

Celebrity Power: Spotlighting and Persuasion in the Media

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## **Abstract**

As technological and business demands have transformed the operation and demands on news and entertainment media, celebrity activists have proliferated. Only a few years ago, the notion that these celebrities were anything other than opportunistic was laughable. Less likely was the prospect that celebrities might have real power to change minds or affect outcomes. It is difficult enough for politicians to set public agendas. Can celebrities compete? This dissertation compares celebrities to politicians and focuses upon one key area of potential power: media agenda setting. If celebrities hope to change the public agenda to focus on the issues they think are important, can they gain attention for those issues and are they persuasive? The results of a time series analysis and an experimental study conclude that they are capable of not only competing with politicians in “spotlighting” and persuasion on political issues, but may at times, exceed their abilities. These findings potentially upend what many political scientists assume about power, particularly scholars who study policymaking, policy entrepreneurship, and social movements.

According to the data presented in this dissertation, celebrities produce larger spikes of media attention when advocating on a public issue than politicians do, a relationship that bears out across media types. More celebrities generates more media attention, while politician/celebrity joint interventions seem to have mixed results, implying that politicians benefit more from the public attention celebrities generate than celebrities benefit from public association with politicians. Moreover, celebrities are capable of persuasion on political issues of public importance, despite whatever personal feelings people have for them. The more perceivably important the issue, the more likely the celebrity is to be persuasive. However, celebrities are more likely to persuade on issues that are less polemic. Celebrities do not have

the legitimacy or credibility/expertise of politicians, but many make up for these weaknesses by allying with credible transnational advocacy groups. The more institutionalized they are, the more likely they are to be able to persuade target audiences. Finally, the more they are perceived to be “authentic” based on their skills and talents, the more effective they are at persuasion.

## Acknowledgements

Throughout my life, two subjects have dominated and competed for my academic interests and passions—one is politics and the other is music. When I was in the sixth grade, I was playing trombone in the school band, singing with the choir at the state capitol building, composing a long biography of the Beatles for a writing class, drawing political cartoons for social studies, practicing a solo guitar performance of “Here Comes the Sun” for the talent show, writing songs for a rock band I would undoubtedly start in the future, and polling kids about whether or not they would (if they could) have voted for Ronald Reagan or Jimmy Carter on the playground. (My 60-70 responses were hardly derived randomly, but I was happy with the sample size). By the time I was an undergraduate, many concerts, gigs, and debate tournaments later, I had to choose between being a political science and a music major. I decided to make political science my academic profession and make music my creative outlet.

The idea of marrying them in an academic work must have been rushing around my head for a while. To pay for my graduate degrees, I had been playing in bands and teaching music lessons at a music store while teaching politics classes to gifted teenagers and college students. By bringing political psychology into the music studio, I was teaching young potential performers how to stage their events and plan their recordings. By bringing my guitar and protest music into the classroom, I was teaching young politics students about identity, symbolic politics, and manipulation. In my politics classes, discussions about organizing, citizen engagement, and the media led to historical and contemporary questions about musicians and celebrities. Had George Harrison’s Concert for Bangladesh actually raised consciousness about starvation and oppression in Southeast Asia? Had John Lennon’s organizing with Jerry Rubin and Abby Hoffman amounted to any real changes? Does it make a difference when politicians

play music at their rallies? How did Ronald Reagan co-opt Bruce Springsteen's critical and subversive "Born in the USA" as a campaign theme? Why was President George Bush publicly consulting with Bono from U2 about issues in the developing world? I was skeptical. However, students became more emotionally and academically engaged with the subject matter as I began to explore what it was about music and musicians and celebrities that entangled them with politics. I strictly considered these topics a tool to communicate with students and graphically illustrate subject matter, not as a serious area of study in political science.

While my teaching blossomed, I struggled with finding a dissertation topic. After a long period of frustration with various proposals, the idea to write about music or celebrity and politics literally came to me in a dream. Why hadn't I thought of it before when it was right in front of me? Because the topic was completely beyond the norm of what seemed acceptable research for a political scientist. The next day's visit to the library revealed that there was very little serious research on music and politics that would pass as serious social science: an anthology of interpretive essays entitled *Resounding International Relations* (Franklin, 2005), Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison's *Music and Social Movements* (1998), John Street's *Rebel Rock* (1986), and Mark Mattern's *Acting in Concert* (1998). Even including the subject of celebrities in politics did not enlarge the literature much when I began this research. I knew that in writing an altogether new research proposal, I was taking a risk. I would have to anchor my project to a nearly non-existent music in politics literature. I knew that many would be as cynical as I once was about the prospects of celebrity power. Yet I held to the notion, though, that if celebrities are wasting their time and have no effect, the result would still be interesting and important. Thus, the major challenge of this project was not actually doing the research or the writing. The most difficult part was finding the topic and convincing people that the research

could be done and was worth doing. Citing George Harrison's "Awaiting on You All," I was "awaiting" the academic community to "awaken and see" the potential in this research area. Once I eventually persuaded people that this was a worthy topic, the slow, frustrating, and lonely process that so many describe as dissertation writing was—in fact—fast, joyful, and cooperative. I truly enjoyed this experience and by the end received more support than I could have possibly expected. Thus, this introduction is an acknowledgment that this challenging, insurgent accomplishment could not have been completed without my community.

Thanking such a large community is a daunting task. My support group extends from Kansas across many countries. At the risk of adding additional pages to this work, I will thank those who directly and indirectly helped me whether or not they were aware of their powerful contributions to my academic success, hoping that I do not miss anybody. The few words or the mention of a name below do not adequately express my deep appreciation for those who brought me to this point.

Among those most directly responsible for the success of this project, I must first thank Mark Joslyn, my dissertation advisor. He was an inspirational teacher and a supporter of my research early in my Ph.D program, encouraging me to submit articles and present at conferences. Later, he placed his confidence in me by believing in this project. He encouraged me to pursue methodologies and analyses that I assumed were beyond my reach and served as an indispensable editor. He has given me academic, professional, and personal advice, and I could not have asked for a better partner to shepherd me through what could have been a grueling process of research, writing, and review.

My committee has also been very supportive. Donald Haider-Markel and John Kennedy particularly provided valuable feedback and suggestions at the proposal stage and final revisions

that helped to focus the project and improve the methodology. It was a blessing to have Jim Daugherty as an external member of the committee, bringing his specialized knowledge of music. He was also encouraging during my break. In addition to being a member of the committee, Burdett Loomis was a key figure in the earliest stages of the project, pushing me to think more about how musicians are like policy entrepreneurs, working within networks—that Bono the political actor is not just Bono, but in his words, “Bono, Inc.” Before departing for the LBJ School of Public Affairs, Kate Weaver was on the committee and was also among the first to support the project, encouraging me to utilize case studies such as the John Sinclair Freedom Rally to illustrate key points. She also introduced me to the transnational advocacy network literature, which supported Professor Loomis’ suggestion to investigate the institutionalization of celebrities.

Paul D’Anieri taught me the value of good research design, particularly having a good research question and a strong thesis. Julie Kaarbo was influential in deepening my interest in political and social psychology, which comprised much of the foundation of my literature review and methodology. Phil Schrodt not only introduced me to quantitative methods, but along with Ron Francisco, assisted me on my first article utilizing these methods, and even gave me the opportunity to work on his KEDS project for the Department of Defense. Likewise, Paul Johnson challenged me to the point where I eventually achieved a level of ease and comfort in quantitative analysis.

I must give special thanks to those who financially supported my Ph.D work including the University of Kansas political science department through Walter Thompson Awards, the Kansas Board of Regents through the James B. Pearson Fellowship, and the University of



Kansas and University of Birmingham through the Graduate Direct Exchange Fellowship. These financial awards greatly enriched my research and teaching in immeasurable ways.

I would also like to recognize those who inspired me to rethink my skepticism about the role of celebrities and musicians in politics. Long before this became a serious dissertation topic, an idea to write a book about music and politics was hatched with Jill Steans in a bar in Brussels. Long debates in pubs in Birmingham and Munich with Oliver Hofmann about Bob Dylan, John Lennon, and Bono greatly softened my attitude and opened my mind to the possibility that they might be more conscientious and influential than I first expected.

In addition, I would like to thank many outstanding teachers, managers, administrators, and organizations that provided life changing and transformational educational, teaching, and professional opportunities: Mike Meyer, Robert Gamer, Max Skidmore, Steven Cann, People to People International, Rotary International, and the Kansas City Plaza and Swansea Bay Rotary Clubs, Alan Dobson, Thomas Heilke, Hollace Selph, David Dunn, Jeremy Jennings, Sean McGough, Michelle Case, Jayne Maugans Swanson, Amanda Kulp, Ron Logan, Don Orrell, Rick Gunter, Jim Long, Wendy Acker, and Brian Messer. In addition, many of these outstanding individuals not only provided key opportunities, but also specifically helped to facilitate the execution of the experimental design portion of this survey. By execution, I mean that people assisted in the editing of the survey, arranged for participants on my behalf, made copies and collated different versions of surveys, assisted me with revisions, guided me through processes of institutional review, and so much more. As a personal favor to me, these people undertook a lot of menial tasks and took their valuable time to ensure that the study would be successful. These people include Larissa Brown, Emily Ford, Andy Jett, Dan Falvey, David Strohm, Patricia Howard, Erin Nielsen, Molly Smith, Boniface Mutuku, Shawn Kane, Carolyn Doolittle, Don

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## Chapter 1 - The President Meets the Rock Star

“George Bush is a comedian....I walk down the corridor, he comes out and stands to attention. ‘Here’s the President,’ he says. ‘What do you want us to do this time, Bono?’”

Bono, the lead singer of the rock group U2, was allowed free access to the 2005 G8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, where he attended meetings and lobbied United States President George W. Bush and other world leaders to aid the developing world. Bono picks up the story after Bush’s comedy routine: “Now this is a guy who knows where I stand on the war—a long, long way from where he stands—who knows there are so many things we could never see eye to eye on, and yet the leader of the free world lets us into the room and we’re there for an hour, shaking the tree at the last minute, pushing malaria and pushing girls’ education, making sure it ends up in the communiqué.” Bono also lobbied British Prime Minister Tony Blair to persuade G8 leaders to sign a communiqué pledging fifty billion dollars of debt relief to some of the poorest countries in the world (McCormick et al. 2006, 342).

As the lines between popular culture and politics have blurred, and the media has diversified and grown in influence, celebrity activists have proliferated, involving themselves intimately in political organizations in order to advance various causes (Street, Hague, and Savigny 2008). According to one count, 62.8% of celebrities were engaged in advocacy for an average of 1.8 causes and involved in an average of 1.8 groups. Those on *Forbes*’ “100 Most Influential Celebrity List” were 90% likely to be involved in advocacy, involved in 4.16 issues and 3.45 groups (“The World’s Most Powerful Celebrities List” 2013; Thrall et al. 2008, 367). There is also an increase in celebrity political donations, and celebrities testifying before Congress (Lester 2010, 157; Thrall et al. 2008, 374). Some, such as Bono, have even gained direct access to policy makers and the policy process.

Bono is not an elected politician—the indebted countries he claims to represent are not paying him and they did not choose him to be their spokesperson. Bono and his organization did not offer Bush money for political campaigns. His main US constituency, so to speak, consists of those who buy U2 records and attend concerts. Yet he gained rare access to some of the most powerful leaders in the world and persuaded them to sign a landmark pledge for a substantial sum. Bono’s quote articulates a puzzle in political science: why would the president of the United States give a rock star an hour of his time to lobby him directly on international debt relief? What does a celebrity have to offer the world’s most powerful leaders?

Perhaps the answer is nothing. Outspoken US Olympic runner Nick Symmonds, in an interview expressing support for gun control and opposition to discrimination toward homosexuals, explains the challenge of being an athlete and an advocate:

Too often, athletes go into a press conference and are asked difficult questions and they say ‘no comment’ and I never wanted to be that kind of athlete. I have opinions on everything and I have logical reasons why I have come to those conclusions and I’ll tell you why I feel that way....they said, you know, you’re an athlete. What makes you qualified to speak out about anything? Or some people have gone as far as to say I’m a disgrace to America and I shouldn’t be allowed to represent the country because I can’t keep my mouth shut. And I just laugh at these people...First Amendment is the right to free speech. And as an American, I’m going to exercise that right domestically and internationally, barring getting arrested in Russia for speaking out against their laws, where my First Amendment doesn’t necessarily apply (Ashlock, 2013).

Symmonds’ quote summarizes the attitude of many celebrities toward politics: as citizens, they do not have to have expertise, credibility, or even an effective voice, but they have the right and perhaps obligation to express their concerns as citizens and will do so when given the opportunity (Symmonds, 2013). He does not expect to change minds or to influence the



powerful, but he does want to speak his conscience.<sup>1</sup> Symmonds suggests that he has nothing more to offer the public discussion than any other American citizen.

During a joint interview with Senator Russell Feingold, actor Ben Affleck, attempting to raise awareness of the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, echoes the cynicism that celebrity activists receive from some citizens. Unlike Symmonds, he explains how his position as a celebrity makes him unlike most American citizens:

I think there is a deeply ingrained cynicism in culture and particularly, with all due respect, in the media toward celebrity activists...there is the opportunity to be involved with causes that, you know, do more for you than you do for the cause... I shared some of that skepticism and resentment.... I'm not an expert. I'm a person who's spent a lot of energy and dedicated a lot of my time to this issue... What I am is an advocate, and a human being, and a director, and an actor, and somebody who cares deeply about this, and wants other people to know about it.... we live in a society that gives a very, very high profile to even the most mundane activities of entertainers, and so I'd like to take some of that interest and focus it on something substantial (Greene 2014).

Despite Symmonds' self-professed humility about his personal views, there are clear reasons why the aforementioned quotes are in the public domain. The first is that Affleck is correct. Symmonds would never likely attract the kind of attention he is receiving if he was not an Olympic athlete. He is not just any American citizen. Most American citizens are not regularly watched by multiple media organizations and admired by millions of sports fans and information consumers. There is a presumption that when Symmonds or Affleck speak that someone will pay attention. If they receive attention for their statements, perhaps someone in power will pay attention and that will shift the public agenda.

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<sup>1</sup> Granted, some scholars are cynical about celebrities' motives for involvement. Some celebrities may appear beneficent as they opportunistically use issue advocacy as a way to burnish their public image (Tsaliki, Frangonikolopoulos, and Huliaras 2011) and it does not hurt to be on the *Forbes* Top 100 Most Powerful Celebrity list (Becker 2010, 95). On the other hand, in one study, celebrities who make candidate endorsements are liked less after the endorsement than before, which is somewhat consistent with Symmonds' perceived personal experience (Lammie 2007).

The second unspoken reason is that Symmonds and Affleck at least implicitly hope that they will be persuasive. In the first example, Symmonds did not write an op ed in *Runner's World* or publicly dedicate "his silver medal to his gay and lesbian friends," enduring criticism from pundits if he did not hope or expect to change some minds (Ashlock 2013). In the second example, either Feingold or the interviewer, David Greene, believed that the audience would be more interested in hearing about Africa from the next Batman rather than from Feingold because 68 of the spoken words in the interview were Feingold's, while 963 were Affleck's. The interview was almost entirely directed toward Affleck, and Feingold did not attempt to intervene in the conversation. From this example, one could conclude that reporters and politicians alike may believe that celebrities are better at getting attention and making a case than a politician is. If Symmonds or Affleck had an audience with President Barack Obama, both would not just state their opinion. They would actively make an effort to persuade the president and they might just be effective at doing so. Therefore, if Symmonds or Affleck or Bono, were directly asked, "What does a celebrity have to offer the worlds' most powerful leaders?" their answers would certainly not be "nothing."

### **Good intentions versus reality**

Celebrity hopes and expectations do not necessarily translate to attention, persuasion, or changes to the public agenda. Any celebrity can speak on any issue s/he likes. Symmonds might give an interview or write an op ed on homosexual rights or gun control. It does not mean that the media will suddenly pay more attention to these issues. It does not mean that conservatives will change their strongly held beliefs. It does not mean that he will be invited to lunch with President Obama. If he was invited to lunch at the White House, what prevents the event from

being more than a chance for a politician to get an autograph? Indeed, if Symmonds' polemic political statements hurt his own credibility with certain audiences, why would certain public officials want to be seen with him? Could the involvement of both celebrity and politician in advocacy potentially bring them both down? At the end of the day, perhaps Symmonds, for all of the money, fame, and attention he receives for being an Olympic athlete, may be little different in his abilities to politically persuade than any other citizen.

Much of the limited literature on this topic echoes this pessimism. Celebrities can be helpful to advocacy groups, but may not be powerful enough to influence the public agenda. Celebrity involvement creates some headlines, but represents "just one small piece of the media's attention to these larger political issues or causes" (Becker 2010, 96; Thrall et al. 2008). Celebrities are more likely to conveniently and cynically "jump on the bandwagon" after a politician has already focused media attention on an issue, or if the issue is already generally salient across media sources (Hawkins 2011). At best, celebrities may be more effective at attracting attention of niche audiences rather than broad segments of the population (Thrall et al. 2008). According to these scholars, the assumed effects of celebrities' media interventions are exaggerated. As a result, the literature says little about conditions where celebrities may be successful in their media campaigns. If celebrities do not produce a strong measurable effect in the media, by definition one cannot specify how they might be successful.

More has been written about the question of persuasion, particularly in the advertising literature that focuses upon celebrities' abilities to sell products (Atkin and Block 1983; Boorstin 1992, 162; Gamson 2007; Miciah and Shanklin 1994). Far less has been written about whether a celebrity can sell anything of a political nature. Among this literature, the most common studies focused on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements of candidates (Boon and Lomore 2001;

Brubaker 2011; Garthwaite and Moore 2008; D. J. Jackson and Darrow 2005; Lammie 2007; MediaVest USA 2004; Meyer and Gamson 1995; Nownes 2012; Pease and Brewer 2008; Powell and Cowart 2012; Wood and Herbst 2007). However, very little has been written on the effectiveness of celebrities in issue advocacy. What scholarship that does exist offers some cautious and limited optimism for the possibilities for celebrity persuasion. Becker (2010, 96) argues that “issue advocacy efforts can strengthen public agreement with accepted political arguments and in some cases can also make unpopular political statements seem more acceptable—especially among members of an attentive or captive audience” (D. J. Jackson and Darrow 2005). Moreover, the more well-liked and credible the celebrity, the more likely individuals will agree with their arguments, particularly if they match the target individual’s political orientation (Brown, Basil, and Bocarnea 2003; D. J. Jackson 2008). These studies offer an initial look at celebrity persuasion in issue advocacy. However, scholars generally agree that much more study is necessary.

It is not difficult to understand why a celebrity would want to speak his/her conscience. It is much more difficult to understand why anyone in the public would care. Yet the story of Bono lobbying the world’s most powerful leaders is becoming less exceptional. How have celebrities gained access to public officials and policymaking? Are they simply entertaining and novel? Or do they bring something to politics that traditional politicians cannot gain? Ultimately, are celebrities effective at getting the media to focus on political issues and at persuading target audiences to accept their position on those issues?

The small but growing body of literature on celebrity and politics does not offer very satisfying solutions to this puzzle. If celebrities have little media impact beyond their own self-promotional abilities, and if they tend to opportunistically take their cues from public officials,

why would politicians find them useful? One could argue that celebrities' abilities to make unpopular messages seem more acceptable is beneficial. But is this enough to make a president listen to a rock star? The current scholarship on the subject presents such a weak and inconsistent picture of celebrities that it fails to answer the question. Important pieces to this puzzle are still missing. The extant literature implies that the increase in celebrity involvement and engagement with politicians is a peculiar phenomenon, not a logical trend given the current political and media environment, or the characteristics of the celebrity.

### **Celebrities, Power, and Agenda Setting**

Unless a busy politician is fishing for autographs, perhaps the answer is that celebrities possess power. Politicians do not gain or keep political office without power. They are unable to achieve solutions to public problems without it. Democratic institutions are infused with it. Political scientists have long assumed that public officials crave power in order to achieve their objectives. Might celebrities have some "powers" not available to the ordinary politician? Public officials who are powerful and at least to some degree pursue pragmatic self-interest would solicit the help of others who are powerful. What powers might Bono have, for example, that Bush might not?

The purpose of this dissertation is to probe the questions of whether celebrities can successfully attract and amplify media attention toward political issues and whether they are capable of persuading target audiences. Both of these questions not only test the power of celebrities' abilities to effectively engage in agenda setting, the "politics of selecting issues for active consideration" (R. W. Cobb and Ross 1997, 3). They also address the central question of where a celebrity's power lies. This is the primary focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 2 introduces a framework for explaining celebrities' powers. If there is logic to this modern marriage between celebrities and politicians, and in the public's interest in them, it must lie within either environmental factors or some particular traits or qualities that celebrities possess. Thus, this chapter explains why the public has become increasingly interested in the activities of celebrities by detailing the changes in the media and business environment. Advances in technology and marketing have turned celebrities and politicians alike into identifiable brands—sellable market commodities—that a willing media, desperate for news content to fill the demand for constant coverage and heightened stimulation, feeds to the public to maintain its business model. The commodification of celebrities and politicians alike has blurred the distinctions between the two and increased their level of exposure. It has not, however, changed the nature or perception of politicians' power. Politicians still hold the legitimate reins of power, expertise in public policy, the means to coerce or reward others in order to achieve ends, the ability to command media attention on issues of major public concern, and, at least, just enough charisma to get themselves elected. At first glance, celebrities may have few of these powers—perhaps they are likable, charismatic, and can garner some media attention for their own pet projects—but one would not expect them to have adequate levels of power to compete with public officials on political issues.

To evaluate this proposition, chapter 2 directly compares the power of politicians to celebrities according to French and Raven's power typology (Costa and Martins 2011; French and Raven 1959; Raven 1993) and specifies an approach to test whether celebrities are capable of agenda setting. Obviously, celebrities do not have legitimate power because they do not hold public office. Operationally, this makes celebrities' powers more comparable to activists rather than politicians. They operate as political entrepreneurs, engaging in outsider strategies to focus

public attention toward the issues and general solutions they favor and/or insider strategies to gain access to public officials in order to lobby the powerful and to narrow the scope of options that form a final policy. Unlike politicians and activists, credibility and expertise may not be a source of celebrities' power, nor may it be necessary for them to achieve their ends. Instead, celebrities may compensate for a lack of expertise by pursuing first-hand experience of an issue (such as gathering information on the ground or visiting the victims they hope to defend) and/or by allying with a transnational advocacy network in order to benefit from its resources, connections, and expertise. The real potential for celebrity power, and particularly in their potential to set the public agenda, lies in their ability to affect and control information, including increasing exposure to an issue and potentially persuading audiences. This may be achieved through their likability, charisma, or perceived authenticity. However, the current literature does not uniformly support the propensity of celebrities to "put the spotlight" on political issues or to persuade target audiences.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the subsequent chapters offer methods and data for evaluating celebrities' powers of spotlighting and persuasion.

Chapter 3 evaluates the effect of celebrity involvement on media coverage. If celebrities publicly involve themselves in political issues, is there an increase in coverage on that issue? If there is an increase in reporting on that issue, it illustrates an ability to raise awareness. This hypothesis was evaluated using content analysis of various media sources and a time series analysis. The results indicate that celebrities can, with a high degree of certainty, command attention on political issues. In individual cases, they outperform politicians and presidents across broadcast and print media alike. Moreover, a discrete event or series of celebrity interventions can increase total media coverage on that issue, even increasing the number of

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<sup>2</sup> The spotlight analogy is further developed in chapter 2 and sourced in Crosby and Bender (2000, 14) and Richardson (2002).

stories that do not make direct reference to the celebrity him/herself. The effect is also evident across media types. In other words, if the broadcast media has an interview with George Clooney that does not receive direct coverage in the print media, there may still be a burst of media attention in newspapers. Chapter 3 also poses some remaining questions introduced by the data. Clearly, celebrities do not outperform politicians in all circumstances. What conditions make celebrities most likely to spotlight issues?

This question is the subject of chapter 4. When evaluating all cases in the dataset, what combinations increase a celebrity's likelihood to focus attention on an issue? Do celebrities have an independent ability to gain attention, or are they better served in joint appearances with politicians? Are they more effective in broadcast news or in newspapers? Chapter 4 operationalizes political actors' "wins" and "losses" as a dependent variable, analyzing whether an intervention resulted in a statistically significant "bump" in media coverage. I then compare total wins and losses of celebrities to politicians across media type. In the cases selected, celebrities have more "victories" and are higher ranked than politicians across cases. Using logistical regression, results indicate that celebrities are more successful than politicians at attracting media attention in broadcast news and newspapers alike. In addition, the more celebrities that are involved in an intervention, the more likely they are to generate a positive spike in coverage. The same effect does not hold for more politicians at an intervention. If a celebrity and a politician engage in a joint intervention, newspapers are more likely to increase coverage on the issue in question, but broadcast media are not. For example, if George Clooney and Barack Obama meet at the White House to discuss Darfur, the spotlight effect is stronger in newspapers than in broadcast media.



Celebrities may be able to cast a spotlight on a political cause, but do their endorsements on that issue affect the way people feel? Do people agree with their endorsements? To discover whether celebrities had the power of persuasion on political issues, chapter 5 introduces an experimental design study. Participants were provided information about an issue and exposed to a frame where a celebrity endorsed a position or policy. Thus, celebrities' ability to persuade respondents in experimental groups to accept their proposed position was compared to the control groups that received no celebrity endorsement. Respondents were also asked about how they felt about the celebrity, how much credibility particular celebrities and politicians had on a particular issue area, what positions they expected celebrities to take on a given issue, and whether the selected celebrities' "talents, abilities, and professional projects" uniquely make him/her an "authentic spokesperson." Additional metrics were established to measure how deeply embedded a celebrity is in an advocacy network, the perceived importance of the issue at the time of the study, and the degree of polarization. Demographic data such as age, gender, and party affiliation were also gathered and included as control variables.

Chapter 5 finds that politicians, across the board, are generally more credible and expert than celebrities on most of the eight political issues included in this study. Some celebrities did rank higher than some politicians, but for the most part, high profile politicians such as Barack Obama, John Boehner, and Hillary Clinton topped the lists. Celebrities did top the lists in two issue areas: same-sex marriage and increased funding for international AIDS prevention. However, when focusing on two distinct issues—US intervention in the Syrian conflict and legalization of same-sex marriage—some celebrities were found to be uniquely persuasive versus the control group, a finding that was statistically significant while controlling for age, gender, or party affiliation. Some celebrities were persuasive whether they advocated for or

against a particular policy position. In these two issue areas, celebrities could persuade respondents independently of the feelings they had about the celebrity.

While some celebrities were quite persuasive, most, across the multiple issue areas, were not. Therefore, chapter 6 introduces an aggregate analysis to ascertain correlates of successful persuasion. Credibility of the celebrity had no effect on persuasion, although authenticity did, suggesting that a source of celebrity persuasion lies in his/her unique qualities and talents as an entertainer. Moreover, those celebrities that were more embedded in advocacy networks proved to be more persuasive. Thus, celebrities' connections to a larger movement may successfully compensate for a perceived lack of expertise. A celebrity advocating a policy that was inconsistent with respondent expectations did not seem to increase or diminish his/her likelihood to persuade. However, celebrities were more likely to persuade on issues that were considered to be of greater public importance and on issues that were less polemic. Indeed, celebrities seemed to be least persuasive when partisan respondents from one side or the other had very strong views on the issue, limiting the range of respondents who could be more easily persuaded.

Chapter 7 ultimately concludes that celebrities are capable of both spotlighting and persuading target audiences on political issues, making them potentially powerful and capable of affecting the public agenda. Clearly, not all celebrities have these abilities. However, many celebrities who engage in policy advocacy can be pivotal in achieving strategic goals. Moreover, the potential of celebrity power is substantial enough that politicians might well benefit or suffer because of their interventions.

## Celebrity Power and the Study of Politics

The findings of this dissertation potentially go a long way toward understanding why a public official would pay attention to a celebrity. To return to the example, if Bono can attract attention and is effective at persuasion, why would George Bush *not* want him on the team? Moreover, if Bono is actually better than Bush in at least one of these skills, Bush might perceive that he is *less* likely to “win” without Bono. Bono facilitates Bush’s ability to push debt relief on the public agenda. On the other hand, if Bono is effective at this agenda setting game and disagrees with Bush’s policy, perhaps Bono is more threatening outside of the White House than inside it. If Bono is willing to play on Bush’s team, why not let him? Answers to these questions illuminate why Bush might tolerate or even appreciate Bono. In addition, if the answers are conditional—that is, if a celebrity is skeptical of his/her ability to command media attention in a particular situation—it might explain why s/he might play the role of policy lobbyist and confidante instead of pursuing an outside strategy.

If celebrities are more powerful than the literature currently assumes, the implications for the public agenda literature in particular, and for political science in general, are profound. First, it adds a dimension to the policy entrepreneur literature by explaining how activists with unique skills of spotlighting and persuasion may be able to affect the policy process. Moreover, it specifies conditions under which celebrities can or cannot gain attention and/or persuade target audiences. Second, it may reveal something about the relative power of celebrities as political actors. The growth of mass media has made politics more like entertainment and entertainment more political (Marshall 1997; Shea 1998). If celebrities really compete with politicians for power, this challenges basic assumptions about how scholars study power in domestic and

international politics. In short, the introductory scenario of Bush jokingly standing to attention as Bono walks by may be less ridiculous than previously assumed.

## Chapter 2 - I'm Just a Singer in a Rock and Roll Band: Is Bono Wasting His Breath?

Photographs of the conservative president and the agitating rock star at Gleneagles made good entertainment on the evening news and fodder for talk show hosts in 2005. Similar images still do. As implied in chapter 1, Bono seemed to think his lobbying efforts made a difference, as do dozens of celebrities touting similar causes. However, are these celebrities simply offering up more entertainment? Does it really make any difference when celebrities intervene in politics? Or is Bono wasting his breath?

Larry Sabato, Robert Kent Gooch Professor of Politics at the University of Virginia and director of its Center for Politics, cynically suggests that celebrities have little impact on the political process:

My take on celebrity endorsements is that the only weak minds they can sway are fortunately not registered voters, or they don't show up at the polls. Very few Americans are empty vessels into which celebrities or the media can pour opinions...Celebrities don't sway any voters with substantial gray matter. I mean, who would vote for someone because Ben Affleck is for them? They'd have to be a blithering idiot. Generally, the blithering idiots are in the movie theaters on Election Day....Celebrities? Most of them couldn't get their spouses to endorse their choice. This is of great fascination to readers of *Variety*, and not to any real people — thank goodness (Ross 2004).

Until recently, most academics would likely agree. The idea of celebrity political power was so laughable, that the subject had hardly been pondered. The celebrities in politics literature has a few modern precursors to Shea's edited volume on politics and popular culture (Dyer and McDonald 1998; Gamson 1994; Marshall 1997; Meyer and Gamson 1995; Shea 1998; Street 1986, 1997) and a body of research has been slowly growing since then.<sup>3</sup> Still, the collection of

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<sup>3</sup> With few exceptions, the study of politics and popular culture was a marginalized and underdeveloped area of study among American politics scholars until the 1990s. Shea's (1998) edited volume on the subject lamented the lack of scholarship and the lack of seriousness given to the study of popular culture, but says little about celebrity.

articles and books on the subject could hardly be considered a subfield and the answers to research questions often offer ambiguous answers.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and organize much of the disparate research pertaining to the study of celebrity and politics to highlight the central problem that this dissertation purports to address: are celebrities capable of agenda setting and if so, how effective are they? The first section of this chapter will differentiate celebrities from other types of political actors and detail the ways that celebrities have emerged as competitors with traditional politicians. Drawing from theory and empirical research, the second section will conceptualize and compare politician and celebrity power. The third section will focus on agenda setting, explaining how celebrities act as policy entrepreneurs in order to advance their causes. The final section will explain how this dissertation intends to evaluate celebrities' potential for agenda setting.

### **The Concerned Celebrity**

Reporting of celebrity activists on websites, newscasts, and the pages of newspapers has increased substantially since the 1940s when celebrities such as Frank Sinatra endorsed Franklin D. Roosevelt for president. Observers at the Democratic Action Committee luncheon in New York and the Republican opponents who criticized the president's affiliation with a "mere crooner" would not have been able to imagine a world where reality television star Kim Kardashian announces, "Let's get this trending!" With a few taps on the buttons of her cell phone, she tweets a hashtag to over 14 million followers, causing "#Armenian Genocide" to become one of the most searched for terms on Google in hours (Kendzior 2012; Wheeler 2013, 44–45). While multiple factors have led to the increased prominence and perceived importance

of celebrity in modern society, for simplicity, these factors can be categorized into two trends (Marshall 1997, 25–26; Stohl, Stohl, and Stohl 2011; West and Orman 2003, 2–8; Wheeler 2013, 44). First, technology has both empowered and exploited audiences. Media organizations, mindful of competition and profits, have utilized celebrities to meet a market demand. Second, some celebrities have become autonomous from their business benefactors, allowing them a greater opportunity to express themselves politically. The following sections will address each of these trends.<sup>4</sup>

### *Technology, Media, and the Audience*

Most would argue that the accuracy and quality of media reporting has improved over the past 100 years. Many would argue that the “press” is “enabling” to democracy as it presents “diverse views and critical scrutiny of those in power,” media and entertainment organizations remain, first and foremost, businesses (Corner and Pels 2003, 3–4).<sup>5</sup> The business part of the press also makes it potentially “disabling” to democracy when the pursuit of “the bottom line” puts media organizations at odds with honest, in depth reporting for the purpose of serving the populace (Bennett 2012; W. J. Campbell 2003; Kuypers 2013).

Over time, however, technology has increased the importance of the “business side” of the media business. It has accelerated speed of delivery and enhanced the entertainment value of media so that people can consume entertainment or news on demand at any time of day or night through multiple delivery mechanisms, observing some of the highest quality writing, photos,

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<sup>4</sup> There is an associated literature on whether celebrity politics is enabling or disabling to democracy (Corner and Pels 2003; Couldry and Markham 2007; Giroux 2002; Gitlin 1998; Rojek 2010; Rosamond 2011; Tsaliki, Frangonikolopoulos, and Huliaras 2011; G. Turner 2004; Wheeler 2011, 2013; Zoonen 2004). While that literature is complementary to the work of this dissertation, its normative nature is somewhat beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>5</sup> Kuypers (2013) argues that the modern media has returned to its partisan roots after a brief historical period where “objectivity” was attempted.

video, and audio that cater to an audience's personal preferences. These "audiences" have grown in power since the emergence of consumer capitalism. An audience in a capitalist economy and democratic society has purchasing power, makes political decisions, includes people of varying power capacities, and involves both observer and participant in an interactive process (Marshall 1997, 63). An audience's social power is evident in the way that media companies and political organizations alike attempt to learn more about their audiences. They target messages, programs, and advertising to the appropriate consumer, ironically persuading members of demographic groups of their unique individuality in order to sell massive quantities of identical products (Adorno 2002; Fenster and Swiss 1999, 226; Marshall 1997, 63–64).

The entertainment industry responds to consumer and media demand by manufacturing and marketing art and entertainment as if they were automobiles or bars of soap (Adorno 2002; Balliger 1999, 58; Boorstin 1992; Fenster and Swiss 1999, 225; Gramsci 2011; Marshall 1997; Martiniello and Lafleur 2008). Celebrities are part of a larger business machine that serves to publicize and promote them and their projects (Marshall 1997, 25–26). Politicians have followed the same trend. By 1960, the image of John F. Kennedy mattered, particularly in his presidential debate versus Richard Nixon. The accompanying fame associated with this "commodification of the individual" means that celebrities and politicians alike become highly visible and immediately recognizable products. Daniel Boorstin referred to this as the "age of contrivance" where public officials and celebrities (who are "pseudo-people") participate in scripted, counterfeit versions of real events ("pseudo-events") to depict and construct public images that may be alternative, phony, or false representations of reality (Boorstin 1992).

The news media willingly convert these events and people into easily digestible tabloid "infotainment," presenting "complex issues...in terms of human experience" and utilizing



“images, especially emotional ones...to illustrate news events.” News organizations have discovered that audiences respond well when stories are modeled after fiction with clear beginnings, middles, and ends, and are selected based on their potential for displaying high levels of action, conflict, or novelty (Bennett 2012; Cook 2005, 2–3, 104; E. J. Epstein 1973, 262–263). The mantra, “if it bleeds, it leads,” does not only pertain to television news coverage, but also to newspapers (Jowell et al. 2007, 109). As a result, news organizations present politicians in constant, extreme conflict with each other, presenting simplified soundbytes of complex issues. Celebrity interviews on their latest project offer a break from serious news, and those celebrities that advocate political issues are both entertaining and novel. In this way, politicians and celebrities alike enter into a symbiotic relationship with the media where public figures build consumer loyalty and peddle their goods (public policies, music, film, personalities), while media outlets benefit from the attention that these figures attract, which translates to advertisement revenue (G. Turner 2004).

Because market share is important, media organizations compete for consumers by adopting similar business models and presentation styles. Taking into account budget, time, advertising revenue, and other business considerations, newsrooms establish standard operating procedures to avoid “crises or intervention from network executives” (E. J. Epstein 1973, 259). In addition, there is an incredible competition in the industry to be the first to break a story. At the individual level, reporters monitor what others in rival organizations are doing to avoid being “scooped.” At the organizational level, news corporations constantly evaluate other media sources, even different types of global media outlets, including newspapers, television and radio news, and websites (Boczkowski 2009; Bourdieu 1996; Lim 2012; Reinemann 2004; Weaver et al. 2007). An increased reliance on electronic information has intensified imitation (Boczkowski

2009) and reporters and editors often choose stories because they expect that a rival might do it (Lim 2012).

Finally, the demand for more content has led journalists to become more reliant upon public officials to give them information that they can deliver to the public without much effort or critique (Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2008, 3; Cook 2005, 102–103). It has also forced journalists to “figure out how to make journalistic silk purses out of the sow’s ears that officials occasionally give them” (Cook 2005, 102). Journalists have increasingly turned to “reality” and celebrity stories, presenting these stories as if they were as significant as political news (Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2008; Bennett 2012). This kind of coverage can lead to sensationalism, not unlike “yellow journalism,” where stories are “over-hyped” to increase attention and circulation by either heightening the importance of trivial issues that are not of public importance or trivializing issues of public importance by oversimplification in a tabloid format (Bennett 2012; Stephens 2007; Thompson 1999). The ultimate result of the demand for more content and for the best “scoop” has driven reporters to source non-experts and non-celebrities through citizen-generated content. “Facts” derived from Twitter and other social media have often been treated uncritically, which has led to poor reporting from otherwise reputable newspaper, radio, television, and online news outlets (Folkenflik 2012; Guthrie 2013; Lutz and Rogers 2012; O’Neal 2013; Rieder 2013; Wigley and Fontenot 2011).

### *Celebrity autonomy*

The process of turning people into celebrity commodities makes them famous, but it does not necessarily make them political. The news media does not need entertainers to have opinions on political issues. Reporters can manufacture news with entertainers just being entertainers.

Celebrity advocacy requires a conscious decision, which consists of the individual desire and freedom to “get involved.” Desire and freedom do not emerge easily or naturally.

Just like other citizens, many celebrities who have the freedom to get involved in political advocacy do not have the desire to do so, or have mixed motives. Some seek out causes in the same way they seek product endorsements. They look for causes that match their image and avoid controversy and believe that certain types of political involvement will enhance their images as “all-around” individuals who do more than feed mundane promotions of their latest projects to a hungry media (Becker 2010, 95–96; Duvall 2010; Meyer and Gamson 1995; Tsaliki, Frangonikolopoulos, and Huliaras 2011, 9).

On the other hand, many celebrities who have the desire to express themselves may not have the freedom to do so, since they are limited by contractual obligations. Prior to the 1960s, celebrities were largely dependent upon their employers. Actors and musicians were often exclusively signed to a single studio and athletes were not free agents. Movie studios, record companies, or sponsors of athletes and sports teams were concerned about controlling the image of celebrities for fear that the tarnishing of a celebrity’s image would adversely affect movie or album sales or attendance at sporting events. Contracts sometimes stipulated that the artist or athlete could not speak against the interests of the employer. Those celebrities who had commercial corporate sponsorship had even less freedom of expression for fear that speaking out could tarnish their image and risk loss of a product endorsement contract. Even today, “morals clauses” in entertainment contracts are commonly used as an excuse to release actors whose behavior undermines the success of a project. For example, Charlie Sheen’s erratic behavior led to his release from the popular sitcom, *Two and a Half Men* (A. W. Campbell 1994, 394; Huliaras and Tzifakis 2011; “Morals Clause at Issue in Charlie Sheen Legal Fight” 2011;

Williamson 2011; Zirin 2009). However, changes in the entertainment industry have given some celebrities a greater degree of autonomy, which has led to an increase in celebrity advocacy.

Two factors are believed to drive autonomy: money and an emergent authenticity norm.

First, celebrities that are more financially successful are likely to have greater autonomy. The Beatles in the 1960s, for example, had latitude to express themselves more flexibly because they were an industry “cash cow.” From the Beatles’ earliest American tours they put out a press statement as part of their performance policy directed at segregationists, “We will not appear unless Negroes are allowed to sit anywhere” (Miles 2009). John Lennon said, “We never play to segregated audiences and we aren't going to start now. I'd sooner lose our appearance money” (Cornish 2011). Subsequent statements about civil rights and religion led to Beatles boycotts and record burnings in southern American states. Ultimately, the Beatles were able to direct attention to this issue and demand changes to policies based on their popularity and commercial influence. Political involvement is potentially a commercial risk for entertainers, but wealth may reduce that risk.

Second, changes in the music industry in the 1960s transformed the marketable image of the modern musician, emancipating many artists from such “moral” issues and increasing their level of autonomy. Unlike actors, whose business is to play someone other than themselves, rock and folk musicians such as the Beatles and Bob Dylan were increasingly marketed as genuine artists who wrote and produced their own music. These changes pressured many musicians to meet an “authenticity norm,” which pigeonholed some musicians as superficial and others as deep and artistic. Those who fell into the latter category were less likely to be commercially “punished” for sharing their opinion, because political expression fit into their constructed image of authenticity (Ballantine 1984; Balliger 1999, 60–63; Brackett 1999;

Fischlin 2003, 11; Grossberg 1987; Kruse 1999, 87–89; Marshall 1997, 150, 75; Mattern 1998, 16–17; T. Rose 1994, 18; Schoonmaker 2003b, 2003a; Small 1987; Veal 2000; Winstock 1970, 70–71). Indeed, audiences may be more likely to punish an “inauthentic” celebrity than one whose image depends upon the perception of authenticity.

While many celebrities who serve advertisers still feel pressure not to make political statements, the emergence of free agency has led some actors and sports figures to become more outspoken (Wertheim 2008; Williamson 2011; Zirin 2009). Still, it may still be less normatively acceptable for athletes and actors to get politically involved. Some, like Olympic runner Nick Symmonds, describe the public pressure not to speak out, as documented in chapter 1 (Ashlock 2013; Symmonds 2013). Likewise, when Tim Robbins, a principal actor in the popular baseball movie *Bull Durham*, spoke out against the Iraq war in 2003, the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame cancelled a the celebration of that film’s 15 year anniversary (Hernández 2003; Rosenbaum 2003; Sports Illustrated 2003).<sup>6</sup> Moreover, modern audiences may be less tolerant of country music artists taking on political positions that are not apolitical or conservative, as evidenced by the Dixie Chicks’ unintentional political firestorm with their fifteen famous words on a British stage, “Just so you know, we’re ashamed the President of the United States is from Texas.” The comment seriously undermined their commercial viability as radio stations pulled their songs from playlists and fans staged CD smashing parties (Brost 2013; Firestein 2005; Rudder 2005, 208; Scholten 2007; Van Sickle 2005; Willman 2007). The authenticity norm clearly does not extend to all celebrities or even all genres of music.

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<sup>6</sup> Hall president Dale Petroskey said that Robbins’ public criticism undermined the country and “ultimately could put our troops in even more danger.” Subsequently, an interview with Robbins by Matt Lauer on the Today Show was cut short when Robbins stepped up his criticism.

## **Qualifying Celebrity Power**

The previous section illustrated how traditional celebrities have become potentially politicized while political figures increasingly behave as Hollywood actors, engaging in the image-building common in the entertainment industry (Corner and Pels 2003, 2; West and Orman 2003, x). The public sanctions these individuals with power “based on similar emotive and irrational, yet culturally deeply embedded, sentiments” causing “a convergence in the source of power between the political leader and other forms of celebrity” (Marshall 1997, 19). If the media has provided a cultural power to celebrities, how does that power compare to politicians’ power? Given that the political science literature on celebrity is sparse, the following section draws from a diversity of sources in order to summarize theories and empirical findings on the potential power of celebrity.

Celebrities have much in common with politicians in that they have similar relationships with the media and have public personas that are akin to brand recognition for a product. However, one key difference between them is that politicians hold public office and formal reins of power while celebrities do not. Thus, celebrities are more like activists than like politicians. They are outsiders trying to pressure the system to attain specific ends. To understand not only the power potential for celebrities but also their differences from politicians, Table 2.1 summarizes a “bases of power” typology, which provides a means to compare types of power across those who hold formal institutional power and those who do not (Costa and Martins 2011; French and Raven 1959; Raven 1993).

<b>Types of power</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Legitimate	Based on the subject's perception that the influencing agent has the legitimate right to indicate his behavior and that this indication should be complied with.
Expert	Based on the subject's perception that the influencing agent has knowledge and expertise in a certain area.
Reward	Based on the subject's perception of the influencing agent's ability to reward him for the desired behavior
Coercive	Based on the subject's perception of the influencing agent's ability to apply punishments.
Informational	Based on the influencing agent's presentation of information and logical arguments.
Referent	Based on the subject's identification with the influencing agent, seeking to behave like him.

Source: French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1993; Costa & Martins, 2011

**Table 2.1 - French and Raven's Power Typology**

Politicians possess all of these powers. They hold legitimate power as publicly elected or appointed officials, coercive and reward power in the form of creation of laws, execution and enforcement of laws, and access to the resources necessary to attain public office and to facilitate others' entry into public office. They also hold expert power based on their specialized knowledge and connections within a particular policy area. They likely would not have been elected to public office without the informational means to persuade. Likewise, they have varying amounts of referent power. Not all politicians are particularly charismatic, but based on party identification, which is a significant source of social identity for many when political issues are salient, citizens do identify with them. They also have to at least be likable enough to get elected.

Celebrities possess most of these powers in degrees. To what extent can we describe these powers of celebrity and how do they compare with politicians' powers? The following sections organize the scholarship on celebrity power using French and Raven's typology.

## *Legitimacy*

Elections and appointments to public office provide political legitimacy. Of course, some celebrities become public officials such as Ronald Reagan, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jesse Ventura, Bill Bradley, John Glenn, Sonny Bono, and Jack Kemp. Once a celebrity is elected, their position in public office becomes their primary vocation, at least for a time. Unless celebrities attain legitimate power, their powers are more akin to those of activists.

There are two primary differences between celebrity activists and ordinary activists. The first and most obvious is that their fame sets them apart from typical activists. According to Jamie Drummond, global strategist for the Jubilee 2000 “Drop the Debt” campaign and the man who recruited Bono to the cause, “Bono got meetings with people that we couldn’t meet with. If you’re looking for the X factor, it is that we managed to win over the attention of the media, which usually ignore a cause like this. And that was through Bono” (Stockman 2005, 152). Huddard (2005) calls celebrities “symbolic heroes” in activism: people who have the status and utilize most of the same tactics as other activists, but by nature of their stature can amplify a social cause.

Second, celebrities are, in the words of Francesco Alberoni (2007), “politically irresponsible.” Their independent fame makes them free agents, so their actions can be unaccountable and less coordinated with broader social movements. Media organizations report on celebrities’ random statements or uncoordinated events, causing traditional activists to “jump on the bandwagon” if the publicity brings positive benefits or to distance themselves if the movement suffers from the fallout. Alternatively, if an organization recruits a celebrity to advance their cause, the effort may backfire. Celebrities sometimes lose interest, experience personal problems on the front pages of tabloids, or fail to stay on message. Thus, when



celebrity activists fail, their failures are more public and consequential than those of ordinary activists (Rosamond 2011; Stohl, Stohl, and Stohl 2011; de Waal 2008; Wheeler 2011). For example, Bob Dylan had been performing at rallies organized by Martin Luther King in the early 1960s, even performing “Blowin’ in the Wind” at the March on Washington in 1963. In December of that year, one month after the assassination of President Kennedy, the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee (NECLC) honored Dylan with a civil rights award for his songs that raised the profile of the plight of African Americans. During his acceptance speech at their annual banquet, a drunken Dylan talked about how he “saw a lot of himself” in Lee Harvey Oswald (Crosby and Bender 2000, 12; Dylan 1963). The crowd booed him out of the room.

Because celebrities are not legitimately powerful and are technically more like activists, the following sections focus upon the forms of power that are available to celebrities and define those powers primarily utilizing terminology from the transnational advocacy network and social movement literature.

### *Expertise and Credibility*

Celebrities are credible and expert at their professions. People may think that Mariah Carey is a good singer who does good things for the Fresh Air Fund, but few would assume that she is an expert on environmental issues or equipped to be a policy maker. Angelina Jolie, George Clooney, and Bono are not professors, professional lobbyists, or policy makers. Celebrities will generally be perceived first and foremost based on their abilities—as a musician, actor, or athlete.

Must celebrities gain expertise in order to become credible? The advertising literature suggests that it is not essential, but it is highly desirable. Perceived expertise of celebrities is the

only source factor that has a significant impact on intent to purchase. Those who have perceived expertise are thought of as more attractive and more liked than those who do not, and credible sources tend to be more persuasive (Buhr, Simpson, and Pryor 1987; Horai, Naccari, and Fatoullah 1974; Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953; Lammie 2007; Maddux and Rogers 1980; Ohanian 1991; Speck, Schumann, and Thompson 1988). However, celebrities are often not seen as expert, credible, believable, or effective (Atkin and Block 1983; Freiden 1984), although some scholars have suggested that celebrities are more persuasive than “experts” (Becker 2010, 116).

In fact, few celebrities claim to be experts or actively pursue expertise, although some attempt to compensate for their lack of expertise. Ben Affleck, who testified twice in the House of Representatives and once in the Senate on the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, argues:

I knew I wouldn't be a credible advocate if I wasn't taken seriously, if I hadn't done my homework. And so, you know, in order to do it, you had to do it properly.... there definitely [is] a sense of resentment towards actors, and the idea is, well, you're not an expert, and that's true.... I never pretended to be a technocrat or a wonk or certainly, you know, an expert, a special envoy (Greene 2014).

To compensate “properly” for a lack of expertise, celebrities do two kinds of “homework.” The first is the establishment of experiential credibility. George Clooney, for example, sneaked into some of the worst, war-torn areas of Sudan to witness the plight of refugees living in caves (Straziuso 2012). Days later, he testified before Congress about his experience. Because of his resources, he was able to fund and execute the trip. Because of his high profile, he was able to draw attention from national leaders. Nevertheless, it was his expertise on this focused event—the fact that he was able to see things on the ground that no other expert could have recently seen—that made his content worth hearing. Whether it is Bono touring Africa or El Salvador or Angelina Jolie visiting a refugee camp, many celebrities put

themselves on the ground, often among victims, in an effort to communicate to observers that they know and understand something that the regular citizen or legislator does not.

A second kind of homework is establishing a connection with a network of activists. Transnational advocacy networks provide an enabling means for individuals to produce meaningful change by operating transnationally within larger organizations (Antrobus and Sen 2006; Batliwala and Brown 2006; Garwood 2005; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002; Mekata 2006; M. Rodrigues 2004; Shaw 2005). They undertake voluntary collective action across state borders and are distinguishable by the centrality of principled ideas or values in motivating their formation, the belief that individuals can make a difference, the mobilization of information, and the employment of sophisticated political strategies. They are comprised of activists, local social movements, professionals, scientists, foundations, the media, churches, economic actors such as trade unions and firms, consumer organizations, research and advocacy NGOs, and intellectuals (Clark 2006, 133; Keck and Sikkink 1998, xi, 1; Naidoo 2006, 54).

A celebrity that allies with a network or affiliated organization or institution gains access to dozens of organizations, thousands of activists, a multitude of experts, and additional resources. For example, when Bono first became involved in debt relief with the Jubilee 2000 campaign, he contacted Kennedy family activist Bobby Shriver who suggested that Bono “go back to school” before lobbying Congress. Shriver connected him to World Bank head James Wolfensohn, ex-Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volker, and David Rockefeller to discuss the issue. He then studied under Jeffrey Sachs at Harvard (N. D. Jackson 2008, 70). When he lobbied Congress, Bono’s arguments might have independently persuaded legislators to forgive the debt of developing countries (Busby 2007). However, Bono gained credibility as he was

flanked by experts and connected politicians such as Jeffrey Sachs and Bobby Shriver and backed by an advocacy network. Bono became the articulate mouthpiece of a coordinated lobby.

### *Reward/Coercion*

Celebrities may possess reward and coercive power at some level. Two categories of tactics used by activists directly refer to reward and coercive power: leverage politics and accountability politics. “Leverage politics” refers to activists’ attempts to secure commitments from leaders and institutions on policies by linking an issue to use of money, goods, votes in international organizations, powerful allies, prestigious offices, or other benefits (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 16, 24–29, 35, 206; M. Rodrigues 2004; Shaw 2005). Here, the goal is to get public officials to change their position. “Accountability politics” is where activists attempt to get officials to take public positions on issues and “hold powerful actors to their words, policies or principles” (Batliwala and Brown 2006; Keck and Sikkink 1998, 19–27). Perhaps “talk is cheap,” but it may not be if networks can pressure target actors to act according to their stated intentions. In this case, they pressure a target politician into doing what they promised to do. To achieve these goals, activists may get financial institutions to link money to salient issues as a source of pressure. By mobilizing the masses, they may affect public opinion through the media and then pressure policy makers. If target actors are vulnerable or sensitive to their organization or state’s reputation among the “good opinion” of others as described in the previous section, activists may exert “moral leverage” against them as well by “shaming” them for bad policies and practices (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 23–24).

Celebrities have greater potential for power in these tactics than regular non-celebrity activists. As entertainment celebrities have gained in wealth, they have not only increased their

ability to manipulate their media image more effectively, but also to exert leverage by contributing money to organizations and campaigns and demanding a greater role in their promotion. One could argue that the ability to give money or threaten to deny it would make celebrities as potentially powerful as individuals of similar wealth (Marshall 1997; West and Orman 2003, 19). While this coercive and reward power may not rival the legitimate power of public officials in wealthy democratic states, or even the concentrated wealth of multinational corporations, it may buy influence in places.

Another factor is fame. High profile celebrities, because of their ability to command attention, may be more effective at pressuring public officials or holding them accountable to their promises. While the literature offers little hard research on this hypothesis, there are anecdotal examples that support this possibility. For example, Bono, while lobbying for debt relief and AIDS funding with the Jubilee 2000 campaign, played a role in shaming US senators and representatives in their own districts during campaigns and subsequently received both attention and commitment from these players (N. D. Jackson 2008, 151–152). Likewise, “Little” Steven Van Zandt of Bruce Springsteen’s E Street Band formed Artists United Against Apartheid to shame governments who did not go through with promises to sanction South Africa. The primary vehicle was a song and music video in which dozens of popular musicians appeared. Van Zandt not only shamed the world’s major governments for failing to sanction South Africa, but also shamed many of his fellow musicians who evaded a United Nations sanctioned cultural boycott by playing at the Sun City Casino and Resort (Hawkins 2011; Young 2013).

How effective were these shaming efforts? Both Bono and Van Zant got what they wanted. However, both also worked through transnational advocacy networks to attain their

ends, so it is difficult to assign credit to the celebrity intervention alone. To prove that celebrities have the power to shame or praise political actors effectively, one has to first prove that celebrities are capable of attracting sufficient media attention on a political issue and that they are sufficiently persuasive enough to be threatening. Otherwise, both efforts may have been acts of conscience that ended well enough. If it can be demonstrated that celebrities are indeed capable of these skills, it is quite possible that celebrities' coercive and reward powers go beyond distributing or denying money. They may include the ability to make life difficult for public officials by inspiring audiences to validate or question their credibility.

### *Informational Power*

Informational power is based on the influencing agent's presentation of information and logical arguments (French and Raven 1959; Raven 1993). "Information politics" is the "ability to quickly and credibly generate politically usable information and move it to where it will have the most impact" (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 16). On a most basic level, information politics refers to the mechanisms used to distribute information. Activists make use of social media, websites, and email in order to organize and communicate their messages. They stage events, give speeches, write editorials, make endorsements, and perform interviews. On another level, information politics also refers to the construction of the message. Activists frame stories and testimonies that appeal to shared principles, utilize language for maximum persuasive impact, explain problems, blame responsible parties, and attempt to set agendas (Antrobus and Sen 2006, 149; Appaduri 2006, xi; Clark 2006; Grove and Carter 1999; Keck and Sikkink 1998, 16, 24–29, 202; Mekata 2006, 186; Nelson 2004; Overdevest 2005; Riker 1996; Tarrow 1996). These strategies not only inform target audiences, but also set public discourse with the intention of

changing language, changing minds, and even uniting diverse actors behind a common cause. This section on informational power will focus on three aspects of informational politics: spotlighting, persuasion, and symbolic politics.

*Spotlighting.* One manifestation of information politics is celebrities' use of fame to direct attention toward particular causes. For example, during the civil rights movement, Harry Belafonte explains that Martin Luther King was inspirational and a good organizer. "All they needed was somebody to say, 'Where do we go?' They just needed someone to point and since I'm always pointing anyway, Dr. King made me the pointer" (Crosby and Bender 2000, 14). Bono echoes Belafonte's analogy: "We have a spotlight on us. I'm just doing what everyone else would do if they had the time and the money. U2 fans have given me a great life, and I'm a spoiled-rotten rock star...In return, there's a deal. One, don't bend over, and two, use this spotlight to shine on bigger problems" (Richardson 2002). If a celebrity can attract attention, the celebrity not only becomes the message, but also the medium.

However, some celebrities employ alternative methods and focus primarily upon the medium itself. For example, Serj Tankian of System of a Down and Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine founded Axis of Justice to "bring together musicians, fans of music, and grassroots political organizations to fight for social justice" and to "build a bridge between fans of music around the world and local political organizations to effectively organize around issues of peace, human rights, and economic justice" ("Fighting for Social Justice" n.d., "Serj Tankian" n.d.). They use their celebrity names to host a website that acts as a communication link to connect organizations with common causes. Rather than seeking out interviews on network news, they pursue a grassroots model focused on organizing and lobbying.

What does the literature conclude about the ability of celebrities to attract media attention toward political issues? Very little. Some scholars argue that celebrities can be powerful political communicative agents that raise awareness, raise the profile of some issues, and legitimize some actions (Njoroge 2011; Rosamond 2011). They may provide focus for causes, which make them a successful in political communication (Wheeler 2011). They may also create a sense of ethical obligation and sympathy for causes that seem distant (Rosamond 2011; Wheeler 2011). Having said that, some scholars argue that celebrities do not increase focus on an issue, but rather contribute to a larger media bandwagon effect (Hawkins 2011; Tait 2011). Using the *New York Times* as a source, Strine found no significant difference in the amount of media attention given to committees hosting celebrity witnesses versus committees which do not invite celebrity witnesses (Strine 2004).

*Persuasion.* Many celebrities are also known to be quite persuasive, perhaps based on the nature of their art and skills. Musicians authentically deliver their music; actors exploit emotion. Anecdotally, some empirical examples support this assertion. Joan Baez successfully appealed to President Jimmy Carter to send the Navy's Sixth Fleet to rescue refugees from Southeast Asia (Ali 2013; Berman 2005, 242). Bono famously made conservative Senator Jesse Helms cry by connecting with him on their shared Christian faith, which broke his resistance to release aid to Africa (Busby 2007). Drummond summarizes how these sorts of events run counter to expectations, yet the potential for successful persuasion and personal appeals is there: "We expected that [Bono's involvement] might be concerts and records, but it turned out that Bono's a very brilliant political lobbyist" (Stockman 2005, 154).

Are stories such as these supported in the academic literature? Most of the literature on celebrity persuasion focuses on endorsements, particularly product endorsements. While



celebrities are highly desired for advertisement, in practice, placing an attractive celebrity next to a car to sell it is not as simple of a prospect as it seems. Celebrities do attract attention to ads (Atkin and Block 1983; Miciah and Shanklin 1994) and make ads more believable and memorable (Friedman and Friedman 1979; Kamins 1970; Lammie 2007). Celebrities also improve brand recognition (Gamson 1994, 62; Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983). Attractiveness also is potentially persuasive, serving as a cue to make inferences about one's characteristics, abilities, and motivations (Berscheid and Walster 1974). Sources that are familiar, physically attractive, or similar to the target audience are more persuasive (McGuire 1985). Celebrities are often attractive and usually familiar, which makes them more persuasive.

However, the attractiveness of the actor does not necessarily transfer to the product. If anything, the "cultural meaning" attached to a celebrity can be transferred to "the symbolic properties of the product" (McCracken 1989). If cultural meaning can be transferred to a product, then advertisers must be extremely careful about their choices of celebrity because of the potential for both positive and negatively transferred meanings. Celebrities are most effective when the image of the product matches the image of the celebrity (Friedman and Friedman 1979; Kahle and Homer 1985; Kamins 1970; McCracken 1989), although these findings have not been consistently demonstrated when matching a celebrity to a candidate or cause (Lammie 2007).

Surprisingly, celebrity product endorsement rarely increases purchasing behavior or intentions. Advertisers' expectations have only been satisfactorily met in one out of five campaigns (Lammie 2007; Miciah and Shanklin 1994). An overexposed celebrity generates lower consumer purchase intention than an underexposed celebrity (Roy 2012). A celebrity will

be an ineffective endorser if a product cannot enhance a person's attractiveness or if it detracts from the person's attractiveness (Kahle and Homer 1985; Kamins 1970).<sup>7</sup>

This mixed record for advertising, an activity in which celebrities regularly engage, complicates celebrities' endorsement of politicians or issues. Celebrities' skills at persuasion in politics have not been extensively studied, although there is a growing body of research on celebrity endorsements of political candidates. Celebrity endorsements may be helpful in getting attention, raising money, and appealing to youth (Atkin and Block 1983; Becker 2010, 116; Meyer and Gamson 1995; Pease and Brewer 2008; Torrey 2008), although the relationship between youth and celebrity persuasion has been disputed (Duvall 2010; Lammie 2007, 4; Wood and Herbst 2007). Scholars identified a positive effect on Barack Obama's candidacy when Oprah Winfrey endorsed him, but whether that effect is unique to Obama and Winfrey is not established (Garthwaite and Moore 2008; Pease and Brewer 2008). Nownes (2012) argues that celebrity endorsements are more likely to influence citizens' views of political parties than vote choices or views of political candidates. Moreover, third-person effects are also strong. Individuals tend to believe that celebrity endorsements are more likely to affect other people, particularly those in out-groups. Celebrity endorsements may not change the attitudes of voters, but may instead have a polarizing effect on voters who are already decided on candidates (Brubaker 2011).

Much less research has focused on celebrity endorsements on political issues. If endorsements of candidates are like endorsements of issues, one could infer that celebrities are more likely to be persuasive with young people and less likely to be persuasive on polarizing issues. Political science research on persuasion is consistent with these inferences. When one's

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<sup>7</sup> This finding has interesting implications for political research if the analogy between products and political candidates or causes holds. In order to be effective, the celebrity would have to make the target audience feel more attractive or better about themselves in order to be effective.

views are closely tied to moral values, people are resistant to change and perceive their opinions as facts (Johnson and Eagly 1989; Morgan, Skitka, and Wisneski 2010; Turiel 2002). Becker's research concludes that celebrities were more likely to be persuasive with young people, young women, and Democrats, particularly where the issue had low importance or were "soft" social issues like same-sex marriage. Celebrities were less persuasive on "hard" issues such as the economy. Moreover, video appeals by celebrities were more effective than text appeals, which implies that audiences may respond to broadcast media differently than newspaper or other written media (Becker 2010, 112, 116).

Lammie (2007) argues that persuasion is affected by a "three-way interactive process" involving the celebrity, party identification, and the perceived affiliation of the celebrity so that one's party identity is central to evaluation of the celebrity's message. Democrats respond to certain celebrities differently than Republicans, a finding consistent with the larger political science literature on party identification and persuasion (Bartels 2002; Brady and Sniderman 1985; A. Campbell et al. 1980; Dancey and Goren 2010; Gaines et al. 2007). Moreover, party match improves persuasion, suggesting that someone delivering a message who shares beliefs with a target audience is more likely to be persuasive (Nelson and Garst 2005).

*Symbolic politics.* "Symbolic politics" can also be considered as a form of information politics.<sup>8</sup> It is the "ability to call upon symbols, actions, or stories that make sense of a situation for an audience that is frequently far away" physically or emotionally (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 23–24). A public speaker who is skilled at the use of symbolic politics can refer to such symbols in order to not only inspire and unite those who may associate with them, but may also use them

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<sup>8</sup> The transnational advocacy network literature treats symbolic politics as a separate category of activity from information politics. Because French and Raven's typology groups together forms of information distribution and persuasion, it makes sense to place symbolic politics in this category. Despite its treatment of symbolic politics as a separate category, the transnational advocacy network literature has done little to specify or test its impact or acknowledge its potential power.

as a dividing line between identity groups: those who support from those who oppose the symbol, potentially polarizing the divide. In this way, symbols bring people together and tear them apart, depending upon the rhetoric of the speaker. Objects such as flags are perceived as a threat to some and reassurance to others. Images of leaders and statements attributed to them are subjectively interpreted based upon the individual's beliefs. Rhetorical references to particular public officials can unite or divide people (Edelman 1985; Perloff 2013).

Symbols are universally used by politicians and activists alike to frame arguments and ultimately to persuade a target audience (Barnett 1998, 4, 10; Keck and Sikkink 1998, 22–23; Grove and Carter 1999). Activists attempt to connect target actors with causes and people outside of their normal experience, negatively associate “bad” actors with despised groups or individuals, or unify disparate groups around common ideas. Celebrities are as capable as anyone of utilizing these rhetorical arguments (Marshall 1997, 54–55; Weber 1978, 1112).

What makes celebrities different is that, like a flag or a president, they are symbols, too. Media attention provides cultural meaning for celebrities—first, based on their role as entertainers and the symbolic information associated with the image they have constructed and the entertainment they produce; second, based on the personal information they share about their supposedly “real” life that deepens public knowledge about them. The public then forms subjective impressions of them based upon this information (Dyer and McDonald 1998; Marshall 1997, 19).

Sometimes the political symbolism works as intended where artist, organizers, and “art” coincide to deliver the framed message. Consider the case of David Hasselhoff's appearance in Berlin in 1989. Hasselhoff is often apologetically described as “big in Germany.” During that time, one German newspaper displayed the headline, “Hasselhoff: Not since Elvis” and another

displayed, “Hasselhoff: Not since the Beatles” (Barr 2001; “Did David Hasselhoff Really Help End the Cold War?” 2004). One month after the official fall of the Berlin Wall, Hasselhoff was invited to headline a New Year’s Eve concert there. He apparently insisted that he would do it if he could sing his number one hit, “Looking for Freedom” from atop the Berlin Wall itself. This request was supported and arranged by West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and East German communist leader Erich Honecker. German reunification was on the mind of many, but not a “done deal” at that point. Hasselhoff’s role in this historical event is clearly not quantifiable, although organizers of this event likely had symbolic politics in mind when they put “The Hoff” on “The Wall” (Bainbridge 2006; Orth 2006; Patel 2013; Witchel 2010, 4–5).

In many cases, celebrities’ political messages are more subjectively interpreted than the message advanced by Hasselhoff. The Beatles’ 1967 performance of “All You Need is Love” on the first global television program, transmitted by Telstar to 350 million viewers worldwide was “intended to serve as an emblem of the benevolence of expanding Western influence”, but “it also became an anthem of countercultures that were resisting the power of authoritarian states throughout the world” (Hall 2006, 18). Likewise, “Born in the USA” by Bruce Springsteen was critical of the US for its treatment of returning Vietnam veterans and implicitly critical of the Reagan administration for shutting down factories and closing off opportunities for veterans to return to work. However, in the 1984 presidential campaign, both Reagan and Mondale campaigns adopted the song as their own. The anthemic riff and repeating chorus of “I Was Born in the USA” in front of a backdrop of American flags and festive cheering destroyed any irony the song intended. Listeners, politicians, and audiences in general separated the literal message of the song from the feeling evoked by the music and its contextual use (Grossberg 1987; Kruse 1999; Marshall 1997, 75; Mattern 1998, 17; T. Rose 1994, 18).

Moreover, celebrities and their entertainment products are often subjectively interpreted when celebrities do not deliberately make a political statement at all. Something that was not intentionally political may be interpreted politically whether the celebrity intended it or not. Elvis Presley, for example, both blurred the lines between acceptable behaviors for black and white youth, making a rock and roll art form accessible to a young white audience, but simultaneously drew strong symbolic lines separating youth and adult (Altschuler 2003; Iton 2000, 216). The Monkees' television program, on the other hand, made rock and roll and the counterculture symbolically more palatable to adults during a time when the "generation gap" was pronounced (Perone 2004).

*The informational "power of persona."* Celebrities bring together many diverse qualities in one symbolic person—a series of traits that are otherwise attainable when distributed across an entire organization or movement—the promise of communicating information, identity, and symbolic meaning clearly, effectively and efficiently. DeMars (2005, 9) refers to this as the "power of a persona—projected onto the world stage by an NGO, conveying a contagious moral conviction, and offering a simple and readily imitated technique for action." All of these qualities make celebrities potentially powerful practitioners of symbolic politics. It also means that some people may be more receptive to celebrities' messages than others, and that efforts to get involved in politics may potentially fail.

### *Referent Power*

A combination of promotional ability and personal artistic or physical talents and traits translates to "referent power," the ability to be likable and relatable (French and Raven 1959). In an information-soaked, media-connected political environment, referent power is available to

non-traditional political actors such as entertainers. Referent power is profoundly useful because it translates to love, adoration, emulation, and support from an audience (Jauss 2008; Marshall 1997, 56). Therefore, it is possible that celebrities may be more skilled at attaining and exercising referent power than many public officials.

Celebrities “attract unconditional admiration and interest and are usually credited with capacities superior to those of other people,” which gives them a unique charismatic power (Marshall 1997, 20; Tsaliki, Frangonikolopoulos, and Huliaras 2011, 9; Weber 1978, 241). Across age groups, individuals affectively “personalize” these distant celebrities, connect emotionally to them, and speak as if they know them and have a relationship with them. People may not share an unconditional admiration and interest in all celebrities, but they tend to have powerful feelings for the ones they do like and a fairly universal understanding of a celebrity’s image within the culture (Caughey 1984; Lammie 2007, 1; Marshall 1997, 56–61). Celebrities play a role in individuals’ construction of their own personal identity and meaning (Dyer and McDonald 1998; Marshall 1997, 19). People live vicariously through celebrities, imagining themselves as athletes, rock stars, or in a role played by a favorite actor. Moreover, the public has a desire to buy into a discourse where individuals can make a positive difference where, perhaps, they cannot do so themselves. Celebrities, thus, compensate for qualities absent in “normal” people’s lives (Dyer and McDonald 1998). As a result, citizens may become more aware of social problems because of their identification with celebrities. Thus, celebrities may be able to influence audiences to get involved or to support causes as another means to *consume* politics and activism in the same way they consume entertainment (Dyer and McDonald 1998; Gitlin 1998).

One foundation of their referent power with an audience may lie in their perceived “authenticity,” which gives them a level of inflated moral standing based upon their status as an artist (Balliger 1999, 61; Fenster and Swiss 1999, 228). Much has been written about this, particularly in regard to the aforementioned emergent authenticity norm in popular music (Marshall 1997, 150). Authenticity includes the connection between a celebrity’s “art” to an expression of his/her inner emotions, feelings, and personality (Huddart 2005). While the public has felt more jaded about public officials, the authenticity discourse may have created an opening for the public to feel less jaded about the intentions of entertainers (West and Orman 2003, x). People recognize that celebrities are interested in making money. However, they are also inclined to believe that they are trustworthy and invested in their art or entertainment (Atkin and Block 1983). As Jimmy Buffett observes:

I love to watch politicians come to my shows and be fascinated by how the crowd loves us, because they don’t get that. And they want that more than anything. So many times people have asked me, ‘How do you do that?’ I go, ‘Because I tell them the truth. I’m not there to make it up. I’m not asking for their money. I’m just doing it.’ It’s an amazing thing that what they so desperately want *we* have. And we have it because we’re able to do it from the heart (Crosby and Bender 2000, 99).

On the other hand, some scholars argue that modern audiences are savvier than they were years ago. With the increased glut of reality television stars, the increased exposure to fame via a diversity of media delivery systems, the public does not view celebrities in the glorified patterns of the past. Awareness of celebrities’ need for self-aggrandizement may lead to greater skepticism on the part of the audience (Tsaliki, Frangonikolopoulos, and Huliaras 2011, 10). Moreover, those citizens who are most connected to celebrity culture are the least engaged in politics and least likely to get involved (Couldry and Markham 2007).



### *Summary and synthesis*

The discussion on celebrity power not only illustrates the distinction between politicians and celebrities. It also theoretically illustrates the ways in which celebrities exercise power. The academic literature provides some limited and nuanced support for celebrity power, although inconsistent conclusions demand much more research. Despite ambiguous results from academic sources, some conclusions or hypotheses can be drawn from the previous analysis, according to the bases of power.

*Legitimate power.* Celebrities do not have legitimate power. They are activists with a difference. Since they are far more recognizable than the average activist is, and since they receive media coverage, they have potentially more power and may be able to act independently of advocacy network. However, some opportunistic celebrities may bring less commitment and more baggage to an advocacy campaign.

*Expert power.* Celebrities lack academic expertise and credibility on political issues. They compensate for these losses by generating experiential expertise and by affiliating with transnational advocacy networks.

*Reward and coercive power.* There are cases of celebrities engaging in accountability and leverage politics in order to reward or coerce public officials into holding to pledged positions or changing their positions. Money and resources may be important to their ability to advance a campaign and to reduce their personal risk.

*Informational power.* Celebrities may have the ability to draw attention to issues and to persuade target audiences. Results in the literature thus far offer ambiguous answers to these hypotheses.

*Referent power.* People identify positively with celebrities because they socially identify with them and because they are perceived as authentic. Their likability fuels media interest in them and enhances their ability to attract attention and to persuade others, which makes referent power an amplifier for informational power, the real potential power base for celebrities.

## **Agenda Setting**

Thus far, this chapter has summarized the rise of celebrities in politics and detailed the ways in which celebrities are potentially powerful. As suggested above, when celebrities get involved in issue advocacy they ideally hope to get people to pay attention to an issue and to persuade people to support policies. One way of visualizing how celebrities, as well as activists and politicians, attempt to gain attention for their issue and persuade the powerful is through the concept of agenda setting.

The agenda is “the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time” (Kingdon 2010, 3). Given the incredible demands placed upon those who hold legitimate power to meet a diversity of needs, not all ideas and policies receive the same amount of attention. Agenda setting is the process of making issues important to controllers of information and decision makers. Thus, it involves identifying a problem, raising it in the public consciousness, getting target actors to acknowledge the problem, and ideally, persuading them to make it a priority (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Batliwala and Brown 2006, 5).

Those who hope to affect the agenda are often called policy entrepreneurs (Crowley 2003, 13–14). Much of the research on policy entrepreneurs focuses on key legislators’ abilities to make an issue prominent that would not otherwise rise on the public agenda (Loomis and Nownes 1993). John Kingdon, in his early use of the term, (2010, 122) argues that policy

entrepreneurs “could be in or out of government, in elected or appointed positions, in interest groups or research organizations. But their defining characteristic, much as in the case of a business entrepreneur is their willingness to invest their resources—time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money—in the hope of a future return.” In a way, celebrities are policy entrepreneurs in a media saturated age. As summarized in the discussion on celebrity power, celebrities have more of most of these entrepreneurial resources than average, which offers them potential access and power beyond the reach of the typical citizen entrepreneur.

Table 2.2 illustrates how policy entrepreneurs engage in two basic strategies in order to achieve their ends (Crowley 2003, 14–27). The first is a risk reduction strategy. If policy entrepreneurs necessarily accept a level of risk by simply entering the political game, it is in their best interest to minimize or diffuse cost and uncertainty, which usually plays out in terms of “strong” or “weak” approaches. A weak approach is “individualized.” The policy entrepreneur attempts to achieve his/her goals through force of will, based on the strength of personality, with many of the efforts and resources deployed by the individual, only networking if absolutely necessary. While approach may be effective, it means that the individual shoulders much of the risk and gains may be slowed without support from a larger organization. A strong approach places the policy entrepreneur in a larger organization, networking with others to achieve goals to offer a diversity of skills and resources as well as a more enduring institution for future lobbying efforts (Crowley 2003, 11–14). These risk reduction strategies are consistent with what has already been discussed about celebrity behavior when engaging in advocacy. Celebrities with more money and resources, and those that are institutionalized are theoretically less likely to be exposed to risk.

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Legitimate (Strong)</b>	<b>Illegitimate (Weak)</b>
<i>Risk Reduction Strategies</i>	Cooperative (Highly organized, system-based, thick)	Individualized (Personality-based, atomized, thin)
<i>Shakeout Strategies</i>	Lobbying, media exposure, institutional changes	Force, coercion, illegal activities, undemocratic tactics

[From Crowley (2003, 13, 18–19)]

**Table 2.2 - Strategies of Policy Entrepreneurs**

A second strategy is called “shakeout.” As a policy window opens, policy entrepreneurs perceive opportunities to disrupt the status quo equilibrium or to capitalize on a disruption.

Shakeout refers to the competition between status quo forces (incumbent entrepreneurs) and reform forces (challenger entrepreneurs) that results in some ideas, players, and organizations rising to prominence and others falling by the wayside. Shakeout strategies, therefore, include those activities policy entrepreneurs employ in order to survive the shakeout and achieve the policy goal. Illegitimate or weak shakeout approaches include the use of force, coercion, illegal activities and undemocratic tactics. Legitimate or strong shakeout approaches include lobbying, media exposure, and institutional changes, all approaches utilized by celebrity activists (Crowley 2003, 14–18, 20).

In the “shakeout” process, entrepreneurs seek to open a “window of opportunity” or “policy window” where the conditions are ripe for policy change (Galligan and Burgess 2005; Jaiani and Whitford 2011; Kingdon 2010, 87). Kingdon describes three convergent “streams” that have the capacity to open a policy window. The first is the problem stream, the salience of a set of issues or problems that the public perceives at a given time. The second is the policy stream, which includes various solutions to these problems formulated by public officials, legislative staffers, bureaucrats, academics, and interest group participants (Kingdon 2010, 116). The third is the political stream, which includes shifts in public opinion, results of elections, turnover of public officials, changes in ideological and partisan distributions in a decision

making body, and interest groups' pressure campaigns (Crowley 2003, 14–27; Henig 2009; Knott and McCarthy 2007; Levin and Sanger 1994; Mintrom and Norman 2009, 652; Mintrom and Vergari 1996; Mintrom 1997, 2000; Quinn 2000; N. C. Roberts and King 1991; Schattschneider 1975; Stone 2001; Teske 2004).

Another way to categorize these streams is according to the “insider” and “outsider” strategies they deploy. The second stream largely focuses on insider strategies where policy entrepreneurs act as “hidden participants” by connecting themselves to policy makers or injecting themselves into the policy making process where possible (Florini, Nihon Kokusai Kooryu Senta, and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2000, 105; Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002, 67; Naidoo 2006, 56–57; della Porta and Tarrow 2004; M. Rodrigues 2004). Insiders are less likely to affect the public agenda, but are more likely to narrow alternatives once the agenda has already been set (Kingdon 2010, 72–74). Ultimately, the intervention of entrepreneurs directly in the policy process has been shown to affect agenda setting and ultimately policy innovation (Mintrom and Norman 2009; Mintrom and Vergari 1996; Mintrom 1997, 2000).

Celebrities have, on many occasions, undertaken insider strategies. To name only a few, actor Michael J. Fox lobbied Congress to pass stem cell legislation, hoping for a potential cure for Parkinson's Disease (Stanley 2006). Actor Fran Drescher lobbied successfully to pass Johanna's Law, also known as the Gynecologic Cancer Education and Awareness Act, which allocated \$6.5 million for a national gynecologic cancer education campaign (“Gynecologic Cancer Education and Awareness Act of 2005” 2006). In perhaps the first example of a celebrity becoming intimately involved in a Congressional policy making process, Harry Chapin worked

on the Presidential Commission on Domestic and International Hunger and lobbied Congress in an attempt to pass legislation to change food policy toward Africa (Coan 2001, 373).

The first and third streams of agenda setting, for the most part, comprise “outsider” strategies (Clark 2006; Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002; della Porta and Tarrow 2004; Price 1998; Torrance and Torrance 2006). When the focus is on the public’s perceived salience of an issue, public opinion, elections, and campaigns by advocacy groups, outsider strategies are more likely to be utilized (Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen, and Jones 2008; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Birkland 1997; R. W. Cobb and Elder 1975; R. W. Cobb and Ross 1997, 26; Soroka 2003). Public officials and activists alike engage in public information politics strategies to draw attention to issues and to persuade the public and key players, often through framing (Grove and Carter 1999; Jerit 2008; Maoz 1990; Matthes 2012).

Celebrity outsider strategies are obvious because of their broad public appeal. When Angelina Jolie makes an appeal for funding education in Africa on Dateline NBC or George Clooney protests alongside public officials in front of the Sudanese Embassy, they are attempting to gain media attention for their cause and framing their arguments to persuade their target audiences: the mass public and policy makers. A trip to Congress is not necessary to execute these strategies. However, the media are essential. According to Shanto Iyengar, “The well-known ‘agenda-setting’ effect refers to the tendency of people to cite issues ‘in the news’ when asked to identify the significant problems facing the nation” (B. C. Cohen 1963; Cook 2005; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Iyengar 1994, 132; McCombs and Shaw 1972; Zaller 1992). Timothy Cook describes the interaction between politicians and media: “Politicians dictate conditions and rules of access and designate certain events and issues as important by providing an arena for them. Journalists, in turn, decide whether something is interesting enough to cover, the context

in which to place it, and the prominence the story receives.” Non-traditional political actors can make news on their own terms if “the material they provide is high in the production values that would make the news interesting” (Cook 2005, 102). Social movements may produce sporadic information, usually on the reporter’s terms, but the escalation of this information can “set the agenda and shift the terms of the debate” (Cook 2005, 102). Indeed, the visibility of an issue is a key factor in swaying public opinion and even voting behavior (Hopmann et al. 2010). In addition, Mortenson (2010) establishes a positive correlation between the amount of time the public spent focused on an issue and the amount of money a legislature spent on that issue, suggesting that successful outsider agenda setting strategies may affect policy outcomes.

Insider and outsider strategies are not mutually exclusive. One can make public statements and privately lobby. A celebrity’s insider lobbying efforts can become public news, and thus, an outsider strategy as well. People pay attention when Bono meets Bush or Clooney meets Obama. The insider is simultaneously a “visible participant” (Kingdon 2010, 72–74). However, it is methodologically helpful to separate the strategies. Proving that a celebrity can set a public agenda by making issues seem more salient or by framing arguments in the media is different from proving that a celebrity can successfully lobby or insert him/herself into the policy making process and produce changes there.

### **Can Celebrities Set Agendas?**

The previous literature review offers many anecdotal cases of celebrity successes, but much of the academic literature surveyed offer a mixed to pessimistic view when it comes to generalizable findings. As Nick Symmonds or Ben Affleck or even Larry Sabato might expect, original survey research produced for this dissertation received its share of cynical comments

about celebrities from “I don’t really care” to “Who cares anything about her, seriously....??” to “Don’t give a flying f\*\*\*.”

Perhaps the cynics are correct. Perhaps few care about the statements or actions of celebrities. Still, the anecdotal stories of persistent celebrities advocating for unlikely causes beg for an answer. Are their efforts in vain? Theoretically, celebrities have power that compares or perhaps even exceeds that of public officials. Can any of these powers be quantified in an effort to demonstrate celebrities’ potential for agenda setting? In order to answer this question, the first step is to establish a threshold for proving an agenda setting capacity and to be able to attribute that capacity specifically to celebrities.

There are many ways to operationalize agenda setting. Kingdon specifies three policy streams, and one could focus on several strategies in the agenda setting process to come up with potential answers. To narrow the scope of the question, this dissertation focuses primarily on outsider strategies and more precisely, upon the effects of celebrity policy entrepreneurs’ information politics strategies. The following chapters will provide evidence on two criteria that support prospects for successful agenda setting. The first criterion is issue visibility. Does the celebrity have the “spotlighting” power described by Belafonte and Bono? When a celebrity publicly involves him/herself in an issue, is there a heightened level of media coverage? If so, celebrity involvement may affect issue salience, which has been associated with agenda setting (B. C. Cohen 1963; Cook 2005; Hopmann et al. 2010; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Iyengar 1994; McCombs and Shaw 1972; Mortensen 2010; Zaller 1992). The second criterion is persuasion. It is important to gain media attention. Once a celebrity has the attention of a mass audience, is s/he persuasive? If it can be proven that a celebrity is also persuasive, the dissertation can make an even stronger case for celebrity agenda setting.



The following chapters will address these questions. Chapters 3 and 4 will examine evidence on the effect of celebrity interventions on media coverage. Using time series analysis, chapter 3 will focus on specific instances of interventions in the media to determine whether these interventions cause coverage “spikes” on the relevant political issue. Chapter 4 will analyze the data from chapter 3 to determine whether celebrity successes are significant across all cases taken as a whole. Chapter 5 will present the results of an experimental study on celebrity persuasion. In that chapter, experimental group participants were given information about a political issue, along with a celebrity endorsement frame taking sides on that issue. The purpose is to determine whether celebrities are able to persuade experimental groups to accept their proposed position on an issue when compared to the control groups that receive no celebrity frame. Chapter 6 will use the data from chapter 5 to isolate the characteristics and conditions that optimize celebrities’ potential for persuasion. Each chapter will specify the methodology taken to produce and analyze the data.

How can these attributes be uniquely connected to a celebrity intervention? This dissertation will isolate key attributes and environmental factors as control variables, based on some of the major questions in the literature. One set of questions revolves around whether celebrities can compete with politicians for media attention. Chapter 3 will compare celebrities’ and politicians’ abilities to generate attention on a political issue by constructing timelines that include media interventions from celebrities, politicians, and other public figures. In order to determine whether celebrities are independently powerful or “piggyback” by association with politicians, Chapter 4 will compare the level of media coverage of celebrities or politicians acting alone versus celebrities intervening with politicians. It will also examine whether an increased number of politicians and/or celebrities increases the likelihood of media coverage.

Chapters 3 and 4 also compare results across newspaper and broadcast news, treated as separate media types. At least one finding suggested that people are more responsive to celebrities in video messages rather than in print. Does this relationship apply to media attention as well? If celebrities are capable of attracting media attention, are they more effective in the traditional print media or in broadcast media? If politicians and celebrities thrive on the pseudo-event as implied in the literature review, are they treated better in the broadcast media than in print? Is there a contagion surrounding a story? If a celebrity intervention appears in one media type (such as broadcast news) will it also correspond with a bump in another media type (such as newspapers?) These questions are also addressed in the time series and aggregate analyses.

While the real crux of this dissertation focuses upon information politics media strategies, another set of questions focuses on different kinds of power. The first questions pertain to expert power. How do politicians and celebrities compare on credibility and expertise? Must a celebrity be credible in order to be effective? Does affiliation with an institution improve the celebrity's chances for persuasion? Is it possible for a celebrity to be effective outside of an advocacy organization? The second questions revolve around referent power. Do the feelings or perceptions respondents have about celebrities make them more likely to agree with them? To get at expert power, the mean credibility of politicians and celebrities were compared across eight issue areas. Institutionalization scores were also computed to compare celebrities' level of connection to advocacy networks. For referent power, respondents were asked about the authenticity of celebrities and how they felt about certain celebrities.

A fourth question area deals with the characteristics of the issue advocated by the celebrity. Several questions in the literature review have ambiguous answers in the literature. Must celebrities only advocate "safe," non-controversial issues? Are they only persuasive on

issues that are perceived as less important? Must the position advocated by the celebrity match a target audience's expectations? Metrics were constructed to take into account how polarizing the issue is, how important it seemed at the time of the study, and whether the celebrity was advocating a position that matched the expectations of the respondents.

Chapters 5 and 6 take all of these questions into account when trying to first, determine the persuasive success of celebrities and second, isolate the potential sources of that ability. Additional characteristics of the target audience were also considered as control variables, based upon some of the findings in the academic literature. Does age, gender, or party affiliation affect the attitudes of participants? If so, it may be possible to replicate or reinforce some findings from previous studies.

This chapter's review of the academic literature has not only illustrated how the changing business and media environments have made the news more receptive to celebrity activists. It has also specified ways in which celebrities may possess different types of power. The next task of this dissertation is to evaluate whether any of the theoretical powers of spotlighting or persuasion can be empirically documented. If so, it may be possible to conclude that celebrities can set public agendas.

## **Chapter 3 - The Power of Spotlighting: Celebrities and Issue Advocacy in the Media**

In 2003, activist John Prendergast was working with the International Crisis Group, an NGO seeking to resolve international conflicts. After meeting Angelina Jolie, he invited her to travel to the conflict zone in the Congo instead of exclusively to refugee camps in an effort to raise awareness of the civil war in that country, the human rights violations, and the humanitarian crisis. She took photographs that were featured on Washington D.C.'s Holocaust Memorial Museum website. The traffic from the photos crashed the website. "If I had made that trip alone," Prendergast said, "maybe a few hundred people would have paid attention" (Bergner 2010). Despite the rhetorical power of statements such as Prendergast's, they remain informal stories illustrating the positive effect of celebrities in politics. They say little about the general impact of celebrity interventions in the media.

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate whether the public activities of celebrities result in increased visibility on an issue. Policy makers may start to consider policy changes as the public becomes more aware of an issue. Making an issue salient is a necessary but not sufficient means to change policy. Still, the ability to make an issue "known" is an important step.

The question is, how effective are celebrities at drawing attention toward issues? How do they compete with politicians at agenda setting? More importantly, is there a way to operationalize and quantify this phenomenon? This chapter will focus on answers to these questions. The first section will describe the methodology. Next, key case studies will suggest that in many instances, celebrities can be quite effective at agenda setting.

## **Methodology**

The following section presents the methodology utilized in this chapter. It describes the rationale of case selection, how the content analysis was conducted, the logic behind the time series analysis, and the development of the regression models.

### *Case Selection*

This study focuses on high profile celebrities. Celebrities are, by definition, known. Thus, it is assumed that at some level, a celebrity can garner attention. How much attention can they command? Do they command attention only over their latest project or does this attention extend to political issues as well? Are they drowned out by the political players and events competing for time on that issue? The literature does not make clear predictions about the performance of celebrities on such issues (Hawkins 2011; Njoroge 2011; Rosamond 2011; Tait 2011; Wheeler 2011). Since the purpose of this analysis is to examine whether a celebrity can cut through the media noise on political issues, those celebrities selected for analysis were assumed capable of garnering attention in the non-entertainment media, at least for their professional work. In addition, choosing high profile, “attention-getting” celebrities was important not only in terms of research design, but also in terms of methodology. If celebrities made no impact outside of the entertainment press, there would be nothing to measure, or the number of cases would be too small to make any conclusions.

Celebrities were also chosen based on their long-term affiliation with political causes and connections to high profile international institutions and transnational advocacy networks. Granted, it may have been more of an exciting “crucial” or “least likely case” to have focused on random, renegade, disconnected celebrities who happened to make an impact at a particular

moment in time. This study assumes that those celebrity activists are not common. Indeed, the literature on transnational advocacy networks and political entrepreneurship supports the notion that successful activists are more likely to be embedded in institutions and advocacy groups while renegades have little traction (Keck and Sikkink 1998). In addition, choosing celebrity activists that were densely connected with groups and causes made it possible to track protracted campaigns. Bono, for example, has been working on debt relief since at least 1998. By looking at extended efforts such as these, it is possible to not only draw conclusions about the performance of multiple celebrities across cases but also about the conditions that may limit or enable the success of a single celebrity over a single related issue area. Finally, those celebrities that are deeply embedded in institutions and advocacy groups are presumed to be more credible within their own networks, at least compared to those celebrities who make occasional and unpredictable appearances. Credibility within one's own cause may prove to be energizing when a celebrity addresses loyal followers. Whether that credibility extends to media organizations, citizens, and public officials is an open question.

International issues were selected as a “least likely” methodological strategy (Eckstein 1998; Gerring 2007).<sup>9</sup> It is safe to assume that people are more likely to care first about their own domestic concerns and that media would be responsive to that (Foyle 2011; Monroe 1979; Murray 2006; Shapiro 2011). The ability of celebrities to move public attention toward international causes could prove to highlight their potential power. Moreover, both political and entertainment media have become increasingly internationalized. High profile celebrities are known across countries and across markets. Celebrities' projects and activities are

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<sup>9</sup> While choosing international issues does not precisely follow a crucial case approach where a single least likely case provides a reason to accept or reject a premise, it does follow this logic by choosing a series of cases where any political actor may have more difficulty raising the profile of the issue, thus increasing the rhetorical power of the argument.

simultaneously known in several media markets. This expands the possibilities for data analysis. When a newspaper, for example, allows a celebrity to play editor for the day, does it have an impact on the local and national market? Does the bump extend across borders? In addition, activists have become internationalized. Local activist organizations benefit from international affiliations and distant donors. In many cases, low profile international issues would gain little attention and support from far away citizens and politicians seeking to satisfy the narrow interests of their constituents. Does that equation change when celebrities enter the picture? Might the entrance of a high profile celebrity move the media spotlight from parochial concerns to international ones? Many people may not universally care about education in Africa, or feel moved to action, but without awareness, there is no choice.

To satisfy these criteria, this study focuses on Angelina Jolie, George Clooney, and Bono. All are high profile celebrities who have received mainstream media attention beyond the entertainment press. All have long-term relationships with international organizations and transnational advocacy networks. All have achieved a level of legitimacy within their own activist circles as well as with policy makers. All have met many times with various world leaders and policy makers. And all have advocated on behalf of international issues.

For simplicity, this study limits the number of issues supported by each of the three major celebrities. The first issue included Angelina Jolie's involvement in AIDS education and treatment, and education for children in Africa. The second was an analysis of George Clooney's attempts to find a resolution for the Darfur conflict. The third was a focus on Bono's debt relief efforts and attempts to prevent or end AIDS in Africa in association with the Jubilee 2000 campaign and the NGO he co-founded, Debt AIDS Trade Africa (DATA), which in turn founded and merged with the ONE campaign. In the process of researching these issues,

additional celebrities appeared in the timelines. They included Brad Pitt, Don Cheadle, Matt Damon, Muhammad Ali, Bob Geldof, Wyclef Jean, Quincy Jones, Prince Harry, Alicia Keys, Peter Gabriel, Elton John, Dikembe Mutombo, Usher, John Mayer, Cynthia Nixon, and Jessica Alba.<sup>10</sup> While these celebrities were not the initial focus of this study, and not all match the criteria described above, their involvement provided additional data in understanding how celebrities interact with the media.

### *Content Analysis*

To determine the optimal time range of study, timelines were constructed based on occasions when Jolie, Clooney, or Bono publicly intervened in the political discourse in the selected issue areas. An intervention counted as a public event initiated by the celebrity or in which a celebrity made an appearance. It could include writing an op ed to sway public opinion in a newspaper, a public speech in which the celebrity discusses the issue, interviews with major media organizations, situations where celebrities are given editorial control over publications, meetings with public officials, involvement in protests, attendance at a fundraiser, and the like. If a celebrity wants to make their issue known, and has gained some media attention in the effort, it counts as an intervention. When celebrities intervene, is there a spike in the number of stories on that issue? Do media organizations increase their coverage of related stories that day and the day after? What portion of total stories on an issue in a given day is comprised by coverage of the celebrity's statements or activities?

A content analysis of two Lexis-Nexis databases provides the data. US newspapers were searched utilizing Lexis-Nexis' "advanced search" feature. Searches were limited to five

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<sup>10</sup> Details on the political involvement of these celebrities in the causes selected for this study can be found in Appendix A.



newspaper sources: the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the McClatchy-Tribune News Service. The latter includes a sampling of 30 daily newspapers from medium to large city markets across the United States and includes publications such as *the Miami Herald*, *the Kansas City Star*, *the Charlotte Observer*, and *the Sacramento Bee*. In situations where the interventions seemed to be targeted outside the United States, the same feature was used to search newspapers from the target country. In some cases, the United Kingdom was the target country, so the four publications that had the highest circulation there were selected: *the Times* of London, *the Daily Telegraph*, *the Independent*, and *the Guardian*. When Canada was the target country, four of the newspapers with the highest circulation were the *Toronto Star*, *Globe & Mail*, *the Gazette*, and *the Vancouver Sun*.

In all cases, broadcast news sources were also searched using Lexis-Nexis' Broadcast Transcripts search engine. All major US television news sources are included in this database as well as radio news sources such as NPR, and dozens of affiliates that pick up stories from national sources and broadcast them locally. Even some entertainment sources appear in this database. Broadcast transcripts of congressional and other institutional hearings frequently appear in the database. The advantage of using a broad database is to get a better picture of the impact of a single story across multiple markets and broadcast media. If Fox News carries a story that interests local affiliates, the story echoes across local markets, inflating its effect. No other available database could potentially capture this effect. As a result, the exaggerated effect of broadcast media is better illustrated in this search engine than simply utilizing an advanced search limited to the major American news networks. Big events seem even bigger when using this database, which reflects the reality of news consumption. A media consumer may read a newspaper or see a story online. But in broadcast media, they watch it on the evening news, see

it picked up again on a local broadcast, hear it on the radio, catch it again on *Entertainment Tonight* if a celebrity is involved. The media effect is cumulative and this search engine, while not perfect, captures that reality. Moreover, a simple search of broadcast transcripts (minus any stories that are complete duplicates from the same source or affiliate) can be quantified and replicated.

Key words were selected pertaining to the aforementioned issue areas. A search yielded a count indicating the total number of stories reported on that issue during a specified period. One search featured only the key words. A second search featured the search string, plus the name of the intervening celebrity, revealing only those stories where the media discussed the issue by referencing the relevant celebrity. For example, the first search string for Sudan was “Sudan and not earnings or quarter.” The second was “George Clooney and Sudan and not earnings or quarter.” This method produced line graphs to compare the total number of stores on an issue with the number of stories that focused on a specific celebrity in reference to that issue.

### *Time Series Analysis*

The number of stories per day for each time span was recorded in a database. The celebrity intervention is the independent variable. The design of the study was to observe a dependent variable, the number of stories occurring within a twenty-four hour news cycle following the intervention. This was counted in four ways: the number of stories appearing in selected US newspapers, the number of stories appearing in US newspapers that made reference to the issue in reference to a celebrity, the number of stories appearing in Broadcast Transcripts, and the number of stories appearing in Broadcast Transcripts that made reference to the issue in reference to a celebrity. Line graphs were generated to observe (1) whether there was a visible spike that coincided with a celebrity intervention; and (2) whether non-celebrity interventions or

other news stories seemed to be primarily driving coverage. Clearly, celebrities are not the only drivers of news. Were the spikes in news coverage driven by political leaders making statements about the issue or by changing events on the ground? Were interventions by non-celebrities producing spikes in the number of stories? If a news organization reported on an issue with reference to a celebrity, would it create enough momentum behind that issue to generate interest in other stories on this issue where the celebrity is not mentioned? The line graphs offered a way to answer these questions.

### *Intervention Regression Models*

For analyses of the data, I estimated ordinary least squares (OLS)/multiple regression models for the dependent variable, the number of stories occurring within a twenty-four hour news cycle following the intervention. This was counted in four ways: the number of stories appearing in selected US newspapers, the number of stories appearing in US newspapers that made reference to the issue in reference to a celebrity, the number of stories appearing in Broadcast Transcripts, and the number of stories appearing in Broadcast Transcripts that made reference to the issue in reference to a celebrity. Line graphs were generated to observe (1) whether there was a visible spike that coincided with a celebrity intervention; and (2) whether non-celebrity interventions or other news stories seemed to be primarily driving coverage. The independent variables were interventions of public figures, including celebrities, politicians, or others. Dummy variables were constructed to represent the intervention of a public figure into the news timeline. Each day received a 1 or 0 where 1 = an intervention of public figure in the

time series and 0 = no intervention.<sup>11</sup> In all cases, a one-day lag was assumed to account for a 24-hour news cycle. For example, if a political actor intervened on May 21, a “1” would be recorded for May 21 and 22.<sup>12</sup>

Each model represented a different dependent variable (number of newspaper stories; number of broadcast transcript stories) over a given period on a particular issue defined by the search terms. Including interventions by public figures compared the spotlighting abilities of celebrities (such as Bono, Clooney, and Jolie) with political leaders (such as Bush, Blair, and Obama) and others (such as evangelist Rick Warren, First Lady Laura Bush, or businessman and philanthropist Bill Gates). Each OLS model included an intercept statistic, which indicates how many stories were reported per day on the issue area for the designated period, if the independent variable is not taken into account, offering a reasonable measure for the salience of an issue for that period.

## **Results - Celebrity Victories**

Can a celebrity’s intervention in a political cause raise the visibility of the issue in the media? In general, the answer is yes. The following cases illustrate some “victories” when celebrities intervene.

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<sup>11</sup> The purpose of this data was to consider a connection between deliberate interventions and numbers of news stories on an issue on a given day. In other words, George Clooney being referenced in a story was not sufficient to be counted as an intervention. He had to be involved in some sort of event intended to advance his cause.

<sup>12</sup> Upon closer examination of the news cycles, stories often had longer staying power than one day. However, using a one day lag made it easier to isolate the effect of a single story. Since celebrities and other political actors often engaged in a series of political events in short sequence for days in a row, a two day lag made it difficult to discern which intervention caused a spike in coverage on an issue. Thus, for methodological reasons, the narrower operationalization of these variables was chosen. The advantage of this approach was greater precision in isolating independent variables. The disadvantage was that the results probably underestimate the potential impact of an intervention.

### *Sudan – 2012 Broadcast and US Newspaper Coverage*

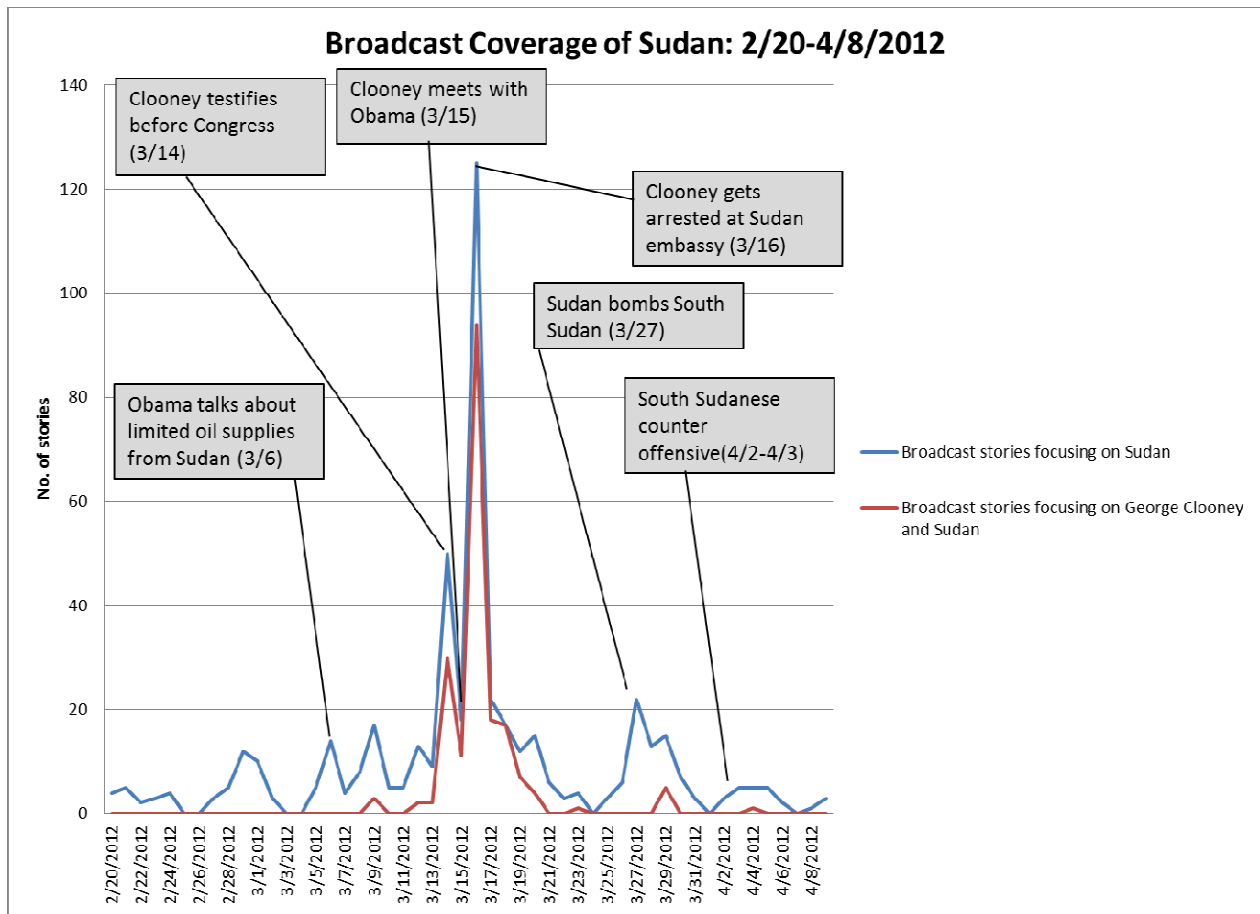
When heavy fighting broke out in Dafur in 2003, George Clooney became passionately concerned for the plight of the victims of the civil war in Sudan. He increasingly felt a sense of obligation,—that his celebrity should be used as a platform. “If there is any chance you can shine a light on it, and if you don't, it's irresponsible,” Clooney said in an interview (Curry 2009). He soon aligned himself with John Prendergast, the aforementioned activist who brought Angelina Jolie to a war zone in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and a movement that sought to provide aid to displaced refugees and end the genocide (E. Epstein 2013). As a result of his alliance with Clooney—now leader and founder of the Enough Project—was able to attend a meeting with President Obama arranged and attended by Clooney in 2010. While Prendergast worked under Susan Rice, the senior director for African Affairs in the Clinton Administration’s National Security Council for a time, he claimed, “I wouldn’t be getting a 45-minute meeting with the president if it weren’t for Clooney.”

Meetings between Obama and Clooney soon revealed the value of a relationship with Prendergast. Prendergast knew South Sudanese rebel leaders. He had been working in Africa for years and understood both the reality on the ground and the demands of policy makers. In exchange for information that Prendergast was able to provide about rebel leaders in South Sudan, Obama allowed him a key role in the policy making process. Moreover, the rebel leaders knew that Prendergast was becoming a point player in Washington and came to rely upon him (Bergner 2010).

In early 2012, George Clooney attempted to raise awareness about war crimes and victims of war in the Nuba Mountains. Conflict between the Sudanese government and rebels forced thousands to seek shelter in caves, forcing a potential hunger crisis. Clooney, along with

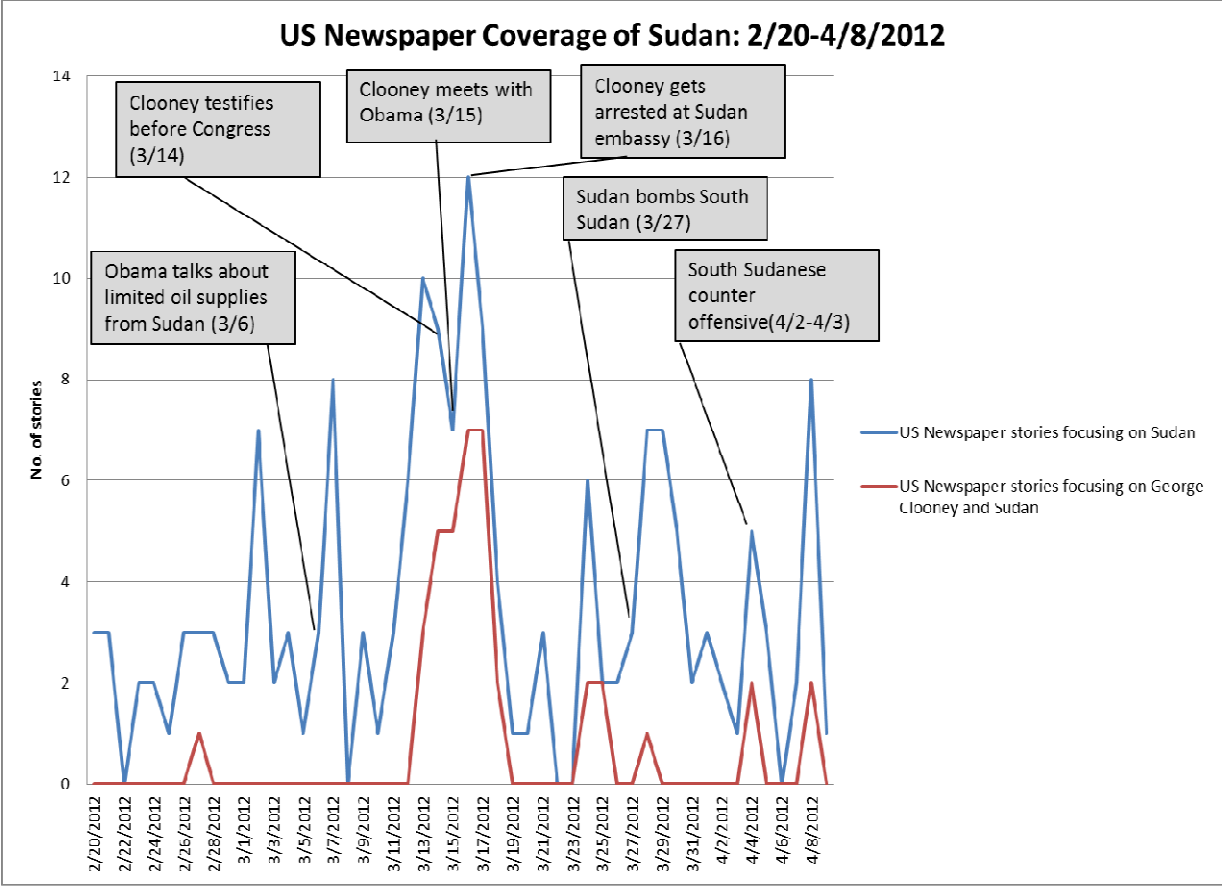
Prendergast, wanted solutions to assist the displaced and to press the international community to hold President Omar al-Bashir accountable for human rights violations before the International Criminal Court (ICC). Clooney and Prendergast quietly slipped across the Sudanese border in March 2012, “saw burned-out villages and met with residents forced to seek shelter in caves because of aerial attacks by Sudan's military” (Straziuso 2012). This secret visit became public when Clooney returned to the US and testified before Congress on what he had witnessed. The following day, he met with President Obama. On the third day, he gave a speech and protested on the Sudanese embassy lawn along with United to End Genocide President Tom Andrews; Democratic Representatives Jim McGovern, Al Green, Jim Moran and John Olver; Martin Luther King III; and NAACP President Ben Jealous among others. All were arrested for crossing a police line.

Table 3.1 illustrates George Clooney’s interventions, and how they correlated with stories reported on Sudan in the broadcast media. On March 6, 2012, Barack Obama talks about oil supplies from Sudan. This story produces a moderate spike. However, once the coverage of Clooney’s “secret” trip to Sudan begins and once he starts talking publicly about Sudan, massive, visible spikes in the number of stories covered appear. The blue line represents the total number of stories on Sudan reported per day. The red line represents stories that discussed Sudan by referencing George Clooney in the story. As the graph indicates, the broadcast media evidently cannot discuss Sudan without reference to George Clooney. On the peak day of coverage, March 16, 94 out of 125 stories were about George Clooney’s arrest.



**Table 3.1 - Broadcast Coverage of Sudan and Interventions by Clooney**

Does this coverage extend to US newspapers as well? Table 3.2 illustrates the relationship between Clooney’s interventions and numbers of stories reported in US newspapers. While the overall number of stories is not as high as those reported in broadcast media, the relationship appears to be the same. Spikes coincide with Clooney’s interventions and newspapers consistently report on Clooney’s activities as he intervenes.



**Table 3.2 - US Newspaper Coverage of Sudan and Interventions by Clooney**

The spikes in the line graphs correlate with Clooney’s interventions, and with stories about Clooney and Sudan. Visual representations of spikes associated with Clooney’s interventions look impressive, but are they statistically significant?

According to the OLS regression estimates in Table 3.3, on a typical day during this period, the broadcast media reports almost six stories on Sudan (intercept  $\beta = 5.73$ ). In contrast, a meeting between Clooney and Obama yielded almost 66 additional stories ( $\beta = 65.76, p \leq .001$ ). Clooney himself is likely to increase the number of stories to almost 18 during the period ( $\beta = 17.76, p \leq .05$ ). Interestingly, Obama does not generate the same amount of attention on his own ( $\beta = 3.26, n.s.$ ). Therefore, Clooney alone, and Clooney and Obama together, produce a spike; Obama alone does not. In addition, it is difficult to say whether the meeting with Obama



generated an independent effect since Clooney testified before Congress the previous day and was arrested the following day and the majority of stories focused on this event, not only on the day of the arrest, but for the following week. Thus, Clooney alone may be producing this relationship.

<i>OLS Regression Estimates</i>				
	<i>Broadcast Transcripts</i>		<i>US Newspapers</i>	
	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t Stat</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t Stat</b>
Intercept	5.74 (2.03)	2.82****	2.68 (0.31)	8.55
Clooney	17.76 (6.9)	2.57**	5.73 (1.00)	5.73****
Obama	3.26 (9.54)	0.34	2.82 (1.47)	1.92*
Clooney and Obama	65.76 (9.54)	6.89****	3.96 (1.53)	2.59**
<i>Summary</i>				
N	50		50	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.53		0.54	
SEE	13.18		2.04	
*p ≤ .10; ** p ≤ .05; ***p ≤ .01; **** p ≤ .001				
Standard Error is in parentheses.				

**Table 3.3 - Association between interventions of political actors and number of stories reported on Sudan: 2/20-4/9/2012**

During the same time, a similar relationship can be found in US newspaper coverage of Sudan. George Clooney’s interventions produce almost six more stories in newspapers ( $\beta = 5.73$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ), when newspapers are producing approximately three stories per day (intercept  $\beta = 2.68$ ). Clooney also generates significant attention when he meets with Obama ( $\beta = 3.95$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ).

In newspapers, Obama has a stronger effect than in broadcast media and this effect is statistically significant ( $\beta = 2.82, p \leq .10$ ). Obama clearly creates a bump when he discusses oil in Sudan. However, the rapid sequence of events makes it unclear whether the alliance of Clooney and Obama creates a spike in story or if it is Clooney alone. Nonetheless, Clooney alone ( $\beta = 5.73, p \leq .001$ ) and Clooney with Obama ( $\beta = 3.96, p \leq .05$ ) have a stronger relationship and are more significant than when Obama speaks on the issue.

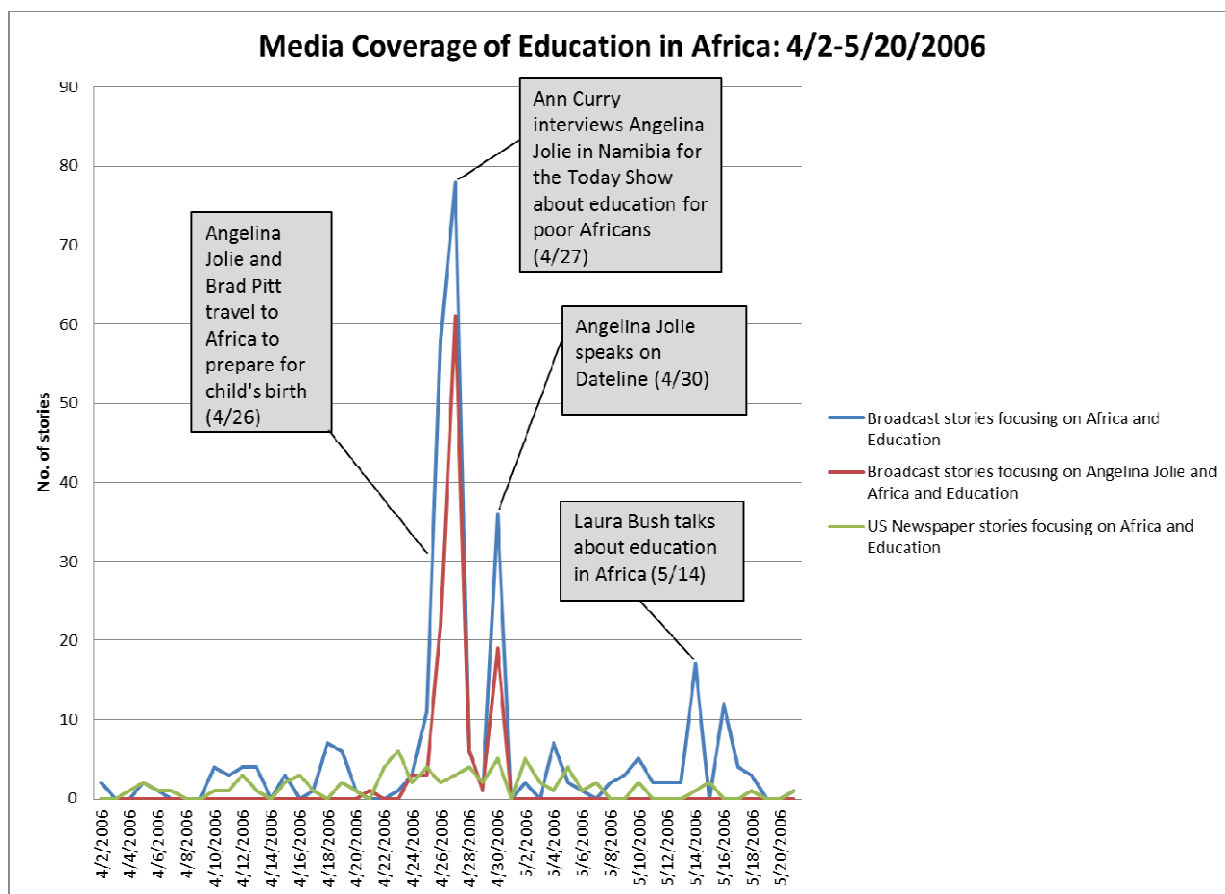
#### *Education in Africa – 2006 Broadcast news and US Newspaper Coverage*

In the spring of 2006, Angelina Jolie was pregnant with her first biological child, Shiloh. In the midst of the entertainment press' manufactured media frenzy, Jolie and partner Brad Pitt decided to have their child in Namibia. They claimed that they “wanted to find a place where they could spend some special time with their kids, Maddox, 4, and Zahara, 1.” According to Reuters, Namibia “not only welcomed the movie stars, it handed over control of its international land borders and airspace to them.” Namibian officials “bowed to pressure from Jolie and Pitt and granted them the right to ban foreign journalists from entering the country - a remarkable move for the Government of any sovereign state,” in part because “their presence would be a massive boost to tourist income in the desperately poor country, where the average wage is \$46 a week.” Jolie and Pitt told public officials that they would leave unless the “paparazzi were brought to heel.” Human rights groups criticized the Namibian government for expelling four foreign journalists (Reuters, Independent 2006).

To celebrate Shiloh's birth, Jolie and Pitt engaged in the high profile activity of “donating \$315,000 to state hospitals and a local school and community center” and promised to work with Namibia's first lady, Penexupifo Pohamba, to determine plans for future donations and

beneficiaries (Silverman and Fromm 2006). Getty Images took the first photos and the rights to the photos were sold to *People* magazine in the US and *Hello!* magazine in the UK for \$4.1 million and \$3.5 million dollars, respectively. All money was donated to charities to benefit African children (L. Rose 2007). Jolie capitalized on the run-up to the birth to draw attention to the beauty of Namibia, and particularly, the plight of many in Africa who suffer from inadequate education. This effort was publicized when Ann Curry interviewed Angelina Jolie in Namibia in conjunction with “global education week” for interviews broadcast on April 27 and April 30. The interviews emphasized how “global education” has become Jolie’s “global mission” (Curry 2006).

Table 3.4 illustrates how the broadcast media and US newspapers reported on this series of events.



**Table 3.4 – Broadcast News and US Newspaper Coverage of Education in Africa and Interventions by Jolie**

Jolie and Pitt’s arrival in Africa coincided with a burst of stories, climaxing with the first broadcast of Jolie’s interview on April 27. The subsequent airing of the interview on April 30 also produced a major spike. The only other notable spike in the sequence is a Laura Bush speech about the issue on May 14. The blue line represents total numbers of stories appearing in broadcast news on the subject of education in Africa. The green line counts the stories in US newspapers on education in Africa. The red line references those stories in broadcast media where education in Africa was discussed with direct reference to Angelina Jolie. There were no stories among the surveyed US newspapers that discussed education in Africa by referencing her.

It appears that Jolie’s appearances and interviews drove broadcast news coverage on those days. The red spikes clearly coincide with the blue spikes. This effect is less visible among US newspaper coverage where the number of stories reported is much smaller. A regression model in Table 3.5 more clearly reveals the impact of Jolie’s interventions.

<i>OLS Regression Estimates</i>				
	<u>Broadcast Transcripts</u>		<u>US Newspapers</u>	
	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t Stat</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t Stat</b>
Intercept	2.37 (0.85)	2.80****	1.33 (0.24)	5.61****
Jolie	11.63 (3.32)	3.51***	1.67 (0.93)	1.81*
Pitt and Jolie	54.00 (5.07)	10.65****	-0.50 (1.41)	-0.35
Laura Bush	6.13 (4.02)	1.53	0.17 (1.12)	0.16
<i>Summary</i>				
N	50		50	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.86		0.083	
SEE	5.55		1.55	
*p ≤ .10; ** p ≤ .05; ***p ≤ .01; **** p ≤ .001				
Standard Error is in parentheses.				

**Table 3.5 - Association between interventions of political actors and number of stories reported on Education in Africa: 4/2-5/21/2006**

In broadcast media, Jolie’s interventions produce approximately 12 additional stories ( $\beta = 11.63, p \leq .01$ ) when one would ordinarily expect about two (intercept  $\beta = 2.37$ ). When Pitt and Jolie make news together, such as their move to Namibia for the birth of their child, their efforts produce 54 additional stories ( $\beta = 54.00, p \leq .001$ ). In newspapers, however, Pitt and Jolie have no discernible significant effect ( $\beta = -0.50, n.s.$ ). However, Jolie’s interventions produce a positive effect on coverage of stories about education in Africa which are otherwise scarce in newspapers ( $\beta = 1.67, p \leq .10$ ). Using the intercept as a proxy for salience, newspapers were

reporting just over one story a day on the issue (intercept  $\beta = 1.33$ ). When Jolie intervenes, a second story is more likely to emerge.

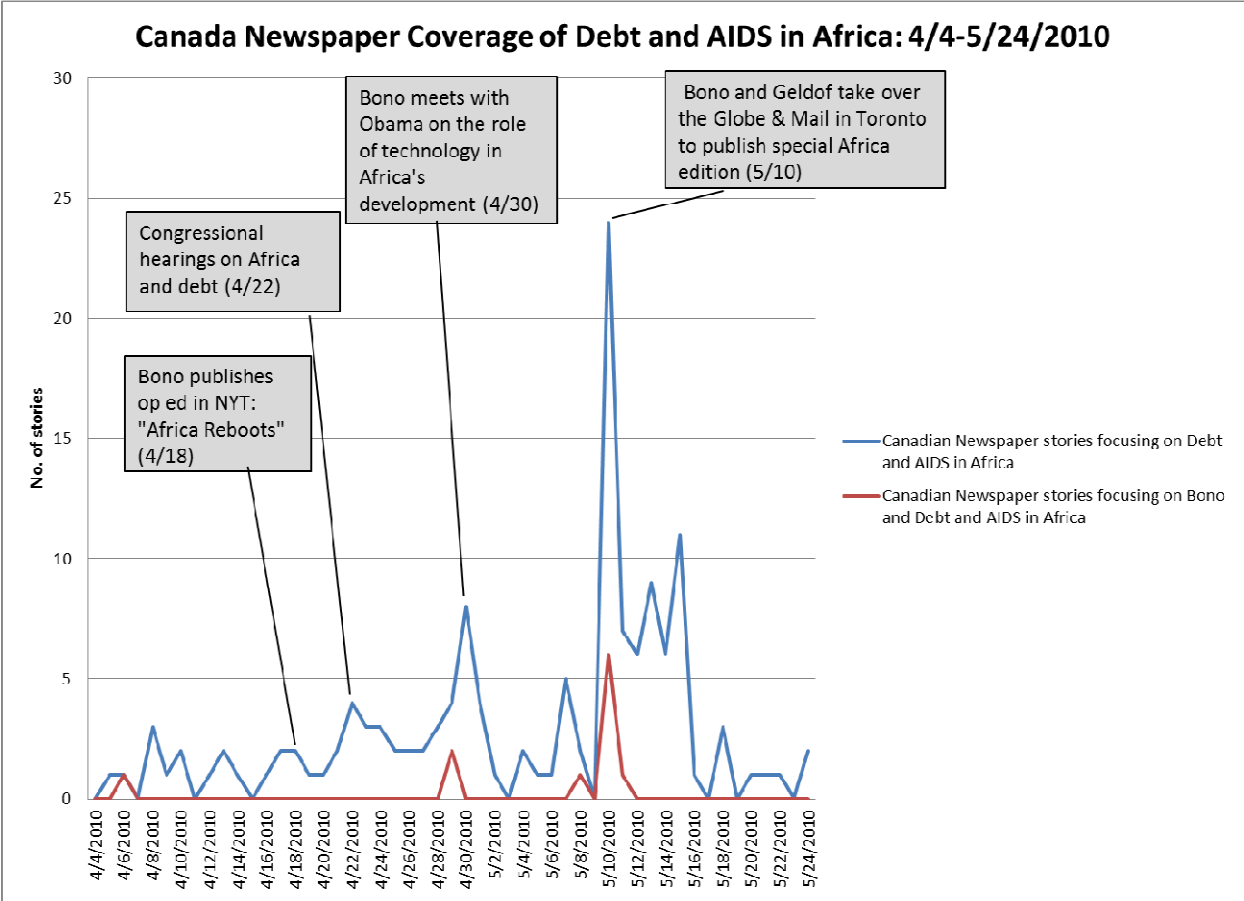
### *Debt and AIDS in Africa – 2010 Canadian Newspaper Coverage*

In April and May 2010, Bono and Bob Geldof attempted to raise the profile of problems with development in Africa, particularly focusing on the indebtedness of governments and the spread of AIDS. Both had been involved in African issues for years. Geldof got his start as an organizer of the Band Aid effort, “Do They Know Its Christmas?” followed by Live Aid, the 1985 international concert to raise funds for famine victims in Ethiopia. Bono, as lead singer of U2, played a visible role in both efforts. He and the band had already been under fire for making controversial statements of neutrality and peace between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. Since that time, he had been involved in various political statements and efforts, mostly on behalf of the poor in the developing world. In the mid-1990s, activist Jaimie Diamond with Jubilee 2000 decided to recruit rock musicians to advance the cause of debt forgiveness in the year 2000, the Jubilee year, and contacted Bono to become a spokesperson for the campaign. By early 1999, he wrote an op ed in The Guardian newspaper where he pressured world leaders to engage in debt forgiveness, a message that was publicized at the Brit Awards. He was given the Freddie Mercury Award for outstanding charitable works and spontaneously ran to the audience, giving the award to Mohammad Ali, announcing that he and Ali were supporting the Jubilee 2000 campaign. This announcement on live television prompted a response by Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown and Prime Minister Tony Blair. Ultimately, his involvement in this campaign led to years of events—dozens of meetings at G8 conferences, with presidents and

legislators—ultimately leading to pledges from leaders around the world to forgive the debt of governments in the developing world (N. Jackson 2008, 66).

One of his awareness campaigns was initiated in 2010. Bono published an editorial in the New York Times on April 8, which received some media attention beyond the newspaper itself. On April 30, Bono met with Barack Obama to discuss development issues in Africa. The most striking result of Bono and Geldof's intervention was in Canadian newspaper coverage. On May 10, Toronto's *Globe and Mail* newspaper, one of the newspapers with the highest circulation in Canada, allowed Bono and Geldof to take over the editorial reins of their publication for the day. With these two rock musicians in charge of the paper for the day, they could write articles, choose content, and interview anyone they wanted. Given control over a major Canadian newspaper, they were, to some extent, able to drive the agenda of the Canadian media for the day.

The red line in Table 3.6 illustrates stories about AIDS and debt in Africa that were written via direct reference to Bono. The blue line illustrates a corresponding spike in overall stories on AIDS and debt in Africa occurring on the same day in four Canadian newspapers. Compared to the intervention of other actors on this issue, Geldof and Bono's editorship clearly produces the biggest spike.



**Table 3.6 - Canadian Newspaper Coverage of Debt and AIDS by Bono and Geldof**

Regression estimates reported in Table 3.7 reveal the significance of these various events in Canadian newspapers.



<i>OLS Regression Estimates</i>		
	<i>Canadian Newspapers</i>	
	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t Stat</b>
Intercept	2.00 (0.43)	4.70****
Bono & Geldof	13.50 (2.06)	6.54****
US Congress	1.50 (2.06)	0.73
Bono & Obama	4.00 (2.06)	1.94*
<i>Summary</i>		
N	51	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.49	
SEE	2.85	
*p ≤ .10; ** p ≤ .05; ***p ≤ .01; **** p ≤ .001		
Standard Error is in parentheses.		

**Table 3.7 - Association between interventions of political actors and number of stories reported on debt and AIDS in Africa in Canadian newspapers: 4/4-5/24/2010**

Bono and Geldof’s editorship yields 13.5 additional stories on that day ( $\beta = 13.50$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). The direct intervention of a celebrity by controlling a form of media defacto increases the coverage of that issue. The Bono and Obama meeting also receives attention and generates an additional four stories on the day of that event ( $\beta = 4.00$ ,  $p \leq .10$ ).

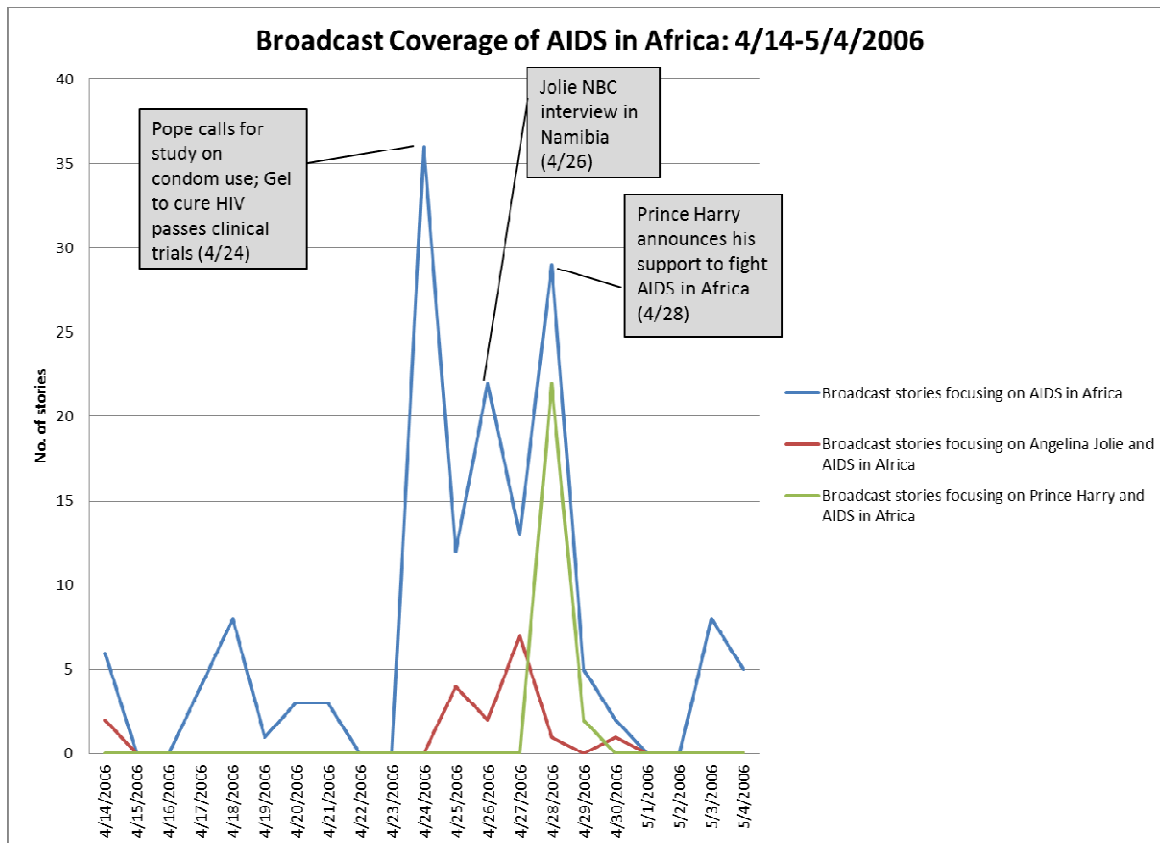
*AIDS in Africa – 2006 Broadcast News, UK, and US Newspaper Coverage*

During the spring and summer of 2006, a number of celebrities and politicians attempted to raise awareness about the problems associated with AIDS in Africa. In Table 3.8, the blue line illustrates the total number of stories reported per day on AIDS in Africa. The first major spike on this story involves the Pope saying the word “condom.” Birth control had been a taboo subject at the Vatican and his announcement that they might even study the possibility of

encouraging condom use to prevent AIDS in Africa was exceptional. The Pope is more of a political figure than a celebrity and is clearly capable of commanding attention. Some of his “effect” is moderated by the other significant announcement driving the news on that day, that a gel to cure HIV passed some clinical trials. So the spike is huge, but the Pope is not the only factor driving the spike.

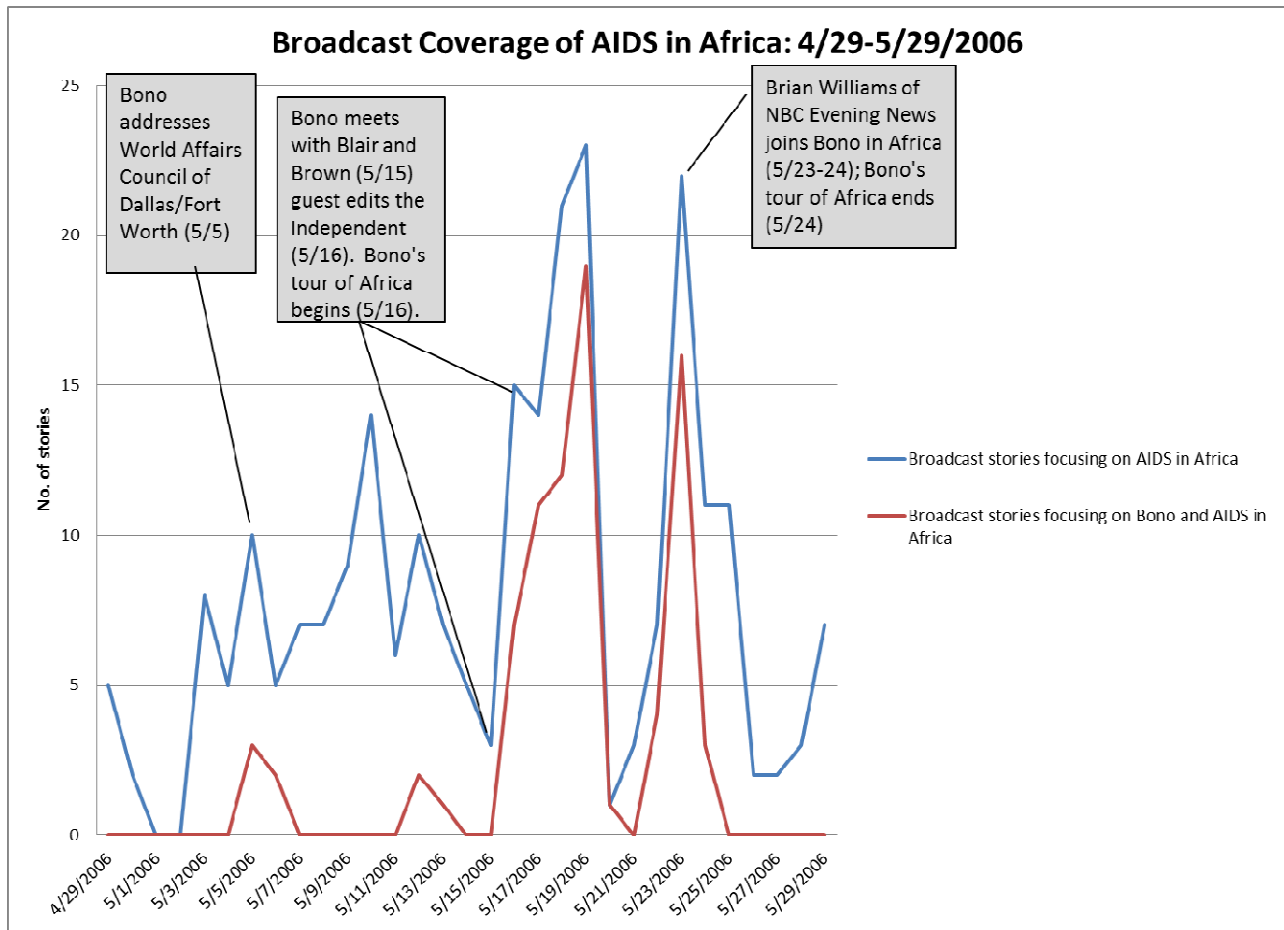
The aforementioned case of Angelina Jolie publicizing the problems with education in Africa was only one facet of her campaign. A secondary facet was the connection between poverty in Africa and AIDS. While her interviews were focused on children and education, AIDS was also occasionally mentioned. As a part of this effort, Angelina Jolie gives an NBC interview while in Namibia on April 26, expecting to give birth to her child with Brad Pitt in tow.

Prince Harry announces an initiative to fight AIDS in Africa on April 28. The red line indicates the number of stories devoted to AIDS in Africa while referencing Angelina Jolie. The green line shows the number of stories devoted to AIDS in Africa while referencing Prince Harry. The table illustrates a confluence between spikes in the coverage of celebrities advocating this issue with overall broadcast coverage. These spikes only appear in broadcast news, not in US or UK newspaper coverage.



**Table 3.8 - Broadcast Coverage of AIDS in Africa and interventions by Pope, Jolie, and Harry**

Table 3.9 illustrates Bono’s attempts to increase global awareness of AIDS in Africa and how they are covered in the broadcast media. In a roughly one month period, from April 29 through May 29 of 2006, Bono makes a series of interventions. One is a speech on AIDS and development before the World Affairs Council of Dallas/Fort Worth on May 5. On May 15, he meets with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown to discuss the global AIDS pandemic, and to interview them. The interview is included in a special issue of the *Independent*, released on May 16 where the newspaper editors allow Bono to “guest edit” the publication and ultimately determine the content. On the day of publication, he leaves for a tour of Africa, visiting several countries in the region. Brian Williams of NBC travels to Africa to shadow Bono on the last days of his African tour (May 23-24), which results in the NBC evening news being reported from Africa with Bono involved.

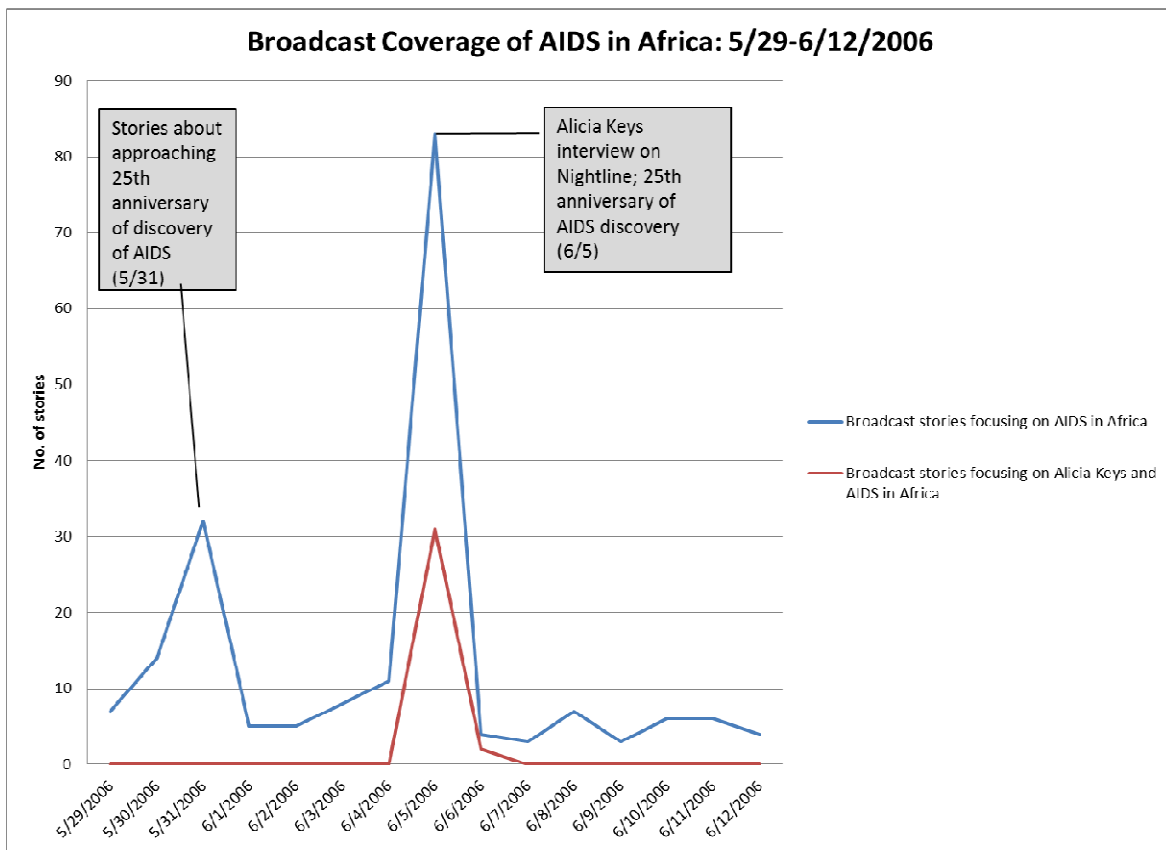


**Table 3.9 - Broadcast Coverage of AIDS in Africa and Bono Interventions**

The blue line illustrates broadcast media coverage of AIDS in Africa during this period by numbers of stories. Large spikes in numbers of stories are associated with each of Bono’s interventions. The red line indicates how much of this spike is attributed to coverage of both Bono and AIDS in the same story. In some cases, Bono’s spikes are modest compared to overall coverage of the issue. However, taking over the editorship of the *Independent*, his departure for Africa, and the NBC news coverage of the trip almost entirely drove coverage of AIDS in Africa on those days.

These spikes also illustrate the cross-media effect of some celebrity stories. When NBC news focuses on Bono for two days, it results in a huge bump in broadcast coverage. However, when Bono edits the *Independent* in print, it still receives a bump in broadcast media coverage. Broadcast outlets treat Bono’s editorship of a print newspaper as news itself.

Between May 29 and June 12, 2006, coverage peaked on June 5, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the discovery of AIDS. However, the focus on AIDS in Africa alone was dominated by a *Nightline* episode focusing on Alicia Keys and her work to raise awareness and raise money. As illustrated in Table 3.10, 31 out of 83 broadcast stories made reference to Alicia Keys in the *Nightline* interview.



**Table 3.10 - Broadcast Coverage of AIDS in Africa and Keys Intervention**

Are these interventions statistically significant? Table 3.11 offers some answers:

<i>OLS Regression Estimates</i>						
	<i>Broadcast Transcripts</i>		<i>US Newspapers</i>		<i>UK Newspapers</i>	
	$\beta$	t Stat	$\beta$	t Stat	$\beta$	t Stat
Intercept	4.91 (1.16)	4.25*****	1.16 (0.17)	6.75*****	1.65 (0.22)	7.54*****
Pope Benedict	19.09 (6.22)	3.07****	0.34 (0.93)	0.37	0.35 (1.24)	0.29
Angelina Jolie	9.59 (4.48)	2.14**	-0.16 (0.67)	-0.24	-0.65 (0.90)	-0.73
Prince Harry	12.09 (6.22)	1.94*	-0.16 (0.93)	-0.17	-0.15 (1.24)	-0.12
Bono	5.09 (2.45)	2.08**	1.15 (0.36)	3.16****	1.16 (0.55)	2.12**
Bono, Blair, Brown	0.67 (5.44)	0.12	-0.31 (0.81)	-0.39	8.27 (1.25)	6.61*****
Bill Clinton	4.59 (6.22)	0.74	0.84 (0.93)	0.91	-0.65 (1.24)	-0.52
Alicia Keys	38.59 (6.22)	6.20*****	-1.16 (0.93)	-1.25	-0.65 (1.24)	-0.52
George W. Bush	2.42 (5.13)	0.47	-0.83 (0.76)	-1.08	-0.31 (1.02)	-0.31
<i>Summary</i>						
N	90		90		90	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.40		0.16		0.41	
SEE	8.65		1.29		1.72	
*p ≤ .10; ** p ≤ .05; ***p ≤ .01; **** p ≤ .001						
Standard Error is in parentheses.						

**Table 3.11 - Association between interventions of political actors and number of stories reported on AIDS in Africa: 4/29-5/29/2006**

In broadcast media, celebrity interventions were strong and statistically significant across the board. The only political figure who compared was Pope Benedict ( $\beta = 19.09$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ), whose effect was probably inflated by the presence of another major news story of the day, as mentioned above. Still, even if his 19-story “bump” is cut in half, his intervention is quite powerful and statistically significant. Of the celebrities, Alicia Keys’ appearance on *Nightline* is the most powerful ( $\beta = 38.59$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ), followed by Angelina Jolie ( $\beta = 9.59$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ), and

Bono ( $\beta = 5.09, p \leq .05$ ). Prince Harry's intervention is quite strong as well, straddling the line between celebrity and public official ( $\beta = 12.09, p \leq .10$ ). In this media form, none of the traditional politicians drive media stories as well as the celebrities do.

On the other hand, in UK newspapers, almost none of the celebrities which were significant in Broadcast Transcripts are significant here. This may be because some of the interventions (such as interviews on CNN and NBC) may have been broadcast for US audiences and not UK audiences. Having said that, UK newspapers were not following Prince Harry's AIDS interventions as much as broadcast media. The biggest drivers of this set were Bono acting alone ( $\beta = 1.16, p \leq .05$ ) and the meeting of Bono, Tony Blair, and Gordon Brown ( $\beta = 8.27, p \leq .001$ ). Whether the eight-story spike was produced by the celebrity/politician combination or by Bono alone is impossible to determine since Bono's editorship of the *Independent* was already news before the meeting and all three were featured in the special issue of the *Independent*. At any rate, either Bono alone drove media coverage during this time or Bono acting with the most prominent UK politicians. No US politician or other celebrity approached this level of coverage or statistical significance.

US newspaper results mirror UK newspapers where there is little statistical significance in the correlation between celebrities' or politicians' interventions and numbers of stories reported. The major exception is Bono. His interventions are correlated with a near doubling of the number of stories covered in US newspapers. Line graphs for UK and US newspapers are not displayed here, but show a roughly similar pattern of spikes in respect to Bono's interventions. These interventions produce smaller spikes in the US media, in part because the AIDS in Africa story appears to be less salient in the US newspaper media as illustrated by Table 3.12.

	<b><u>Intercept</u></b>
	<i>(Number of stories per day 4/14-7/12/2006)</i>
<i>Broadcast Transcripts</i>	4.91
<i>UK Newspapers</i>	1.76
<i>US Newspapers</i>	1.16

**Table 3.12 - Intercept comparison as a proxy for salience: AIDS in Africa**

The intercepts suggest that US newspapers are reporting approximately 1.16 stories a day, UK newspapers are reporting about 1.76 stories a day, and broadcast news is reporting about 4.91 stories a day. In the case of US newspapers, if Bono appears in even one story as a result of his intervention, coverage increases substantially relative to that event.

*AIDS in Africa – 2003 Broadcast News and US Newspaper Coverage*

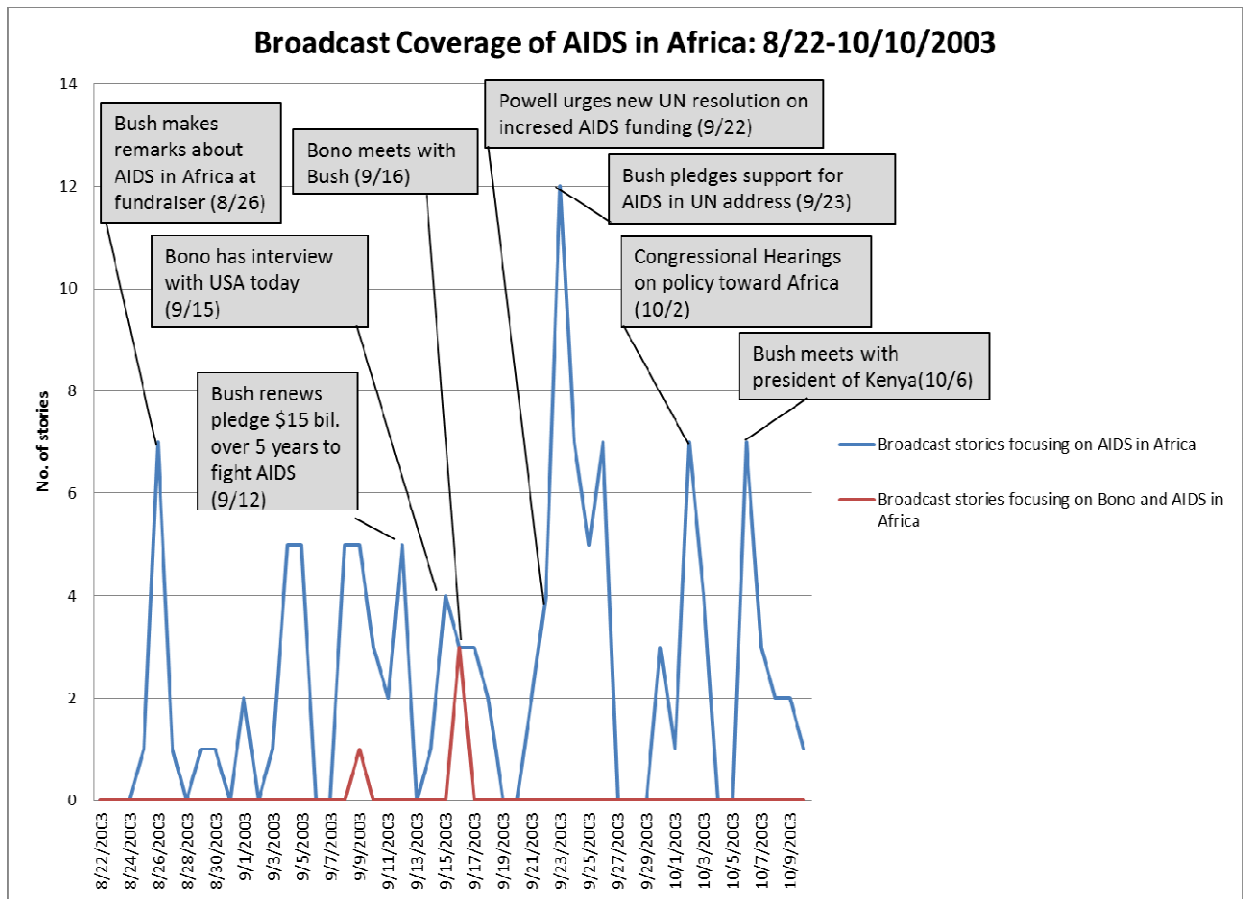
From Bono’s initial involvement in the debt relief movement, he was not only involved in public advocacy but also private lobbying of public officials. After working with the Clinton administration, he made inroads with the Bush administration, personally meeting President Bush in 2002. He developed a strong working relationship with Condoleezza Rice, where he was involved in the policy making process. Their collective work led to the Millennium Challenge, an effort to double aid to Africa, adding \$5 billion dollars annually. Bush invited Bono to attend the announcement of the initiative, but Bono was hesitant to attend unless they also committed to AIDS funding at historic levels. The administration was not prepared to make a public statement on that yet, but Bush eventually announced a US Global AIDS Initiative known as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) at his 2003 State of the Union Address, a commitment of \$15 billion dollars over five years to fight AIDS abroad. “I



was genuinely amazed,” Bono said. “To put this into context, in 2001 if you had told anyone on Capitol Hill that a Republican administration would get behind delivering anti-retro-viral drugs to people with AIDS in Africa, they would have laughed in your face. And they did laugh in my face” (McCormick et al. 2006, 314).

By July 2003, the \$3 billion dollars per years that was pledged for the initiative had been partially gutted by Congress, and the Bush administration reduced the amount requested for the first year to \$2 billion dollars because, “we didn't think the program could ramp up fast enough to absorb that amount of money early” (USA Today 2003). Bono and DATA disagreed, arguing that “the additional \$1 billion could prevent 1.6 million HIV infections in Africa” (Kaiser Health News 2003). He had an interview with USA today on September 15 and on September 16, Bush met with Bono where they had a “good old row” about how much should be spent. Still, Bono’s press conference following the meeting was not an attempt to publicly shame President Bush. Bono acknowledged that Bush is “very passionate” about the problems plaguing Africa but, “I believe the capacity is there. He doesn't.” He insisted, however, that “Seven thousand people dying a day is not a cause - it's an emergency” (Batchelor 2003).

The Bush administration responded with its own public relations campaign. From summer through September 2003, Bush emphasized the importance of fighting AIDS globally in a series of speeches and fundraisers. Their efforts climaxed with a speech by Colin Powell at the United Nations urging a new resolution on AIDS and Bush formally pledging his support the following day. Early October brought additional Congressional hearings focused on Africa and Bush hosted a meeting with the President of Kenya on October 6. Table 3.13 summarizes the major events from this period and how they were covered in the broadcast media.



**Table 3.13 - Broadcast News Coverage of AIDS in Africa by Bono**

Again, the blue line represents total stories about AIDS in Africa from broadcast transcripts. The red line represents numbers of stories written about AIDS in Africa by referencing Bono. Despite some high profile interventions and a visible correlation between Bono’s interventions and coverage of stories on a given day, Bono’s interventions do not compare to those made by President Bush or Colin Powell. One could say that at this time, the administration made the issue of AIDS in Africa their own.

This effort was fairly successful in the broadcast media as the regression analysis in Table 3.14 reveals.

<i>OLS Regression Estimates</i>				
	<i>Broadcast Transcripts</i>		<i>US Newspapers</i>	
	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t Stat</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t Stat</b>
Intercept	1.40 (0.35)	3.94****	2.81 (0.29)	9.64****
Bono	1.74 (1.71)	1.01	-1.21 (1.41)	-0.86
Bush	2.74 (0.83)	3.32***	0.77 (0.68)	1.14
Powell	4.13 (2.12)	1.95*	1.11 (1.74)	0.64
Congress	3.67 (1.09)	3.36***	-0.01 (0.90)	-0.01
Powell and Bush	1.10 (1.51)	0.73	1.19 (1.24)	0.95
Bono and Bush	0.74 (1.71)	0.43	-0.21 (1.41)	-0.15
<i>Summary</i>				
N	50		50	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.48		0.16	
SEE	2.08		1.71	
*p ≤ .10; ** p ≤ .05; ***p ≤ .01; **** p ≤ .001				
Standard Error is in parentheses.				

**Table 3.14 - Association between interventions of political actors and number of stories reported on AIDS in Africa: 8/22-10/10/2003**

The politicians upstage Bono. Colin Powell seems to garner the strongest effect, with the possibility of four additional stories on AIDS in Africa when he speaks ( $\beta = 4.13$ ,  $p \leq .10$ ). Bush ( $\beta = 2.74$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ) and Congress ( $\beta = 3.67$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ) also are likely to produce spikes in coverage in broadcast news when promoting the issue in this high profile manner. Bono's interventions do not register as statistically significant ( $\beta = 1.74$ , n.s.). Even Bono and Bush's joint meeting do not command significant attention ( $\beta = 0.74$ , n.s.).

The picture is starker for all political actors in US newspaper reporting. None of the interventions by any political actor is statistically significant. They all received some coverage for their efforts, but their actions do not seem to drive broader coverage of this issue during this time. Bono has no advantage as a celebrity. Bush has no advantage for the presidency.

While Bono may have lost the media battle and perhaps the battle over short term allocations, he won the war. Ultimately, \$18.8 billion dollars were spent fighting AIDS—a larger amount than was originally pledged—between fiscal years 2004 and 2008 (Itano 2008). Bush and Bono’s working relationship deepened over time. On the Daily Show in 2012, Bono said of Bush that he did an “amazing” job in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa. “I know that’s hard for you to accept, but George kind of knocked it out of the park. I can tell you, and I’m actually here to tell you that America now has 5 million people being kept alive by these drugs. That’s something that everyone should know” (Hughes 2013). Of Bono, Bush said, “He was skeptical of me and frankly I was skeptical of him. And we became pals because we shared a common desire to help others on the continent of Africa. Bono’s the real deal” (Glueck 2013).

### **Mixed Results and Lingering Questions**

Thus far, this study has concluded that celebrities are highly successful at commanding media attention, which goes a long way toward establishing that celebrities may be able to set agendas, at least in the media. The last case, however, is instructive. It reminds us that celebrities still play an outsider’s game for the most part, and that politicians set agendas for a living. The fact that celebrities and politicians cannot garner attention equally in all markets and across all forms of media leads to more questions than answers. Clearly, celebrities are capable

of generating a lot of media attention across markets and media forms, but not all of the time. What makes the difference? Why are they successful at some times and not at others?

One answer may be that celebrities cannot cut through an atmosphere where politicians make a concentrated effort to dominate discourse. A celebrity becomes one additional voice in an environment already dominated by powerful actors. As a result, maybe newspapers take politicians more seriously than celebrities. Pitt and Jolie's incredible combined impact on broadcast media could not translate to newspapers. Perhaps the newspapers were less likely to cover Pitt and Jolie's African trip because they did not deem it newsworthy. An upcoming birth announcement by a popular celebrity couple in a foreign country is tantalizing but not a public policy issue. Bono, likewise in the 2003 AIDS case, may well have known that Bush had a bully pulpit larger than the one that he could offer as a celebrity. If a celebrity perceives that they will lose the public agenda setting battle, perhaps an "insider" strategy is best.<sup>13</sup> Rather than staging a series of high profile events as Clooney did when he returned to Washington from Sudan, Bono chose his words and his battles carefully knowing that he had the attention of a public figure, President George W. Bush, and that Bush might allow him to continue the conversation on another day. Still, Powell and Bush could not command newspaper attention even when they attempted to dominate that agenda. They cracked broadcast media in the final case, but not newspapers. In 2003, Bono was not able to command as much attention as major players in the political establishment. In 2006 on the same issue, he was.

In addition, US newspapers may treat politicians and celebrities with equal respect (or disregard), likely privileging the story over the pseudo-event. Perhaps "visual satisfaction"

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<sup>13</sup> This is a clear implication of this case. Proving this demonstrably is beyond the scope of this study and raises questions for future research. On insider strategies, see Florini, Nihon Kokusai Kojo Senta, & Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000, p. 105; Khagram et al., 2002, p. 67; Naidoo, 2006, pp. 56-57; Rodrigues, 2004.

matters more to broadcast media than it does to newspapers, implying that the audiences respond differently to print media and that newspapers do not have to be nearly as sensationalist in order to draw readers (Becker 2010; Cook 2005, 102; E. J. Epstein 1973, 261). Perhaps a celebrity or a politician offering a press release, giving a speech, or making a statement is only relevant in the context of the unfolding action of the story itself. Perhaps personalities and pseudo-events matter more in broadcast media (Boorstin 1992). Jolie speaking alone about education and poverty may have translated well across media forms because she is a personality engaging in a pseudo-event speaking intelligently and credibly about an issue. Once she offers some substance, her comments contribute to an issue narrative already established by newspaper coverage and communicating that issue to some who might not normally pay attention to serious news.

Moreover, interventions by combinations of political actors and celebrities seem to have varying results. Bono and Bush do not generate as much attention as Clooney and Obama. Multiple celebrity or multiple politician interventions seem to produce different outcomes. Does the number or combination of types of political actors affect the “success” of an intervention?

One major question remains: who is the best at spotlighting? Might the answer vary across media types? Ultimately, answers to questions across cases may best be answered by analyzing aggregate data. In the next chapter, I will analyze the data across cases to compile “wins” and “losses” for all political actors, compared across broadcast news and US newspapers, in an attempt to answer some of these questions.

## **Chapter 4 - Competition in Media Agenda Setting**

Can celebrities compete with public officials when it comes to gaining attention for political causes? Politicians are established power brokers who are assumed to naturally attract media attention around political issues. Celebrities attract media attention for their artistic endeavors and personal exploits. They are very proficient at whatever media lies within their expertise—television, films, music, or other art forms. This gives them an advantage in gaining media attention (Adorno 2002; Balliger 1999, 58; Boorstin 1992; Fenster and Swiss 1999, 225; Gramsci 2011; Marshall 1997; Martiniello and Lafleur 2008). Still, the news has traditionally been a realm for learning about current events, issues of public importance, or the activities of public officials in a democracy (Corner and Pels 2003, 3–4). Over time, the lines between what is traditional news and what is entertainment have blurred (Bennett 2012; Cook 2005, 2–3, 104; E. J. Epstein 1973, 262). In this environment, can celebrities point attention toward political issues? The previous chapter established that they can. Celebrities can cut through the media noise and gain attention for their cause, affecting the agenda presented within the media.

However, celebrities remain only one kind of agent competing for attention. How do they compete with the traditional political power brokers? Are some media outlets more sympathetic to celebrities than others? Are newspapers equally disdainful of politicians and celebrities? Do the chances of success increase with more celebrities? More politicians? Combinations of both? What factors lead to “victory?” The purpose of this chapter is to look at the data in the aggregate in order to find some answers to these questions.

## The Methodology of Win-Loss Ratios

The figures and tables included in chapter 3 offer some of the best illustrations of the results from the time series analysis. There were far more cases, line graphs, and regression models that illustrated the same patterns and relationships, many of them quite dramatic. In this study, 88 intervention events with 123 intervention opportunities were analyzed.<sup>14</sup> To generalize the comparisons, a dependent variable was created where all public figures were assigned a “win” or a “loss” (win = 1; loss = 0) for every intervention opportunity. If the intervention has a p-value of  $p \leq .05$  on an event included in the OLS analysis *and* there is a visible spike on the line graph within a 1 day lag of the event, it is coded as a win. Without those two criteria, the event is coded as a loss. Wins and losses were separated according to media source type, providing a comparison between the successes or failures of certain political actors across types of media outlets.<sup>15</sup>

The dichotomous dependent variables were analyzed using binary logistical regression. In one model, independent variables included celebrity intervention (celebrity present = 1; no celebrity = 0); politician intervention (politician present = 1; no politician = 0). In another model, independent variables included number of celebrities, coded as the number of celebrities involved with the event; number of politicians, coded as the number of politicians involved with

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<sup>14</sup> The total number of cases was 123: a measure of each individual political actor’s opportunity to “win” or “lose.” The spreadsheet was set up and the regression models calculated so that all political actors’ wins and losses could be tallied, and so that conditions for all wins and losses could be associated with independent variables. Because there were 88 events, some of the events were counted multiple times, depending upon the number of participants involved. Thus, an event involving Bush and Bono would have been calculated as two intervention opportunities to allow for the fact that both may have scored a “loss,” allowing a clean count for each political actor irrespective of his/her partner at a given event. Since the dependent variable is a measure of wins and losses per individual’s intervention opportunity, and not a measure of winning or losing an entire event, this seemed an appropriate way to compute results.

<sup>15</sup> There were not enough intervention events in UK and Canadian newspapers to analyze them separately.



the event;<sup>16</sup> and celebrity/politician combination, coded as a dummy variable (celebrity and politician present = 1; no celebrity and politician= 0).

### **Results of the Win-Loss Ratio Analysis**

Table 4.1 displays a summary of political actors' win-loss records. Each political actor had the opportunity to "win" or "lose" in a given intervention, whether they were the sole "star" or appeared with other celebrities and/or politicians. Only those political actors that were involved in at least three interventions are displayed. The first column represents "total wins across media types," which includes Broadcast Transcripts and US Newspapers as well as UK and Canadian Newspapers on those cases where additional data was used in those markets. Content analyses of UK and Canadian Newspaper did not produce enough intervention opportunities to be statistically significant, so those results do not appear in the table below. Wins and losses were also tabulated in columns specific to Broadcast Transcripts and US Newspapers.

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<sup>16</sup> Situations where specific congress people intervened were coded and counted by their name. Numbers of politicians were capped at 6, equal to the highest number of celebrities at a given event. The reason is that some institutions (such as the US Congress) drove some news events, and it is not easy to quantify a number in such circumstances. If Congress intervenes, it does not realistically equate to 538 politicians when so many unnamed people produce an "intervention" in the media.

<b>Total Wins Across All Cases</b>				<b>Wins in Broadcast Transcripts</b>			
<i>Political Actor</i>	<i>Total N</i>	<i>Total wins</i>	<i>Total W/L %</i>	<i>Political Actor</i>	<i>BC N</i>	<i>BC wins</i>	<i>BC W/L %</i>
George Clooney	36	20	55.56%	Alicia Keys	3	3	100.00%
Alicia Keys	9	5	55.56%	George Clooney	18	16	88.89%
Angelina Jolie	17	8	47.06%	Angelina Jolie	6	5	83.33%
Barack Obama	19	8	42.11%	Barack Obama	9	7	77.78%
Bono	53	20	37.74%	Bill Clinton	3	2	66.67%
US Congress	13	4	30.77%	US Congress	6	3	50.00%
Bill Clinton	7	2	28.57%	Bono	21	9	42.86%
George W. Bush	22	4	18.18%	George W. Bush	10	4	40.00%
Laura Bush	7	0	0.00%	Laura Bush	3	0	0.00%
				<b>Wins in US Newspapers</b>			
				<i>Political Actor</i>	<i>USNP N</i>	<i>USNP wins</i>	<i>USNP W/L %</i>
				Alicia Keys	3	2	66.67%
				Angelina Jolie	6	3	50.00%
				Bono	21	6	28.57%
				George Clooney	18	4	22.22%
				US Congress	6	1	16.67%
				Barack Obama	9	1	11.11%
				Bill Clinton	3	0	0.00%
				George W. Bush	10	0	0.00%
				Laura Bush	3	0	0.00%

**Table 4.1 – Total Wins and Losses Across Media Types**

Across all cases, the big “winners” are George Clooney and Alicia Keys, followed by Angelina Jolie. What perhaps is most striking is that celebrities have better records than politicians across all media types. In total wins, only Barack Obama ranks among the celebrities and Bono among the politicians, and both of them lie squarely in the middle of the results with celebrities on top and politicians on bottom. The top winning percentage is 56%, a good record in baseball and quite good in this media environment where a political actor “wins” if they generate a spike and “loses” if the collective media turns away. Even low percentages are positive in an environment when victory is attention and defeat is ignorance. A “defeat” for one intervention may cost little and any political actor may have “victory” another day.

A comparison of the win-loss record of political actors in broadcast media versus US newspapers reveals that most of the interventions have a 50% or higher success rate in broadcast

media and 50% or lower in US newspapers. This suggests that public figures in general have an easier time gaining attention in the broadcast media and a more difficult time in newspapers.

With celebrities on top of broadcast and newspaper lists, it appears in both media that celebrities are more likely to have successful interventions than politicians are.

The win-loss records illustrate a high rate of success for celebrities. Is there a statistically significant relationship between these interventions and wins and losses? How do politicians and celebrities perform in competition across media types? At the outset, one might assume that the serious and event-driven nature of newspapers would make them less likely to be susceptible to celebrity interventions than broadcast media, and that broadcast media would be more likely to follow the personalities and images associated with celebrity. Table 4.2 rejects these assumptions. This model compares celebrity versus politician interventions to see which is more likely to generate the win.

Table 4.2 corroborates the win-loss findings: that celebrities top all lists. In broadcast media coverage, a celebrity intervention on a political issue increases the likelihood of heightened media coverage ( $\beta = 1.07, p \leq .05$ ). Politicians' interventions are not statistically significant in broadcast media ( $\beta = -0.13, n.s.$ ). What is surprising is that newspapers are more likely to pay attention to celebrity ( $\beta = 2.90, p \leq .001$ ) and politician interventions ( $\beta = 0.90, p \leq .10$ ) than broadcast media. Across both media types, a celebrity intervention is more likely to produce a bump in coverage than a politician intervention.

<i>Logistical Regression Estimates</i>				
	<i>Broadcast Transcripts</i>		<i>US Newspapers</i>	
	$\beta$	Wald $\chi^2$	$\beta$	Wald $\chi^2$
Celebrity Intervention	1.07** (0.43)	6.26	2.90**** (0.79)	13.44
Politician Intervention	-0.13 (0.42)	0.09	0.90* (0.46)	3.78
Constant	-0.09 (0.46)	0.04	-3.77**** (0.84)	20.25
<i>Summary</i>				
Pseudo R-Square - Cox and Snell	0.07		0.17	
$\chi^2$	8.21		23.07	
N	123		123	
*p < .10; ** p < .05; ***p < .01; **** p < .001				
Standard Error is in parentheses.				

**Table 4.2 - Likelihood that a celebrity versus a politician intervention increases coverage**

This sample concludes that celebrities are more successful than politicians at gaining media attention when advocating political issues. Does this effect increase with multiple actors? Do more celebrities increase the likelihood of coverage? Does it help if politicians and celebrities “team up?” Consistent with the conclusions in the previous table, Table 4.3 suggests that “more is better” when it comes to celebrities.

<i>Logistical Regression Estimates</i>				
	<i>Broadcast Transcripts</i>		<i>US Newspapers</i>	
	$\beta$	Wald $\chi^2$	$\beta$	Wald $\chi^2$
No. of celebrities	0.74*** (0.25)	8.93	0.83**** (0.18)	21.13
No. of politicians	0.01 (0.14)	0.01	0.18 (0.18)	1.00
Celebrity and politician present at event together	-0.31 (0.51)	0.37	1.14** (0.54)	4.42
Constant	-0.17 (0.31)	0.29	-2.88**** (0.47)	37.36
<i>Summary</i>				
Pseudo R-Square - Cox and Snell	0.13		0.30	
$\chi^2$	17.33		43.38	
N	123		123	
*p < .10; ** p < .05; ***p < .01; **** p < .001				
Standard Error is in parentheses.				

**Table 4.3 - Likelihood that multiples or combinations of celebrities and politicians increase coverage**

There is a positive correlation between number of celebrities and obtaining a “win.” The more celebrities involved in an intervention, the more likely they are to create a spike in coverage in both broadcast media ( $\beta = 0.74, p \leq .01$ ) and in US newspaper coverage ( $\beta = 0.83, p \leq .001$ ). More politicians do not create more coverage. However, if a celebrity and a politician intervene together, they are likely to increase coverage in US newspapers ( $\beta = 1.14, p \leq .05$ ), but not necessarily in the broadcast media ( $\beta = -0.31, n.s$ ).

### **Implications**

The data in this chapter suggest that when it comes to gaining attention for a political cause, celebrity interventions are more likely to produce media coverage than politician interventions across media types and that more celebrities may increase the effect. Combinations

of celebrities and politicians acting together are also likely to gain some attention, particularly in US newspapers. Politicians are more likely to affect coverage in US newspapers than in broadcast media, but do not perform as well as celebrities in any media form when it comes to pointing public attention toward a political issue.

That politicians have a difficult time producing spikes in both media markets is a rather surprising finding. Politicians, who need to advance their messages, communicate through various media forms daily. One might assume that democratically elected public officials are credible and should be able to produce a bigger spike than anyone else. The President of the United States, arguably the most powerful political figure in the world, should produce the biggest spikes of all (Kernell 1997). However, it is easy to forget that the president makes many statements.<sup>17</sup> Some are flashy and exciting and relate directly to issues that concern the public. Others are ordinary. A president's ability to generate interest, or to distract from problematic issues, is also limited and he sometimes fails. Even if a president thinks an issue is globally important, the issue may not resonate with the public or the media's idea of what makes a good enough story to sell more units. After all, media organizations are also businesses (Kuypers 2013). An individual editor's first commitment may be to providing quality and accurate news. However, which stories, how many stories, and how prominent the stories appear may be a factor of not only how "big" the story is but also how the story might lead to higher circulation and greater sales and advertisement revenue (Bennett 2012; Cook 2005; E. J. Epstein 1973; Jowell et al. 2007; Lim 2012; J. C. Turner 1987). If this is the case, politicians are "business as usual." Newspapers in particular do not necessarily need statements from public officials to tell a story about a current event. Broadcast news, which is more reliant on visuals and sound bites for

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<sup>17</sup> The notion that a politician may be "overexposed" and therefore, less potent, is consistent with the celebrity product endorsement literature (Roy 2012).

increased entertainment value, is more likely to desire personalities to provide content in order to contextualize stories (Cook 2005; Kazin, Edwards, and Rothman 2011, 401). Still, with hundreds of options to use as “talking heads,” politicians are in high supply and part of the routine of news making, even in broadcast news.

If a politician wants to stand out, she will place herself next to a talking head that is lower in supply and higher in demand—a celebrity touting an issue that appeals to the politician. A celebrity advocating on behalf of a public issue is a rare commodity: far from business as usual. Celebrities are typically more likely to gain attention for their latest project, or for getting themselves into trouble. When celebrities appear authentic and articulate when speaking about a public issue, and when they utilize the skills that have made them popular in the first place, public policy advocacy marries the theater, a premise that will be explored further in chapter 5. Entertainment may not be news in this case, but the news becomes entertaining.

The data presented above are consistent with this conclusion. They imply that a celebrity does not need a politician to be legitimated in the media. Since celebrity interventions are stronger than politician interventions, and that more celebrities generate a greater level of attention than more politicians, we might conclude on the contrary, that celebrities are the draw and politicians are the beneficiary when they appear together. Through the celebrity, a politician gains special attention from the media. If the celebrity plays the game right and coordinates well with her advocacy network, the celebrity may not only gain access to lobby high profile decision makers; she may also create an opening for her affiliated activists to become intimately involved in the policy process. It is clear why Bono would seek out George W. Bush. These data provide a reason why George W. Bush might want or need Bono. Bono provides a means for Bush to gain attention on an issue he cares about.

The ranking of celebrities on each list might also provide some insights about why some interventions work and some do not. In Broadcast Transcripts, Keys, Clooney, and Jolie are at the top of the list. It is striking, though, that while Keys has only three low risk intervention opportunities, and yields a 100% success rate, and Jolie is at 86% for six intervention opportunities, Clooney manages to maintain an 89% record with 18 intervention opportunities. For other political actors, it appears that more opportunities may yield lower percentages. Bono has the most intervention opportunities in this sample at 53. He also is ranked among the lowest of the celebrities in terms of coverage in broadcast media. In other words, there may be a fatigue effect where media organizations begin to see certain celebrities as routine and others as extraordinary (Roy 2012). Just as a president may become “routine,” so might an overexposed celebrity. Likewise, the very qualities that make Bono more of a routine politician in broadcast media may make him more attractive in US newspapers, where he ranks among the most successful of the celebrities. He is a routine policy insider, given his long track record of lobbying Congress, meeting presidents, attending G8 summits, and involving himself in detailed facets of the policy making process.

Indeed, Clooney’s success might be tied to the fact that he is aware of overexposing himself in the wrong ways. Clooney’s interventions tend to be high profile, dramatic events designed to attract a lot of attention. He uses these events and his star power to provide opportunities and leverage to create an opportunity for his connected lobbyist and policy wonk, John Prendergast, to play an insider game. Bono ultimately had to choose whether he wanted to primarily play the role of outraged celebrity activist or thoughtful insider. He leans toward the latter. As a result, he is much more cautious about his public statements and events, trying not to burn his bridges and upset his inside game. Clooney, on the other hand, has the luxury of



choosing a strictly outsider strategy, yet sending in and accompanying Prendergast, who can do the insider work for him.<sup>18</sup> This gives him the freedom focus upon his core competency: playing the angry movie star in public, while allowing Prendergast to be the educated, yet zealous insider. Prendergast could make thousands of appearances and there would be little Prendergast fatigue because no one notices him as much as they do Clooney. Clooney can be selective about his interventions and stay “fresh” in the broadcast media.

Another reason why the media may be turning to a star such as George Clooney so consistently may be implied in a statement Clooney made about the media’s coverage and the American public’s response to the Darfur crisis:

The unfortunate truth of it is it’s not somehow sexy enough news and it’s hard. It’s hard to look at, and after a while people don’t want to see it. And there’s a lot of, I think, wear and tear on people seeing a lot of tragedy. But while we don’t pay attention to it and sort of shut our eyes, there’s an awful lot of killing going on, an awful lot of rape going on. Here’s the thing: We always see this now. We have tragedy fatigue on television. Every day, 20 kids [are] killed in Iraq or, you know, there’s always disaster (Clooney 2006).

People may experience politician or celebrity fatigue. They may also experience tragedy fatigue (Acampora and Cotten 2008, xi; Associated Press 2008). However, perhaps the “sexy” part is the key to understanding the role of actors like Clooney and Jolie in broadcast media, a variable that is not lost on the advertising literature (Berscheid and Walster 1974; McGuire 1985). Clooney did not exactly say it in this way, but he implied it: the media is about “sexy.” Perhaps there is no other way to make a tragedy in Africa sexy other than to put George Clooney’s face on it. As indicated above, the pursuit of sound bites to make news more entertaining leads intelligent journalists to more attractive talking heads. Jolie and Clooney may have a degree of credibility, but if they also exude “sexiness,” why not privilege their profiles

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<sup>18</sup> See Clark, 2006; Khagram et al., 2002; Price, 1998; Torrance & Torrance, 2006 for literature on outsider strategies.

over that of an aging rocker like Bono or a stock photo of lesser known politicians? A CNN headline underlines an answer to this question: “Clooney, senators urge action on Darfur.”

Clooney was the headliner. Senators in attendance included Sam Brownback and Barack Obama (CNN 2006). Barack Obama may have become the president of the United States, but as a well-known Senator, he was still Clooney’s sidekick on CNN.

Newspapers seem to be different. In print, might US newspapers privilege a Bono or Angelina Jolie, who have credentials in the political establishment and understand policy making, over Clooney, who is very intelligent and articulate about his issue but plays more of an outsider’s game? Sexy does not translate as well in media that provide fewer pictures and is not an essential quality of print news.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided some answers to questions about whether celebrities could command attention in the mainstream media on political issues, whether they could compete with politicians, and the circumstances that make for a successful celebrity intervention. It is possible for both celebrities and politicians to produce visible spikes in coverage in broadcast news and newspaper coverage. It may be more difficult for both to penetrate newspapers and more likely for celebrities to be successful in both. Indeed, more celebrities may lead to more coverage. In US newspapers, politicians may gain an advantage by allying with celebrities, to advance their agenda or burnish their image on particular issues. This provides an opening for celebrities to gain access to politicians and the political process. Thus, there may be a connection between the outsider game of gaining media attention and the insider game of gaining access and advantage in the policymaking process.

The analyses of chapters 3 and 4 focused on the ability of celebrities to gain media attention for political issues. The research suggests that celebrities have an ability to influence public agendas by shining a spotlight on a particular issue. Where celebrities shine their spotlight, the media tends to look. However, even the aggregate analysis of chapter 4 raises some additional questions. Once the public is paying attention to the celebrity, and the issue, can celebrities affect people's attitudes? Raising the profile of an issue is an impressive accomplishment. But do people care about what the celebrity says?

In addition, any celebrity may be able to gain attention, but can just any celebrity convince people that they ought to agree with him or her? Being famous may be necessary to reach a broad audience, but certainly would not be sufficient to persuade that audience. George Clooney, based on his patterns of success documented in the previous chapters, appears to be quite credible when discussing Sudan. Dennis Rodman, on the other hand, is a joke when he talks about North Korea. Does the perceived credibility of a celebrity matter? Is credibility or success somehow linked to the celebrity's artistic abilities? Can a celebrity advocate just anything, or does it somehow have to be consistent with what people know or believe about that celebrity? If celebrities are uniquely persuasive, over what types of issues do they have influence? An ability to persuade would not only translate to success in agenda setting in the media, but also in personal lobbying efforts, which has important implications for insider strategies. Thus, the next chapter will attempt to answer this question: can a celebrity frame issues and prime audiences? If this can be demonstrated, celebrities might rival politicians in power along an additional dimension.

## Chapter 5 - "I'm not George Harrison." Celebrity Framing and Persuasion

In 1974, Father Bill Ayers wanted to start an organization to fight world hunger after a severe draught in Sub Saharan Africa. He approached Harry Chapin, famous for his hit, "Cats in the Cradle" to do for world hunger what George Harrison had done to publicize the crisis in Bangladesh in 1971. Chapin argued, "I'm not George Harrison." Chapin said it would take him fifty concerts to make as much as Harrison could make in one night. So they connected with the United Nations and eventually started an organization called World Hunger Year (WHY) to raise money and heighten awareness of the problem. Ultimately, Chapin wanted to lobby the US Congress to divert surplus US food supplies. To learn to successfully how to access the powers in Washington and to establish meaningful alliances that might help support the effort, Chapin reached out to Ralph Nader, who had successfully pressured Congress to enact public interest legislation.

Nader was not interested and not impressed. He had solicited "concerned stars" such as Marlon Brando, Linda Ronstadt, and Robert Lamm of Chicago, who "had not been able to get beyond the point of doing a big splashy publicity thing" and make "a long-range commitment." He thought Chapin would be just like them. Chapin asked if Nader had heard any of his music. Nader said, no, so Chapin pulled out a guitar and sang "Cats in the Cradle."

"Well, that's something I could listen to," Nader said.

It was at that point that Nader reconsidered his affiliation with Chapin. Chapin explained how he agreed with Nader's skepticism of celebrity involvement: "I mean, half the country thinks we solve our environmental problems on Earth Day, or racial problems with Peter, Paul and Mary singing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, or hunger with a Bangladesh concert.

You have to be working in the process. Students ask me when world hunger will end and I tell them it'll be decades before we really see a difference.”

Chapin persuaded Nader to give him a chance. Chapin agreed to perform at fourteen Public Interest Research Group benefits as well as the national convention in Washington, D.C. In exchange he got Nader's aid in organizing. Ultimately the alliance provided access to some of the most powerful people in Congress, a seat on President Carter's Presidential Commission on Domestic and International Hunger, and a congressional bill on food aid (Coan 2001, 280–285, 381; Marsh 1978).

Chapin's intents illustrate some of the methods of agenda setting described in chapters 3 and 4. These chapters established that not only were celebrities capable of commanding media attention, but their abilities at times exceeded those of conventional politicians. In addition, the more celebrities that are involved in an intervention, the more likely the media are to take note. According to the data, politicians can dominate the media at times, but are not nearly as effective as raising awareness about specific political issues at discrete points consistently over time.

These chapters illustrate the power of celebrities to attract media attention, which goes a long way toward explaining how they may be capable of setting public agendas. Chapin, in his own words, was not George Harrison and could not attract the type of media attention that a Beatle could command. However, his efforts did end with a degree of success. The difference for Chapin was his ability to persuade key individuals and change minds in order to achieve his goals. Thus far, the previous chapters do not address this ability. They do not reveal whether celebrities' messages successfully persuade target audiences. Attracting attention toward a political issue is a powerful ability. Persuasion would add another dimension to that power.

Bono can attract a lot of attention. Once people pay attention, are they prone to believe the message?

The impact of celebrity endorsements is not obvious (Brubaker 2011; M. C. Campbell 2012; Garthwaite and Moore 2008; D. J. Jackson and Darrow 2005; Pease and Brewer 2008). Media messages have been known to mobilize or demobilize citizens (Aarts and Semetko 2003; Hillygus 2005; Schuck and Vreese 2009) and even influence undecided citizens on how to vote (Hillygus and Jackman 2003). One assumes that politicians have credibility on political issues. Celebrities are entertainers. Is it possible for entertainers to be persuasive on issues of public policy? The purpose of this chapter is to discover whether a celebrity can change minds or even effectively call citizens to action. If a celebrity delivering a message persuades the person receiving it, that celebrity, amplified through the media, has a significant amount of power over an audience and thus public opinion, voters, and perhaps even policy makers. The following section will explain the methods pursued to find answers to these questions.

## **Methodology**

To evaluate the ability of celebrities to persuade, two types of surveys were constructed. The first “authenticity and credibility survey” was created to discover how respondents perceive celebrities across a series of issues and how their credibility compares to a few high profile politicians. The second was an experimental survey design intended to evaluate whether a celebrity advocating a particular issue could affect the attitudes of respondents in an experimental group compared to a control group. The surveys will be described in detail in following sections. First, there will be a description of the characteristics of the sample and a discussion of the process of selecting cases and celebrities for the surveys.

### *The Sample*

The surveys were administered to 887 respondents. Of the 887 respondents, 177 took a version of the authenticity and credibility survey and 831 took one of the experimental surveys.

All instruments were made available in self-administered paper and pencil surveys as well as identical online surveys hosted by FluidSurvey. Most of the sample came from adult students attending undergraduate and graduate classes at select universities in the Greater Kansas City area. Of that group, most were graduate students, many about to receive their degree. Thus, the majority of the sample was comprised of well-educated professional and working class people. A minority were full time students. From the university samples, 569 students took the paper version. Electronic versions of surveys were taken by 318 respondents, most of whom were online students. Many of the online respondents also saw the survey posted on various websites and voluntarily agreed to take the survey.

**Error! Reference source not found.** lists the characteristics of the sample. The ratio of men to women in the sample is identical to the percentage in the general US population, using US Census figures from 2012 (The US Census Bureau Website Services & Coordination Staff n.d.). While the sample has wide age diversity, the median age (31) is slightly younger than the US general population (37). The numbers of those who self-identify racially as “white” is slightly overrepresented, but close to the US total percentage. Blacks and Latinos appear to be underrepresented, although the survey did not distinguish between race and ethnicity as the US census does, which makes the comparison imperfect. The percentage of whites is probably correct, while some of Latino ethnicity may have reported themselves white, black, or other. The number of Democrats in the sample (32%)

is close to the same number reported by Gallup (31%) for the dates of August 7-11, 2013. Republicans are overrepresented (33% in the sample and 24% nationwide), although this is not surprising given the preponderance of respondents from suburban areas in the Greater Kansas City area, many of whom were business professionals. Independents are also underrepresented in the survey (35% in the sample and 43% nationwide) (“Party Affiliation” 2014).

<u>Age</u>	<u>Sample age</u>	<u>US Pop.</u>	
Median Age	31	37.3	
Youngest Participant	18		
Oldest Participant	68		
<u>Gender</u>			
		<u>% of sample</u>	<u>% of US Pop.</u>
Men	432	49	49
Women	455	51	51
<u>Race</u>			
White	712	80	78
Black	83	9	13
Latino	22	2	17
Other	53	6	8
<u>Education</u>			
Grade School/Some High School	2	**	18
High School Diploma	29	3	30
Some College/No Degree	299	34	27
College Degree	403	45	18
Graduate Degree	154	17	9
<u>Party Affiliation</u>			
Democrat	283	32	31
Republican	291	33	24
Independent or Other	312	35	43
N=887	** Less than 1%		
US Census Bureau Statistics, 2012. Party Affiliation data were from Aug. 7-11, 2013, Gallup.			

**Table 5.1 - Characteristics of the Sample**



As expected, the most striking difference between the sample and the US population is the level of education. The sample is comprised of highly educated respondents, most of whom have already received undergraduate or graduate degrees (62% combined) versus the US population (27% combined). Likewise, the sample underrepresents those who have less education (only 3% have a high school diploma or less education) compared to the US population (48% have a high school diploma or less education).

To the extent that differences in the survey may reflect differences in result compared to the general population, one might conclude that the sample population may create a more difficult case for celebrity persuasion (Bartels 2002; Brady and Sniderman 1985; A. Campbell et al. 1980; Dancey and Goren 2010; Gaines et al. 2007). If one assumes that party identification is stronger in the sample and that there are fewer independents than in the general population, we might conclude that there are fewer “swing votes,” so to speak, who may be persuaded by celebrities. That might reduce the mean differences between control and experimental group, assuming a fairly even distribution of these characteristics across frame and issue areas.

In addition, if we assume that those who are more educated may be more informed about politics and savvy about their understanding of issues, they may be more inclined to think independently than to be swayed by endorsers. Indeed, there were many unsolicited written responses on the surveys, indicating a high level of engagement with the questions. Respondents were not simply responding to a frame; they were thinking deeply about these issues. Whether this was due to the education level of the respondents or to a high degree of interest in the survey is not clear. Some expressed skepticism about celebrities and politicians alike. Many wrote nuanced comments that justified their answers to questions. Others wrote simplistic slogans. Some of these comments have been included in the analysis below. Overall, this high degree of

engagement decreases the likelihood that the respondents would be lightly manipulated by endorsements, which makes a more difficult case for celebrity persuasion.

### *Case and Celebrity Selection*

To compare celebrity performance across cases, eight political issues were selected:

- Intervention in Syria
- Federal support to combat AIDS in the developing world
- Forgiving debt of developing countries
- Ending the Cuban embargo
- Death penalty for Boston bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev
- Federal relief for domestic disasters such as Hurricane Sandy
- Gun control
- Same-sex marriage

These domestic and international issues had varying levels of salience (“Most Important Problem | Gallup Historical Trends” 2013). Some were perceived as “wedge issues” by at least one major political party, while some issues were more consensual (Kohut 2006).

A diversity of celebrities was chosen among musicians, actors, and athletes. As illustrated in Table 5.2, ten celebrities were chosen as “endorsers” on the aforementioned issues.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Issues</b>
<i>Angelina Jolie</i>	Federal Disaster Aid, Syrian Intervention
<i>Bono</i>	Federal Disaster Aid, Debt Relief
<i>Bruce Springsteen</i>	Gun Control
<i>Clint Eastwood</i>	Gun Control
<i>Ellen DeGeneres</i>	Same-Sex Marriage
<i>Elton John</i>	Federal Funding to Combat Global AIDS Crisis
<i>George Clooney</i>	Cuban Embargo, Syrian Intervention
<i>Lady Gaga</i>	Same-Sex Marriage
<i>Oprah Winfrey</i>	Death Penalty
<i>Tim Tebow</i>	Same-Sex Marriage

**Table 5.2 - List of Celebrity Endorsers**

The method of selection takes into account how different celebrities may affect different respondents. Some celebrities are perceived to be quite liberal, some quite conservative, and some hard to tell. They are all generally famous, although some respondents may have been more likely to recognize Oprah Winfrey over Tim Tebow or Lady Gaga over Bono depending upon their age, ethnicity, musical preferences, and whether they are a sports fan. All of the celebrities have either been involved in advocating a political issue or candidate to varying degrees or have been highly politicized themselves.

Since it is possible that any celebrity could lose trust with part of the audience, if s/he is seen as a member of a political outgroup (Brubaker 2011), the experimental survey controls for this potential bias by asking respondents about their party identification, how they feel about the

celebrity, and by selecting celebrities from across the political spectrum. The authenticity and credibility survey offers some hard data about how respondents perceive them.<sup>19</sup> Some celebrities were expected to be highly credible with some demographics (such as Clint Eastwood with Republicans, Tim Tebow with conservative Christians, perhaps George Clooney with Democrats, etc.). While Lady Gaga has been politically involved in issues regarding gay rights, her efforts are not commonly known and one might expect her to be taken less seriously as a young pop artist. Oprah Winfrey is almost universally loved by women. Someone like Bruce Springsteen, who has openly endorsed Democratic candidates, has often been interpreted favorably and his music co-opted by Republicans and Democrats alike (Grossberg 1987; Marshall 1997, 75).

Celebrities were matched with issues based on various criteria. Some, such as Elton John, Bono, Ellen DeGeneres, and Lady Gaga are real activists for AIDS, debt relief, and same-sex marriage. Others, such as George Clooney and Angelina Jolie have advocated on various international issues and seemed to be a good fit for the Syria case but had not made public statements about it. Tim Tebow has not made any specific public statements on same-sex marriage, but is viewed favorably by the conservative Christian community and might be seen as credible by some on that issue. Bruce Springsteen and Clint Eastwood might be seen as liberal and conservative representatives on opposite sides of the gun control issue, although their real positions are not commonly known. Springsteen has said little about guns. Ironically, Eastwood's real statements have reflected a pro-gun control position despite his public endorsements of Republican candidates who are staunchly against gun control (Eastwood 2000).

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<sup>19</sup> See Lammie (2007) on how respondents may react to celebrities differently based upon party affiliation.

### *Authenticity and Credibility Survey*

Respondents were asked three essential questions about the ten celebrities on a 5-point Likert-type scale with a range of 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely). Borrowing the idea that celebrities' power may lie within their perceived "authenticity" (Bourdieu 1992, 130; Dyer and McDonald 1998; Jauss 2008, 153–181; Marshall 1997, 20, 52–56; Tsaliki, Frangonikolopoulos, and Huliaras 2011, 9; Weber 1968, 6, 1978, 241), the first question was about whether the celebrity's "talents, abilities, and professional projects" uniquely make him/her an "authentic spokesperson." The purpose of this question is to determine whether the respondent believes the celebrity is "authentic," and if that authenticity is tied to their entertainment ability rather than their credibility. The second question asks whether the celebrity is a "credible spokesperson" on the issue, a proxy to measure relative expert power (Atkin and Block 1983; Becker 2010; French and Raven 1959; Raven 1993). The third question asks whether the respondent believes the celebrity supports a particular position on that issue, to provide data on whether respondents believe that a celebrity would really advocate that position (Friedman and Friedman 1979; Kahle and Homer 1985; Kamins 1970; Lammie 2007; McCracken 1989).

Four politicians were selected for points of comparison against the celebrities: President Barack Obama, former Secretary of State and Senator Hillary Clinton, Speaker of the House John Boehner, and Senator Marco Rubio. They were selected first for their positions of power. Obama and Boehner are the highest ranking political figures in their respective political parties. They all have relatively high name recognition. Clinton and Rubio were also selected because they were considered by many to be early frontrunners in the 2016 presidential election and generated a lot of media buzz. Since these politicians were public officials and not artists, respondents were not asked about how their talents and abilities made them authentic.

Respondents were also not asked about the politicians perceived positions on various political issues since most of them were fairly well known. Instead, respondents were asked the credibility question—whether the public official in question was perceived as credible when discussing the eight issues covered by this study. In this way, Obama’s or Boehner’s credibility could be compared directly to Ellen DeGeneres’ or George Clooney’s along several public policy issues.

Because of the long list of questions and subjects, the questions were broken into multiple surveys in order to prevent survey fatigue. Survey questions were also mixed so that respondents would evaluate different mixes of subjects. Mixing the questions and the order was an attempt to prevent biased patterns of answers based on consistent, ordered comparisons.

### *Experimental Design Surveys*

In order to evaluate the effect of celebrity endorsements on subjects receiving the message, an experimental survey was deployed following a static-group comparison research design (Babbie 2004, 228–230; Brubaker 2011; D. T. Campbell and Stanley 1963; M. D. Cobb and Kuklinski 1997; Kuklinski and Hurley 1994; Kuklinski and Quirk 2000). In this design, a control group was exposed to general information about a political issue. An experimental group was exposed to exactly the same information, plus a frame. All groups were asked exactly the same questions about how they feel about the issue. If the experimental group responded differently from the control group, then we may conclude that the frame had an impact on the thinking of respondents. Multiple versions of the survey were constructed, each one focusing on a different issue and a different celebrity.

Much scholarship in the media and public opinion literatures suggest that in experimental surveys, frames do affect the thinking of respondents (Brubaker 2011; M. D. Cobb and Kuklinski 1997; Iyengar 1994; Jerit 2008; Kuklinski and Hurley 1994; Schuck and Vreese 2009, 2009; Zald 1996; Zaller 1992, 1996). If a frame alone, without any celebrity or politician's name attached, is capable of persuading a target audience, how can one determine that a celebrity making a statement will be more persuasive than the statement itself? Two innovations were introduced into the design to address this question. First, while the general information section was relatively brief, reasons to accept different policy options were summarized so that respondents would be forced to think intelligently about multiple policy options. Experimental groups included a celebrity frame. Thus, for a respondent to agree with a celebrity s/he would have to have already wrestled with the issue, making the introduction of the celebrity name the key difference between control and experimental groups, and making it less likely that the celebrity name or statement could manipulate them. This also raised the bar for celebrity persuasion, ensuring that ideological and party identification cues might be allowed to fairly compete with a celebrity's statement.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> This bar is set very high for celebrity persuasion in this study. The Elaboration Likelihood Model argues that there are two routes to persuasion: a central and peripheral route. The central route assumes that the receiver is engaged and actively weighing the cues provided by the persuader, who is providing reasons to support an argument. Source characteristics may be ignored. Persuasion is more difficult because people are actively engaging with the information which may challenge core beliefs. The peripheral route, on the other hand, is marked by low involvement where an individual will weigh more source characteristics such as expertise, credibility, and attractiveness as crucial cues (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983). It is an easier but less enduring route of persuasion, likened to using attractive models to sell beer in television commercials. While expertise and credibility of celebrities is not well established, and is a topic of study in this chapter, attractiveness is often attributed to celebrities. The easy case for celebrity persuasion would be for this methodology to simply put up a picture of the celebrity with an endorsement and very few cues providing reasons or evidence to support an argument. While a celebrity photo was included on the feeling thermometer question, separate from the endorsement frame page, the information and frames provided many cues that likely put respondents into a central persuasion route. In this way, celebrities hypothetically could not rely upon good looks alone. This is a better analogy for celebrities' involvement in the political environment since these otherwise attractive and charismatic figures suddenly are advocating positions that may require thought in order to change minds. Therefore, if celebrities are able to persuade in even this very restrictive framework, a strong case can indeed be made.

Second, a “super control” group was surveyed to compare their responses to control and experimental groups. This group was treated to the same information and questions. The difference was that the super control group’s framed statement was not attributed to a specific celebrity, but an unnamed “noted celebrity.” In that way, the design compares respondents exposed to no celebrity endorsement of an issue (control), respondents exposed to an unnamed celebrity endorsement (super control), and respondents exposed to a named celebrity endorsement (experimental). Introduction of the super control allows one group of respondents to be persuaded by the frame without celebrity attribution. If the super control group is persuaded in a way that is different from the control group, it might be the frame alone doing the persuading. If those from the experimental group produce significantly different responses from both control and super control, we may conclude that it really is a particular celebrity doing the persuading: not just the debate or frame itself. As a result, the method may produce fewer significant results, but those results that are significant may be more definitive.<sup>21</sup>

One set of questions attempted to measure attitudinal variation: can a celebrity affect the attitudes of those exposed to the frame? A second set of questions attempted to measure respondents’ proclivity toward taking concrete action in response to the frame. Assuming that respondents answer honestly, after exposure to a celebrity frame, are they more or less likely to give money and time to a cause or to vote for candidates who support a particular position?

To ensure that celebrities were positively identified, the participant responds to a photo and name of a celebrity accompanied by directions to rank that celebrity on a 100 degree “feeling thermometer” where ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees indicated a favorable and warm feeling toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees indicated an unfavorable

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<sup>21</sup> In this way, the design approaches a “least likely” methodological strategy, similar to case selection in chapter 3 (Eckstein, 1998; Gerring, 2007).



feeling. A rating of 50 degrees means that the respondent did not feel particularly warm or cold toward the person (General Social Survey n.d.; Lammie 2007). When a respondent did not answer the feeling thermometer, they were presumed to not recognize the celebrity.

Because of the ambiguity of some of the celebrities' political orientations and positions, different versions of the experimental survey have celebrities "flipping sides." For example, on one experimental survey, George Clooney is quoted as being in favor of intervention in Syria. In another, he is opposed to it. With few exceptions, each celebrity plays both for and against his/her typecast role.<sup>22</sup> Some have argued that if a target audience and a speaker share the same view, but the speaker advocates for a position against expectations, that s/he can be more persuasive (Linder, Cooper, and Jones 1967; Nel, Helmreich, and Aronson 1969). Others have argued that doubt produces stronger advocacy (Gal and Rucker 2010). One would expect Tebow to be persuasive among those who like him when they share the same beliefs. If Tebow is capable of changing attitudes despite an initial difference of positions, it implies that a celebrity endorsement is quite powerful indeed. In this way, the data can reveal whether celebrities are better at advocating on one side of the issue than the other or whether a celebrity's perceived position is irrelevant to the outcome.

For purpose of illustration, results from the surveys of two of the eight issue areas will be featured in this chapter. The first is intervention in Syria. All surveys focused on the Syrian intervention issue included this general information:

Now we would like to get your reaction to the ongoing conflict in Syria. Since March 15, 2011, the country of Syria has been engaged in a civil war between forces loyal to the Syrian Ba'ath Party government led by President Bashar al-Assad and groups seeking to oust these government forces. By April, the government was using armed force against peaceful protesters, leading to condemnation by the Arab League, United States, European Union, and other countries. Since then an organized "Syrian Opposition" has

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<sup>22</sup> Some, such as Ellen DeGeneres on Same Sex Marriage, Bono on Debt Relief, and Elton John on AIDS funding were not "flipped" since their true positions are already very well known.

emerged, engaging government forces in combat across the country. By February 2013, the estimated death toll was 70,000. The Obama administration has indicated that if government forces use chemical weapons on their own people, the US will be compelled to intervene. Recently, the administration announced that there was some evidence that chemical weapons have been used, but that the evidence is not compelling enough yet to intervene in Syria and that they want support from allies before planning any military action. Many Republican lawmakers have attacked the president's position, arguing that they should already have bombed Syrian air bases, armed the rebels and readied an international force to secure chemical weapons stocks.

The control surveys received no additional information. The super control and experimental groups receiving a pro-Syrian intervention survey read this frame at the bottom of the general information paragraph:

“We already know the Assad regime has chemical weapons and has committed atrocities and human rights abuses against its own people. In addition, an organized opposition is ready to take over the reins of government if Assad is pressured out of power. Therefore, I believe the US should increase the pressure on the regime by militarily intervening in Syria before more people die.”

In pro-Syrian intervention super control groups, this quote was attributed to “a noted celebrity.”

In one of the experimental groups, it was attributed to George Clooney. In another experimental group, it was attributed to Angelina Jolie.

An anti-Syrian intervention quote was also constructed and included in additional super control and experimental groups. This quote appeared at the bottom of the general information paragraph in those surveys:

“While I am concerned about the people of Syria, I am more concerned about making the same mistake we made when invading Iraq: getting involved before we had the evidence, the proper strategy, and international support. Without all of that, we're sure to alienate our allies and ultimately fail, potentially risking American lives. Therefore, I am in favor of staying out of it. We don't need to get involved in another war.”

Again, this quote was attributed to “a noted celebrity” in the super control groups, and to George Clooney and Angelina Jolie in two separate experimental groups.

In all Syrian intervention surveys, respondents were asked these questions on a 5-point Likert-type scale with a range of 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely):<sup>23</sup>

Syria	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very Likely
What is the likelihood that you would support US military intervention in Syria?	1	2	3	4	5
What is the likelihood that you would support a US military intervention without consultation or support from allies?	1	2	3	4	5
What is the likelihood that you would support a US military intervention to stop or prevent human rights abuses?	1	2	3	4	5
What is the likelihood that you would vote for a public official who supports military intervention in Syria?	1	2	3	4	5

**Table 5.3 - Questions on Syrian Intervention Surveys**

The second issue of focus in this chapter is on same-sex marriage. All surveys on this issue included the following general information:

Now we would like to get your feelings about same-sex marriage. Several jurisdictions in the United States recognize same-sex marriage. Nine states prohibit it by law and thirty prohibit it by constitutional mandate. The Defense of Marriage Act prevents the federal government from recognizing same-sex marriages, although the constitutionality of the act is under court review. Gay rights advocates argue that without the right to marry, they are stigmatized and treated differently than heterosexual couples and are denied legal access to certain benefits that are unique to married couples. For example, legally married couples get special tax breaks, preferential insurance rates, and are allowed to be involved in end of life issues with their spouses. Same-sex couples receive none of these benefits. They also argue that this would encourage monogamy and strong family values between gay couples and if they are allowed to adopt, more children may find loving homes. On the other hand, opponents of same-sex marriage argue that marriage is an ancient religious institution that has always been defined as being between a man and a woman. To legitimize same-sex marriage would weaken respect for this institution, confuse gender roles, and weaken the traditional family values some say are essential to society. They argue that the homosexual lifestyle is sinful and leads to immorality, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, psychological disorders, and other problems. The legalization of same-sex marriage could also lead to other unacceptable forms of marriage such as polygamy.

<sup>23</sup> Phrasing of the questions, design of the scales, and overall survey design were modeled after a number of studies from reputable social science sources (“American National Election Studies” n.d.; Brubaker 2011; General Social Survey n.d.; Kuklinski and Hurley 1994; Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism 2005; Vagias 2006).

As with the Syrian intervention case, control groups were only exposed to this information.

Super control and experimental groups reading the pro-same-sex marriage surveys read this frame at the bottom of the previous paragraph:

“God loves everyone. I think it’s time to stop looking at homosexuals as freaks. It doesn’t hurt me or anybody else if gay people get married. And no law forces individual churches to marry gay people, so really it still would be up to each congregation whether or not they want to do it. We need to legalize same-sex marriage to end discrimination and give gay couples the same rights as everybody else. I encourage others to financially support organizations and candidates who will protect these rights.”

The anti-same-sex marriage surveys included this quote instead:

“Heterosexual marriage is the foundation of child rearing and family values in society. We can talk about ways to protect the rights of homosexuals as individuals. But I don’t think we should just arbitrarily allow gay marriage. We cannot allow the federal government to water down the sacred institution of marriage that God has defined as between a man and a woman. I encourage others to financially support organizations and candidates who will protect the sanctity of marriage.”

As noted above, these quotes were attributed to “a noted celebrity” in the super control groups.

In separate experimental groups, these quotes were attributed to Lady Gaga and Tim Tebow.

Another experimental group was exposed to a version of the pro-same-sex marriage frame attributed to Ellen DeGeneres.<sup>24</sup>

The following questions were asked of all respondents reading same-sex-marriage surveys:

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<sup>24</sup> An Ellen DeGeneres experimental group was added late in the survey process to the pro-same-sex marriage side. This required a minor adjustment in the language of her frame. Since she is openly gay, it made no sense for her to say something like, “It doesn’t hurt me or anybody else if gay people get married,” implying a separation between her and other homosexuals. Thus, her frame was phrased like this: “God loves everyone. I think it’s time to stop looking at homosexuals as freaks. And no law forces individual churches to marry gay people, so really it still would be up to each congregation whether or not they want to do it. We need to legalize same-sex marriage to end discrimination and give gay couples the same rights as everybody else. I encourage others to financially support organizations and candidates who will protect these rights.” Other than the exclusion of that line, it is identical to the other celebrities’ frames.

Same-Sex Marriage	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very Likely
What is the likelihood that you would support legalization of same-sex marriage?	1	2	3	4	5
What is the likelihood that you would give money to organizations or vote for candidates that support same-sex marriage?	1	2	3	4	5
What is the likelihood that you would give money to organizations or vote for candidates that oppose same-sex marriage?	1	2	3	4	5

**Table 5.4 - Questions on Same-Sex Marriage Surveys**

*Means Comparisons and Ordered Logistical Regression Models*

In order to graphically illustrate the differences in outcomes between control and experimental groups, tables were constructed illustrating the means differences. Ordered logistical regression models were employed to discover whether the means in the experimental groups differed significantly from the control groups. The dependent variable was represented by respondents’ answers to the survey questions on the Likert scale, for example, how respondents in the Syria issue answered the question, “What is the likelihood that you would support US military intervention in Syria?” A number of independent variables were input, most notably dummy variables indicating the presence or absence of a celebrity frame. If, for example, respondents were treated to George Clooney advocating in favor of Syrian intervention, it was coded as a 1. If they did not, it was coded as a 0. Super control variables were also included in the model to discover if the frame itself, without a celebrity name attached, was sufficient to affect attitudes. The control group on each issue served as a baseline for analysis. Additional variables such as age, gender, and party affiliation, were included to take into account competing hypotheses from the literature review. Finally, the feeling thermometer measure was included to determine whether a respondent’s feelings about the celebrity would affect his/her inclination to agree with the celebrity.

## **The Results**

The following sections summarize the major findings of the surveys described above. The first section illustrates how respondents compare the credibility of celebrities and politicians on the selected issues. The second section focuses on results of the survey in two issue areas: Syrian intervention and same-sex marriage.

### *Credibility Comparison*

Respondents were asked about whether they believed that a particular “public figure” was a “credible spokesperson” on the issues in the study. One might expect politicians to dominate here since they are publicly elected officials with a degree of expertise across a variety of political issues. A president might have the most consistent results. Given the party identification bias of the sample, one might also expect Republicans to be perceived as most credible. Table 5.5 reports the mixed results.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Credibility</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Credibility</i>
<b>Syrian Intervention</b>			<b>Same-Sex Marriage</b>		
Hillary Clinton	42	3.29	Ellen DeGeneres	41	3.98
Barack Obama	57	3.02	Barack Obama	57	3.19
John Boehner	43	2.81	Hillary Clinton	42	3.07
George Clooney	60	2.63	Lady Gaga	42	2.66
Angelina Jolie	44	2.61	Marco Rubio	44	2.37
Marco Rubio	40	2.53	Tim Tebow	41	2.37
			John Boehner	43	2.33
<b>Gun Control</b>			<b>Federal Disaster Relief</b>		
Barack Obama	57	3.07	Barack Obama	56	3.5
John Boehner	43	3	Hillary Clinton	42	3.38
Hillary Clinton	42	3	Angelina Jolie	44	2.89
Clint Eastwood	52	2.63	Bono	49	2.88
Marco Rubio	44	2.55	John Boehner	43	2.84
Bruce Springsteen	47	2.36	Marco Rubio	43	2.63
<b>AIDS</b>			<b>Debt Relief</b>		
Elton John	45	3.76	Hillary Clinton	42	3.4
Hillary Clinton	42	3.21	Bono	49	3
Barack Obama	57	2.96	Barack Obama	57	2.88
John Boehner	43	2.6	John Boehner	42	2.81
Marco Rubio	43	2.58	Marco Rubio	44	2.64
<b>Capital Punishment</b>			<b>Cuban Embargo</b>		
Hillary Clinton	42	3.1	Hillary Clinton	48	3.38
Barack Obama	57	2.93	Barack Obama	56	3.25
John Boehner	42	2.9	Marco Rubio	39	2.92
Marco Rubio	44	2.7	John Boehner	43	2.77
Oprah Winfrey	52	2.58	George Clooney	42	2.5

**Table 5.5 - Credibility comparisons between celebrities and politicians**

Not surprisingly, the president is in the number one or number two position on all of the lists. However, Hillary Clinton tops more lists than Barack Obama, which may not be surprising given Obama's low and Clinton's high popularity rating at the time of the survey. Clinton is also

a likely presidential candidate in 2016. What is surprising is that Republicans do not rank more highly on the list given that Republicans comprise a larger than average portion of the sample. John Boehner had a relatively high ranking on gun control. Marco Rubio is at the bottom of most lists. Politicians dominate the list in general and are perceived as most credible on issues such as Syria, gun control, federal disaster relief, capital punishment, and the Cuban embargo.

Celebrities still perform above expectations. Two celebrities were considered most credible on two of the issues (Ellen DeGeneres on same-sex marriage and Elton John on AIDS) and other celebrities ranked higher than some politicians. For example, the same-sex marriage issue finds Lady Gaga more credible than Boehner or Rubio. Rock star Bono is ranked second on the debt relief list, behind former Secretary of State Clinton and ahead of President Obama. Even on the politician dominant issue of Syria, George Clooney and Angelina Jolie rank higher than Rubio.

While it is not clear why some celebrities rank higher than the competing politicians, there are reasons they may be considered credible irrespective of comparisons. Ellen DeGeneres, a well-respected homosexual, is quite public about her orientation. Both she and Lady Gaga have been involved with various organizations in advocacy on behalf of homosexuals. Elton John, another famous homosexual, started the Elton John AIDS Foundation in 1992 and has lobbied the US Congress to increase funding. Indeed, the pro-federal funding frame for the AIDS issue was paraphrased from quotes by Elton John. Finally, Bono is one of the highest profile celebrity activists in the world with a long history of founding and supporting institutions, as well as lobbying public officials to provide debt relief for the developing world. Celebrities who have no known connection to real advocacy on an issue—such as Springsteen

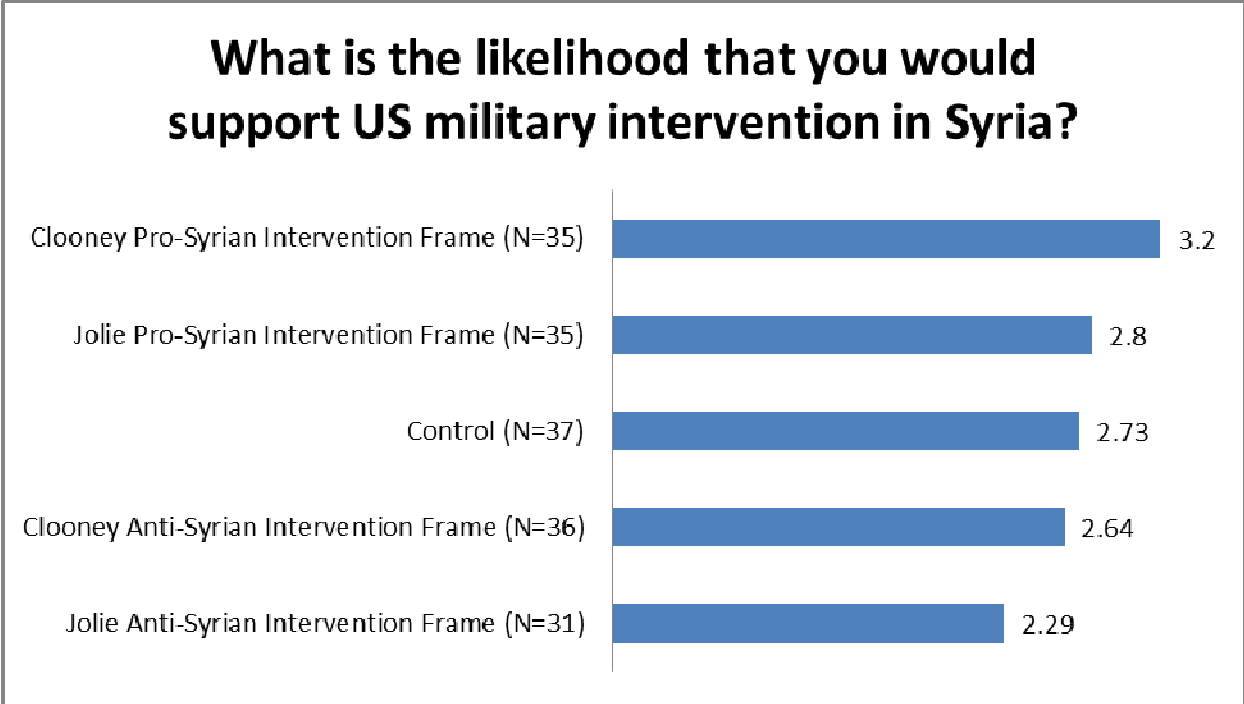


and Eastwood on gun control, Winfrey on capital punishment, and George Clooney on the Cuban embargo—are ranked poorly.

Based on Table 5.5 and the characteristics of the sample, one might expect celebrity persuasion to be difficult. Indeed, if the credibility lists are any indication of how well celebrities are able to persuade, we would expect credible celebrities such as Ellen DeGeneres, Elton John, and Bono to be persuasive in their respective issue areas. Those celebrities that have lower credibility on an issue should be less persuasive on their issues. The next sections will address this hypothesis by focusing on two cases—Syrian intervention and same-sex marriage—to compare the results of a least likely and a most likely case for celebrity persuasion.

### *Syrian Intervention*

The first and central question in the Syrian intervention case compares the attitudes of respondents in a control group who are not exposed to the celebrity endorsement frame to the attitudes of those in the experimental group. Table 5.6 presents the results of answers to the question, "What is the likelihood that you would support US military intervention in Syria?" On the pro-Syrian intervention frame, all celebrities perform better than the control. When George Clooney ( $\bar{x} = 3.2$ ) and Angelina Jolie ( $\bar{x} = 2.8$ ) advocate in favor of intervention the mean scores reported by the experimental group exceed that of the control group ( $\bar{x} = 2.73$ ). On the anti-Syrian intervention frame, Clooney ( $\bar{x} = 2.64$ ) and Jolie ( $\bar{x} = 2.29$ ) perform better than the control. In this frame, Jolie performs better than Clooney.



**Table 5.6 - Likelihood of supporting a military intervention**

Are the means in the experimental groups significantly different from the control? Are other variables more likely to affect the outcome than an endorsement from a celebrity? Table 5.7 reports that Clooney’s pro-intervention endorsement is statistically significant and distinct from the control ( $\beta = 1.073, p \leq .01$ ). Because the super control variable is not significant, it is clear that the frame alone is not persuasive. It is the frame plus Clooney that makes the difference. On the anti-intervention frame, younger people are slightly more likely to oppose intervention than older people ( $\beta = -0.02, p \leq .01$ ). Still, Jolie ( $\beta = -1.206, p \leq .001$ ) and Clooney’s ( $\beta = -0.746, p \leq .01$ ) anti-intervention endorsements are also statistically significant. Even the feelings respondents have about a celebrity, data derived from the feeling thermometer, are not correlated to changes in the mean outcomes.

<i>Ordered Logit Estimates</i>			
<i>Pro-Syria Intervention Treatment</i>		<i>Anti-Syria Intervention Treatment</i>	
	<u>Estimate</u>		<u>Estimate</u>
Jolie-Pro Intervention Frame	0.416 (0.374)	Jolie-Anti Intervention Frame	-1.206**** (0.377)
Clooney-Pro Intervention Frame	1.073*** (0.386)	Clooney-Anti Intervention Frame	-0.746*** (0.361)
Super Control-Pro Intervention Frame	0.403 (0.36)	Super Control-Anti Intervention Frame	0.094 (0.388)
Age	-0.014 (0.01)	Age	-0.02*** (0.01)
Gender	-0.294 (0.26)	Gender	-0.286 (0.256)
Republican	0.276 (0.305)	Republican	0.374 (0.304)
Democrat	0.025 (0.313)	Democrat	0.125 (0.315)
Feeling about celebrity	0.001 (0.005)	Feeling about celebrity	0.004 (0.005)
<i>Ancillary Parameters</i>		<i>Ancillary Parameters</i>	
_cut1	-2.107**** (0.555)	_cut1	-2.703**** (0.533)
_cut2	-.787 (0.534)	_cut2	-1.348*** (0.505)
_cut3	.907* (0.536)	_cut3	0.378 (0.496)
_cut4	2.844**** (0.599)	_cut4	2.313**** (0.559)
<i>Summary</i>		<i>Summary</i>	
Pseudo R-Square - Cox and Snell	0.057	Pseudo R-Square - Cox and Snell	0.081
$\chi^2$	12.745	$\chi^2$	18.302
N	216	N	216
*p ≤ .10; ** p ≤ .05; ***p ≤ .01; **** p ≤ .001			
Standard Error is in parentheses.			
For the dependent variable, respondents were asked, "What is the likelihood that you would support US military intervention in Syria?"			

**Table 5.7 - Likelihood that Respondent Will Support Intervention in Syria**

The next question asks the respondent to take a hypothetical action in response to the frame and the results are reported in

## What is the likelihood that you would vote for a public official who supports military intervention in Syria?

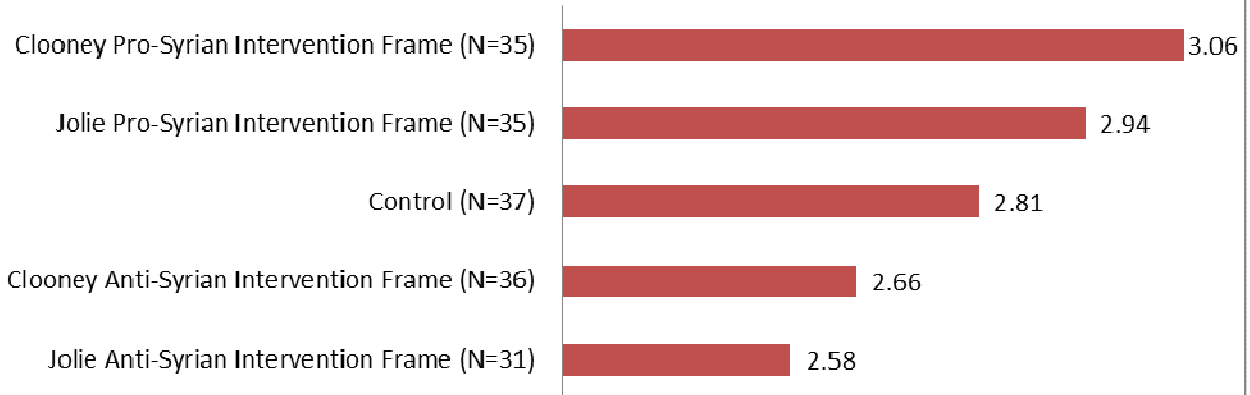
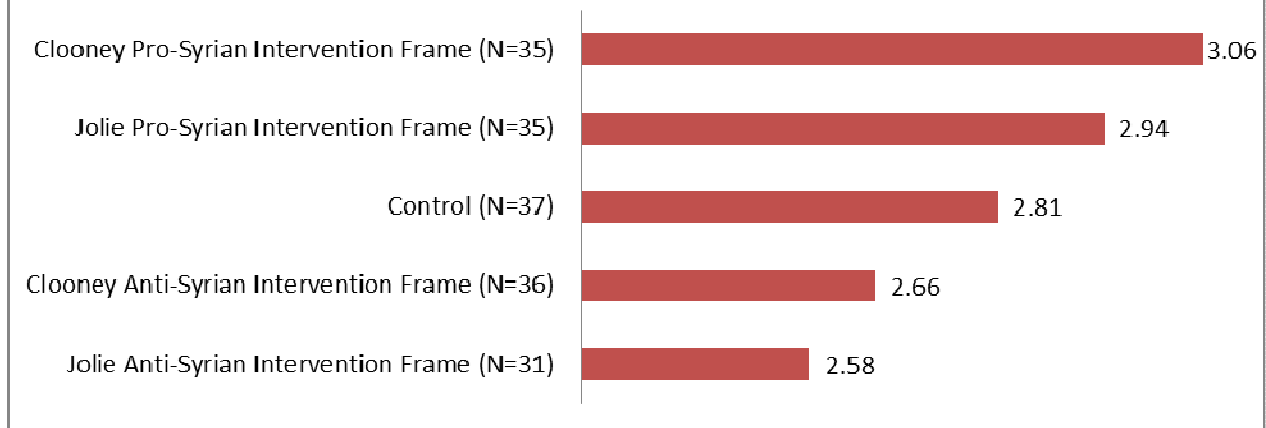


Table 5.8.

## What is the likelihood that you would vote for a public official who supports military intervention in Syria?



**Table 5.8 - Likelihood of supporting a pro-intervention public official**

When asked about the likelihood that a respondent would support a public official supporting intervention, Clooney's ( $\bar{x} = 3.06$ ,  $\beta = 0.559$ , n.s.) and Jolie's ( $\bar{x} = 2.94$ ,  $\beta = 0.264$ , n.s.) means on the pro-Syrian intervention frame are higher than the control ( $\bar{x} = 2.81$ ). However, when controlling for other variables, they are not statistically significant as Table 5.9 reveals. Indeed, Republican Party affiliation is a stronger determinant of a respondent's likelihood to support a pro-intervention public official. Both Clooney's ( $\bar{x} = 2.66$ ,  $\beta = -0.638$ ,  $p \leq .10$ ) and Jolie's ( $\bar{x} = 2.58$ ,  $\beta = -0.728$ ,  $p \leq .10$ ) means are lower than the control group when advocating against intervention, and both frames are statistically significant. This suggests that Clooney and Jolie are more likely than the control group to convince respondents not to support a public official supporting intervention.

<i>Ordered Logit Estimates</i>			
<u><i>Pro-Syria Intervention Treatment</i></u>		<u><i>Anti-Syria Intervention Treatment</i></u>	
	<u>Estimate</u>		<u>Estimate</u>
Jolie-Pro Intervention Frame	0.264 (0.392)	Jolie-Anti Intervention Frame	-0.728* (0.388)
Clooney-Pro Intervention Frame	0.599 (0.399)	Clooney-Anti Intervention Frame	-0.638* (0.377)
Super Control-Pro Intervention Frame	-0.007 (0.382)	Super Control-Anti Intervention Frame	0.41 (0.409)
Age	-0.01 (0.011)	Age	-0.011 (0.01)
Gender	-0.39 (0.273)	Gender	-0.371 (0.27)
Republican	0.611* (0.323)	Republican	0.699** (0.323)
Democrat	0.173 (0.331)	Democrat	0.3 (0.333)
Feeling about celebrity	-0.006 (0.005)	Feeling about celebrity	-0.004 (0.005)
<i>Ancillary Parameters</i>		<i>Ancillary Parameters</i>	
_cut1	-2.592**** (0.592)	_cut1	-2.745**** (0.56)
_cut2	-1.463* (0.568)	_cut2	-1.606*** (0.533)
_cut3	1.043 (0.564)	_cut3	0.96** (0.524)
_cut4	2.649**** (0.624)	_cut4	2.587**** (0.589)
<i>Summary</i>		<i>Summary</i>	
Pseudo R-Square - Cox and Snell	0.051	Pseudo R-Square - Cox and Snell	0.074
$\chi^2$	11.109	$\chi^2$	16.384
N	214	N	214
*p ≤ .10; ** p ≤ .05; ***p ≤ .01; **** p ≤ .001			
Standard Error is in parentheses.			
For the dependent variable, respondents were asked, "What is the likelihood that you would vote for a public official who supports military intervention in Syria?"			

**Table 5.9 - Likelihood that Respondent Will Support Public Officials Who Advocate Intervention**

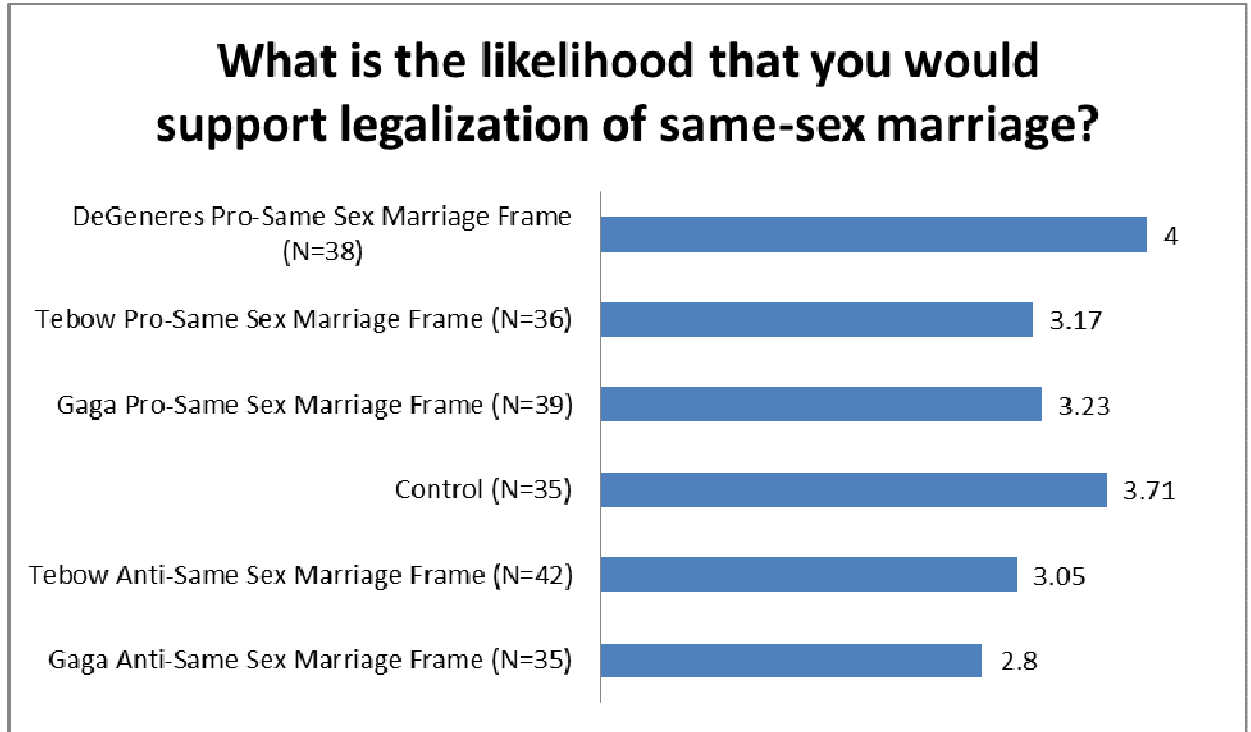
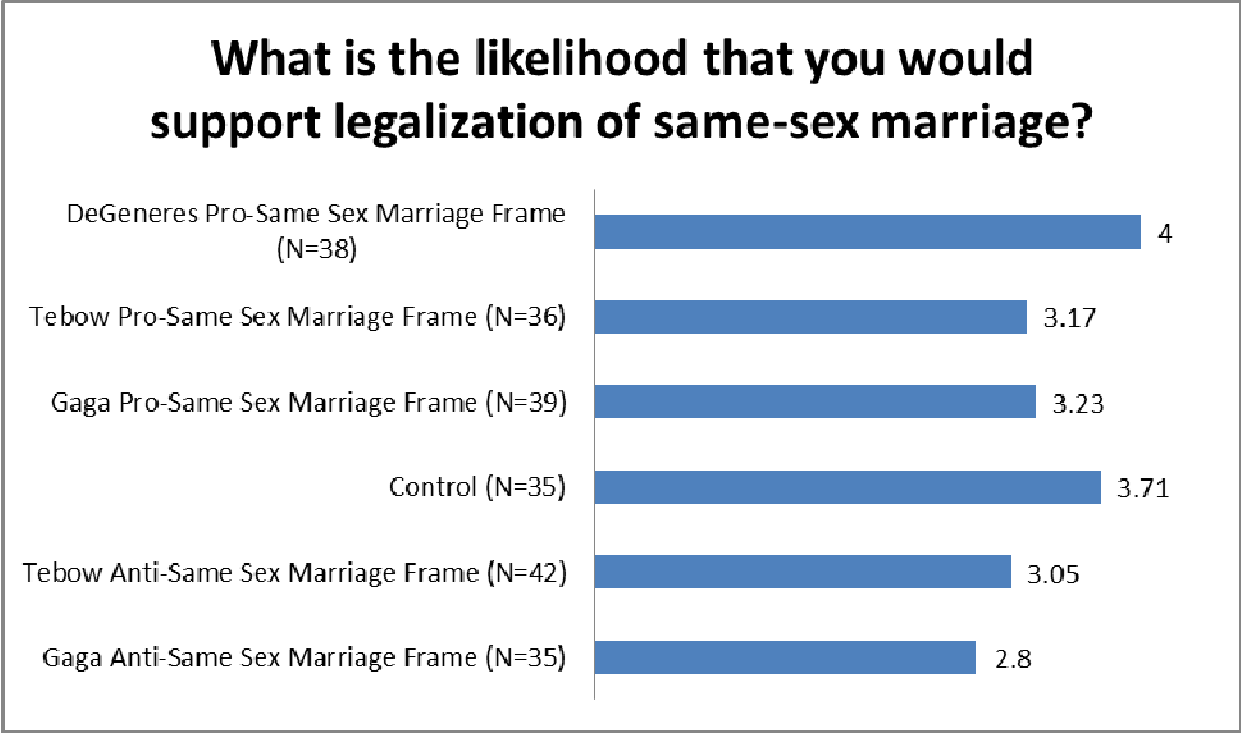


Table 5.10 summarizes the initial findings from the same-sex marriage case. When exposed to the pro-same-sex marriage frame, only Ellen DeGeneres ( $\bar{x} = 4.00$ ) produced means that were greater than the control ( $\bar{x} = 3.71$ ), suggesting that she was able to persuade respondents in the experimental group to legalize same-sex marriage compared to the control group. Because she was the only one to have a difference in the correct direction, it also implies that the celebrity, not the frame, was moving attitudes. When exposed to the anti-same-sex marriage frame, Lady Gaga ( $\bar{x} = 2.80$ ) and Tim Tebow ( $\bar{x} = 3.05$ ) produced lower means than the control group mean, implying that Gaga and Tebow were capable of persuading respondents to oppose same-sex marriage, or that the frame itself was persuasive to the target audience.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Ellen DeGeneres was not portrayed as advocating against same-sex marriage.



**Table 5.10 - Likelihood to support legalization of same-sex marriage**

Table 5.11 assesses the statistical significance of these relationships. DeGeneres’ advocacy of same-sex marriage resonated with the experimental group and was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.953, p \leq .05$ ). Despite Lady Gaga’s strong performance on opposition to same-sex marriage in the means comparisons, when controlling for a number of additional variables, Tebow is statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.932, p \leq .05$ ) while Gaga is not ( $\beta = -0.532, n.s.$ ).<sup>26</sup>

When exposed to either frame, “feeling about celebrity” affects a respondent’s likelihood to accept the frame ( $p \leq .01$ ). Positive feelings about the celebrity make respondents more likely to support the direction advocated by the celebrity while negative feelings make them less likely. The other key variable affecting responses was Republican Party affiliation. If respondents self-identified as Republicans, they were largely resistant to appeals to legalize same-sex marriage and likely to oppose it, independent of most other factors ( $p \leq .001$ ).

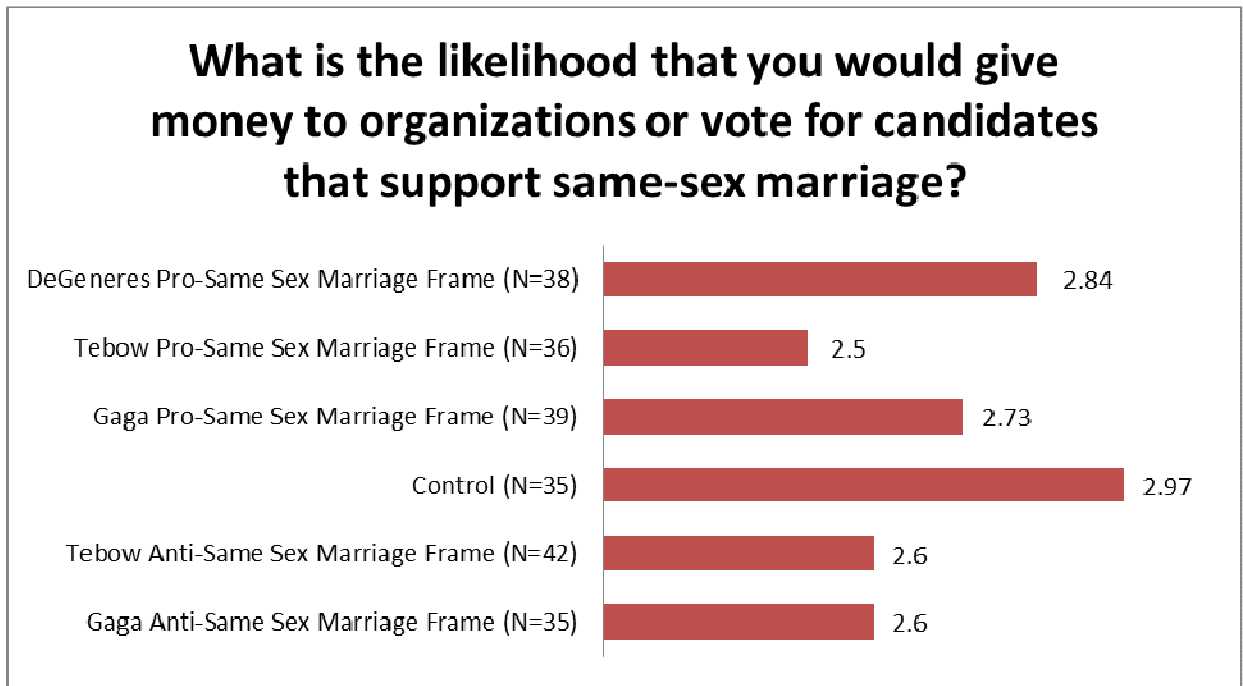
<sup>26</sup> At  $p = .157$ , Gaga is not statistically significant, although the results still imply that her means result is 84% likely.



<i>Ordered Logit Estimates</i>			
<u>Pro-Same-Sex Marriage Treatment</u>		<u>Anti-Same-Sex Marriage Treatment</u>	
	<u>Estimate</u>		<u>Estimate</u>
Gaga-Pro Intervention Frame	0.197 (0.346)	Gaga-Anti Intervention Frame	-0.532 (0.376)
Tebow-Pro Intervention Frame	0.022 (0.38)	Tebow-Anti Intervention Frame	-0.932** (0.373)
DeGeneres-Pro Intervention Frame	0.953** (0.409)	DeGeneres-Anti Intervention Frame	- -
Super Control-Pro Intervention Frame	0.102 (0.367)	Super Control-Anti Intervention Frame	0.115 (0.4)
Age	-0.022** (0.011)	Age	-0.028** (0.011)
Gender	0.081 (0.241)	Gender	-0.022 (0.244)
Republican	-1.159**** (0.288)	Republican	-1.272**** (0.284)
Democrat	-0.025 (0.295)	Democrat	-0.104 (0.288)
Feeling about celebrity	0.013*** (0.005)	Feeling about celebrity	0.014*** (0.005)
<i>Ancillary Parameters</i>		<i>Ancillary Parameters</i>	
_cut1	-1.713*** (0.508)	_cut1	-2.261**** (0.525)
_cut2	-1.209** (0.501)	_cut2	-1.754**** (0.517)
_cut3	-0.331 (0.495)	_cut3	-0.865* (0.507)
_cut4	0.416 (0.496)	_cut4	-0.112 (0.505)
<i>Summary</i>		<i>Summary</i>	
Pseudo R-Square - Cox and Snell	0.172	Pseudo R-Square - Cox and Snell	0.178
$\chi^2$	47.799	$\chi^2$	49.817
N	254	N	254
*p ≤ .10; ** p ≤ .05; ***p ≤ .01; **** p ≤ .001			
Standard Error is in parentheses.			
For the dependent variable, respondents were asked, "What is the likelihood that you would support legalization of same-sex marriage?"			

**Table 5.11 - Likelihood that Respondent Will Support Same Sex Marriage**

The following two tables illustrate comparative answers to a question calling respondents to implicit action. In this case, the questions are about whether respondents would be willing to vote for candidates or give money to groups that support pro- or anti-same sex marriage.



**Table 5.12 - Likelihood to support candidates or give money to pro-same-sex marriage organizations**

According to Table 5.12, when exposed to the pro-same sex marriage frame, no celebrity endorsements (including the super control) were able to produce a mean in the experimental group higher than that of the control group. Thus, no one could convince the experimental group that they ought to give money to pro-same-sex marriage organizations or vote for those candidates. However, all celebrities were able to “beat” the control mean ( $\bar{x} = 2.97$ ) on the opposite side, suggesting that celebrity advocacy of the anti-same-sex marriage frame kept people from wanting to give money to these groups and kept them from wanting to support candidates advocating pro-same-sex marriage.

**What is the likelihood that you would give money to organizations or vote for candidates that oppose same-sex marriage?**

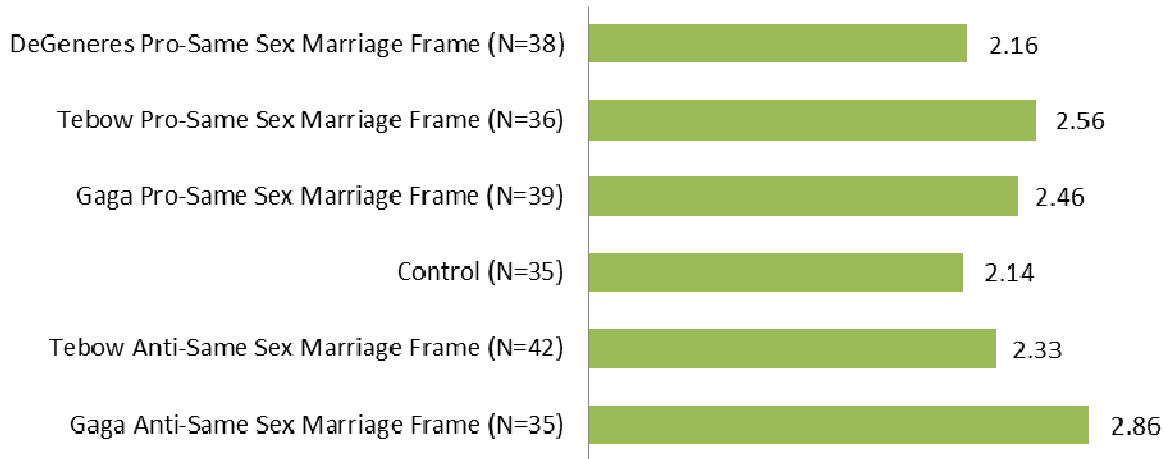
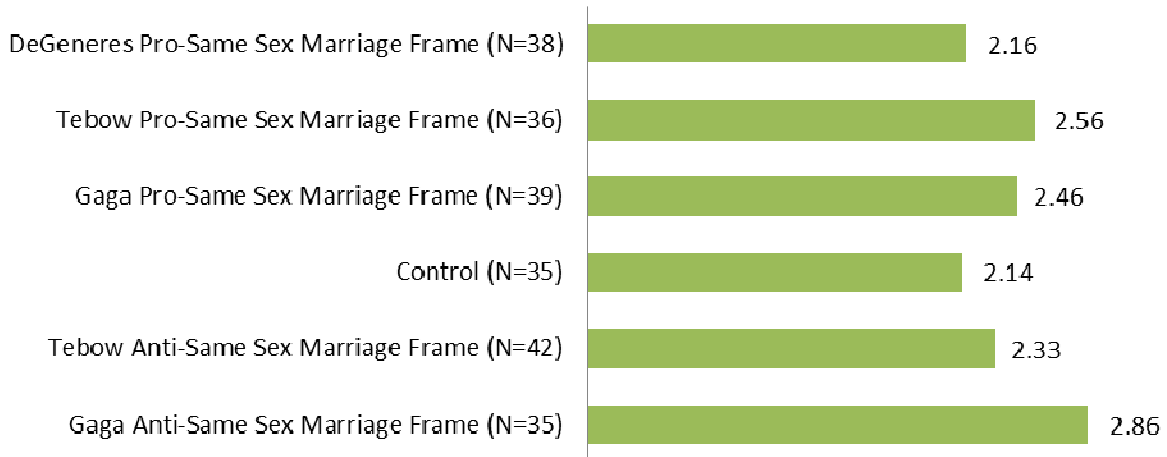


Table 5.13 addresses the same question, only targeted toward anti-same-sex marriage groups.

Ironically, one would expect the pro-same-sex marriage control group to be less likely to support anti-gay candidates and anti-gay groups. The opposite seems to be true. They appear to be more likely to give money to same-sex marriage groups than to resist. On the anti-same-sex marriage frame, celebrities fare much better. All of their scores are higher than the control ( $\bar{x} = 2.14$ ), suggesting that Tebow ( $\bar{x} = 2.33$ ) and Gaga ( $\bar{x} = 2.86$ ) are capable of persuading respondents to give to anti-gay groups and support anti-gay candidates.

**What is the likelihood that you would give money to organizations or vote for candidates that oppose same-sex marriage?**



**Table 5.13 - Likelihood to support candidates or give money to anti-same-sex marriage organizations**

Only the anti-same-sex marriage treatments from the previous figures produced significant results, so only those results are reproduced in Table 5.14 below.

<i>Ordered Logit Estimates</i>			
<i>Anti-Same-Sex Marriage Treatment</i>		<i>Anti-Same-Sex Marriage Treatment</i>	
	<u>Estimate</u> <sup>1</sup>		<u>Estimate</u> <sup>2</sup>
Gaga-Anti Intervention Frame	-0.072 (0.377)	Gaga-Anti Intervention Frame	0.823** (0.376)
Tebow-Anti Intervention Frame	-0.666* (0.376)	Tebow-Anti Intervention Frame	0.159 (0.371)
Super Control-Anti Intervention Frame	-0.346 (0.402)	Super Control-Anti Intervention Frame	-0.187 (0.4)
Age	-0.03*** (0.011)	Age	0.01 (0.011)
Gender	0.077 (0.242)	Gender	-0.011 (0.243)
Republican	-1.097**** (0.287)	Republican	1.409**** (0.287)
Democrat	0.533* (0.282)	Democrat	0.334 (0.289)
Feeling about celebrity	0.011** (0.005)	Feeling about celebrity	0.002 (0.005)
<i>Ancillary Parameters</i>		<i>Ancillary Parameters</i>	
_cut1	-1.603*** (0.516)	_cut1	0.458 (0.505)
_cut2	-0.963* (0.509)	_cut2	1.089 (0.509)
_cut3	0.371 (0.507)	_cut3	2.522 (0.53)
_cut4	1.163** (0.516)	_cut4	3.501 (0.555)
<i>Summary</i>		<i>Summary</i>	
Pseudo R-Square - Cox and Snell	0.183	Pseudo R-Square - Cox and Snell	0.123
$\chi^2$	51.328	$\chi^2$	33.263
N	254	N	253
*p ≤ .10; ** p ≤ .05; ***p ≤ .01; **** p ≤ .001			
Standard Error is in parentheses.			
<sup>1</sup> For the dependent variable, respondents were asked, "What is the likelihood that you would give money to organizations or vote for candidates that support same-sex marriage?"			
<sup>2</sup> For the dependent variable, respondents were asked, "What is the likelihood that you would give money to organizations or vote for candidates that oppose same-sex marriage?"			

**Table 5.14 - Likelihood that respondents will give money to organizations or vote for candidates who support same-sex marriage (Anti-same-sex marriage frame)**

The left column corresponds to ordered logit estimates relating to the question in Table 5.12 and the column on the right relates to the question in

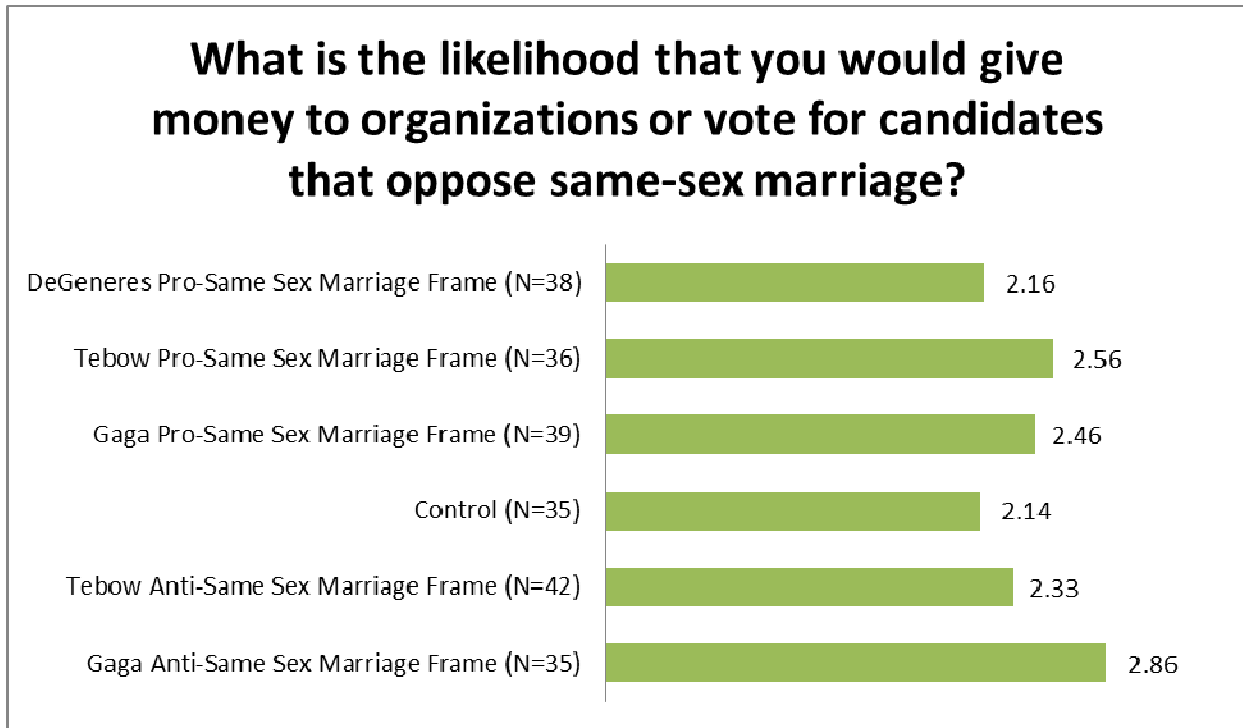


Table 5.13. When respondents in the anti-same sex marriage experimental group were asked about the likelihood they would give money to pro-gay organizations or support pro-gay candidates, Tim Tebow ( $\beta = -0.666, p \leq .10$ ) was most likely to persuade respondents to resist. This result controls for a number of factors, including the tendency for older people ( $\beta = -0.030, p \leq .01$ ) and Republicans ( $\beta = -1.097, p \leq .001$ ) to independently resist. Likewise, Lady Gaga ( $\beta = 0.823, p \leq .05$ ) was most likely to convince respondents in the experimental group to support anti-gay groups and candidates, controlling for the independent tendency of Republicans to do so without prompting ( $\beta = 1.409, p \leq .001$ ).

**Implications**

The previous cases illustrate that celebrities are capable of persuasion. Some of the cases offer strong examples of how celebrities can affect attitudes in a target audience and move them toward some hypothetical action. Their abilities to change attitudes appear to be stronger than their abilities to inspire action. This is not surprising, given that the study cannot measure whether a respondent will really act upon an endorsement, and given the assumption that changing behaviors might just be more inherently difficult than changing minds. This tension was illustrated in some of the written comments on the surveys. When respondents were asked if they were more likely to give money to pro-gun control groups, one respondent marked a low score, but wrote next to that response, “I’m poor,” implying that she would if she thought she could afford it. Another participant, responding to a question about likelihood to volunteer money and time to help victims of hurricanes wrote, “Not all of us are super rich and have nothing better to do with our time.” In many cases, participants implied a desire to act on various issues, but seemed upset or conflicted about questions that asked for personal sacrifice.

While there is some strong evidence of celebrity persuasion on the Syria and same-sex marriage cases, some of the results beg for additional clarification. For example, Table 5.5’s credibility mean score comparison suggests that celebrities are credible in some cases but not others. Credibility may be associated with a celebrity’s connection or experience with the issue they advocated. Elton John with AIDS and Ellen DeGeneres with same-sex marriage—topped their respective credibility lists. This lends some support to the hypothesis presented in chapter 2 that credibility and expertise can be constructed if celebrities create genuine experiences that connect them to those they hope to represent. However, Elton John did not prove to be persuasive on the issue of AIDS while Ellen DeGeneres was persuasive on the issue of same-sex marriage. With variance across the eight subject areas, an obvious question arises: why are

celebrities persuasive in some areas and not in others? Chapter 6 will address this question by analyzing the data in the aggregate.



## **Chapter 6 - Conditions of Successful Celebrity Persuasion**

Chapter 5 made a strong case for celebrity persuasion in two issue areas. However, many cases did not produce clear results. One might reasonably assume that celebrities may not always be persuasive. If a celebrity is capable of affecting public attitudes, it is also important to isolate conditions of success and failure. Is there a level of credibility that is necessary for celebrities to be persuasive? Is an ability to persuade linked more to perceived knowledge of an issue or their abilities as entertainers? Are celebrities who are more connected to established institutions and transnational advocacy networks more likely to persuade than those who have few connections and are acting alone? Are celebrities more persuasive when they advocate in a manner consistent with or against expectations? Are some celebrities more likely to persuade than others? Are there certain types of issues where celebrities are more or less likely to persuade? The purpose of this chapter is to examine the results of the experimental survey in the aggregate in an attempt to discover what kinds of variables are correlated with the likelihood of celebrities to persuade a target audience.

### **Aggregate Analysis Methodology**

If celebrities are at all capable of persuasion in individual cases, such as the Syrian intervention and same-sex marriage case, further analysis is necessary to determine what variables affect a celebrity's ability to be persuasive. Presumably, there will be variance across cases where celebrities may be more successful in some instances than in others. What causes this variance?

To this end, an aggregate analysis of results from all cases was computed. There were 61 celebrity/question/frame combinations over eight issue areas. The unit of analysis is the celebrity/question/frame combination and the dependent variable represents whether the celebrity successfully persuaded respondents on that particular question. For example, one of the 61 variations measures how Angelina Jolie (the celebrity) performed on the question about whether the respondent supports Syrian intervention (the question) when exposed to the pro-Syrian argument (the frame). Another measures her performance on the same question with the anti-Syrian frame. Thus, each unit is based on celebrity, question, and frame direction. Does the frame succeed on that issue in the correct direction when the frame is attributed to a celebrity?

As in chapter 4, the ability to persuade or not can be operationalized as a dummy variable into “wins” (1) and “losses” (0). A celebrity/question/frame combination is operationalized as a “win” if (A) the celebrity moved attitudes in a direction consistent with the celebrity frame and (B) the mean is significantly different from the control and super control ( $p \leq .10$ ), it is registered as a “win.” If not, it was coded as a loss.

Does the celebrity drive success or failure? Or are there issue or environmental circumstances that contribute to wins and losses? To answer these questions, a number of independent variables were run against the dependent variable in a binary logistical regression analysis. The first set of variables operationalized environmental variables. The second set pertained to celebrity characteristics.

Two issue/environmental independent variables were included in the analysis. The first was “issue importance.” This variable was derived from answers to a Gallup poll question in the summer of 2013 when the surveys were deployed: “What do you think is the most important problem facing the country today?” The importance score was computed by adding the

percentage of Americans concerned about these problems.<sup>27</sup> Importance scores are listed in Table 6.1. Of the issues listed below, the summer of 2013 was a time when media coverage focused significantly on same-sex marriage and the associated Supreme Court case and the escalating conflict in Syria, it anecdotally makes sense that they would be toward the top of this list.

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Associated Problems in Gallup Poll</b>	<b>Importance Score</b>
AIDS	Not listed	0
Cuban Embargo	International issues, problems	1
Death Penalty	Crime, Violence	2
Debt Relief	Foreign Aid/Focus Overseas	3
Federal Disaster Relief	Not listed	0
Gun Control	Guns/Gun Control/School Shootings/Crime, Violence	3.5
Same-Sex Marriage	Gay Rights Issues/Ethics, Moral, Religious Decline	6.5
Syria	War/Conflict With Middle East Nations/War (non-specific)/ Foreign Aid/Focus Overseas	5

**Table 6.1 - Computation of Importance Scores (% of respondents mentioning the issue as “important” in Gallup polls)**

The second issue/environmental independent variable was called “wedge polarity,” a measure of polarization. While wedge issues are divisive, they may not be equally important to both major political parties. For example, opposition to gay marriage is very likely to mobilize Republicans to vote. While Democrats generally support gay marriage, they are not nearly as threatened by the issue as Republicans are, so the issue is less likely to provoke them to action (Kohut 2006). Thus, a simple scale of wedge polarity was constructed using the results from a logistical analysis of the experimental data. If party ID was statistically significant in the

<sup>27</sup> Data was taken from 7-11 August 2013. If the issue was less than 1 percent, a 0.5 was added to the total. While not all issues registered specifically on the list, many pertained to the issues in the surveys. The question was open ended, so there were dozens of responses and many of the issues listed had very low values in terms of percentage of people who believed an issue was important.

logistical analyses, and the result was correlated in the direction consistent with party expectations, one could conclude that party ID played a strong role in respondents' attitudes toward that issue. If party identification had no effect on the results (implying no polarization), it was coded with a 1. If party ID was statistically significant for Democrats or Republicans (implying a wedge issue for one party or the other), it was coded with a 2. If party ID was statistically significant for both parties and the parties are on opposite sides of the issue (implying a high level of polarization), it was coded with a 3. Independents were the baseline.

Four independent variables pertaining to celebrity characteristics were also included in the analysis. The authenticity and credibility variables were taken from the first survey. This survey also collected data about whether celebrities were perceived to support a particular direction on an issue or not. These three variables provide key data about the qualities of specific celebrities: are they perceived as authentic based on their art, talent, or ability to entertain? Do they have credibility in a particular issue area? Do respondents believe that celebrities are articulating their true beliefs when they present a frame?

One additional celebrity attribute variable was constructed based on secondary research to answer a key question raised by chapter 4: does the level of institutionalization of a celebrity positively affect his/her ability to persuade? That is, are celebrities who are more embedded in domestic and transnational advocacy networks more likely to persuade? This is a more objective measure of credibility than asking respondents about their subjective feelings about the credibility of a celebrity. For each institution the celebrity founded or co-founded (OCF), the celebrity was given three points. For each organization in which the celebrity is an involved

member or participant (OA), s/he receives one point. Celebrities officially affiliated with the United Nations (UN) also receive one point.<sup>28</sup>

Table 6.2 summarizes the results. The columns to the right are summary columns, computing the level of institutionalization according to the standards specified above.

Celebrity	Issues	Organizations co-founded (OCF)	Organization affiliations (OA)	OCF	OA	UN	Total
Angelina Jolie	Education in Africa, AIDS, Syria, Disaster Relief	Maddox Jolie-Pitt Foundation (MJP)	Human Rights Watch (HRW), UN Millennium Project, ONE, Alliance for the Lost Boys of Sudan, Clinton Global Initiative, Millennium Promise, Yéle Haiti, Millennium Villages Project, UNHCR, UNICEF	3	10	1	14
Bono	AIDS, Debt Relief, Disaster Relief	DATA, ONE, EDUN, Product Red	WITNESS; Jubilee 2000, Amnesty International, NetAid, YouthAIDS, Millennium Promise, Clinton Global Initiative, Millennium Villages Project, Keep a Child Alive, Not on Our Watch, UN Millennium Project	12	11	0	23
Bruce Springsteen	Gun Control			0	0	0	0
Clint Eastwood	Gun Control			0	0	0	0
Ellen DeGeneres	Same-sex marriage		Elton John AIDS Foundation, GLSEN, It Gets Better Project, ONE, the Trevor Project	0	5	0	5
Elton John	AIDS	Elton John AIDS Foundation	AIDSLife, YouthAIDS	3	2	0	5
George Clooney	Sudan, Syria, Cuban Embargo	Not on Our Watch	ONE, Make Poverty History, American Foundation for AIDS Research, Enough Project, UN World Food Programme	3	5	1	9
Lady Gaga	Same-sex marriage	Born this Way Foundation	American Foundation for AIDS Research, GLSEN, It Gets Better Project, Mac AIDS Fund, the Trevor Project	3	5	0	8
Oprah Winfrey	Capital Punishment			0	0	0	0
Tim Tebow	Same-sex marriage			0	0	0	0

**Table 6.2 - Institutionalization Level of Celebrities**

<sup>28</sup> Celebrities only received points for their founding or affiliation with organizations that were relevant to the issue areas covered in the time series and/or experimental design surveys. This was based on the assumption that a celebrity such as Bono might be credible when speaking about AIDS or debt relief but not necessarily on gun control.

The far right column indicates a total score as of 2013, the time that the surveys were administered. By this count, Bono is highly institutionalized in this issue with a score of 23. Bruce Springsteen is not. In actuality, Springsteen is connected to institutions advocating on behalf of Vietnam veterans, Amnesty International, anti-nuclear energy, and revitalization of urban areas in New Jersey. None of these are related to gun control and as mentioned above, Springsteen has no official position on gun control outside of sympathy for victims of gun violence expressed in concert appearances. Likewise, Oprah Winfrey is connected to many charities and causes but is not involved in any anti-death penalty campaigns other than featuring activists on her show.

### **Aggregate Analysis Results**

The Syrian intervention and same-sex marriage cases illustrate the capacity of celebrities to persuade respondents under experimental conditions. Celebrities are capable of not only moving target audiences toward agreeing with their position, but also toward hypothetical action. Having said that, celebrities are not persuasive in all cases in this study. Under what conditions are celebrities likely to persuade?

The aggregate analysis described above in the methodology section is an attempt to provide more definitive answers to some of these questions. The results are summarized in

### **Table 6.3.**<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> “Feeling about the celebrity” was not included in the aggregate analysis because it was computed in every ordered logit estimate, and it was positive and significant in only a few cases. It was significant in some of the same-sex-marriage tables. Ironically, in most cases where it was significant, it was usually in cases where the celebrity was not persuasive. One of the handwritten responses to a survey illustrates the point. The respondent ranked Bono highly on the feeling thermometer and even wrote, “Great Guy! :)” When, on the following page, the respondent was asked to respond to Bono’s endorsement, he indicated that he did not agree, writing, “Bono does a lot, is talented—but that doesn't make him right.” Respondents like Bono, but they did not follow him on debt relief.

<i>Binary Logistical Regression Estimates</i>	
	<u>Estimate</u>
Intercept	-19.00** (8.21)
Mean credibility score	-3.19 (2.12)
Level of institutionalization	0.20* (0.11)
Perceived authenticity	7.21** (3.39)
Consistency with respondents' expectations	-1.33 (1.35)
Perceived importance of issue	1.89** (0.80)
High Wedge Polarity	-2.74* (1.44)
<i>Summary</i>	
Pseudo R-Square - Cox and Snell	0.37
$\chi^2$	27.88
N	61
*p ≤ .10; ** p ≤ .05; ***p ≤ .01; **** p ≤ .001	
Standard Error is in parentheses.	

**Table 6.3 - Correlates of "wins" in celebrity persuasion (p ≤ .10)**

The table affirms that the comparative measure of credibility is not a determinant in celebrity success ( $\beta = -3.19$ , n.s.). The mean credibility score is negatively correlated with “wins” and not significant. The first results section compared the relative credibility of political candidates with selected celebrities. In some cases, the celebrities ranked highly, and in others, they did not. Jolie and Clooney were at the bottom of the Syria list and performed well in the experimental survey. A brief summary of other cases illustrates that those celebrities who ranked highly in terms of credibility were not consistently able to persuade respondents in experimental groups. Ellen DeGeneres was highly credible and capable of persuading respondents on the same-sex marriage frame. Elton John’s pro-federal funding for AIDS frame

and Bono's pro-debt relief frame did not produce significant differences in mean compared to their control groups. When people report politicians and celebrities as "credible," it does not necessarily mean that they find them uniquely convincing on that issue. Expert power for celebrities may be better expressed by the institutionalization variable. Level of institutionalization is correlated with celebrity persuasion ( $\beta = 0.20, p \leq .10$ ), implying that celebrities that are connected to advocacy networks are more persuasive than those that are not.

Likewise, whether a celebrity advocates for or against expectations is also not significant ( $\beta = -1.33, n.s.$ ). Angelina Jolie is more persuasive when advocating against Syrian intervention while George Clooney seems to move attitudes when advocating either position. Both of them command hypothetical action more persuasively when advocating against intervention. Tim Tebow and Lady Gaga seem to be most persuasive when advocating against same-sex marriage. This might be a natural fit for Tebow, whom many Christian conservatives like because of his public prayer position in the end zone known as "Tebowing." Similarly, advocating for same-sex marriage may be an uncomfortable fit for him. Next to the pro-same-sex marriage frame, one conservative participant in an experimental group wrote, "Did Tebow really say this? If this is true I have lost a significant amount of respect for him." Likewise, based on Gaga's public advocacy of pro-gay issues, one would expect her to be less credible and "playing against type" when making anti-gay statements. A contrary result is surprising.

One of the strongest relationships appears to be authenticity ( $\beta = 7.21, p \leq .05$ ), implying that respondents were more likely to respond favorably to how a celebrity's talents and abilities made them seem more genuine when speaking on the issue. The perceived importance of the issue is also positively related to celebrity success ( $\beta = 1.89, p \leq .05$ ). The more prominent the issue is in the minds of the general populace, the more persuasive celebrities are. Finally, highly



polarized issues seem to be negatively correlated with celebrity success, suggesting that celebrities are more successful in advocacy on topics that are not wedge issues for either major political party ( $\beta = -2.74, p \leq .10$ ).

## **Implications**

As chapter 5 indicates, not all celebrities are persuasive all of the time. Under what circumstances are they persuasive? What variables matter? The aggregate analysis concludes that credibility, as measured by these surveys, is not necessary for celebrities to be persuasive. It makes sense that when it comes to credibility and expertise, the public measures celebrities according to a different yardstick than they do politicians, a point consistent with some of the findings in the academic literature (Atkin and Block 1983; Becker 2010; Freiden 1984). Perhaps the credibility variable matters more for those political actors who pursue an insider strategy and regularly involve themselves in policymaking.

What seems to be more important is a celebrity's institutionalization within a larger political movement, along with the support and associated credible activists that accompany it. A cursory glance at the credibility means comparison in chapter 5 illustrates that more institutionalized celebrities such as Bono, Lady Gaga, George Clooney, and Angelina Jolie rank higher than some competing politicians. The aggregate analysis illustrates a positive correlation between institutionalization and persuasion across cases, suggesting that institutionalization may be another path toward gaining expert power, as suggested in chapter 2.

Moreover, people are more likely to respond positively to a celebrity's appeals if they perceive that s/he is authentic. This authenticity is not tied to an understanding of expertise or politics, but to a perception that the celebrity's gifts, talents, and art make the person special.

Celebrities are also most likely to be persuasive when the issue already has some perceived importance and is not a wedge issue. The wedge issues drew a lot of written comments and caveats from respondents. The gun control question, for example, drew slogans such as “People kill, not guns” or statements such as “Those that want guns will still get them.” It is unlikely that any celebrity advocating for gun control will convince respondents such as these. In short, celebrities do better when there is some room for attitudinal change. If people have already made their mind up about an issue, celebrities are less likely to affect attitudes.

The data presented in these chapters have painted a picture of celebrities who are capable of commanding media attention and who are, in varying circumstances, quite capable of persuading target audiences to support a cause. The final chapter will summarize the major discoveries of this study, discuss further implications, and consider directions for future research.

## **Chapter 7 - The Times They Are A-Changin': Celebrity Power Revisited**

In 1969, John Lennon, one of the most recognizable celebrities in the world, privately left the Beatles to engage in a solo career and a series of political events that, for a celebrity, had not been witnessed since the days of the great singer, actor, and athlete, Paul Robeson. Robeson had been blacklisted in the 1950s because of his strong pro-civil rights stances and criticism of the American government. After years of harassment by the CIA, he retired in seclusion in 1963 (Dorinson and Pencak 2004; Duberman 1996, 537, 563–564; Freedomways 1998; Robeson 1988). Lennon hoped to fare better. However, the news media establishment of the 1960s was still fairly hostile to youth culture, as evidenced by the 1967 CBS documentary “The Hippie Temptation” (Reasoner and Wallace 1967), and the political environment was characterized by government crackdowns on protesters such as at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago (Edy 2006; Kusch 2004).

While Lennon and the other Beatles had been openly opinionated about polemic political issues such as civil rights and the Vietnam War, Lennon’s departure from the Beatles signaled his desire for radical activism. At a “Bed-In” for peace in Montreal with his new wife, artist Yoko Ono, Lennon said “You gotta remember, establishment, it’s just a name for evil. The monster doesn't care whether it kills all the students or whether there's a revolution.” By 1971, Lennon’s “Power to the People,” articulated a lyrical response to the “monster” that had been expressed through his performance art and political protests for the previous two years: “Say you want a revolution? We better get it on right away. Well, you get on your feet and into the street” (Leaf and Scheinfeld 2007; Whitehead 2000).

Organized left-wing radicals, such as Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, and Black Panther Chairman Bobby Seale, gravitated toward Lennon and began organizing a series of concerts

running up to the 1972 Republican National Convention to gain media attention, change public opinion, and oust President Richard Nixon at the polls. All of this was planned under FBI surveillance. Declassified files reveal intrusive spying and a paranoid Nixon administration seeking to “neutralize” Lennon because of concerns that he might disrupt his chances for re-election (A. Cohen 2006; Gross 2010; Leaf and Scheinfeld 2007; Parker 2003; Partridge 2005; Whitehead 2000; Wiener 2000, 2010).<sup>30</sup>

The concert strategy was attempted on a small scale in December 1971. Instead of focusing on Nixon and the election, the organization took on the cause of John Sinclair, the White Panther leader who was sentenced to 10 years in prison for possession of two marijuana cigarettes in 1969. Lennon and his associates organized a concert in Ann Arbor, the “John Sinclair Freedom Rally,” which featured John Lennon in his first live US performance since 1966, but also starred Stevie Wonder, Phil Ochs, and Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band. The musical performances were interspersed with speeches by Lennon, Rubin, Seales, poet Allen Ginsberg, and others. Three days later, Sinclair was released. Three months later on March 9, 1972, the US Supreme Court overturned the law used to penalize Sinclair, liberalizing the sentencing of marijuana use (Buchanan 2011; “FREED POET HAILS MICHIGAN RULING; Sees Victory in Reversal of Marijuana Conviction” 1972; Salpukas 1971; Thomson and Gutman 1987, 190–194; Wiener 2010).

The anti-Nixon tour, however, was never to be. In response to this victory, the Nixon administration attempted to deport Lennon. The administration argued that he had been admitted to the United States improperly since immigration law banned the admission of anyone convicted of any drug offense, referring to Lennon’s guilty plea to a misdemeanor cannabis

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<sup>30</sup> Nixon has never been directly linked to the attempt to “neutralize” Lennon, but Nixon’s chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman was intimately involved in the operation.

possession charge in London in 1968. An organization of celebrity artists appealed to the INS on Lennon's behalf including singers Joan Baez and Bob Dylan; beat poet Gregory Corso; writers John Updike, Joseph Heller, and Joyce Carol Oates; painter Jasper Johns; actor Tony Curtis; and composers John Cage and Leonard Bernstein. New York mayor John Lindsay supported Lennon, and thousands wrote letters in his defense, solicited by the liner notes in Lennon's 1972 *Some Time in New York City* album (Thomson and Gutman 1987, 191; Wiener 1991, 2010).

The deportation hearings continued for as long as Nixon remained in office. In 1975, a three-judge panel ruled that Lennon's London conviction did not meet America's standards of justice, and granted his green card (Wiener 2010). At that point, however, it was too late for Lennon's anti-establishment efforts. The hearings may not have deported Lennon, but they did distract, stymie, and exhaust his attempts to organize. There were no political concerts after the Ann Arbor event. His energy was focused on staying in the country, a fighting a battle that took a toll on his marriage and his health. By the time he received his green card, Lennon was not only finished with activism, he had retired from the music business to be a "house husband," living at home with his infant son, Sean, while Ono oversaw his business responsibilities (Leaf and Scheinfeld 2007).

While the case of John Lennon is not a perfect analogy that illustrates every lesson learned from this dissertation, it highlights the promise and limitations of celebrity activism as revealed through this dissertation. A concerned celebrity commits himself to a cause. He utilizes his media skills and art to persuade others to follow his cause. He connects himself to organizers. He attracts media attention.<sup>31</sup> His efforts can even be connected to a political result, the release of John Sinclair. Lennon's ability to work with his advocacy group to organize and

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<sup>31</sup> While this case was not part of the time series analysis from chapter 3, *the New York Times* covered many of Lennon's activities, particularly the "Free John Sinclair" concert and the subsequent events ("FREED POET HAILS MICHIGAN RULING; Sees Victory in Reversal of Marijuana Conviction" 1972; Salpukas 1971).

achieve results were even threatening enough for the president of the United States to spy on him and mobilize a government agency to block his efforts. This final point is important: there are limits to celebrity activism and powerful politicians and government institutions can still dominate or shut down their efforts (Sikkink 2004, 156).

The purpose of this final chapter is to take stock of this dissertation's results. It has sought to highlight the potential for celebrity power by focusing upon the ability of celebrities to set public agendas through spotlighting and persuasion. Lennon's story is consistent with the findings of this dissertation, but it also pushes its boundaries. In the following sections, the case of John Lennon will be revisited as this final chapter probes this work's findings and limitations, along with broader implications and areas for future research.

### **The Puzzle: Two Presidents and Three Celebrities**

The last chapter of this dissertation begins with the realistic picture of a president of the United States crushing the efforts of a potentially powerful rock star activist rival. It contrasts with the first chapter of the dissertation: a ridiculous picture of the president of the United States jokingly standing at attention, while he seriously engages with a rock star activist. The contrast illustrates the central puzzle of this dissertation. It is not at all surprising that the Nixon administration would turn the establishment against John Lennon and win. What is more surprising is that Lennon scores some victories and that the Nixon administration sees him as a genuine threat. The truly cynical would predict that Lennon would have little impact, certainly in 1971, when tabloid television news is still a fairly distant prospect and celebrity headlines belong in the entertainment news (Walls 2001).

For this reason, the puzzle is a modern one and a result of the changing times, as implied by the discussion in chapter 2 about the transforming news media and entertainment business. Celebrities have become more acceptable in newsrooms and the oval office than they were in 1972. Nixon's encounter with a friendlier celebrity is illustrative of this difference. Elvis Presley requested a meeting with President Nixon, held on December 21, 1970. In that meeting, Presley told Nixon that "the Beatles had been a real force for anti-American spirit" and that "the Beatles came to this country, made their money, and then returned to England where they promoted an anti-American theme." Nixon expressed "surprise" about Presley's comments. It is not clear whether Presley's comments persuaded Nixon that Lennon was a threat. Presley's concern was in part about anti-Americanism, but primarily about what he perceived as a drug problem associated with anti-establishmentarianism, a theme consistent with Nixon's campaign to increase criminalization of drug use. As opposed to giving speeches, Presley promised to reach kids with his anti-drug message in his own way by "just singing" (Krogh 1970). Reportedly at Presley's request, the meeting was kept secret, although Nixon probably agreed with the secrecy as he repeatedly expressed his concern that Presley needed to "retain his credibility." Nixon probably assumed that Presley's credibility would be undermined if the meeting were made public. A year later, the story was leaked, but it did not become big news. The now famous photo of Presley and Nixon shaking hands was not released until 1988. That the story was not made public, and more importantly, did not make serious headlines in 1971 when it was leaked, suggests a media environment that was not nearly as receptive to celebrity news as it is today (Carlson 2010). Moreover, no one assumes that Nixon would have taken Presley seriously on political strategy or policy. Despite a media and political environment that was either neutral or hostile to celebrities, Lennon was still able to capitalize on that environment

in a way that made a presidential administration nervous. Nixon's victories over Lennon buried the historical narrative that a celebrity had the potential for significant power, even in the early 1970s. Lennon was sidelined, just as Robeson had been twenty years earlier.

When Bono appears with Bush at Gleneagles over thirty years later, the media and political environment had changed substantially, as summarized in chapter 2. The "pseudo" media environment described by Boorstin (1992) had come to fruition. "Infotainment" merged tabloid-style journalism, salacious "reality" stories, and celebrity gossip and public relations, with traditional political news. Not only did entertainment and news merge, stories with high entertainment value began to compete with less-interesting stories of public importance. Boring stories were sensationalized (Adorno 2002; Balliger 1999; Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2008; Bennett 2012; Boczkowski 2009; Bourdieu 1996; Cook 2005; E. J. Epstein 1973; Fenster and Swiss 1999; Jowell et al. 2007; Lim 2012; Marshall 1997; G. Turner 2004; Weaver et al. 2007; West and Orman 2003; Wheeler 2013). By 2005, the incongruous pictures of the rock star and the conservative politician was not completely surprising, but definitely interesting. Bono had the potential to bring attention and excitement to a boring G8 conference that focused on an issue that carried little interest to most Americans, debt relief to developing countries.

Bono's approach was also different from Lennon's (Easterly 2010). Lennon was at odds with the establishment and at that time, a president would not treat a celebrity as a serious policy partner. In 2005, Bono hoped to ally with the president, push the president to accept his agenda, and persuade him. This strategy was illustrative of another major transformation in the entertainment and news industries: that the celebrity and politician both became identifiable commodities for hungry media consumers. Both capitalized on fame and the fertilization of a public image (Corner and Pels 2003; Marshall 1997; West and Orman 2003). Bono could



approach Bush as someone who was powerful in a realm that overlapped with Bush's. Thus, no one in the media or the public in 2005 was interested in burying or ignoring Bono's potential power as with Lennon in 1972. Instead, Bono's involvement became a tantalizing news story.

Ironically, while the media, the public, and even the politicians began to take celebrities seriously, the cynical scholars were the holdouts. Few scholars in 2005 expected that Bono could make a difference, because the study of political science is biased toward a picture of the world that presumes that those with the most political power are most likely to set the public agenda (Kernell 1997). Political scientists expect a world where activists have great difficulty advancing their political interests (Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002; Tarrow 1996). The Nixon-Lennon model, at face value, seems more plausible. It is easy to dismiss Lennon's successes. Non-traditional political actors such as celebrities are curiosities for tabloid entertainment news that are, in the words of Sabato, only to be taken seriously by "blithering idiots" (Ross 2004). Bono and Bush as long-term policy partners seemed so far-fetched that the phenomenon of celebrity power has been a non-issue in political science literature until recent years. One purpose of this dissertation was to test the bounds of this cynicism. Were the cynics correct?

This dissertation suggests that the changing nature of the media environment has created new opportunities for celebrities to engage meaningfully in activism and that their ability to spotlight and persuade illustrates their potential for public agenda setting. These findings potentially upend what many political scientists assume about power, particularly scholars who study policymaking, policy entrepreneurship, and social movements. Politicians do not necessarily have an edge in media manipulation, and activists, working with celebrity policy entrepreneurs, may make mobilization, media attention, access, and persuasion more achievable.

The next section details the findings of this dissertation as they pertain to the potential for celebrity power.

### **What Power?**

Lennon and Bono do not have the same power as Nixon or Bush. However, the cases from this study imply that celebrities such as these do have a degree of power. In order to understand how Lennon could be a threat to Nixon or how Bono could be an asset to Bush, chapter 2 offered French and Raven's typology (French and Raven 1959; Raven 1993), to compare the potential powers of celebrities and politicians across several dimensions: legitimate power, expert power, reward/coercive power, informational, and referent power. The following sections will itemize these forms of power and use them as a structure for summarizing the major findings of this dissertation.

#### *No Legitimacy*

Legitimate power is, by definition, the domain of public officials. Nixon and Bush have institutional power that Lennon or Bono could not access. As a result, those celebrities that do not seek public office are essentially activists. The main difference between celebrities and regular activists is that celebrities have greater resources and visibility than other activists. This may bring greater advantages to a movement, but may also jeopardize the legitimacy of the movement if they are not completely committed, if they fail to stay on message, or if their personal lives damage their public image (Crosby and Bender 2000; Rosamond 2011; de Waal 2008).

### *Expertise compensated*

Celebrities do not compete well with politicians in expert power. Celebrities generally engage in activism as an avocation. They are musicians, athletes, and actors first. Lennon and Bono may be passionate, but they do not have the political and policy expertise of presidents. Public officials not only have legitimacy. They also immerse themselves in their political careers on a full time basis, learning what they need in order to satisfy their constituents. The advertising literature argues that celebrities that are perceived as expert may have an advantage in selling a product, but that for the most part, celebrities are not perceived as expert, credible, believable, or effective (Atkin and Block 1983; Freiden 1984). Data presented in chapter 5 are consistent with these conclusions. Politicians are consistently ranked higher than celebrities regarding expertise and credibility on issues of public importance. Moreover, the aggregate analysis in that chapter reveals that credibility, measured as expertise on an issue, is not significantly correlated to celebrities' ability to persuade.

Chapter 2 summarizes two alternative approaches for celebrities to substitute expertise: experience and institutionalization. Data in chapter 6 offer support for the idea that these are appropriate substitutes. While experiences such as Clooney's visits to camps in Sudan were not quantified, the credibility mean scores illustrate that those celebrities with deeper experience or a stronger identity with an issue—such as Bono, Elton John, Lady Gaga, George Clooney, and Angelina Jolie—may rank higher than those who do not. This is an area, however, that requires further research.

Chapter 6 also concludes that institutionalization is positively correlated with a celebrity's ability to persuade, implying that those celebrities who are connected to a dense transnational advocacy network may be perceived as “credible” in a way that substitutes for

subject expertise. What a celebrity lacks in subject expertise and even legitimacy can be substituted by an affiliation with a broad network of experts and professional lobbyists and activists. As discussed elsewhere, Bono does not act alone. He surrounds himself with experts who educate him and do the groundwork necessary to advance the cause. Likewise, whether Lennon's connections with Rubin and Seales translated to perceived expertise, his affiliation with them automatically connected him to a network that had already been working on radical causes since the mid-1960s. Therefore, if expertise is measured in this way, it is quite likely that a celebrity's "expert power" may be instrumental in his/her ability to persuade, which has some effect on his/her ability to engage in agenda setting.

#### *Conditional coercive and reward power*

Public officials have definite coercive and reward power. The fact that the Nixon administration could utilize bureaucracies to neutralize Lennon is not surprising. However, celebrities have the capacity to coerce or reward public officials. One way is through simple money and resources. Most celebrities have these in abundance, which gives them a means to give money or threaten to cut it off from campaigns of public officials. There are documented cases of celebrity political donations, but it is as difficult to document the connection between money and outcomes in these cases as it is in the interest group literature. If money is the source of a celebrity's power, that makes them no different from other citizens who have money, but lack the skills, abilities, and fame of celebrities (Marshall 1997; West and Orman 2003). Therefore, this is a possible source of celebrity power, but it is not a unique power and it is not easily measurable.

Celebrities' abilities to coerce or reward may lie more in language and public access than in material resources. Celebrities, like activists, may engage in leverage or accountability politics by holding public officials to promises or pressuring them to change policies (Batliwala and Brown 2006; Keck and Sikkink 1998; M. G. M. Rodrigues 2004; Shaw 2005). Chapter 2 offered some empirical examples of celebrities effectively "shaming" the powerful. The actions of Lennon and his associates at the John Sinclair Freedom Rally involved shaming as well, to some apparent positive effect. However, if celebrities' power of coercion and reward is linked to gaining public attention and persuading others, then the final two sources of power, referent and information power, become extremely important; they explain why and how a celebrity connects with an audience and how they utilize information to attract attention and persuade. Thus, cases such as those where Bono or Van Zandt engaged in shaming of public officials or powerful players in the entertainment industry are supported by evidence in chapters 3-6. Nevertheless, more research is necessary to connect spotlighting and persuasion to coercive and reward politics. Hypothetically, one would have to engage in process tracing and some contextual research (Bates et al. 1998) in order to illustrate that these skills were indeed key to success in these cases.

*Informational power: spotlighting and persuasion*

Informational power refers to the ability of political actors to quickly generate politically usable information and deliver it to the places where it is most effective. Because of Lennon's celebrity status, he could grab the attention of the public. He deliberately constructed pseudo-events in the form of performance art, such as staging bed-ins, public recording sessions, films, or appearing at press conferences in a bag, in order to capture media attention. At times when

the traditional news media paid less attention, he turned his albums into sources of political information and even bought billboard space in every major city in the world with the printed slogan, “War is Over! If You Want It” (Athey and Deiter 2009; G. Matthews and Goodman 2013, 34; Mesch 2013, 78; Wiener 1991). Clearly, the Free John Sinclair concert was well placed, powerful, and persuasive. However, little is known exactly about the inside causes and circumstances that led to Sinclair’s release or if this event affected the judge’s opinion.

Similarly, anecdotal cases offer optimistic views of celebrity interventions and some research emphasizes positive effects (Njoroge 2011; Rosamond 2011; Wheeler 2011), but other scholars present a skeptical or ambiguous view of celebrities’ abilities to draw media attention toward political issues (Hawkins 2011; Strine 2004; Tait 2011). Chapter 3 offered strong evidence that celebrity interventions in advocacy campaigns result in significantly increased media coverage. This increased coverage is not only specific to the intervention event or in ongoing references to the celebrity’s involvement. It represents an overall spike in stories on the issue. This relationship was statistically significant in case after case, from Bono advocating on AIDS or debt relief to Angelina Jolie discussing children’s education or George Clooney protesting the violence in Darfur. Granted, celebrities are not the only figures who can generate a buzz by giving an interview or planning an event. Politicians are extremely adept at gaining attention, and the data reflect this reality, too.

However, chapter 4 produces the surprising conclusion that celebrities may be *more* effective at capturing media attention on political issues than politicians are. One would expect celebrities to be experts at parading their own projects. Politicians should be better at promoting political causes. Nevertheless, the data in chapter 4 reveal that celebrities perform better than politicians across media types and that the results are statistically significant. The relationship

not only holds true in broadcast media where one might expect a bias toward celebrities with their demand for a higher degree of sensationalism and interest in avoiding the “visually unsatisfactory” stories; it is also true for newspapers where concerns about static talking heads and providing enough action footage are irrelevant (Cook 2005, 2–3, 104; E. J. Epstein 1973, 261–263). Indeed, a story that is heavily covered in broadcast media, but not covered at all in newspapers, such as the birth of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie’s child in Namibia, can nevertheless increase the coverage of African education stories in newspapers without specific reference to Jolie or Pitt at all. A general public interest emerges around a topic that seems to cross media types.

One possible reason why celebrities gain more coverage than politicians may be their uniqueness. Politicians advocate on policies and issues of public importance all of the time. Celebrities do it rarely and in focused events. A celebrity gives a media organization an excuse to talk about a serious issue and to show their viewers something unusual and potentially attractive. To some extent, this is consistent with advertising research suggesting that overexposure might limit ones’ media power (Roy 2012). An underexposed celebrity may trump an overexposed politician. However, it also implies that an overexposed celebrity may not have traction, either. This might explain why Bono’s spikes in chapter 3 are not as consistent or as large as George Clooney’s or Alicia Keys’. Bono is a longtime advocate and policy insider who is consistently visible when discussing challenges of the developing world. Clooney consistently advocates on Sudan, but seems less exposed and more selective about his interventions. Keys is a consistent advocate who has not received as much coverage. Moreover, when viewers experience “tragedy fatigue” (Acampora and Cotten 2008, xi; Associated Press 2008) or are overexposed to an issue, perhaps an attractive, even sexy face can draw attention back toward it,

again, a finding consistent with advertising research (Berscheid and Walster 1974; McGuire 1985). While the data from chapters 3 and 4 clearly imply these conclusions, the design does not absolutely verify them. Do overexposed celebrities and politicians attract less attention? Do more attractive faces revitalize a story? More research is necessary to explicate these hypotheses.

In addition, the more celebrities that are involved in an intervention, the more likely the intervention is to capture media attention. The same cannot be said for multiple politicians involved in intervention events. Contrary to expectations, celebrities do not necessarily need politicians in order to increase attention on an issue. Indeed, politicians are the ones who likely benefit from “being seen” with celebrities, particularly in newspapers. To some extent, this answers the question, “why would Bush take Bono seriously?” Besides the possible policy expertise he brings with his transnational advocacy network, the answer may be that Bono is better at spotlighting an issue than Bush is. In exchange for the attention gained on an issue where they have like interests, Bush may be willing to give Bono a seat at the table. Once at the table, he may have the opportunity to establish himself as a policy insider, which may make him valuable in a way that extends beyond his ability to command media attention.

Thus, persuasion, another important expression of informational power, becomes a potentially important aspect of agenda setting and even policy making. Celebrities can spotlight issues and can gain access to the highest levels of power. Once celebrities gain attention, can they get people to agree with them? Advertising research is cautious in suggesting that celebrities are particularly persuasive, even in product endorsements (Atkin and Block 1983; Miciah and Shanklin 1994). Recent political science literature illustrates how celebrity endorsement of candidates can be effective in some circumstances (Brubaker 2011; Garthwaite



and Moore 2008; Lammie 2007; Pease and Brewer 2008). However, very little has been concluded about the effect of celebrity issue endorsements (Becker 2010).

Chapter 5 demonstrates some strengths and limitations of celebrity persuasion. First, some celebrities are very persuasive. Respondents who were exposed to celebrity frames such as George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Ellen DeGeneres, Lady Gaga, and Tim Tebow were more likely to accept their frame of the issue than control respondents who received information about an issue, but no frame. These findings were statistically significant. The inclusion of a super control group that was exposed to the frame but no celebrity name ensured that it was the celebrity and not the frame itself that was persuasive. In addition, the design addressed participants' central route of persuasion, which put those respondents in a more critical mental state when evaluating the issues (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983). Despite a very difficult crucial design, many celebrities were quite persuasive.

However, not all celebrities were persuasive, or at least persuasive enough. While many celebrity endorsements affected attitudes of respondents in predictable directions, means differences were not statistically significant in all cases. Perhaps if the study had been designed to prepare respondents to accept a peripheral route of persuasion, the celebrities might have been more effective by capitalizing more on one of their key strengths: their attractiveness. Indeed, advertising often attempts to appeal to audiences through a peripheral route to prevent individuals from actively and intellectually engaging with the message (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983). A different design might have produced more favorable results, particularly a design that might have involved more symbolic attempts at persuasion (Edelman 1985; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Perloff 2013). However, political debate is a messy business. People often

engage on many levels. This methodology illustrated how celebrities can be persuasive under the most challenging of conditions.

Moreover, when advocating on issues, celebrities “flipped sides” across experimental groups. For example, George Clooney would advocate in favor of Syrian intervention on a survey given to one experimental group. He would advocate against on a different survey before a different group. Clooney was capable of persuading participants whether he argued for or against the issue. Indeed, the aggregate analysis concluded that the perceived position of the celebrity did not affect his/her ability to persuade. One would expect Clooney to be less credible when advocating against participants’ expectations. However, where celebrities advocated on both sides of an issue, this expectation did not seem to hamper their success.

Chapter 6 also concludes that celebrities were more persuasive on issues that participants perceived as important, rather than those that were less salient. This implies a connection between celebrities’ ability to spotlight and their ability to persuade. Issues that are more salient have greater potential for celebrity persuasion. That implies that the more effectively a celebrity spotlights an issue, the more persuasive they are on that issue. However, more research is needed to confirm this implication.

#### *Referent power: connecting to audiences and communicating authenticity*

Referent power is the ability to be likable and relatable, an ability that most celebrities have. One cannot easily entertain without having a degree of attractiveness, charisma, or an ability to draw attention (Tsaliki, Frangonikolopoulos, and Huliaras 2011; Weber 1968). Celebrities also are admired for their authenticity, the way that a celebrity’s art or ability can connect to their image to his/her inner emotions, feelings, and personality to communicate a

sense of honesty and sincerity (Balliger 1999, 61; Fenster and Swiss 1999, 228; Huddart 2005). Some scholars are skeptical of whether celebrities are genuinely perceived as authentic by an increasingly media exposed and jaded audience or if their likability translates to real power (Couldry and Markham 2007; Tsaliki, Frangonikolopoulos, and Huliaras 2011).

There is no doubt that Lennon had referent power. Between the power of his music and the power of his personality, Lennon had as much charisma as an entertainer can have. What can one do with referent power? In practice, referent power connects a leader with followers—or in this case the image of a celebrity or politician as a consumable product with distant audiences. When celebrities or politicians connect, the result is often that people speak about these distant figures as if they were personal acquaintances, and even emulate or live vicariously through the public figure to make up for the life or qualities regular people lack (Dyer and McDonald 1998; Marshall 1997). The effect is likely more pronounced for celebrities than for most politicians, although more research is necessary to come to this conclusion.

Chapters 5 and 6 call into question the notion that a celebrity's likability translates to persuasion. Data derived from the "feeling thermometer" indicate no clear positive relationship between the way a person feels about a celebrity and the way that a person may feel about a political issue. Likability does not clearly translate to persuasion. Some celebrities seem to persuade whether they rank highly on the feeling thermometer, which means that other variables are driving persuasion. Moreover, on polemic "wedge" issues, party identification seems to have a stronger influence on attitudes than celebrity interventions. The power of party identification is well documented in the literature, so this finding is not surprising (Bartels 2002; Brady and Sniderman 1985; A. Campbell et al. 1980; Dancy and Goren 2010; Gaines et al. 2007; Nelson and Garst 2005).

While likability and positive feelings may not be correlated to celebrity persuasiveness, chapter 6 demonstrates that authenticity is. Thus, what is important for the participants in this study is not whether the celebrity is likable, but that s/he is sincere and that the skills and abilities s/he provides as an entertainer or artist feed into that sincerity. This is somewhat consistent with the finding mentioned above that institutionalization is linked to persuasion. A celebrity may not have issue expertise or credibility, but s/he may have experience or an affiliated network that makes up for it. Participants in the study responded positively to celebrities who were connected to institutions rather than their subjective feelings about the celebrity. Therefore, a celebrity's authenticity, a function of his/her referent power, and institutionalization, a compensated form of expertise, relate to his/her ability to convince someone to accept a political position.

If institutionalization and authenticity underlie a celebrity's power of persuasion, it might also offer an additional explanation about why Bush might ally with Bono. If Bush lacked authenticity on the issue of assistance to Africa, he might benefit from being seen discussing the issue with Bono. Perhaps Bono's authenticity could legitimate Bush. Through Bono, he could publicize his desire to take aid to the poorer parts of the world. He could communicate his genuine interest in real reform by taking seriously a man, supported by advocacy institutions, who not only wanted to deliver maximum benefits to the developing world, but during the Clinton administration proved himself capable of melting the staunchest conservatives of the Republican Party (Busby 2007). In this way, an alliance with a celebrity allows a politician to not only gain attention for a particular issue, but perhaps even to recast his image on that issue by associating with a celebrity activist.

## **Can celebrities set a public agenda?**

If one were able to “connect the dots” between Lennon’s efforts to draw attention to Sinclair’s imprisonment and his release, we could reasonably conclude that he raised the profile of that issue, placing it on the public agenda and producing the desired result. Even without the process tracing necessary to prove that Lennon’s intervention and the release of Sinclair are more than just correlation, the timing of both events seems more than coincidental. The anecdotal evidence suggesting that Bono’s efforts to raise consciousness about debt relief was successful is better documented and more compelling. This dissertation provides hard evidence that celebrities are quite adept at spotlighting public issues and many celebrities are quite persuasive. How persuasive they are depends upon who the celebrity is, what the issue is, how much authenticity they have, and whether they are connected to transnational advocacy groups. It would certainly be an overstatement to argue that any celebrity can set the agenda any time. But there is enough evidence here to suggest that Bono is not “wasting his breath,” so to speak. Many celebrities compete well versus politicians at agenda setting and some may even be better at it.

When celebrities attempt to attract attention to their issue or engage in acts of persuasion, they are taking part in the sorts of strategies and tactics utilized by activist policy entrepreneurs. They deploy a set of “shakeout strategies” to disrupt the status quo or capitalize on a disruption as a means to focus important actors on their issue. Specifically, they spotlight important issues and policies, gain access to powerful players and the policymaking process, hold public officials accountable to their words, utilize leverage to push public officials to change their positions, symbolically mobilize audiences to connect or separate from politicians and policies, and

convince target audiences of the validity of their positions. In that sense, celebrities are no different than other activists or policy entrepreneurs.

Moreover, like activists and policy entrepreneurs, celebrities deploy strategies to reduce the personal risk associated with their involvement in activism. Depending upon the celebrity, many choose to connect with organizations in order to support, advance, and maintain focus on the issue. While the celebrity may lose some control over their vision by including more people, success and longevity of the effort depend upon coordination. In addition, celebrities can moderate their time and resource commitments if they know that an existing institution can continue their work, calling upon the celebrity to deploy their skills when necessary.

The major difference between celebrities and regular activists or policy entrepreneurs has to do with the “power of a persona” (DeMars 2005, 9). All of the branding and publicity associated with building a celebrity image amplifies their abilities to engage in “shakeout.” They attract more attention to an issue and, through their unique abilities and resources, potentially enchant target audiences. As has been documented elsewhere in this dissertation, celebrities can grab headlines in ways that would be difficult without them, gain access to public figures that typical activists and entrepreneurs cannot, and even create compelling arguments as to why members of the public or powerful officials should agree with them. The increased resources, money, and fame, along with the “persona” described above also means that they may be able to reduce risk more easily than a typical activist or entrepreneur. More money equates with more power, more flexibility, more time—resources that are not in abundance for typical volunteer citizen activists and not easily accessible to professional organizers. Because of the power of persona, celebrities are also more likely to achieve some of these goals of access and persuasion, which means that time and resources are less likely to be wasted.

Granted, not all celebrities become politically involved, so the drive to advocate on behalf of a political issue is dependent upon the desire and ability to do so. Risk cuts both ways. A celebrity does not just have to want to sacrifice their time and/or resources, s/he has to be willing to calculate the damage or benefit of involvement to his/her image and career (Becker 2010; Duvall 2010; Meyer and Gamson 1995; Tsaliki, Frangonikolopoulos, and Huliaras 2011). Rock and folk musicians, in particular, have had a greater degree of autonomy since the 1960s because of the way in which political expression was normatively linked to the artist's authenticity (Huddart 2005; Marshall 1997). Actors and athletes had less autonomy because of the more restrictive nature of their contracts and their connections to potential commercial advertisements (A. W. Campbell 1994; Williamson 2011; Zirin 2009). It is likely not a coincidence that among those who appealed to the INS on John Lennon and Yoko Ono's behalf that most were musicians and writers. There were no athletes. Only one actor, Tony Curtis, made a statement. The rise of actor activists such as George Clooney and Angelina Jolie suggest that many Hollywood actors have more autonomy than in past years (Huliaras and Tzifakis 2011), although actors and athletes still seem to be more attached to the contracts and advertising inherent in that industry than do musicians and other artists.

### **Avenues for Future Research**

Thus far, this chapter has revisited the central puzzle of this dissertation and implications, summarized the major findings, and specified the limitations from the research. Already, several areas for additional research have been mentioned. The following sections will detail several additional areas for potential research along with some limited data drawn from the studies to offer some "teasers" about possible results.

### *Activism and Multilevel Governance across Time*

This chapter began by arguing that this dissertation addresses a “modern” puzzle—why would a president care about a rock star? It appears modern, particularly when compared to the case of Lennon and the Nixon administration. However, more research is needed to demonstrate whether this genuinely is a modern puzzle. One way to address this concern is to replicate the time series analysis over time. In preparation for this dissertation, data was gathered on cases of celebrity intervention from 1935 through the 1960s including interventions by Paul Robeson, Marian Anderson, Harry Belafonte, Nat King Cole, Louis Armstrong, Jackie Robinson, and Lena Horne. By utilizing the same methodology from chapters 3 and 4, one could first discover whether these celebrity interventions gained much media traction at the time. One interesting variable to consider is race. All of the figures listed above are African Americans and most of them were involved in civil rights advocacy. Would a potentially hostile media cover these artists’ activism in any depth? By looking at many cases over time, one could also document the rise of celebrity influence in the media—was it a gradual phenomenon or was there a threshold where celebrities suddenly had more access?

Moreover, assuming that the media and political environments in 1971 really were substantially different from 2005, what conditions make a political environment receptive to celebrity activism? One potential answer comes from the transnational advocacy network and social movement literatures. Scholars have constructed frameworks to explain how activists exploit interacting international and domestic opportunity structures, which vary over time, geography, and issue area. As illustrated in **Error! Reference source not found.**, institutions are relatively more accessible in an open structure.



Likewise, strict laws or even repression can block access in a closed structure. If institutions are closed at domestic and international levels, chances of activism are diminished. If domestic and international institutions are open, activists may act according to an “insider/outsider coalition model” where activists may primarily act on the domestic level but “will keep international activism as a complementary and compensatory option” (Sikkink 2004, 165). In the case of closed domestic institutions and open international institutions, activists employ a “boomerang pattern and ‘spiral model’.” A boomerang pattern describes how domestic actors, when unable to access national or local institutions may connect with transnational coalitions to bring pressure upon those institutions. A spiral model suggests that activists pursue these efforts to create enough domestic openness to allow for activism at that level. Therefore, a successful boomerang/spiral may result in a system that is open on both domestic and international levels. Open domestic opportunity structures and closed international opportunity structures are often characterized by “defensive transnationalization” activism, where activists may employ pressure on domestic institutions in order open or democratize international institutions or to prevent transfers of power to these more opaque institutions (Sikkink 2004, 161–164).

		International Opportunity Structure		
		Closed	Open	
Structure	Domestic Opportunity	Closed	Diminished chances of activism	Boomerang pattern and “spiral model”
	Open	Democratic deficit/defensive transnationalization	Insider/outsider coalition model	

[From Sikkink 2004, 156]

**Table 7.1: Dynamic Multilevel Governance**

Additional research would be needed to specify this model in the context of celebrities, but it is certainly plausible to assume that the US government was much more “closed” to celebrity activism at the domestic level in 1971 than it is today. Likewise, in the early 1970s, there would be few opportunities for Lennon and his associates to connect to activists overseas to shame the US government from the outside in a meaningful way. Complex internationalism and globalization have increased the ability of activist networks to connect transnationally. In 2005, Bono benefitted from a friendly and open set of global leaders at a G8 conference, open domestic structures in congresses, legislatures, and among executives, and an open and connected activist environment in which he could employ an insider/outsider coalition model. He could, at one point, turn to the media for attention and then work behind the scenes with leaders and policy makers to engage in agenda setting.

### *Insider Strategies*

This dissertation established a distinction in agenda setting between “insider” and “outsider” strategies (Clark 2006; Florini, Nihon Kokusai Ko-ryu- Senta, and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2000; Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002; Naidoo 2006; della Porta and Tarrow 2004; Price 1998; Sikkink 2004; Torrance and Torrance 2006). Lennon deployed an outsider strategy. An insider strategy would have been extremely unlikely. Bono, on the other hand, had the flexibility to engage in both kinds of approaches.

For the most part, this research focused on outsider strategies. The methodology tested whether celebrity policy entrepreneurs could make headlines by intervening on political issues and create a contagion effect in the media surrounding the issue. It also tested whether they could persuade target audiences through exposure to written content. Celebrities use their power

to raise the salience of issues and to persuade outsiders (the public and the media). The intended result is to pressure insiders (policy makers) to address the issue in question. Research has concluded that successful media agenda setting is often correlated with policy results (Hopmann et al. 2010; Mortensen 2010), and one can assume that a celebrity that is persuasive with a study participant might also be persuasive with a policy maker, given the chance. Some work has focused on specific cases (Busby 2007), but more research is necessary to illustrate this relationship, particularly as it relates to the process of influencing policymakers and policymaking.

Another approach to this question would be to study the correlates of access. What qualities and resources of a celebrity make celebrities likely to gain access to the policymaker? To answer this question, the data from this study was tentatively analyzed. The unit of analysis was the celebrity. The dependent variable was the number of times a celebrity appeared with a policymaker in the news. Independent variables included credibility, authenticity, and institutionalization. Unfortunately, this study only had data on 10 celebrities and of those 10 celebrities, only two had appeared with a public official multiple times. Still, using a bootstrapped OLS regression model (N=902), results were consistent with some of the other findings from this dissertation—particularly that credibility did not increase the likelihood of access. Authenticity was positively correlated, but not significant ( $\beta = 2.42$ , n.s.) and Institutionalization was positively correlated and significant ( $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $p \leq .10$ ), arriving at the intuitive conclusion that better-connected and better-supported celebrities are more likely to gain access. The results are not particularly reliable, but they do open the possibility for further research in this area.

One final implication about insider strategies relates to persuasion. This study concludes that perceived importance of an issue is positively correlated to a celebrity's ability to persuade. If this is the case, then importance is subjective. Based on Gallup polling, issues such as debt relief and AIDS prevention did not matter to the public at the time of the study. However, what is important to the public may not be the same as what may be important to a policy maker. In this study, Bono and Elton John are both credible and authentic on those issues where they are real life advocates. However, they did not advocate on issues that were important to the public and were ineffective at persuading respondents. Both, however, involve themselves in insider lobbying in Congress. Bono, in particular, is reported to be very persuasive among politicians. In short, perhaps Bono and Elton John are not persuasive with this sample of respondents. However, they may be persuasive to policymakers if they already think the issue is important. Likewise, the design of the information and frames in the experimental study did not attempt to convince respondents that an issue was important. It just offered both sides of an issue and ended with a celebrity endorsement of one side or the other. What if part of the frame included a justification from a celebrity about why the issue is important? Would it amplify the effect of the celebrity frame? An answer to these questions might increase an understanding of how celebrities persuade both citizens and policymakers.

### *Celebrity framing*

Celebrities were persuasive under specific conditions, as summarized above. Are there conditions that might make them more persuasive? Some research has already suggested that video appeals by celebrities are more effective than written appeals (Becker 2010, 112, 116). This could be an area of further exploration. Some research has also suggested that political

endorsements have a stronger effect when voters have limited information about candidates (Weaver-Lariscy and Tinkham, 1991; Converse, 1962). This implies that political knowledge may be a variable in how easily celebrities can persuade. Moreover, the sample from the experimental study trended toward more educated respondents. Might the results have been different with a less educated sample? Future research might benefit from focusing on respondents who know less about issues and/or have less education in general. In addition, this dissertation focused on the difference between celebrity framing in an experimental group compared to controls and super controls with no frame or no celebrity. An alternative for future research could be to also include surveys with politicians making the same statements to see if, say, Barack Obama is more persuasive than George Clooney.

### *Types of interventions*

This dissertation made distinctions about predictors of the success of celebrity interventions. One predictor that was not quantitatively tested was intervention type. One of the most effective types of interventions revealed in the time series analysis was when celebrities such as Bono and Bob Geldof took over a newspaper. Clooney's arrest at the Sudanese embassy received an incredible amount of press. Is a television interview more effective than an op ed? Should more celebrities try to get themselves arrested?

Another possible research direction could be to focus on a particular type of event. One early idea in the design of this dissertation was to focus on the effect of political concerts. Anecdotally, Lennon's John Sinclair Freedom Concert may have had some effect on media coverage and perhaps upon Sinclair's release. How effectively did similar events such as the Concert for Bangladesh, Live Aid, or Live 8 draw attention toward their respective issue? Did

that vary over time? Perhaps the Concert for Bangladesh got less coverage in 1971 than Live Aid did in 1985 because of the media's increased interest in celebrity activism. Perhaps Live 8 in 2005 had less coverage because of the increased fragmentation and choices among television stations compared to 1985. Already, this dissertation has concluded that more celebrities equal more media attention. Perhaps these mass, multi-celebrity events generate more publicity than single celebrity interventions.

### *Celebrity institutionalization*

Throughout this dissertation, much discussion has focused on celebrities' efforts to connect with advocacy networks. Additional study could further illuminate the ways that institutionalization affects persuasion or other dependent variables. Moreover, it could also illuminate the historical normative process of celebrity attachment to advocacy organizations. Effective celebrity advocates rarely act alone. Jackie Robinson's civil rights interventions were generally organized as events and fundraisers for the NAACP. Harry Belafonte's interventions were coordinated with advice from Martin Luther King. George Harrison's Concert for Bangladesh, which was to be administered by UNICEF in response to the refugee crisis there, suffered because his management failed to apply for tax exempt status, causing most of the money to sit in an IRS escrow account for ten years (Clayson 2001; Harrison 1980). Despite its setbacks, it became the template for subsequent benefit concerts. Harry Chapin learned from those failures when planning his benefit concerts. Ultimately, when Bob Geldof organized Live Aid, he drew upon the example of Bangladesh and consulted with Harrison himself to avoid potential mistakes (Fine 2002). He also directly drew organizers from Chapin's and Harrison's groups to build upon their previous experience (Coan 2001; Crosby and Bender 2000). Given

the emergence of so many benefit concerts since that time, one could make the case that a semi-permanent transnational network emerged for organizing successful benefit concerts. If there is evidence of an increasing permanence and professionalization of these efforts, it is an interesting alternative hypothesis to the media transformation argument advanced in chapter 2. Rather than changes in the business and technology of the media causing the elevation of celebrities into the political world, perhaps music industry professionals', concert promoters', and artists' deliberate efforts to organize played a significant role. This dissertation does not preclude this possibility, but it also is not the focus of this work.

### *Musicians and authenticity*

At the beginning of this research project, 437 celebrity political interventions were identified over a long historical period, in keeping with Huddart's description of the three waves of modern celebrity activism. The first wave began in the late 1950s with the civil rights movement in the late 1950s. The second wave responded to the anti-war movement in the late 1960s. A third wave was marked by a series of large scale concerts, first initiated by Bob Geldof and others in response to the Ethiopian famine, borrowing from the earlier efforts Harrison and Chapin. This wave gave rise to the branding of celebrity causes and its merger with capitalism in the form of projects such as Product RED, where consumers purchase celebrity endorsed products to raise money to assist world development (Coan 2001; Crosby and Bender 2000; Grow 2014; Harrison 1980; Huddart 2005; Lyons 2005; Marsh 1978; Richey and Ponte 2008; Shankar 2005; Swimmer 2005).

When data collection began, vast numbers of documented celebrity interventions were discovered, stretching back to the 1930s. **Error! Reference source not found.Error!**

**Reference source not found.** only represents the interventions discovered in the preparatory stages of this research study, before narrowing case selection. This table illustrates the trend of celebrity involvement by decades.<sup>32</sup>

	<b>Athletes</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Musicians</b>
<i>1930-1939</i>	0	0	14
<i>1940-1949</i>	0	0	44
<i>1950-1959</i>	5	0	22
<i>1960-1969</i>	7	3	35
<i>1970-1979</i>	3	6	32
<i>1980-1989</i>	5	5	54
<i>1990-1999</i>	5	11	54
<i>2000-2009</i>	5	63	64
<i>Total</i>	30	88	319

**Table 7.2 – Numbers of Celebrity Interventions by Decade**

This table illustrates how celebrity activism has been on an upward trend as the media has become more globalized and more inclined toward “infotainment.” Clearly, musician interventions dominate the list and the overall numbers have grown over the years. In the early years, the vast majority of those interventions were generated by one person: Paul Robeson, with 72 interventions between 1935 and 1959.<sup>33</sup> From 1957-1963, most of the interventions involved Harry Belafonte, although he frequently mobilized other musicians and actors where possible. The numbers on Robeson and Belafonte are likely skewed, because the data set does not include interventions by musicians who should appear more frequently with deeper research, such as Pete Seeger or Woody Guthrie.

<sup>32</sup> Table 7.2 does not represent the universe of interventions, and it does not take into account the longer term commitments that some celebrities have made to institutional causes for many years. It also operates on a loose definition of what a celebrity intervention entails, because it includes some interventions that may be considered more “charitable” than “political.”

<sup>33</sup> Paul Robeson, appearing in many interventions from the 1930s through the 1950s, was categorized as a musician because most of his intervention events involved him singing in concert rather than acting or referencing his earlier days in sports. As someone who was an athlete, actor, and musician, he could have been counted three times for each intervention. This could be a challenge for operationalizing variables, although there are very few celebrities in history who were extremely successful in all three of these categories. If celebrities were as successful at gaining political attention in the 1930s as they are today, perhaps Robeson’s exceptional status across celebrity professions played an important role in launching the idea of a celebrity as political activist. Perhaps few others who had such broad appeal could have been able to survive as long as he did.



From the mid-1960s onward, the number of musicians involved in interventions increases, and it is more difficult to argue that any one musician dominates them. These trends are consistent with the argument that the Beatles' commercial dominance from 1964-1970, coupled with Bob Dylan's folk ethic influence on popular music, likely created an artistic and commercial space for more musicians to express themselves politically without being normatively "punished." It also offers some support for the existence of an authenticity norm for musicians (Balliger 1999, 61; Fenster and Swiss 1999, 228; Huddart 2005). However, more research would have to be conducted to affirm this.

**Error! Reference source not found.** **Error! Reference source not found.** also illustrates how athletes are the least inclined to get politically involved, a phenomenon that might well be explained by contractual restrictions discussed above (Bush, Martin, and Bush 2004; Williamson 2011; Zirin 2009). Indeed, in most decades, nearly all of the interventions were made by only a few athletes whose names are not surprising: Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali, and Billie Jean King. As the decades go on, a wider diversity of athletes seem to be involved in these interventions, but the total number is flat.

Actors are scarcely involved throughout the twentieth century, and then their involvement spikes at the turn of the century. By 2009, actor interventions rival musician interventions. One potential area for research would trace the reasons for this change. Thus far, the research presented in this dissertation strongly suggests that it is likely to be associated with celebrity autonomy, particularly from commercial contracts. Television stars may likely be more restricted than film actors because of the demands of commercial advertisers that sponsor shows. More research is necessary to demonstrate the potential relationship between entertainment type and potential autonomy. However, the authenticity scores derived from the surveys and

displayed in Table 7.3 imply another possible argument: actors have achieved a level of authenticity that rivals musicians, at least among this sample. Again, this table is illustrative, not determinant, and offers an interesting hypothesis about what might be driving the increase in celebrity intervention or even the potential effectiveness of interventions.

<b>Authenticity Scores</b>	<i>N</i> =	<i>Mean Authenticity Score</i>
Ellen DeGeneres	41	3.51
Oprah Winfrey	52	3.13
Elton John	63	3
George Clooney	71	2.9
Bono	56	2.88
Angelina Jolie	44	2.86
Bruce Springsteen	47	2.81
Tim Tebow	41	2.78
Clint Eastwood	52	2.69
Lady Gaga	40	2.45

Respondents were asked to respond to this statement, "This public figure's talents, abilities, and professional projects uniquely make him/her an authentic spokesperson."

**Table 7.3 - Mean Authenticity Scores**

The strength of musicians on this list is also consistent with research suggesting that music is a unique form of potential referent power. While some political scientists have addressed this assertion (Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Mattern 1998; Street, Hague, and Savigny 2008; Street 1986, 1997), most of the literature on the multiple connections between music and power comes from other disciplines. Historians and philosophers from ancient times argued that music was attached to spiritual and political power and was assumed to be the most subversive of arts because of its potential to unify and disconnect the masses from reason (Gray 2004, 261–262; Martiniello and Lafleur 2008; Plato 1983, 26, 1985, 96–109). From medieval troubadours to modern protesters across cultures and continents, music has always been an instrument of subversion (Balliger 1999, 60–61; Benjamin 1969; Gray 2004, 151; Mattern 1998, 18, 62; Schoonmaker 2003a, 2003b; Veal 2000). From Catholic mass to military units and patriotic

anthems, music has also always been a form of propaganda to psychologically control the masses (Balliger 1999; Gray 2004, 45; Said 1993; Winstock 1970). Democracies, including the US, have sought to discourage, ban, or limit forms of musical expression deemed threatening or destabilizing (Balliger 1999, 58; Brackett 1999, 133–134; Fischlin 2003, 32; Fuchs 1999; Martin and Segrave 1993, 183).

Many have argued that musicians may have an authenticity edge over other celebrities because of the nature of music itself. The first way in which music is fairly unique is the way that it creates a sense of community that separates and unifies certain groups (Brackett 1999; Fischlin 2003, 11; Mattern 1998; Small 1987). Individuals who feel attached to an artist or a kind of music may even become more open and tolerant to the experiences of others who are different than they are because they reside in the same ideational community. Moreover, attitudes within a community can change if a musician creatively and skillfully challenges his/her audience (Ballantine 1984; Mattern 1998, 22–23; Small 1987).

On the other hand, music also creates lines of demarcation between groups, separating self and other along identity lines that are created or reinforced by music and musicians. For example, Irish are Irish in part because of their distinct music, which forms a communicative cultural part of their identity. The virtual creation of the “teenager” in the 1950s illustrates the establishment of a youth identity which created the social space to stand counter to adult identities and therefore, in opposition to dominant values (Brake 1990; Weinstein 1999, 103). So Irish teenagers may perceive themselves as separate from Irish adults, and the demarcation may relate to musical artists and styles, which provide meaning and role modeling for social behavior. Some Irish rebel songs, such as “The Fields of Athenry,” have different meanings depending upon their context, which make different sub-identities salient. The lyrics to “Fields

of Athenry” relates a story of suffering during the Great Famine as a man is deported to Australia. In the abstract, it is a song about Irish history. At a modern football match, fans shout it as a song of victory for scoring a goal or winning a game, uniting the nation behind the Irish team. To Irish Republicans, the song unifies them in their resentment of the oppression of the Irish by the British during the famine as Loyalist landlords exported potatoes to be sold outside of Ireland for a profit and native Irish starved. Its informal chants of “Sinn Fein!” and “IRA!” by have traditionally provoked offense and hostility toward Irish Loyalists.

The second way in which music uniquely generates authenticity lies in its unique participatory nature. While athletes play sports, audiences cheer. While actors act out a scene at a play or on film, audiences watch. In both cases, the experience is emotional, but the audience generally does not actually participate in the action. At a concert, audiences may not be able to play instruments or use microphones, but they dance, sing, clap, or sway at a concert, in a dance hall, in the privacy of their home, or anywhere attached to their ipods. Because audiences play such a participatory role in the shared performance of music, the distinction between entertainer and listener is less formal. The audience becomes both vested in the singer and music as well as a part owner of the artistic experience which they can repeat at will by playing and singing along with recordings at their leisure and using the music for their own purposes (Packman 2010). The repetitiveness of music means that “Each work of music recaptures and re-creates past experience, refashioning it according to present creative and practical interests and goals” (Mattern 1998, 17).

One reason why music is participatory is because of its mental and even physical effect on the individual. Music produces messages that can often not be expressed in words—moods, emotions, and messages that are sometimes less ambiguous than lyrics. Musicians and

composers understand that when people, even from divergent cultures, hear music played in minor keys they may feel mournful. Blues musicians bend strings to create a crying sound; Andean bamboo flute players bend notes to similar effect (Mattern 1998, 19). In addition, audiences physically feel music with their bodies as sound waves (Grossberg 1987; Mattern 1998, 1998, 17, 151; T. Rose 1994, 138; Walser 1993, 2; Williams 2012). Good musical performers and soundmen know that by projecting a bass frequency at the proper level, they can create a vibration in one's chest that, combined with darkness and feelings of anonymity in dense crowds, is known to manipulate and stimulate people to dance. The combination of the physical musical experience, coupled with atmospheric lighting, and packing hundreds of people into a small space made Rolling Stones and Doors concerts often susceptible to violence, and made their audiences subject to manipulation (Hopkins and Sugerman 1995; Morgen 2013).

These ideas call into question the role of fame as a key source of power for celebrities. As suggested elsewhere in this dissertation, fame was a necessary but not sufficient means of capturing attention. Celebrities are, by definition, famous. More research could focus on the question of whether those who are more famous attract more attention than those who do not, or if other factors are more significant. This dissertation assumes that fame is important, but does not measure it directly. However, if the relationship between music and power has more to do with the building of identity communities and even the physiological effect of music on a subject and less to do with fame, it is also possible that new areas of research may be opened on the local uses of music in politics. If fame alone explains the potential referent power of musicians, why would local or regional movements utilize relatively unknown musicians in their efforts? Fame did not empower or assist the Swansea Assembly Supporters when they recorded and sold a CD and created a theme song to promote Swansea as the seat of national Welsh power, albeit

unsuccessfully (Swansea Assembly Supporters 1997). It did not empower Richard G. Jeffrey to record a CD and sell his protest music, appearing with Eurosceptic activists on the streets of Oxford, in order to challenge the British government on moves toward greater integration with the European Union (Jeffrey 2001). It did not empower Gianluca Zanna in his efforts to sell his music, promote concerts, and lobby other musicians to mobilize minutemen in their xenophobic mission in the American southwest (Glass 2006; Zanna 2011). It did not empower teenage cellist Jason Crowe to raise awareness about ethnic cleansing in Bosnia (Jewell 2007). It did not empower Green Elvis, who spreads environmentally sensitive messages by adapting an Elvis Presley impersonation and converting popular Elvis songs into humorous ecology anthems (Smith 2010). These musicians had no significant fame to speak of prior to, during, or after their political involvement. Yet their unusual skills give them an undeniable identity—that of artist or entertainer.<sup>34</sup>

One of the general findings of this dissertation is that power is more broadly distributed than many political scientists believe and that this power may be concentrated in certain kinds of public figures that are not often considered to be powerful or political. One of the implications of this finding is that power may also come from unusual sources. Is it possible that musicians have some sort of uniquely powerful effect on target audiences that makes them somehow different from other forms of celebrity? How does music create identity communities that unify and divide people? What qualities of music, physical or social psychological, allow powerful individuals to mobilize audiences? With few exceptions, these arguments are anecdotal and hypothetical. Already, politicians seem at least loosely aware of this power of music as certain playlists are assembled to provoke feelings in the crowd prior to candidates' speeches, for

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<sup>34</sup> This was the purpose of Mattern's (1998) work in which he focused on how normative communities were built around music and how it affected their political involvement.

example. More empirical research could open new types of research on political persuasion and manipulation.

## **Coda**

We came here not only to help John and to spotlight what's going on, but also to show and to say to all of you that apathy isn't it, and that we can do something. Okay, so flower power didn't work. So what? We start again.

-John Lennon, John Sinclair Freedom Rally, December 10, 1971

Prospects for celebrity activism improved from the time that John Lennon demonstrated for peace and agitated for the release of John Sinclair to the time that Bono lobbied some of the world's most powerful leaders to forgive the debts of some of the world's poorest countries. Ironically, the political and media environment allowed Bono and dozens of other celebrities to advantageously utilize what many believe is the worst aspect of modern news—its tendency to sensationalize and oversimplify the political world.

Changes in news and entertainment media have illustrated two sources of power potentially present in celebrities even before Lennon's time: their ability to shine a spotlight on issues of public concern and to persuade audiences. By providing evidence to support these abilities, this dissertation has illustrated how celebrities are also able to engage in agenda setting, a practice assumed to be easier for politicians given their power and media access than for typical activists with fewer resources. Surprisingly, celebrities, acting as political entrepreneurs, are potentially as capable as politicians at using the media for agenda setting.

Since the study of celebrity politics is still relatively new to political science, the findings of this dissertation open potential avenues for additional research. Further exploration of this topic might allow scholars to learn more about what kinds of domestic and international opportunity structures may facilitate or hamper celebrity activism. More can be learned about the relative success of celebrities across time and what kinds of variables affect success and failure during those times, including whether certain types of interventions are more effective than others. This dissertation did not focus directly on insider strategies, so more research can illuminate the ways in which celebrity political entrepreneurs operate when they are lobbying public officials or engaging in formal policy makers. Through additional framing experiments, future studies can also reveal more about celebrities' ability to persuade. A particularly fertile area of development is the potential for directly comparing differences in respondents' attitudes if they are exposed to a celebrity's endorsement of an issue versus a politician's endorsement of the same issue. One of the biggest questions underlying this dissertation is the tension between fame and authenticity. How is it that famous celebrities can obtain an intimate and persuasive relationship with distant observers? More research into the relative authenticity of different types of celebrity and into their arts, such as music, may provide meaningful answers.

Future research will benefit from recognizing that celebrities have more power than previously assumed. Even if celebrities cannot successfully spotlight or persuade in every circumstance, the possibility that they can direct media attention and change minds in many circumstances means that they have the potential to affect the public agenda. That information alone is valuable, at least to affirm that celebrity activism is not in vain, and that advocacy networks and affiliated organizations may benefit from affiliations with celebrities. While there is no doubt that many scholars will continue to be skeptical about celebrities' involvement in



public life, this dissertation demonstrates that celebrities are capable of doing what was once thought extremely unlikely in Lennon's time, the ability of a concerned celebrity to make a difference in the minds of policy makers and the public. If their efforts do not always work, at least they communicate that "apathy isn't it...we can do something...we start again."

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## Appendix A - Summaries of Celebrities' Political Activities in the Time Series Analysis

*Angelina Jolie:* Actor Angelina Jolie was United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for ten years and now serves as Special Envoy of High Commissioner Guterres. She has been involved in building “millennium villages” in developing countries in accordance with UN development goals through the Maddox Jolie-Pitt Foundation (MJP) (Bella 2009, 45). In addition, she advocated for the UN across a number of issues including status of refugees and prevention of sexual violence in military zones (Hom 2012; Nichols 2013). In her role with the UN, she has lobbied the US Congress on at least 20 occasions (Swibel 2006). She has also raised awareness about genetic screening for cancer since the revelation of her double mastectomy. *Time* referred to her ability to command attention on this issue as the “Angelina Effect” (Kluger and Park 2013). She is perhaps best known for supporting improved educational opportunities for African children and efforts to fight AIDS in Africa. She supports the One Campaign, the non-profit organization co-founded by Bono focused on forgiving debt, ending poverty, and fighting AIDS in developing countries.

*George Clooney:* Actor George Clooney has served as a United Nations Messenger for Peace since 2008 and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (R. Roberts and Argetsinger 2010). He co-founded the Not on Our Watch Project, an international organization intended to prevent mass atrocities (Karimi 2010). His political involvement has included fundraising for a variety of disasters and filming documentaries to raise awareness about political issues. He supports gay rights and supported Barack Obama’s political campaigns in 2008 and 2012 (Avlon 2012). His highest profile work has been in turning the world’s attention toward the genocide in Sudan.

*Bono:* Rock musician Bono has been politically involved since his earliest days as lead singer of the band, U2. Their 1983 song, “Sunday Bloody Sunday,” advocated peace in Northern Ireland and in 1998, they played a role in bringing together leaders from opposing sides as they worked on the Good Friday Agreement (Kootnikoff 2010, 101; Rolston 2001; White Lucy 1983). They performed on the Band Aid promotional single to benefit famine victims in Ethiopia and the subsequent benefit concert, Live Aid (Bordowitz 2003, 156). They played on Amnesty International’s Conspiracy of Hope tour and were involved in protesting the Sellafield Nuclear Plant with Greenpeace (Shirley 1992). Bono has also advocated on behalf of many global issues independently of his work with U2, most notably on debt and AIDS in the developing world.

*Brad Pitt:* Actor Brad Pitt’s partnership with Angelina Jolie as co-founder of the Maddox Jolie-Pitt Foundation (MJP), friendship with George Clooney and co-founder of Not on Our Watch, and support of the ONE campaign with Bono make him a regular activist for education in Africa, the conflict in Sudan, and AIDS. He has also been involved in fundraising for many humanitarian causes.

*Don Cheadle:* Since 2010, Actor Don Cheadle has served as the United Nations’ U.N. Environment Program Goodwill Ambassador. He is best known for raising awareness about the genocide in Rwanda through his role in the film *Hotel Rwanda*. He also is a co-founder of Not On Our Watch.

*Matt Damon:* Actor Matt Damon founded the H2O Africa Foundation to raise awareness about clean water initiatives in Africa. He also supports the One Campaign and is a co-founder of Not On Our Watch. All of these activities put him at the center of African development activism.

*Muhammad Ali:* Former professional boxer Muhammad Ali was a controversial figure in the 1960s when he attempted to resist the draft on religious grounds and was ultimately jailed. Ali was part of the promotional team supporting Jubilee 2000 to persuade the world's major powers and institutions to forgive debt of the developing world. During a time when this issue received very little media attention, Ali teamed with Bono to raise awareness.

*Bob Geldof:* Rock musician Bob Geldof has been a longtime advocate of ending poverty in Africa, beginning with his organization of the Band Aid and Live Aid fundraisers for the famine in Ethiopia, and continuing with the Live8 concerts in 2005 to pressure G8 leaders in Gleneagles, Scotland to forgive the debt of developing countries. His overlap with Bono on issues regarding poverty, debt, and AIDS in Africa make them occasional partners.

*Quincy Jones:* Record producer and composer Quincy Jones' philanthropic work has mostly consisted of endeavors to encourage the arts in poor communities. Bono has made appearances at these events. Jones, along with Geldof and Bono, appealed to Pope John Paul II to encourage debt forgiveness for the developing world in 1999 on behalf of Jubilee 2000.

*Wyclef Jean:* Rapper/R&B musician Wyclef Jean's primary political interests have been to provide aid to his native Haiti through the organization he founded, Yéle Haiti. It provided scholarships, school funding, meals, earthquake, and hurricane relief to poor Haitians. The New York Attorney General's office alleged mismanagement and improper payments to Jean and his family, which led to the closure of the charity and subsequent lawsuits in Haiti for unpaid debts. Jean announced his candidacy for the presidency of Haiti in 2010 but was rejected on residency grounds. Jean and Bono wrote a song, "New Day," and performed together at NetAid in 1999, an effort to raise funds and awareness for refugees in Kosovo and Africa.

*Prince Harry:* Not truly a political figure or a professional celebrity, Prince Harry's position with the British royal family has made him the subject of frequent media attention. In 2006, he announced his support to fight AIDS in Africa through co-founding Sentebale with Prince Seeiso of the Lesotho Royal Family.

*Alicia Keys:* R&B singer-songwriter Alicia Keys is a global ambassador for Keep a Child Alive, an organization that provides medicine to poor African families suffering from HIV/AIDS. She initiated EMPOWERED, a campaign sponsored by Greater Than AIDS to educate American women about HIV/AIDS. Keys was featured in an interview on *Nightline* on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the discovery of AIDS. She also performed, alongside Sudanese rapper Emmanuel Jal, in the "We Want Peace" music video, produced with George Clooney to raise awareness about the genocide in Darfur. The video also featured appearances by the Elders, a group of international world statesmen including Jimmy Carter and Kofi Anan (Kaufman 2010).

*Peter Gabriel:* A long-time associate of Amnesty International, performing in all of their benefit concerts, rock musician Peter Gabriel also co-founded Witness, an international organization that equips and trains local organizations to uncover human rights abuses using video equipment. He authorized the use of his song, “Don’t Give Up,” to the One Campaign for Bono and Alicia Keys to perform in a music video, raising awareness of the impact of AIDS in Africa. He also appeared in the “We Want Peace” video, featuring Alicia Keys and produced by George Clooney (Kaufman 2010).

*Elton John:* Rock musician Elton John founded the Elton John AIDS Foundation in 1992, which has sponsored many fundraisers to create an “AIDS-free future.” John has personally lobbied the US Congress on funding for AIDS issues on several occasions (“Elton John AIDS Foundation” n.d.; D. Matthews 2013).

*Dikembe Mutombo:* Basketball player and Congo native Dikembe Mutombo of the Houston Rockets led a group of current and former NBA players for basketball instruction in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2005 as part of Basketball Without Borders. Supporting him were Maciej Lampe of the New Orleans Hornets, Jerome Williams of the New York Knicks, Mamadou N’diaye of the Los Angeles Clippers, Marcus Camby of the Denver Nuggets, Darvin Ham of the Detroit Pistons, and Jim Jackson of the Phoenix Suns. Approximately 350 NBA basketball players are involved in Basketball without Borders (BWB), a community outreach program to “promote the sport and encourage positive social change in the areas of education, health, and wellness” (“Basketball Without Borders Mission” n.d.).

*Usher:* R&B singer Usher has been involved primarily in education campaigns, but has also been involved in AIDS fundraisers.

*John Mayer:* Rock musician John Mayer is most often involved in environmental causes, but has also raised money for AIDS organizations.

*Cynthia Nixon:* Actor Cynthia Nixon, a breast cancer survivor, is an advocate for Susan G. Komen for the Cure. She also has taken part in AIDS fundraisers.

*Jessica Alba:* Actor Jessica Alba has been involved in some fundraising efforts for AIDS charities.

## Appendix B - Details on Content Analysis Searches in Lexis-Nexis

### *Selection of Search Terms*

When engaging in the time series content analysis, the intent was to choose search terms that would capture as many stories as possible on the issues studied while screening out other stories that were not relevant to the issue. The following represent search strings employed to record story counts in the spreadsheet.

### Debt and Poverty in Africa

- January-March 1999; June 1999 - debt and (poorest or poverty) and not ("pro-bono" or "pro bono") and not (earnings or quarter))
- August-October 1999 - debt and (poorest or poverty or poor) and not ("pro-bono" or "pro bono") and not (earnings or quarter) or farm)

### Africa and Debt

- June-July 2007 - (Africa and debt) and not "pro-bono")

### Poverty in Africa

- April-June 2002; January-March 2006 - ((africa and (poverty and not (earnings or quarter))

### Debt and AIDS in Africa

- April-July 2006 - africa and (debt or hiv) and not (earnings or Darfur or Zuma or chimp or chimpanzee or "25 years" or "bin laden" or plane or "pro-bono" or "pro bono")
- April-May 2010 - africa and (debt or aids) and not (earnings or textbook or "world cup" or plane or "pro bono" or "pro-bono")

### AIDS in Africa

- August-October 2003- ((AIDS and africa) and not "pro-bono")
- September-November 2005 - (hiv and africa) and not "pro-bono" or "pro bono" or chastity or earnings

### Education in Africa

- April-May 2006 - (africa and education)) and not (earnings)

### Sudan

- September 2010-February 2011; February-April 2012 - Sudan and not earnings or quarter

In some cases, additional modifiers such as “not” were used in order to cut stories that appeared in the results but had no relation to the issue. Given the volume of stories, the methodology assumes that some stories would appear in the results that were unrelated, but that the modifiers would limit these to a minimum. Manual checks of stories verified this assumption. In other cases, modifiers were unable to filter unrelated stories without eliminating

relevant ones. In those cases, such as the Education in Africa and the Debt and Poverty in Africa cases, coders looked at every story in a sequence of events and manually discounted those that did not relate to the issue. For example, when searching for “debt” and “poverty” in “Africa” in 1999, there were still many stories about US domestic politics talking about poor African Americans in debt or the national debt in the US and how it related to poverty. On one day, a story about a fire in Sudan, Texas had to be manually filtered out. Given the limitations of the search tools, manual checks were, at times, necessary in order to adjust the numbers.

The different issues and search terms selected for analysis in chapter 3 represent subtle differences in the ways the issues were reported at the time. When discussing development issues, the word “development” is rarely used. Occasionally, the media focuses more on AIDS. At other times, the focus is on debt or poverty. The search terms reflected subtle changes in the language. The words “earnings” and “quarter” were eliminated from many searches because doing so eliminated stories about businesses’ quarterly earnings in Africa. “Pro Bono” and “Pro-Bono” were often used in stories about developing countries as legal alternatives for the poor. Searching for “Bono” without these limiters led to many false positives. Using “U2” as an additional limiter took out too many instances of Bono’s appearances. After a certain point in time, media sources ceased referring to Bono with the appositive, “lead singer of the band U2.” In some cases, other terms were used to exclude unrelated stories. When other big stories were captured by the general search terms that did not relate to the issue studied, words were chosen to exclude stories on those topics such as “world cup,” “Zuma,” or “chimpanzee.”

#### *Use of Broadcast Transcripts*

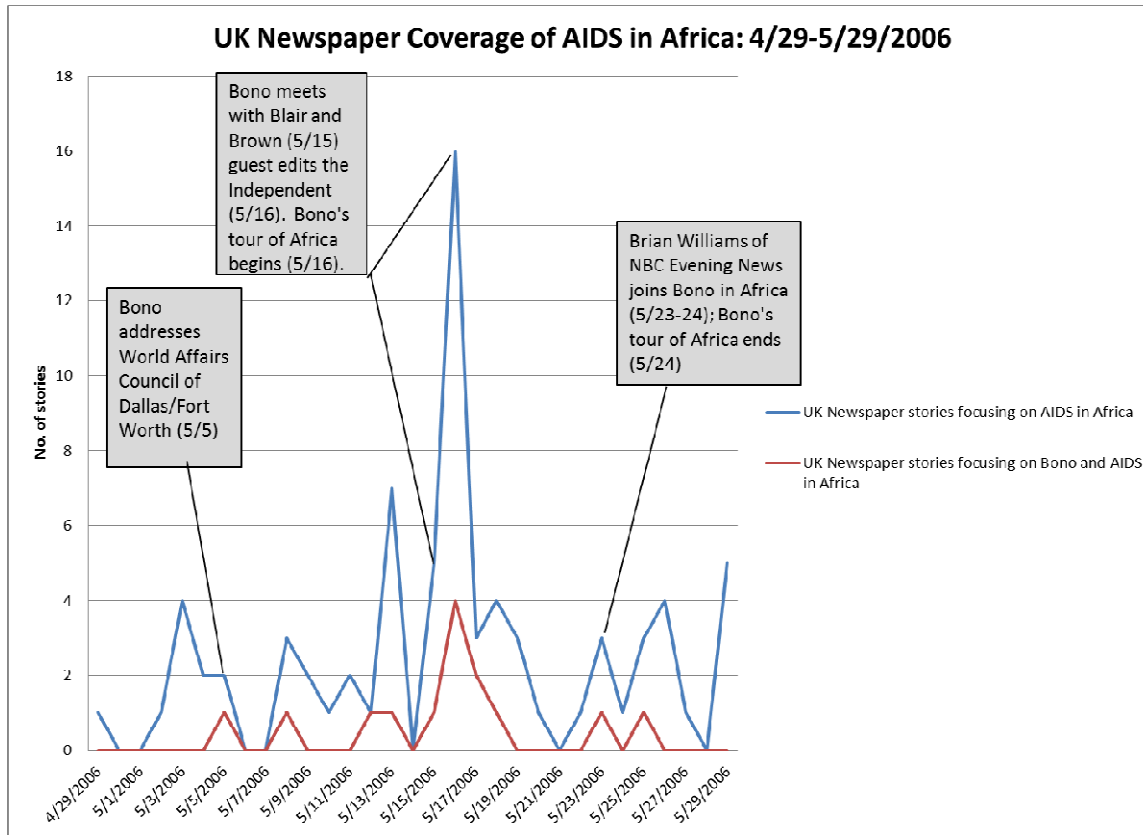
The Lexis-Nexis Broadcast Transcripts search engine includes a host of broadcast sources, mostly comprised of US sources, but containing some foreign sources as well. On balance, US media sources were most likely to appear in Broadcast Transcript searches. Thus, the kinds of stories that appear in search results not only include major national news coverage, but some international coverage, some coverage of US government activity, and a sizable amount of local and entertainment news coverage.

## **Appendix C - Notes on Coding and Spreadsheet Design in the Time Series Analysis**

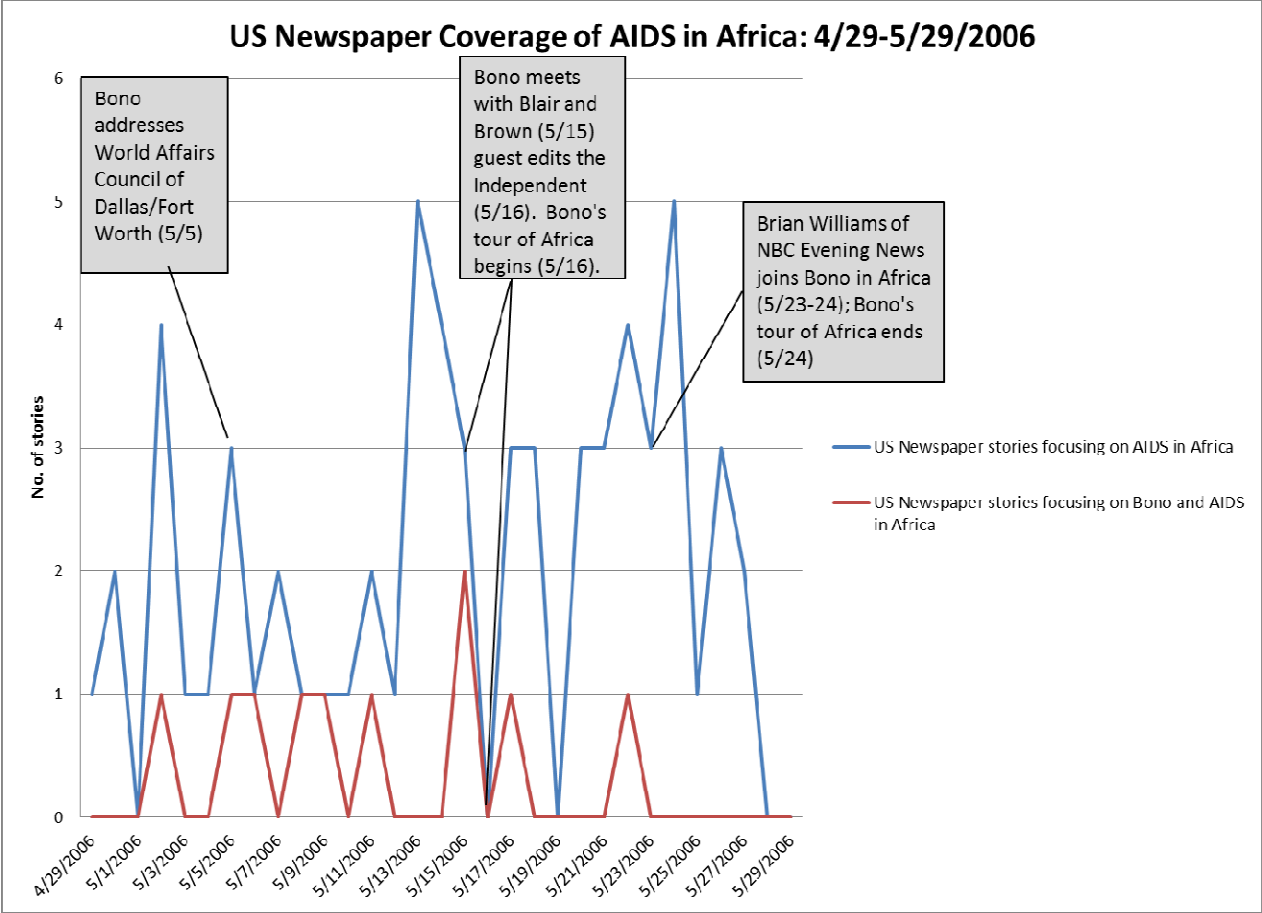
When recording the number of stories reported on a given day, one column represented the number of stories on that issue appearing in US newspapers. Another represented the number of stories appearing in broadcast transcripts. Other columns were added if Canadian or UK newspapers were searched. The second search was reflected in a series of columns representing the presence of a celebrity in a story pertaining to that issue. Thus, additional columns reflected how many stories a celebrity appeared in as a subset of each of the previously mentioned columns (i.e.: Bono's appearance in US newspapers in reference to AIDS in Africa, Bono's appearance in broadcast transcripts in reference to AIDS in Africa, etc.) This data was then converted to a series of line graphs. Each graph illustrated the rise and fall in numbers of stories across time on each of the searches. When a spike appeared in the number of stories, coders read the stories for that day to determine what was driving the spike. Was it mostly one major story or a series of unrelated stories that were still within the issue area? If there were one or two major drivers, they were labeled on the line graphs. Labels were also inserted on the graphs indicating when a celebrity intervened in the timeline.



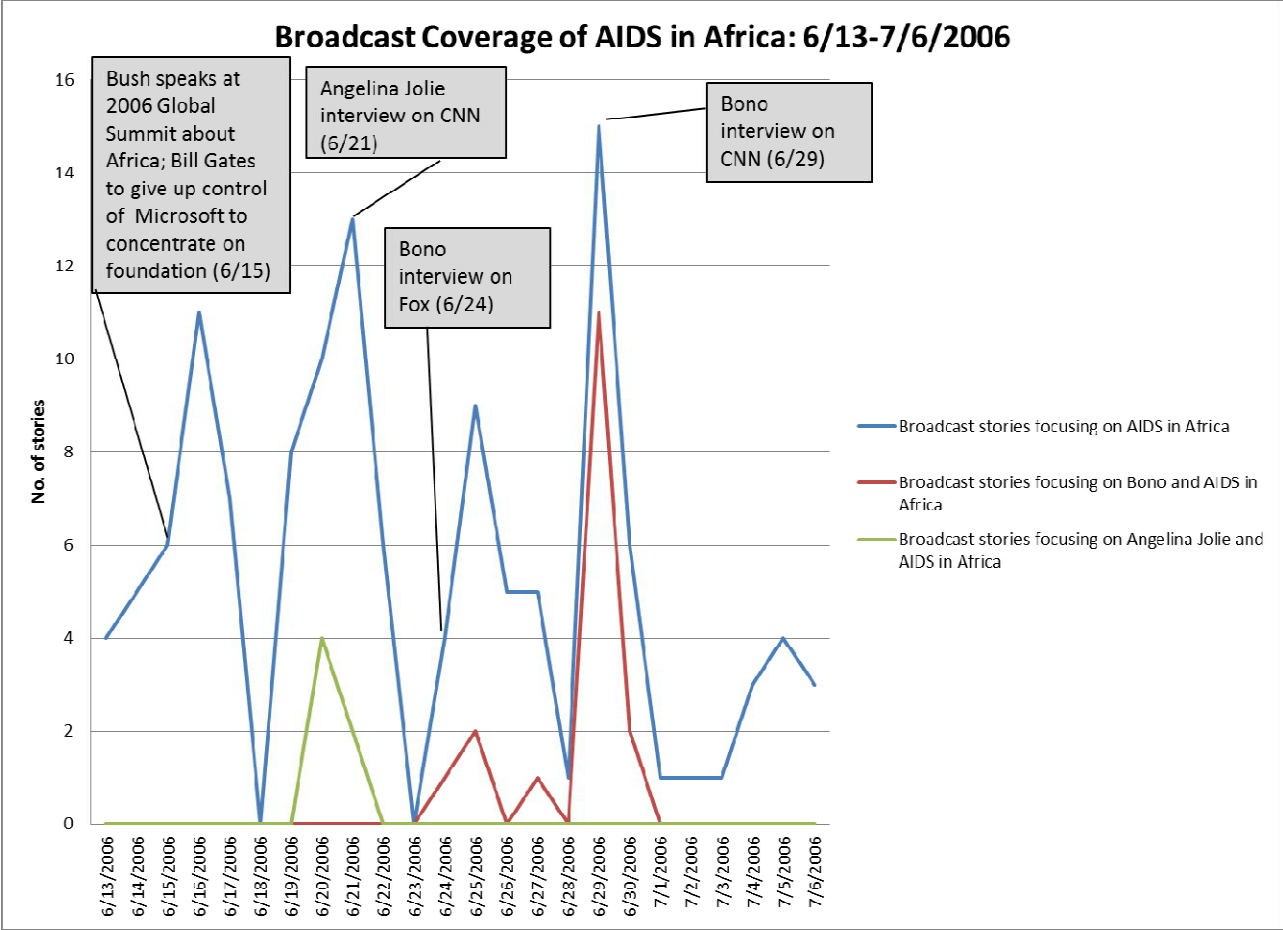
## Appendix D - Additional Line Graphs from the AIDS Time Series Analysis



**Table D.1 - UK Newspaper Coverage of AIDS in Africa and Bono Interventions**



**Table D.2 - US Newspaper Coverage of AIDS in Africa and Bono Interventions**



**Table D.3 - Broadcast Coverage of AIDS in Africa and Jolie/Bono Intervention**

## **Appendix E - Sample of survey format used in experimental study**

The following pages give two examples of the surveys used to derive data in the experimental study.

The first is an example of the credibility and authenticity surveys. The survey contains the basic format but does not list every celebrity or politician about whom data was gathered. Multiple surveys with different celebrities, sometimes mixed up from one survey to the next, were distributed over various groups in order to prevent survey fatigue and to prevent a possible bias that could result from seeing the same public figures in the same order.

The second is an example of the experimental survey itself. The survey's format was uniform across groups. What changed in each survey was the celebrity and frame in the middle and the topic of the control or super control frame at the end.

## **Credibility and Authenticity of Public Figures**

Mark Harvey  
Principal Investigator

The purpose of this study is to gather data about how people get information and develop opinions on issues of importance. While your participation will not benefit you directly, the information I gather will be useful in evaluating public and private approaches to political issues and will give you the opportunity to voice your opinions and concerns. The survey should take 10 minutes or less of your time. If you choose not to take part in this study, please return the blank survey. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary; you may withdraw at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits or academic standing to which you are otherwise entitled.

The data I am gathering may be used in academic conference papers and articles submitted to scholarly journals and other publications on public policy. If you have questions or would be interested in the results when they become available, feel free to contact Mark Harvey at [harveyinstructor@gmail.com](mailto:harveyinstructor@gmail.com).

## Demographic Information

**Gender:**

- Female
- Male

**Race/Ethnicity:**

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Occupation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Education Level:**

- Grade School/Some High School
- High School Diploma
- Some College/No Degree
- College Degree
- Graduate Degree

**Political Party Affiliation:**

- Democrat
- Republican
- Independent
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

The following questions feature a series of names and photographs of public figures. We are interested in knowing how these figures are perceived in the media. Therefore, we are not looking for “correct” answers. We are more interested in what you may have heard through the media and how you feel about these public figures and these issues. Please circle the numbers that best reflect how you feel.

## John Boehner



Do you know who John Boehner is?

Yes

No

If you recognize this person, do you agree or disagree that this public figure is a credible spokesperson on the following political issues?

Issue Credibility	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
AIDS	1	2	3	4	5
Capital Punishment	1	2	3	4	5
Debt Relief to the Developing World	1	2	3	4	5
Environmental Protection	1	2	3	4	5
Federal Disaster Relief	1	2	3	4	5
Genetic Screening for Cancer	1	2	3	4	5
Genocide in Darfur	1	2	3	4	5
Gun Control	1	2	3	4	5
Income Inequality	1	2	3	4	5
Legalization of Marijuana	1	2	3	4	5
Same-Sex Marriage	1	2	3	4	5
Syrian Crisis	1	2	3	4	5
Cuban Embargo	1	2	3	4	5

# Bruce Springsteen



Do you know who Bruce Springsteen is?

Yes

No

If you recognize this person, do you agree or disagree that this public figure is a credible spokesperson on the following political issues?

<b>Public figure Credibility and Authenticity</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
This public figure's talents, abilities, and professional projects uniquely make him an authentic spokesperson.	1	2	3	4	5
This public figure is a credible spokesperson on gun control.	1	2	3	4	5
This public figure supports gun control.	1	2	3	4	5
This public figure is a credible spokesperson on income inequality.	1	2	3	4	5
This public figure supports policies to end income inequality.	1	2	3	4	5



# Tim Tebow



Do you know who Tim Tebow is?

- Yes
- No

If you recognize this person, do you agree or disagree that this public figure is a credible spokesperson on the following political issues?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Public figure Credibility and Authenticity</b>					
This public figure's talents, abilities, and professional projects uniquely make him an authentic spokesperson.	1	2	3	4	5
This public figure is a credible spokesperson on same-sex marriage.	1	2	3	4	5
This public figure supports same-sex marriage.	1	2	3	4	5

# Lady Gaga



Do you know who Lady Gaga is?

Yes

No

If you recognize this person, do you agree or disagree that this public figure is a credible spokesperson on the following political issues?

<b>Public figure Credibility and Authenticity</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
This public figure's talents, abilities, and professional projects uniquely make her an authentic spokesperson.	1	2	3	4	5
This public figure is a credible spokesperson on same-sex marriage.	1	2	3	4	5
This public figure supports same-sex marriage.	1	2	3	4	5

## **Public Opinion on Current Issues**

Mark Harvey  
Principal Investigator

The purpose of this study is to gather data about how people get information and develop opinions on issues of importance. While your participation will not benefit you directly, the information I gather will be useful in evaluating public and private approaches to political issues and will give you the opportunity to voice your opinions and concerns. The survey should take 10 minutes or less of your time. If you choose not to take part in this study, please return the blank survey.

The data I am gathering will contribute to the completion of my Ph.D. dissertation and may be used in academic conference papers and articles submitted to scholarly journals and other publications on public policy. If you have questions or would be interested in the results when they become available, feel free to contact Mark Harvey at [harveyinstructor@gmail.com](mailto:harveyinstructor@gmail.com).

**Demographic Information**

**Gender:**  Female  
 Male

**Race/Ethnicity:**  American Indian or Alaskan Native  
 Asian  
 Black or African American  
 Hispanic  
 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
 White

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

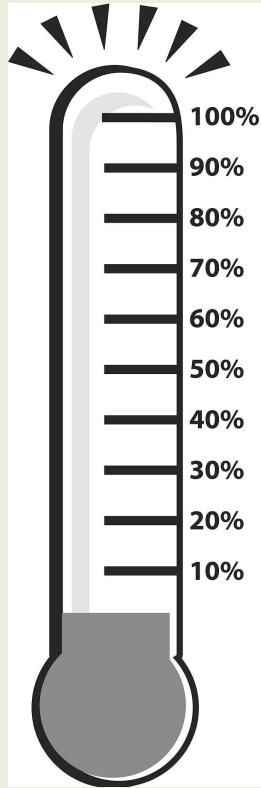
**Occupation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Education Level:**  Grade School/Some High School  
 High School Diploma  
 Some College/No Degree  
 College Degree  
 Graduate Degree

**Political Party Affiliation:**  Democrat  
 Republican  
 Independent  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

We have a set of questions concerning the American political system. We want to see how much information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers and the like.

1. Which political party is currently in the majority in the U.S. House of Representatives?
  - A. Conservatives
  - B. Democrats
  - C. Independents
  - D. Liberals
  - E. Libertarians
  - F. Republicans
  - G. Tea Party
  - H. Don't know
  
2. Who is the current Vice President of the United States?
  - A. Joe Biden
  - B. John Boehner
  - C. Dick Cheney
  - D. Hillary Clinton
  - E. Mitch McConnell
  - F. Nancy Pelosi
  - G. Harry Reid
  - H. Don't know
  
3. Who is the current Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court?
  - A. John Jay
  - B. John Marshall
  - C. Thurgood Marshall
  - D. William Rehnquist
  - E. John Roberts
  - F. Antonin Scalia
  - G. Clarence Thomas
  - H. Don't know
  
4. Who is the current Secretary of State of the United States?
  - A. Sam Brownback
  - B. Hillary Clinton
  - C. Chuck Hagel
  - D. Eric Holder
  - E. John Kerry
  - F. Colin Powell
  - G. Condoleezza Rice
  - H. Don't Know



We would like to get your feelings toward some people who are in the news these days using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the person and that you don't care too much for that person. You would rate the person at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the person. Please circle the temperature on the left that best reflects how you feel. If you do not recognize the person, you don't need to answer.

**George Clooney**



Now we would like to get your reaction to the ongoing conflict in Syria. Since March 15, 2011, the country of Syria has been engaged in a civil war between forces loyal to the Syrian Ba'ath Party government led by President Bashar al-Assad and groups seeking to oust these government forces. By April, the government was using armed force against peaceful protesters, leading to condemnation by the Arab League, United States, European Union, and other countries. Since then an organized "Syrian Opposition" has emerged, engaging government forces in combat across the country. By February 2013, the estimated death toll was 70,000. The Obama administration has indicated that if government forces use chemical weapons on their own people, the US will be compelled to intervene. Recently, the administration announced that there was some evidence that chemical weapons have been used, but that the evidence is not compelling enough yet to intervene in Syria and that they want support from allies before planning any military action. Many Republican lawmakers have attacked the president's position, arguing that they should already have bombed Syrian air bases, armed the rebels and readied an international force to secure chemical weapons stocks.

Recently, George Clooney said, "We already know the Assad regime has chemical weapons and has committed atrocities and human rights abuses against its own people. In addition, an organized opposition is ready to take over the reins of government if Assad is pressured out of power. Therefore, I believe the US should increase the pressure on the regime by militarily intervening in Syria before more people die."

<b>Syria</b>	<b>Very unlikely</b>	<b>Unlikely</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Very Likely</b>
What is the likelihood that you would support US military intervention in Syria?	1	2	3	4	5
What is the likelihood that you would support a US military intervention without consultation or support from allies?	1	2	3	4	5
What is the likelihood that you would support a US military intervention to stop or prevent human rights abuses?	1	2	3	4	5
What is the likelihood that you would vote for a public official who supports military intervention in Syria?	1	2	3	4	5

Next, we have a set of questions concerning the media. We want to see what kinds of media are consumed by the public.

From what sources do you receive your information about news and popular culture?  
(Check all that apply.)

- Website
- Magazine
- Newspaper
- Books
- Television
- Radio
- Government Agencies
- Family
- Friends/Colleagues
- Social Media
- Phone Apps
- Class
- Email
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

How much of the time do you think you can trust the media to report the news fairly?

- Just about always
- Most of the time
- Only some of the time
- Almost never

<b>News Consumption</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Very little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Quite a bit</b>	<b>A great deal</b>
How much attention do you pay to political news?	1	2	3	4	5
How much attention do you pay to celebrity news?	1	2	3	4	5



Now we would like to get your feelings about same-sex marriage. Several jurisdictions in the United States recognize same-sex marriage. Nine states prohibit it by law and thirty prohibit it by constitutional mandate. The Defense of Marriage Act prevents the federal government from recognizing same-sex marriages, although the constitutionality of the act is under court review. Gay rights advocates argue that without the right to marry, they are stigmatized and treated differently than heterosexual couples and are denied legal access to certain benefits that are unique to married couples. For example, legally married couples get special tax breaks, preferential insurance rates, and are allowed to be involved in end of life issues with their spouses. Same-sex couples receive none of these benefits. They also argue that this would encourage monogamy and strong family values between gay couples and if they are allowed to adopt, more children may find loving homes. On the other hand, opponents of same-sex marriage argue that marriage is an ancient religious institution that has always been defined as being between a man and a woman. To legitimize same-sex marriage would weaken respect for this institution, confuse gender roles, and weaken the traditional family values some say are essential to society. They argue that the homosexual lifestyle is sinful and leads to immorality, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, psychological disorders, and other problems. The legalization of same-sex marriage could also lead to other unacceptable forms of marriage such as polygamy.

A noted celebrity recently weighed in on the debate: “Heterosexual marriage is the foundation of child rearing and family values in society. We can talk about ways to protect the rights of homosexuals as individuals. But I don’t think we should just arbitrarily allow gay marriage. We cannot allow the federal government to water down the sacred institution of marriage that God has defined as between a man and a woman. I encourage others to financially support organizations and candidates who will protect the sanctity of marriage.”

<b>Same-Sex Marriage</b>	<b>Very unlikely</b>	<b>Unlikely</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Very Likely</b>
What is the likelihood that you would support legalization of same-sex marriage?	1	2	3	4	5
What is the likelihood that you would give money to organizations or vote for candidates that support same-sex marriage?	1	2	3	4	5
What is the likelihood that you would give money to organizations or vote for candidates that oppose same-sex marriage?	1	2	3	4	5