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*Keynote Address*

MEDIATED PUBLICS AND THE CRISES OF DEMOCRACY

Megan Boler

Ontario Institute for the Study of Education, University of Toronto

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INTRODUCTION

It is with a mixture of shame and pride that I confess I cannot imagine having survived the last two years without Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* (*TDS*). The form of my borderline obsessive need for this four-times weekly injection of humor into an otherwise despairing sense of the weight of the history and the present as it unfolds in all its horrors has distinct chapters. The first signs included: my partner's irritation with my 11 pm addiction and her unwillingness to participate in my habit; attempts to seek tickets at any cost to the live *TDS* on-screen set in New York; deciding to use excerpts of *TDS* to illustrate otherwise abstruse philosophical conjectures; developing an intimate rapport with the Comedy Central staff in New York through urgent requests that they send me VHS copies of particular shows for "educational purposes"; originally, a great appreciation of their searchable archive of episodes, now frustrated by their corporate sellout to Windows Media Player and downloads available for only personal computer users; culminating in my present state of having been driven into the black-market of seeking the "best of" *TDS* excerpts illegally circulated online.

Why do I have any pride in these behaviors, in the stacks of tapes I've collected of *TDS* reruns, in my commitment to a commercially-based cable owned corporate run network television show? I have pride because I feel myself part of a particular counterpublic that is constructed through this discourse. I feel part of an imagined and real public who avidly watches and appreciated this show, because I imagine that this public, along with me, now has a small space and time of refuge from the horrors of mainstream news. Where once, this public and I, used to watch CNN and feel alienated and horrified at media distortion and lies, we now share the pleasure of watching professional comedians send up the mainstream media for their ridiculous coverage intended to pass as decent journalism.

And why shame? Where do I begin...Do I think watching *TDS* will lead to social revolution? Am I shirking the time I used to spend watching socially-responsible and serious documentaries? Do I think being part of this *TDS* public bears any relationship to democracy? Do *TDS* critiques of media really have any teeth, when even Stewart's ostensible enemies want to be on the show? How can anything truly radical be broadcast on a channel owned by a major cable network? Why doesn't my partner, whom I respect greatly, watch the show with me? Why do I sometimes laugh even at sexist jokes levied at

female politicians I loathe? In sum, isn't it a pathetic, middle-class privilege to take such pleasure at 11 pm when there is so much suffering in the world?

I could counter this by saying that for the 3–4 years of *TDS* popularity prior to when I began watching, I was instead addicted to C-Span. I served my time watching and reading real media. I have boxes and boxes of videotapes and cartons of carefully saved newspapers to prove it. During this epoch, I obsessively taped different representations of post-9/11 propaganda, the invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent build up to and preemptive invasion of Iraq. After moving to Canada, I no longer have access to C-Span but could defend myself against accusations of shirking my responsibilities by noting that when I recently spent 6 weeks at Dartmouth in New Hampshire, I watched not only Stewart but C-Span as well. Speaking of moving to Canada, I could appeal for mercy by claiming that watching the *TDS* is my way of remaining connected to all I both miss and despise about my nation of origin from my position of pseudo-exile.

All this said, I take the question of public crisis of confidence in media and democracy very seriously. As I've spoken nationally and internationally on this and related topics, it has become clear that a major obstacle in our current political landscape of political and social action is a deep sense of hopelessness and despair shared by many, a sentiment that has blossomed or metastasized exponentially following the United States (US) military disasters after 9/11 and the lack of recognition on the part of "elected" white house officials to concede such things as the largest international anti-war movement in history. What direction and shape should democracy take when such a grassroots organized social movement is patently disregarded as a focus group by George W. Bush?

What kind of public is created through *TDS*? How does this public fulfill John Dewey's hopes for a public engaged in critical reflection? What role does political parody play in contemporary new media landscapes? How does parody perhaps bridge the world of the newspaper and the world of social and scientific inquiry Dewey hoped for?

#### *THE DAILY SHOW AS A NEW PUBLIC*

*TDS* produces a public that arguably fulfills Dewey's hope of the media engendering a form of critical inquiry. While I can argue that a public is constructed through *TDS* broadcast and that this four-times weekly airing trades in critical political commentary, I cannot prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that any social action or social change necessarily follows. I will argue that *TDS* produces a public that fulfills Dewey's hope of the media engendering a form of critical inquiry.

My analysis needs to be situated in the wider context of new media convergence. New media convergence refers to the way that old forms of media such as TV broadcast and print news have now converged with new

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media technologies. So, for example, *TDS* is watched as much online as it is through cable broadcast, and online discussion of and blogging about *TDS* functions as a new level of both informal word-of-mouth PR for the show as well as, arguably, a public space of discussion about the issues raised in the broadcast. Thus, studies of mass media now need be situated within the context of digital multimedia circulation, technologies, and culture. This culture includes particularly multimedia “virals”: quicktime movies, animations, etc; the blogosphere; instant messaging and chat; podcasting; gaming culture. These radical changes of the media landscape has spawned two new areas of inquiry that can be referenced as the study of “web-enhanced” social movements; and new media literacy, both of which are related to my essay but which I touch upon only briefly.

With respect to the question of whether or not *TDS* represents a new public sphere, there are fundamental questions that must be asked about this view. The most skeptical might be: isn't *TDS* merely a pleasurable sideline commentary with no offline effect? Shouldn't we argue that *TDS* is an armchair critique and one-click activism that is taking away from traditional and necessary forms of social movements? Less cynically, one must ask: does *TDS* genuinely create a culture of critical questioning that Dewey would have favored? Who is part of this public? At the other end of the spectrum is the cynical view about education and media that would argue that *TDS* is as good as any critical media literacy taught in most K-12. Most optimistically, some might wish to argue that *TDS* is the basis of a social movement. It is these points that I will address in my discussion.

#### A PUBLIC OF COMMONSENSE

I represent the distracted center...My comedy is not the comedy of the neurotic. It comes from the center. But it comes from feeling displaced from society because you're in the center. We're the group of fairness, common sense, and moderation...We're clearly the disenfranchised center...because we're not in charge.<sup>1</sup>

Arguably, the appeal of *TDS* and its political strategy is founded on a membership imagined as “the group of fairness, common sense, and moderation.” Stewart's claim to common sense correlates with Dewey's sensibility regarding the basis of a democracy. As Jeffrey Jones writes in one of the few published books to address the political significance of *TDS* and other recent political satire: “Jon Stewart's approach is not a ‘rant’...[but] Instead he simply asserts a smirking disbelief,” often used to expose contradiction and the outright lies of politicians.<sup>2</sup> Jones points out further that “Stewart gets to play the fool by using the words of those in power against them, revealing ‘truth’ by a simple reformulation of their statements....”<sup>3</sup>

In the early part of the last century, Dewey was taken with the crucial question, “By what means shall [the public's] inchoate and amorphous state be

organized into effective political action relevant to present social needs and opportunities?”<sup>4</sup> I suggest that *TDS* gives language and form to this “inchoate and amorphous” sensibility. Stewart voices what its viewers have felt and not articulated, or what we have indeed voiced but which hasn’t been heard. Because of his power, prominence and legitimacy, he can effectively broadcast our own public sentiments. “A new public,” Dewey explains, “often remained inchoate and unorganized because the existing state was inadequate to its needs. Indeed, the existing state was often actively hostile to the needs of new publics. If inherited public agencies were well institutionalized, Dewey noted, they obstructed the organization of a new public....To form itself the public has to break existing political forms. This is hard to do because these forms themselves are the regular means of instituting change.”<sup>5</sup>

To further understand Dewey’s understanding of public, I turn to Michael Warner’s essay, “Publics and Counterpublics” in which he outlines in detail seven features that he argues constitute a “public.” Warner’s analysis of public resonates with Dewey’s insight that a well-organized state works against counterpublics. Warner’s first point, that a public is self-organized, emphasizes that publics are *not* state organized. Self-organization distinguished potential counterpublics from totalitarian systems where all organizational relations are fixed. Warner writes, “A public is a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself. It is autotelic; it exists only as the end for which books are published, shows broadcast, Web sites posted, speeches delivered, opinions produced. It exists *by virtue of being addressed*.”<sup>6</sup> This aspect of a public aptly describes the audience constructed through the broadcast as well as the online discourse produced in response to *TDS*.

Warner’s second point is:

*A public is a relation among strangers....Reshaping the most intimate dimensions of subjectivity around co-membership with indefinite persons in a context of routine action.*<sup>7</sup>

This almost uncannily describes the pleasure I myself find in viewing *TDS*. Central to that pleasure is the sense that this broadcast creates a relation among strangers through this routine action of tuning in nightly to a point of view that reflects not only my frustrations but that of the shared collective of the “disenchanted center.”

The third feature of a public is:

The address of public speech is both personal and impersonal....Public speech must be taken in two ways: as addressed to us and as addressed to strangers. The benefit in this practice is that it gives a general social relevance to private thought and life.<sup>8</sup>

Giving “social relevance to private thought and life” aptly describes the appeal

of *TDS*. Stewart and his writers take what Dewey called the amorphous and articulates this private sense of incomprehension about the blatant deceptions of politicians and media spin. Through a form of address to strangers, Stewart makes the absurdities public and gives them relevance, no longer simply part of our private sense of horror.

The last three features that Warner discusses as defining features of a public I will not address in detail, but wish to mention as worthy of further comparison of the measure of *TDS* as a public:

4. A public is constituted through mere attention....

Because a public exists only by virtue of address, it must predicate some degree of attention, however notional, from its members.

5. A public is the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse.

6. Publics act historically according to the temporality of their circulation.<sup>9</sup>

I would add to Warner's list a 7<sup>th</sup> feature: namely, the affective bonds created through humor and in this case satire. Affect is a potent social glue that must be understood in theorizing what constitutes publics through address, especially contemporary modes of media address. In connection with Dewey, this public use of humor works to "pop" one out of placid acceptance of the status quo. Thus it is affect and political satire in particular that constructs a public which may lay the groundwork for the kind of political movement that Dewey did not specify in his discussion of "The Public and its Problems."

I move now to an example from *TDS* that ties to a point Warner makes drawing on Jürgen Habermas. Warner quotes Habermas' major objection to the modern "contrivance" of polling:

Of all the contrivances designed to escape this circularity, the most powerful by far has been the invention of polling. Polling, together with related forms of market research, tries to tell us what the interests, desires, and demands of a public are without simply inferring them from public discourse. It is an elaborate apparatus designed to characterize a public as social fact independent of any discursive address or circulation. As Pierre Bourdieu pointed out, however, this method proceeds by denying the constitutive role of polling itself as a mediating form.<sup>10</sup>

Warner draws on this point to emphasize the view that polling is "NOT representative of a public."<sup>11</sup> The worry about how media and those in power construct publics is central to this segment from *TDS*, "The Hall of Same."

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 THE HALL OF SAME: SATIRE AND CONSTRUCTED PUBLICS

In a segment titled “The Hall of Same,” *TDS* deconstructs the “production” of Bush’s public and simultaneously criticizes mainstream media’s complicity in helping the state produce illusion of this public. Before analyzing this segment, it is useful to offer a very brief definition of satire’s long historical legacy.

Political satire history is traditionally traced to Juvenal and Horace, two Roman writers, who used sharp wit to expose the evils and weaknesses of those in power. The tradition of satire is also marked by such names as Mark Twain, Jonathan Swift, and Miguel de Cervantes. A significant question often posed by satirists, is whether there is a protagonist, and if so of what tone and methods does the protagonist adopt to levy their critique of those in power? Traditionally, protagonists have often been divided into different roles: court jester, clown, buffoon, and the like.

By use of parody, irony, travesty, and grotesquery, satire is able to make its point. Satire is characterized “primarily by reduction and exaggeration” and the “use of wit.”<sup>12</sup>

The following transcribed excerpt from “The Hall of Same” uses wit and multiple levels of satire to critique how politicians use media to create the illusion of “democracy” and a “public town hall.”

SAMANTHA BEE: As he barnstorms across the country to sell his Social Security reforms, President Bush has introduced an exciting innovation: the fake town hall [*Bush laughs at his “friendly,” “chummy” town hall featuring prominently people of color and women*].

In these stirring non-debates [*C-Span town hall footage, a pop-up of an apparently authentic newspaper headline: “The Denver Post Bush ‘Conversation’ more like Pep Rally”*], pre-screened citizens are free to voice their president’s opinions and pepper him with the toughest of compliments.

ELDERLY MIDWESTERN LADY IN CROWD: I’m very happy to have you as the president.

BEE: So why is a fake town hall so much better for our democracy?

(Introduces Frank Luntz, Conservative Image Consultant.)

LUNTZ: A real town hall can be very dangerous if it gets out of control. A town hall that gets out of control, a town hall where the speaker cannot command the respect and control of the audience can look very bad on television.

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BEE [*Luntz absent*]: And Luntz understands imagery. For many years the Republican Party has relied on his expertise as a pollster and strategist to hone their message. From renaming the “estate tax” the “death tax,” to helping label “relaxed emission standards” the “clear skies initiative,” Luntz has made a brilliant career spraying perfume on dog turds.

[*To Luntz*:] What are the really important features of a fake town hall?

LUNTZ: To me the most important component of a *successful* town hall is the visual, the backdrop.

BEE [*to camera*]: At a fake town hall that backdrop includes the people.

LUNTZ [*excitedly pointing out images in town hall footage*]: There he’s got an African American, he’s got an Asian, there’s your female he’s got, he got one of everybody its almost—the rainbow wedding line!

BEE [*to camera, without Luntz*]: Wow, what an incredibly representative sampling—of Democrats....Another vital component, language—

LUNTZ: When you want to communicate, even the sounds of the words matter, and the ideal is to use words that begin with the same letter.

BEE [*to camera*]: For example, this banner reads, “strengthening Social Security” [*Bush’s town hall broadcast on C-Span “Future of Social Security,” with sign “Strengthening Social Security”*].

That’s a big improvement over the original text, “Creating vast new opportunities for Wall Street to generate enormous commissions without addressing the actual problem” [*exact same visual as before but TDS CGI replaces the town hall sign with above text*].

BEE [*to Luntz*]: I’m gonna read you some words, help me warm these up a bit.

LUNTZ [*enthusiastic and sincere*]: OK!

BEE: “Drilling for oil.”

LUNTZ: I would say, “responsible exploration for energy.”

BEE: “Logging.”

LUNTZ: I would say “healthy forests.”

BEE: “Manipulation.”

LUNTZ: [*Pauses.*] “Explanation and education.”

BEE: “Orwellian.”

LUNTZ: [*Inhales, genuinely stumped; no reply.*]

This biting and incisive segment enacts a definition of parody used as one technique of political satire. “The Hall of Same”:

- parodies a news feature format
- parodies not just polling but worse, Bush’s construction of a public
- offers a parody of use of media to further Bush’s illusion of US democracy in the form of town hall
- offers ultimate satisfaction of parody when it creates Samantha Bee’s OWN fake town hall using Bush’s pre-screened citizens scripted lines in her own script

The segment at times uses irony—says one thing while meaning another—but always alongside the level of simpler parody. For example, Bee auditioning “regular Americans” to parody Bush’s actual hand-picking of “Americans” for his Social Security town hall is on one level a simple parody. However, then within the content the writers have produced a second level of commentary not only about the construction of a town hall as a way to question democracy, but what that democracy looks like: in the words of the public relations consultant (who by the way is totally real and serious and sincere).<sup>13</sup>

LUNTZ [*excitedly pointing out images in town hall footage*]:

There he’s got an African American, he’s got an Asian, there’s your female he’s got, he got one of everybody its almost—the rainbow wedding line!

To which Bee retorts to camera (without Luntz), “Wow what an incredibly representative sampling—of Democrats....Another vital component, language” thus moving again to the meta-critique about how the Bush administration had to engage certain forms of performance to create the “fake town hall.” The meta-level of critique—commenting on the actual components needed for the construction of a fake town hall—is in many ways the most interesting political aspect of the segment and what might be argued to be politically subversive compared to merely humorous. The format comes closest to representing a kind of investigative journalism: exposing the performance and disinformation to sell democracy and in this case, the unsuccessful attempt to re-package the original text. Consider again the segment:



LUNTZ: When you want to communicate, even the sounds of the words matter, and the ideal is to use words that begin with the same letter.

BEE [*to camera*]: For example, this banner reads, “Strengthening Social Security” [*Bush’s town hall broadcast on C-Span “Future of Social Security” with sign “Strengthening Social Security”*].

That’s a big improvement over the original text, “Creating vast new opportunities for Wall Street to generate enormous commissions without addressing the actual problem” [*exact same visual as before but TDS CGI replaces the town hall sign with the above text*].

In sum, this kind of deconstruction of how media and language is used by politicians reflects not only a parody of power but a strong critique of how media is manipulated to suit political agenda. To read *TDS* as a critique and commentary of mainstream media is quite accurate: it is as much a satire of news shaping as of political deception. The fact that Stewart in particular holds standards for the role of news in a democracy reflects a vision of an informed citizenry well able to participate in democracy.

#### THE CALL FOR RESPONSIBILITY AND CIVILIZED DEMOCRACY

Another event, Stewart’s appearance on *Crossfire*, illustrates how an iconic figure such as Stewart plays the role of voicing public concern about the media’s “civic responsibility” and the need for “civilized discourse.” Not only was this a watershed moment in blogging media events and popular representation of a concern about media responsibility, but the discourse used by Stewart on *Crossfire* aligns with a Deweyan perspective on democratic values.

Stewart’s appearance on *Crossfire* was the top-cited media story in the blogosphere in 2004. It was first watched when broadcast on October 14, 2004 on CNN by 600,000, and then downloaded and watched by estimates of 1-4 million within one week.<sup>14</sup>

Stewart’s argument echoes, arguably, a Deweyan and idealist notion of democracy, revealed in such quotes as: “You know, the interesting thing...you have a responsibility to the public discourse, and you fail miserably.” This idealism is most aptly expressed when Stewart pleads with Tucker Carlson and Paul Begala: “Stop, stop, stop, stop hurting America....See, the thing is, we need your help. Right now, you’re helping the politicians and the corporations. And we’re left out there to mow our lawns.”

The idealism explicitly articulated on *Crossfire* is a running theme in the content and rhetorical address of *TDS*. Stewart himself refers to *TDS* as reflecting what he calls “a quaint idealism.” In Jones’ words, Stewart is a court

jester who cares. After the 2000 election and World Trade Center attacks on 9/11, the news media coverage of these events “solidified Stewart’s court jester persona.”<sup>15</sup> Competition amongst news channels had changed what counted as news in the 10 years leading up to 2001; secondly, after 9/11 these changes became more pronounced with patriotism packaging of channels like FOX. “Stewart was dismayed. In regard to cable news reporting he says, ‘They’ve so destroyed the fine credibility or the fiber that was the trust between the people and what they’re hearing on the air.’...[TDS] took it as its patriotic duty, so to speak, to parody and ridicule these constructed falsities.”<sup>16</sup> How does this the call for media’s responsibility to public knowledge tie to Dewey’s vision of democracy and critical inquiry? That is the focus of the next section.

#### JOHN DEWEY AND THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN DEMOCRACY

Dewey believed that social science should be tied not to elite but to popular media. He states: “A genuine social science would manifest its reality to the daily press, while learned books and articles supply and polish the tools of inquiry.”<sup>17</sup>

While Dewey wrote very little about the press or journalism, he did articulate a vision in which the press should communicate the scholarly findings of the social sciences, and that in turn the press should inspire the public to look more deeply into pressing social issues. This idealism reflects his view of democracy and his faith in an informed citizenry—much like the faith reflected by Stewart in commonsense: “a democracy that was anything less than rule by citizens possessed of the habits of intelligence was a perversion....democratic reformers should bend their efforts to *cultivating the capacity for deliberation which was well within the reach of most citizens*....Under the right conditions, intelligence might become habitual.”<sup>18</sup> Stewart refers to his own sensibility as reflecting a “quaint idealism.”

The infrequent times when Dewey does speak of the press is in part response to Walter Lippmann. Democracy requires critical investigation of how the world is represented to us. “The newspaper was not, however, up to this task, and the belief that it was fostered a further democratic delusion.”<sup>19</sup>

According to Lippmann, there are two primary causes for people’s misconceptions of the political environment. Lippmann stresses that we have “limited access to relevant factual information”—in short, we rely for example on newspapers whose representations are limited forms of contact with the “world.”<sup>20</sup> Thus our visions is reduced by

artificial censorships, the limitations of social contact, the comparatively meager time available in each day for paying attention to public affairs, the distortion arising because events have to be compressed into very short messages, the difficulty of making a small vocabulary express complicated worlds, and finally

the fear of facing those facts which would seem to threaten the established routine of men's lives.<sup>21</sup>

The second major challenge was the way in which our minds tend to distort the information to which we do have access, and that we tend to read these representations through already-accepted stereotypes.

Exemplifying his hallmark attitude of democratic realism, Lippmann further did not have faith that the average person has the will or rational capacity to sort through these inadequate representations such as newspaper in a manner sufficient to merit making informed decisions for democracy. Lippmann's realism turned him toward an elitism, in which democracy should succeed by focusing on educating a minority of persons well who would then be fit to govern democratically.

Dewey agreed with Lippmann's concerns. "Democracy, which [Dewey] said should be a 'means of stimulating original thought, and of evoking action deliberately adjusted in advance to cope with new forces,' had served, he admitted, mainly to 'multiply occasions for imitation.'"<sup>22</sup>

However, Dewey certainly did not agree with Lippmann's elitism:

But a democracy that was anything less than rule by citizens possessed of the habits of intelligence was a perversion, and consequently, Dewey argued, democratic reformers should bend their efforts to *cultivating the capacity for deliberation which was well within the reach of most citizens, "fostering those impulses and habits which experience has shown make us sensitive, generous, imaginative, impartial in perceiving the tendency of our inchoate dawning activities."*<sup>23</sup>

Dewey's call for cultivating deliberation is a vision of democracy in which the activity of thinking and reflection are values and seen to tie to material change. Social context and habituation encourage individuals to be inclined toward certain actions, but through reflection on one's habits there is potential to alter one's course and then the course of others and the environment.

The use of parody as political critique raises the ultimate question, what is the relationship of political critique to social change, as well as a much broader question of culture, including arts and entertainment, as a form of changing thinking, feeling, or action. Raymond Williams' notion of "structures of feeling" describes these multiple layers of cultural affect and sedimentation. A frequently asked question is how reading (and by this is usually meant reading of popular texts rather than those whose profession it is to read) effects actions. This slippery question raises epistemological issues—what will count as evidence of social change? How does one "measure" shifts in consciousness that bear on shifts in actions?

Which returns us to the opening questions: is *TDS* merely a pleasurable sideline commentary? A generative public? The potential basis for a social movement? I have attempted in this essay to outline the beginning directions of how we might approach understanding the broadcast construction of publics, and how these do and don't dovetail with democratic aims of participation and critical awareness. To evaluate fully and fairly how and when our activities of reading or watching lead to action is a "million dollar question" that most theorists and qualitative researchers struggle with; a question far from easily answered. So I cannot here conclude that *TDS* is the basis for a social movement.<sup>24</sup>

Many have sent out a battle cry for cultural studies to garner empirical evidence, and it is my hope in the next three years of research to make some of the correlations. How discourse translates into action is perhaps the question for those studying the intersection of digital media and social change, and Foucault's analyses will no doubt be of great insight on this matter.

Finally: as a note to those of us engaged not only in philosophy but in education, it is ironic to think that—whatever questions remain about the effects of *TDS*—it almost undoubtedly represents a better form of media education than any formal school curricula. One can laugh at Stewart telling off *Crossfire* for looking to his fake news show for the standard of journalism. But turning the question to ourselves: what can we say about the state of democracy and education if we are looking to *TDS* for our blueprint for critical media literacy?

#### NOTES

1. See Stewart quoted in Jeffrey Jones, *Entertaining Politics: New Political Television and Civic Culture* (New York: Roman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 114–115.
2. Jones, *Entertaining Politics*, 110.
3. Jones, *Entertaining Politics*, 113.
4. John Dewey, "The Public and its Problems," in *John Dewey and American Democracy*, ed. Robert Westbrook (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 318.
5. Dewey, "The Public and its Problems," 303.
6. See Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 49–90.
7. Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 55, 57.
8. Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 57, 58.
9. Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 60–62, 68.

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10. Habermas quoted in Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” 53–54.
  11. Habermas quoted in Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” 53–54.
  12. M.D. Fletcher, *Contemporary Political Satire* (New York: University Press of America, 1987), 3.
  13. In an interview with four writers of *TDS* broadcast in April 2005 through the Museum of Film and Television, viewers call in a question: “Are these interviews are for real?” The writers answer that oddly enough, the people they interview willingly engage and in fact are as ridiculous as they appear—in other words, *TDS* writers don’t edit (though of course they choose which segments of any interview to use). Further, they have not been sued and for the most part those interviewed do not complain about how they come off in the interview.
  14. Stewart’s appearance on *Crossfire* can be viewed on the site ifilm.com as well as on many other sites. One example of estimates made for viewing of *Crossfire* is Cory Doctorow, “Torrented Stewart-on-*Crossfire* Audience Outstrips Cable Audience,” Boing Boing (2004), [http://www.boingboing.net/2004/10/18/torrented\\_stewartonc.html](http://www.boingboing.net/2004/10/18/torrented_stewartonc.html).
  15. Jones, *Entertaining Politics*, 109.
  16. Jones, *Entertaining Politics*, 109
  17. Dewey, quoted in Westbrook, ed., *John Dewey*, 310.
  18. Dewey quoted in Westbrook, ed., *John Dewey*, 293, italics mine.
  19. Walter Lippman, “Public Opinion,” in Westbrook, ed., *John Dewey*, 297.
  20. Lippman, “Public Opinion,” 295.
  21. Lippman, “Public Opinion,” 295.
  22. Lippman, “Public Opinion,” 293.
  23. Lippman, “Public Opinion.”
  24. If time permitted, here it would be useful to summarize social movement theories and how these measure social change—one characterizing social movements as having these features: “Awareness/advocacy; Organization/mobilization; Action/reaction” (in Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers, eds., *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2003)—without a doubt *TDS* fosters awareness. The nightly shows represents advocacy because they present demands for political accountability and media responsibility through social networks of on- and off-line conversation. Particularly through its website, *TDS* functions as an organization. The remaining questions are how does it meet the criteria of mobilization, action, and reaction. The jury is out, but my next three years of funded research are dedicated to a qualitative study of discourse, as
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well as surveys and interviews, with those producing online digital dissent, including those engaged in blogging about *TDS*.

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