, $F(1, 196) = 2.20, p = .14$. Despite eliminating participants, there was still a marginally significant interaction between participants' regulatory focus and the framing of the PSA on their reactions to the anti-egalitarian clips, $F(1, 196) = 3.14, p < .10$. Simple effects tests were run and showed that among promotion focused individuals, participants reacted significantly more negatively to the humor after viewing a positive PSA than they did after watching a negative PSA, $t(105) = 2.49, p < .05$. By contrast, there was still a nonsignificant trend among prevention focused participants where participants who had viewed the negative PSA reacted more negatively to the anti-egalitarian humor than those who had viewed the positive PSA, $t(91) = -0.20, p = .85$.

A 2x2 ANOVA was also run for the Jimmy Carr reactions. The main effect for participants' regulatory focus on ratings on the Jimmy Carr clip was nonsignificant, $F(1, 196) = 0.21, p = .65$. The main effect for participants' PSA framing on ratings on the Jimmy Carr clip was also nonsignificant, $F(1, 196) = 0.78, p = .38$. Again, despite the exclusion of additional participants, there was a significant interaction, supporting the regulatory fit hypothesis, between participants' regulatory focus and the framing of the PSA on their reactions to the anti-egalitarian clips, $F(1, 196) = 7.11, p < .01$. In keeping with the previous results and the regulatory fit hypothesis, simple effects tests still

showed that among promotion focused individuals, participants reacted more negatively to the humor after viewing a positive PSA than they did after watching a negative PSA, $t(105) = 2.72, p < .01$. By contrast, in keeping with predictions, there was still a nonsignificant trend among prevention focused participants where participants reacted more negatively after viewing the negative PSA than after viewing the positive PSA $t(91) = -1.17, p = .25$.

To further test the robustness of the fit effect, it was noted that in the regulatory focus prime some participants undermined the prime by writing responses that supported one regulatory focus orientation, but then modified their regulatory focus in the second half of their response. For example, if a participant in the promotion focus group said that they had aspired to be an astronaut as a child, but now aspire to make money and take care of their family because it is their responsibility, this was said to have undermined the promotion focus prime. For this round of tests, these individuals who undermined the regulatory focus prime were dropped. Discarding these participants brought the sample size down to 166.

A 2x2 independent groups ANOVA was run to test the participants' reactions to the Louis CK clip. There was no significant main effect for participants' regulatory focus on ratings on the Louis CK clip, $F(1, 162) = 0.00, p = .95$. The main effect for participants' PSA framing on ratings on the Louis CK clip was marginally significant, $F(1, 162) = 2.94, p < .10$; participants who viewed the positive PSA reacted more negatively to the clip. Again, supporting the regulatory fit hypothesis, there was a significant interaction between participants' regulatory focus and the framing of the PSA on their reactions to the anti-egalitarian clips, $F(1, 162) = 3.91, p = .05$. In keeping with

predictions, simple effects tests showed that among promotion focused individuals, participants reacted significantly more negatively to the humor after viewing a positive PSA than they did after watching a negative PSA, $t(71) = 2.63, p < .05$. By contrast, among prevention focused individuals there was a nonsignificant trend where participants reacted more negatively after viewing the negative PSA than after viewing the positive PSA, $t(91) = -0.20, p = .85$.

A 2x2 independent groups ANOVA was also run to see participants' reactions to the Jimmy Carr clip. The main effect for participants' regulatory focus on ratings on the Jimmy Carr clip was nonsignificant, $F(1, 162) = 0.28, p = .60$. The main effect for participants' PSA framing on ratings on the Jimmy Carr clip was also nonsignificant, $F(1, 162) = 1.13, p = .29$. Again, in keeping with the regulatory fit hypothesis, there was a significant interaction between participants' regulatory focus and the framing of the PSA on their reactions to the anti-egalitarian clips, $F(1, 162) = 7.18, p < .01$. Simple effects tests also supported the hypothesis and showed that among promotion focused individuals, participants reacted more negatively to the humor after viewing a positive PSA than they did after watching a negative PSA, $t(71) = 2.65, p < .05$. By contrast, for prevention focused individuals, there was a nonsignificant trend where participants reacted more negatively after viewing the negative PSA than after viewing the positive PSA, $t(91) = -1.17, p = .25$.

It was only when participants who were placed in the negative PSA condition, but remembered a positively worded PSA were discounted, that the interaction between participants' regulatory focus condition and the framing of the PSA on their reactions to the anti-egalitarian humor disappeared. Including all participants used in the first

analyses, 62 participants reframed the PSA from negative to positive. However, after implementing the previously described exclusions, dropping people who did this brought the sample size down to 115, with only 25 people in the negative PSA condition.

The main effect for participants' regulatory focus on ratings on the Louis CK clip was nonsignificant, $F(1, 111) = 0.32, p = .56$. The main effect for participants' PSA framing on ratings on the Louis CK clip was also nonsignificant, $F(1, 111) = 0.16, p = .69$. This time, there was not a significant interaction between participants' regulatory focus and the framing of the PSA on their reactions to the anti-egalitarian clips, $F(1, 111) = 0.37, p = .54$.

Results for participants' ratings of the Jimmy Carr clip were similar. The main effect for participants' regulatory focus on ratings on the Jimmy Carr clip was marginally significant, $F(1, 111) = 3.20, p < .10$; participants in the promotion focused condition responded more negatively than those in the prevention focused condition. The main effect for participants' PSA framing on ratings on the Jimmy Carr clip was nonsignificant, $F(1, 111) = 0.24, p = .62$. There was no significant interaction between participants' regulatory focus and the framing of the PSA on their reactions to the anti-egalitarian clips, $F(1, 111) = 0.11, p = .74$.

Discussion

Results from Study 2 support the regulatory fit hypothesis, which in this case holds that participants would react more negatively to anti-egalitarian humor when the regulatory focus prime was congruent with the framing of the egalitarian PSA. The interaction between participants' regulatory fit and the framing of the egalitarian PSA

was significant. Participants who were primed to be promotion focused reacted more negatively to the anti-egalitarian humor when they viewed the positive PSA than when they viewed the negative PSA. Though this effect for participants primed to be prevention focused was not significant, the trend was in the predicted direction so that participants reacted more negatively after viewing the negative PSA than after viewing the positive PSA. The same effect was found for participants' reactions to both the Jimmy Carr clip and the Louis CK clip, but not the Ellen DeGeneres clip. This suggests that this effect is limited to reactions to anti-egalitarian humor and does not generalize across all humor. Additionally, this effect was found to be robust when the reaction held after eliminating additional participants from the sample.

Perhaps the changes made after Study 1 were sufficient to produce this effect. Placing slides at the beginning of the PSAs that reinforced their positive or negative message may have grabbed participants' attention and made them pay closer attention to the PSA. Perhaps the slides that asked participants to think about questions regarding equality caused participants to remember the message of the PSA better. It is also possible that putting the PSA closer to the anti-egalitarian humor clips made the effect more prominent in the minds of participants as they were viewing the Louis CK and Jimmy Carr clips and therefore affected their reactions more. Similarly, perhaps reducing the number of clips in the survey helped participants to remember the PSA more effectively. However, effects of the change in the PSA on participants would have to be on a subconscious level. This is because the same phenomenon in Study 1 was found in Study 2, where a noteworthy number of participants in the negative PSA condition reconstrued the message on egalitarianism to be positive when prompted to remember the

wording of the PSA by the surprise memory task (57.94% and 62.75% of those in the negative PSA conditions, respectively).

Another change from Study 1 that could have made a difference was the new population used in Study 2. The participants recruited through M-Turk were older than those used from the Bates College population in Study 1. As was discussed in Study 1, it is possible that students at Bates College are more chronically promotion-focused. Perhaps the participants who responded to Study 2 were less inherently promotion-focused than those found at Bates College and therefore, responded to the priming condition better.

Chapter 4: General Discussion

Although the results from Study 1 did not support the regulatory fit hypothesis, the results from Study 2 did. Participants in the promotion-focused condition reacted significantly more negatively to the anti-egalitarian comedians (both Louis CK and Jimmy Carr) when they viewed the positively framed public service announcement before the jokes, than when they viewed the negatively framed public service announcement. Also, there was a nonsignificant reversal among prevention focused participants. These results indicate that participants in regulatory fit conditions (promotion focused/positively framed PSA and prevention focused/negatively framed PSA) reacted more negatively to the anti-egalitarian jokes than those in incongruent conditions (promotion-focused/negatively framed PSA and prevention-focused/positively framed PSA). The original question of this thesis was what makes anti-egalitarian humor funny sometimes, and not other times? The regulatory fit findings suggest that people react more negatively when they have been reminded of a moral value in a way congruent to their regulatory focus.

Regulatory Focus of the Bates Community

The significant results in Study 2, but not in Study 1, raise questions as to why Study 2 supported the regulatory fit hypothesis when Study 1 did not. One set of possibilities lies in the procedural changes. These included reducing the number of clips in the survey, changing the regulatory focus prime from having a time limit to having a length limit, placing the PSA closer to the anti-egalitarian humor clips, including clips more similar to the critical PSA to prevent it from standing out, and altering the PSA

itself. Perhaps changing the format of the PSA caused this change. After analyzing results in Study 1, the PSA was changed to include four text frames in the beginning in an attempt to make the positive or negative framing more prominent. It was thought that the PSA was not positive or negative enough because participants in Study 1, when given a memory test after completion of the survey that asked them to repeat the message of the PSA as best as they could, largely remembered a positive message, even when they had viewed the negative PSA. In an attempt to avoid this reframing, the message enforcing slides were placed at the beginning of the PSA. The text frames reinforced the framing of the PSA by encouraging participants to think about questions framed in either positive or negative language about egalitarianism in real life applications.

Another possible explanation for this is the population that was used. In Study 1, participants were recruited from the Bates College community. Perhaps, in general, Bates students have been taught to be “go-getters” and therefore are inherently more promotion-focused. This could have undermined the prevention-focused prime and the negative PSA. A promotion-focused description of Bates students is found on the admissions section of the website:

Bates students are explorers, eager to encounter new people and new ideas. They have the courage and passion to step outside the familiar, in order to test new ways of thinking and living in the world.
(<http://www.bates.edu/admission/>)

The categorizations of Bates students as “explorers” who are “eager to encounter” new situations clearly paints Bates students as promotion-focused individuals. Not only does this quote suggest that Bates attempts to instill a promotion-focused attitude in its students, but its placement on the admissions page suggests that Bates might be self-

selecting in its admissions process. Prevention-focused individuals are less likely to identify with this description of Bates students, and perhaps this has led to an unbalanced pool of applicants, the majority of which are promotion-focused. Additionally, this statement on the admissions page also raises the question of whether Bates accepts more promotion-focused individuals than prevention-focused ones. Bates is likely to accept applicants based on whether they share the College's values and would be a good fit for the school. If Bates' mission and its idea of its students is so promotion-focused, they may selectively accept more promotion-focused individuals. Future research should be done to see what aspects of a community's culture drive its members' regulatory focus. In the present case, if the Bates culture is characterized by high levels of chronic promotion focus, it might have undermined the prevention focus prime and decreased the effect of the negative PSA.

Mechanisms of Regulatory Fit Effect

There are many possible explanations for the mechanisms that cause participants in the congruent conditions to apparently internalize the message of the PSA more than those in incongruent conditions do. Perhaps, when the PSA matched participants' regulatory fit, it grabbed their attention more. The priming regulatory focus task could have alerted participants to messages framed in this way, and therefore, when the PSA came on, participants' interest was sparked. Perhaps the PSA was also better able to hold on to participants' attention when its framing matched their regulatory focus. It makes sense that if something were more agreeable to you and in keeping with your outlook on the world, you would be more interested in hearing its full content.

Another possible explanation is that people in the regulatory fit conditions deemed the public service announcement as more credible than those in the incongruent conditions. In regulatory fit conditions, participants might be primed to be more receptive to PSAs that match their orientation. Therefore, upon viewing this PSA, it would seem real and plausible. Additionally, the participant might elaborate cognitively on a PSA that fits their regulatory focus because they found the PSA to express ideas in a way that is similar to the way they think. These factors may also cause the participant to have better memory retention of the content of the PSA. Simply put, participants would better remember the PSA in the regulatory fit condition because it matched their regulatory focus. Maybe this is because the PSA was more readily absorbed due to the regulatory fit. People are more likely to remember coincidences because they stick out as unique. Perhaps this would be similar if a PSA happened to capture the way a participant was primed to think and they would remember the PSA more when viewing the anti-egalitarian clip than those in incongruent conditions. Perhaps this retention made the value of egalitarianism was more readily accessible for participants in regulatory fit conditions and therefore they reacted more negatively when that value was threatened by the anti-egalitarian humor.

On the other hand, perhaps the incongruent framing of egalitarianism could have had the opposite effect. Perhaps it was so against participants' regulatory focus that they found it unbelievable and it seemed unrealistic to them. This could have discredited the authenticity of the PSA in the participants' eyes. They may also have scrutinized and generated counterarguments to the way egalitarianism was framed when viewing the PSA incongruent with their regulatory focus. This could have led to participants mentally

discarding the information because they did not agree with it or find it compatible with their regulatory focus.

While these are all possible explanations for why regulatory fit was associated with more negative reactions to the Carr and CK clips, this experiment can by no means confirm them. Though the negative reaction was found, this experiment sheds no light on *why* participants in congruent conditions reacted more negatively than those in non-congruent conditions. Speculations can be made, but future research into the mechanisms behind this reaction is needed to investigate its causality. For example, measures could be taken of how persuasive the PSA was.

Additionally, it should be noted that a large number of participants in the negative PSA condition in Study 2 still reworded the message of the PSA they viewed to be positive instead of negative. This is the same effect as was found in Study 1. A notable number of participants in Study 2 reconstrued the negatively worded PSA to be positively worded in the same way that participants in Study 1 did in the memory test. This would indicate that the changes made to the PSA and structure of the experiment did not change the way participants viewed and internalized the message of the PSA. However, it is possible that the text at the beginning of the PSA had a subconscious effect on the participants, which *did* increase their absorption of the message of the PSA, but did not affect the way they explicitly remembered the PSA when prompted at the end of the experiment. This idea is supported by a study by Devine (1989) on subconscious stereotype priming. In this study, Devine primed participants with strong or weak stereotypes of African Americans using a tachistoscope which flashed words at participants for 80 ms each. Eighty percent of the words that participants in the strong

stereotype condition viewed were either other ways of saying “African American” (e.g., Blacks) or words stereotypically associated with African Americans (e.g., lazy). The remaining twenty percent of words were neutral. For the weak stereotype condition, participants viewed words consisting of 80% neutral words and 20% stimulus words. After viewing the words, participants completed a judgment task in which they read a paragraph about a man named Donald who was engaging in “ambiguously hostile behavior” (Devine, 1989, p. 10). Participants were then asked to make judgments about Donald. Devine found that the priming stereotype influenced judgments of Donald so that participants in the strong stereotype group rated Donald as more aggressive than those who were in the weak stereotype group. Importantly, after making judgments about Donald, participants’ recognition memory was tested to see if participants remembered seeing the words they were primed with. Participants reported having no memory of the words included in the stimuli, and results of the memory test yielded few accurate guesses. This study shows that priming can have an effect on participants without them being conscious of it. It is conceivable that the PSA manipulation had effects in the present study, independent of conscious memory.

Boundary Conditions

Another issue is the boundary conditions of this fit effect. When will it or will it not occur? One moderator of this effect may be strength of regulatory focus or, more specifically, accessibility of regulatory focus. The literature on attitude strength supports the idea that accessibility of regulatory focus could be a moderator that affects participants’ susceptibility to regulatory fit effect. Fazio and Williams (1986) looked at the effect of attitude strength on voters’ consistency. During the 1984 election season,

participants were called and asked to participate in a political survey. The survey assessed participants' attitudes on both factual and opinionated items. Importantly, two of the opinion questions asked participants to what extent they felt Mondale (first question) or Reagan (second questions) would make a good president. Later, participants were mailed a second survey concerning participants' opinions about the performances of the candidates in debates. Finally, after the election, participants were contacted and asked whom they had voted for. Participants' attitude accessibility was determined using the latency with which they responded to the attitudinal questions. Fazio and Williams then assessed the attitude-perception and attitude-behavior correlation and found that they were higher for those with high accessibility. In other words, participants who were better able to access their attitudes were more consistent in their opinions of the presidential candidates' debate performances. This finding regarding the accessibility of attitudes has implications for the accessibility of regulatory focus. If this finding does hold true for regulatory fit as well, it would imply that those who had greater accessibility to their regulatory focus would more susceptible to the effect of regulatory fit. These considerations might be especially relevant to chronic regulatory focus where one might observe greater variation in accessibility than with experimentally induced, or acute, regulatory focus.

Reconstrual of Negative Messages of Equality

Additionally, because of the consistency with which participants reframed the negatively worded egalitarianism message, future research should be done to examine how effectively people absorb egalitarian messages framed in positive or negative ways. It is possible that for many people, egalitarianism has been framed as a goal all of our

lives, and it is ingrained in us to think of it as a promotion-focused and positive ideal. After all, Martin Luther King Jr.'s most quoted line, "I have a dream" seems inherently positive and promotion focused. If this is true, this tendency to think of egalitarianism as a promotion-focused oriented moral value would have not only have negated the negative framing of the negative PSA, but would have also undermined the prevention-focused regulatory focus prime by priming participants to be promotion-focused when they viewed the egalitarian PSA.

Extensions

These results also have important implications related to how effectively we absorb a variety of messages presented to us. Results indicate that regulatory fit played a role in getting participants to better absorb and understand the egalitarian message of the PSA. This would be in keeping with previous research on regulatory fit and the impact that role models had on individuals. This research found that when prompted to write about a role model, promotion-focused participants more often remembered role models with promotion-focused messages, while prevention-focused participants more often remembered role models with prevention-focused messages. This suggests that participants in the current experiment might have found the PSA more memorable and inspirational when it matched their primed regulatory focus. Therefore, perhaps it was because the PSA was experienced as being more convincing when participants were primed with the congruent regulatory focus orientation than when they were primed with the non-congruent regulatory focus.

The finding that promotion-focused individuals reacted more negatively to anti-egalitarian humor after viewing a positively-framed PSA on egalitarianism than after viewing a negatively-framed PSA certainly sheds light on people's reactions to anti-egalitarian humor. Those who have recently been exposed to the principle of egalitarianism in a way that fits with their regulatory focus are likely to respond more negatively than those who were exposed to the value in a way incongruent with their focus. This gives insight into an issue that is not so black and white as it may appear at first. People can find anti-egalitarian humor funny at some times, and less funny at other times, depending on the context in which they experience the humor. However, this experiment also has implications that stretch beyond that of why people may respond positively to anti-egalitarian humor sometimes and negatively at other times. People's ability to remember or absorb the PSA and its effect on their perceptions of the anti-egalitarian humor has implications for how people effectively internalize lessons of morality or advice.

One area in which this has been studied is health psychology. The role of regulatory fit in promoting healthy behavior (or in preventing unhealthy behavior) has been studied as it applies to public health in general, and across a variety of health conditions. One study (Veazie & Qian, 2011), looked at patients' regulatory focus as it applies to clinical inertia. Clinical inertia is clearly a very serious obstacle to getting patients to take care of themselves, and a primary public health concern. If patients do not follow the advice of their doctors, doctors are essentially incapable of helping. Veazie and Qian propose that regulatory focus can be used to better motivate participants to follow doctors' instructions. They say that by gearing explanations of potential outcomes

to participants' regulatory focus, and therefore emphasizing positive outcomes to promotion focused individuals and negative outcomes to prevention focused individuals, patients might be more likely to cooperate and take better care of their health.

Another study by Uskul, Kingdom, Keller, and Oyserman (2008) looked at the role of regulatory fit in promoting healthy behaviors. This study looked at regulatory fit in the context of acute health concerns, as opposed to long-term abstract health concerns. They associated these more abstract health concerns with the likelihood of being thrill-seekers. Uskul et al. created a study that looked at regulatory fit by looking at prevention focused people concerned about acute health problems and promotion focused people who cared more about abstract health concerns and immediately rewarding hedonic behaviors. They found that prevention focused individuals in the fit condition were more likely to engage in healthy behaviors than those who were in the promotion focused fit condition.

Another study by Fuglestad, Rothman, and Jeffery (2008) looked at the role of regulatory focus in participants' ability to quit smoking and to lose weight. They found that promotion focused individuals were better able to initiate the behavior change, and had more short-term success. However, prevention focused participants were better able to maintain the behavioral change over the long term. Overall, these studies all highlight the importance of gearing health messages to patients' regulatory focus in order to ensure better compliance.

The findings of the importance of regulatory fit in the way that people internalize messages is not limited to health psychology. This message is potentially relevant to

many other issues. Some examples are anti-littering and anti-bullying campaigns. These campaigns generally phrase their messages in terms of what we can do to prevent negative outcomes (e.g., a barren, polluted earth and hurt children). However, perhaps these messages would be better received if they were geared toward individuals' regulatory foci. This is obviously easier said than done with mass campaigns. Organizations could, however, could put out both promotion positively and negatively framed messages or PSAs in an effort to make an impression on both promotion and prevention focused individuals.

Similarly, these regulatory fit findings have implications for fundraising, especially for non-profit organizations. There is much debate about whether it is more effective for an organization to show (or explain) what would happen without their help (i.e., a negatively framed message) or to show the good work that their organization is doing and the positive outcomes (i.e., a positively framed message). Though other factors are likely involved, such as the nature of the organization's work, taking donors regulatory focus into account seems like a natural way to increase bolster an organization's fundraising capability.

General Conclusion

The finding of this study that regulatory fit can affect participants' reactions to anti-egalitarian humor has broader implications for the study of humor. This effect shows that, as in other domains, how we respond to humor is not solely about who we are or where we are, but both. That is to say, the same joke may be funny to the same person in different situations. Alternatively, the same joke may be funny to different people in the

same situation. Figuring out what makes something funny in some situations and not others is not a simple task. Many instances of anti-egalitarian humor that people know are offensive and inappropriate are also experienced as being funny. This study sheds light on how perceptions of humor change given different circumstances, and reinforces the importance of regulatory fit.

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Appendix A: Video Storyboard for Study 1

Block 1 - Drama (Run time: 2:57)

- *Grey's Anatomy* – Two characters have an argument in a stairwell about a romantic tryst. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trscBOR1FB0&feature=related>) - :49
- *The West Wing* – A political consultant gives an impassioned speech about the nature of politics today. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aL8aKMaOewE>) - :53
- *The Sopranos* – A character is brutally murdered with a baseball bat. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLJQFZlkDuQ>) - 1:12

Block 2 - Commercial Section 1 (Run time: ~ 1:19)

- Geico Pig Commercial – A pig rides in a van squealing out the window. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJDni6Bopzo>) - :31
- PSA Announcement – Described in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. See Appendix C for text. - ~ :45

Block 3 - News (Run time 2:44)

- Egypt – A reporter speaks about riots in Egypt following an election. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hk0W-fd4z_I) - 1:23
- ABC News – America This Morning reports on a meteor shower in Northern California. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vauHNn_SkU&list=CLLwEgrCtqz2Y&index=34&feature=plpp_video) - :40
- BBC News – A reporter comments on people's reactions to the fall of the Berlin Wall. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ut5t3hWyAwQ>) - :37

Block 4 - Commercial Segment 2 (Run time: 0:52)

- 1800 CONTACTS – A dramatic scene in which a man realizes 1800 CONTACTS does in fact have his brand. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aixKm9DahDA>) - :18
- iPod Ad – Different kinds of iPods bounce around to catchy music. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrRHPf0_B3M) - :32

Block 5 - Comedy (Run time: 2:25)

- Louis CK Clip – Louis CK comments on laughing at gays (see Chapter 2 for more detail). (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTh9auIVVrA>) - :56
- Ellen Degeneres – Ellen Degeneres comments on sitting next to people on airplanes (see Chapter 2 for more detail). (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WYvm-xRByA>) - :54
- Jimmy Carr Clip – Jimmy Carr comments on abortions (see Chapter 2 for more detail). (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwXpJvGvORQ>) - :27

Block 6 - Commercial Segment 3 (Run time: 1:05)

- Burger King Commercial – David Beckham orders a smoothie at Burger King. (<http://youtube.com/watch?v=4eOxxI3emV4>) – :30
- Gap Commercial – The Avett Brothers sing a song that fades into the gap logo. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2D4tz0NUQ8>) - :32

Block 7 – Sports (Run Time: 2:01)

- Basketball – A clip from a game of Cleveland playing Denver.

(<http://youtube.com/watch?v=rUhWC6IeWic>) - :22

- Soccer – Steven Gerrard scores an amazing goal for Liverpool.

(<http://youtube.com/watch?v=woCEGoxE3pA>) - :53

- Football – A clip from a football game of the Niners playing the Vikings

(<http://youtube.com/watch?v=v5bAlc5DLRk>) – :38

TOTAL RUN TIME: 13:03

Appendix B: Survey Questions for Study 1

Block 1 - Drama

How realistic did you find the first clip of the doctors (Grey's Anatomy) to be?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Realistic At AllExtremely Realistic

Would you consider watching Grey's Anatomy now (first clip)?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Likely to WatchExtremely Likely to Watch

Did you find the speech in the 2nd clip (The West Wing) inspirational?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Inspirational At AllExtremely Inspirational

Would you consider watching The West Wing?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Likely to WatchExtremely Likely to Watch

How off-putting did you find the murder in the last clip (The Sopranos)?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Off-Putting at AllExtremely Off-Putting

Would you consider watching The Sopranos?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Likely to Watch

Extremely Likely to Watch

Block 2 - Commercial Section 1

Did you find the Geico Commercial (with the pig) funny?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Funny At All

Extremely Funny

Would you consider purchasing Geico because of this commercial?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Purchase Geico

Extremely Likely to Purchase Geico

How influencing did you find this PSA?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Influencing At All

Extremely Influencing

How likely would you be to change your behavior based on this PSA?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Change Behavior

Extremely Likely to Change Behavior

Block 3 - News

How threatening did you perceive the violence following the Egyptian election to be?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Threatening

Extremely Threatening

Would you be likely to follow this news story after seeing this report?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Follow

Extremely Likely to Follow

How interested were you in the news story about the meteor in California?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Likely to Watch

Extremely Likely to Watch

How likely would you be to watch this meteor shower?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Likely to Watch

Extremely Likely to Watch

How happy did you perceive the people to be with the fall of the Berlin Wall?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Happy

Extremely Happy

How inspiring did you find the News Segment on the fall of the Berlin Wall?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Inspiring

Extremely Inspiring

Block 4 - Commercial Section 2

Did you find the 1800 CONTACTS commercial funny?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Funny At All

Extremely Funny

Would you consider using 1800 CONTACTS (if you needed lenses) because of this commercial?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Use

Extremely Likely

to Use

How visually interesting did you find the iPod Ad?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Interesting At All

Extremely Interesting

How likely would you be to buy an iPod because of this ad?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Buy

Extremely Likely Buy

Block 5 - Comedy

How funny did you find the Louis CK Clip about Laughing at gays?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Funny

Extremely Funny

How offensive did you find the Louis CK clip?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Offensive

Extremely Offensive

How inappropriate did you think the Louis CK clip was?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Inappropriate

Extremely Inappropriate

How funny was the Ellen DeGeneres clip about Airplanes?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Funny

Extremely Funny

How offensive did you find the Ellen DeGeneres clip?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Offensive

Extremely Offensive

How inappropriate did you think the Ellen DeGeneres clip was?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Inappropriate

Extremely Inappropriate

How funny did you find the Jimmy Carr clip about abortions?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Funny

Extremely Funny

How offensive did you find the Jimmy Carr clip?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Offensive

Extremely Offensive

How inappropriate did you think the Jimmy Carr clip was?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Inappropriate

Extremely Inappropriate

Block 6 - Commercial Section 3

How funny did you find the Burger King ad?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Funny

Extremely Funny

Would you consider going to Burger King because of this commercial?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Go

Extremely Likely to Go

To what extent were you aware that this commercial was about GAP?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Aware

Extremely Aware

How likely would you be to go to GAP because of this commercial?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to go to GAP

Extremely Likely to go to GAP

Block 7 - Sports

How exciting did you find the clip of the basketball game?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Exciting

Extremely Exciting

How likely would you be to attend a basketball game based on this clip?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Attend

Extremely Likely to Attend

How exciting did you find the soccer clip?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Exciting

Extremely Exciting

How likely would you be to attend a soccer game based on this clip?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Attend

Extremely Likely to Attend

How exciting did you find the football clip?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Exciting

Extremely Exciting

How likely would you be to attend a football game based on this clip?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Attend

Extremely Likely to Attend

Surprise Memory Test

During one of the commercial segments, you might remember that you saw a Public Service Announcement. This was a clip that did not advertise a product, but rather expressed an idea. What was the idea presented in the PSA? (Please be as specific as possible.)

Demographic Information

What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other

What is your class year?

Firstyear

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

What is your ethnicity?

- Asian/Asian-American
- Black/African American
- White/European American
- Latino/Latina/Hispanic
- Native American
- Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Racial
- Other

If you chose other, please specify.

Please use the following scale to indicate the point that best describes your political orientation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely Liberal

Extremely Conservative

Suspicion Checks

Did any aspects of this study seem strange, unusual, or suspicious? If so, please briefly explain.

In your own words, what do you understand the purpose of the study to be?

Appendix C: PSA Scripts

1. Positive Framing:

Whether dealing with marriage, gender, race, occupation, or any other life situation, it is important that in society we create a sense of equality. Our country was founded on ideals of promoting our natural rights as citizens and our country's Constitution guarantees every person equal treatment under the law. National heroes such as Martin Luther King and Susan B. Anthony struggled hard to ensure that minorities and women were treated fairly. It is essential that all groups are treated equally, have equal access to jobs, schools, housing, and public accommodations. We live in a country where society takes pride in the freedom to do and become whatever we choose. When it comes to freedom, our society and our government must ensure that people have the same ability to exercise those freedoms.

2. Negative Framing:

Whether dealing with marriage, gender, race, occupation, or any other life situation, it is important that in society we avoid creating any sense of inequality. Our country was founded on ideals of preventing the violation of our natural rights as citizens and our country's Constitution guarantees every person protection from unequal treatment under the law. National heroes such as Martin Luther King and Susan B. Anthony struggled hard to ensure that minorities and women were not treated unfairly. It is essential that no groups are treated unequally, or have unequal access to jobs, schools, housing, or public accommodations. We live in a country where society takes pride in never being restricted in what we do or choose to become. When it comes to such restrictions, our society and our government must ensure that all people are protected from being treated unequally.

Appendix D: Video Storyboard for Study 2

Block 1 - Drama (Run time: 2:57)

- *Grey's Anatomy* – Two characters have an argument in a stairwell about a romantic tryst. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trscBOR1FB0&feature=related>) - :49
- *The West Wing* – A political consultant gives an impassioned speech about the nature of politics today. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aL8aKMaOewE>) - :53
- *The Sopranos* – A character is brutally murdered with a baseball bat. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLJQFZlkDuQ>) - 1:12

Block 2- Commercial Section 1 (Run time: 1:59)

- Eating Disorder PSA – An informational PSA from the National Eating Disorder Information Centre in Toronto depicting a girl calling herself different words for fat in the mirror. (<http://youtube.com/watch?v=6mEqZAHTB4k>) - :30
- OxiClean Infomercial. Billy Mays speaks on behalf of the magical powers of OxiClean. (<http://youtube.com/watch?v=ZTpXh33Mbeg>) - :56
- Geico Pig Commercial – A pig rides in a van squealing out the window. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJDni6Bopzo>) - :31

Block 3 - News (Run time 2:44)

- Egypt – A reporter speaks about riots in Egypt following an election. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hk0W-fd4z_I) - 1:23
- ABC News – America This Morning reports on a meteor shower in Northern California. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vauHNn_SkU&list=CLLwEgrCtqz2Y&index=34&feature=plpp_video) - :40
- BBC News – A reporter comments on people's reactions to the fall of the Berlin Wall. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ut5t3hWyAwQ>) - :37

Block 4 - Commercial Segment 2 (Run time: ~ 2:16)

- PSA Announcement – Described in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. See Appendix C for text. - ~ 1:03
- ShamWow Infomercial – Infomercial describing the absorbent capabilities of ShamWow. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJEKql1e714>) - :58
- 1800 CONTACTS – A dramatic scene in which a man realizes 1800 CONTACTS does in fact have his brand. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aixKm9DahDA>) - :18

Block 5 - Comedy (Run time: 2:25)

- Louis CK Clip – Louis CK comments on laughing at gays (see Chapter 2 for more detail). (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTh9auIVVrA>) - :56
- Ellen Degeneres – Ellen Degeneres comments on sitting next to people on airplanes (see Chapter 2 for more detail). (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WYvm-xRByA>) - :54
- Jimmy Carr Clip – Jimmy Carr comments on abortions (see Chapter 2 for more detail). (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwXpJvGvORQ>) - :27

TOTAL RUN TIME: 12:01

Appendix E: Survey Questions for Study 2

Block 1 - Drama

How realistic did you find the first clip of the doctors (Grey's Anatomy) to be?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Realistic At AllExtremely Realistic

Would you consider watching Grey's Anatomy now (first clip)?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Likely to WatchExtremely Likely to Watch

Did you find the speech in the 2nd clip (The West Wing) inspirational?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Inspirational At AllExtremely Inspirational

Would you consider watching The West Wing?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Likely to WatchExtremely Likely to Watch

How off-putting did you find the murder in the last clip (The Sopranos)?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Off-Putting at AllExtremely Off-Putting

Would you consider watching The Sopranos?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Likely to Watch

Extremely Likely to Watch

Block 2 - Commercial Section 1

Did you find this Public Service Announcement (PSA) on eating disorders effective?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Effective

Extremely Effective

Would you consider purchasing OxiClean because of this commercial?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Purchase

Extremely Likely to Purchase

Would you consider using Geico after viewing this commercial?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Purchase

Extremely Likely to Purchase

Block 3 - News

How threatening did you perceive the violence following the Egyptian election to be?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Threatening

Extremely Threatening

Would you be likely to follow this news story after seeing this report?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Follow

Extremely Likely to Follow

How interested were you in the news story about the meteor in California?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Likely to Watch

Extremely Likely to Watch

How likely would you be to watch this meteor shower?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Likely to Watch

Extremely Likely to Watch

How happy did you perceive the people to be with the fall of the Berlin Wall?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Happy

Extremely Happy

How inspiring did you find the News Segment on the fall of the Berlin Wall?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Inspiring

Extremely Inspiring

Block 4 - Commercial Section 2

Did you find the Public Service Announcement (PSA) on equality to be effective?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Effective

Extremely Effective

Would you consider buying a ShamWow after viewing this infomercial?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Buy

Extremely Likely to Buy

Would you consider using this brand of contacts after viewing this commercial?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not At All Likely to Use

Extremely Likely to Use

Block 5 - Comedy

How funny did you find the Louis CK Clip about Laughing at gays?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Funny

Extremely Funny

How offensive did you find the Louis CK clip?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Offensive

Extremely Offensive

How inappropriate did you think the Louis CK clip was?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Inappropriate

Extremely Inappropriate

How funny was the Ellen DeGeneres clip about Airplanes?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Funny

Extremely Funny

How offensive did you find the Ellen DeGeneres clip?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Offensive

Extremely Offensive

How inappropriate did you think the Ellen DeGeneres clip was?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Inappropriate

Extremely Inappropriate

How funny did you find the Jimmy Carr clip about abortions?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Funny

Extremely Funny

How offensive did you find the Jimmy Carr clip?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Offensive

Extremely Offensive

How inappropriate did you think the Jimmy Carr clip was?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Inappropriate

Extremely Inappropriate

Surprise Memory Test

During one of the commercial segments, you might remember that you saw a Public Service Announcement about equality. What was the idea presented in the PSA? (Please be as specific as possible.)

Demographic Information

What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other

Prefer Not to Say

Please enter your age.

What is your ethnicity?

Asian/Asian-American

Black/African American

White/European American

Latino/Latina/Hispanic

Native American

Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Racial

Other

If you chose other, please specify.

Please use the following scale to indicate the point that best describes your political orientation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely Liberal

Extremely Conservative

Suspicion Checks

Did any aspects of this study seem strange, unusual, or suspicious? If so, please briefly explain.

In your own words, what do you understand the purpose of the study to be?