

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

DO THE MASS MEDIA DIVIDE US?

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. DIONNE: I want to welcome everybody here today.

I want to thank Pietro Nivola, the Head of the Governance Studies Department and the Vice President of Brookings, for making this all possible because he had this idea that it would be interesting to discuss the whole idea of political polarization and out of that came a series of meetings and now this great book, *Red and Blue Nation*.

I just want to tell you that there will be a book launch for *Red and Blue Nation* here in this very room on December the 8th. Congressman Tom Davis is going to give a talk. Diana will be joining us then along with Bill Galston, Tom Mann, Morris Fiorina, and I will be there too. By the way, my name is E.J. Dionne, and I am a Senior Fellow here at Brookings. That event will be moderated by Pietro and by David Brady who are the co-editors of the volume. You can see it is not quite back from the printer, but you can see the wonderful cover and you can take a look at the book which is outside the meeting room.

You are in for a real treat today, and I am not kidding and I am not exaggerating because when I heard an earlier version of the lecture and the slides that Diana is going to share with us today, I was blown away. I know there were large holes in my knowledge and many things I don't know, but she just reminded me how much I didn't know and how much I had to learn.

This is going to be a spectacular talk. We are very lucky also to have two distinguished scholars and journalists, Jonathan Rauch and Gregg Easterbrook

who will offer their own comments on the very question that is at the top of that screen: Do the Mass Media Divide Us? Note the “do” there.

Diana is the Samuel A. Stouffer Chair of Political Science and Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. She also serves as Director of the Institute for the Study of Citizens and Politics at the Annenberg Public Policy Center. She teaches and does research on public opinion, on political psychology, and mass political behavior with a particular emphasis on political communication. She has published articles in a variety of academic journals. She is the author of *Impersonal Influence: How Perceptions of Mass Collectives Affect Political Attitudes*, which was awarded the Robert Lane Prize for the best book in political psychology by the American Political Science Association. She is the past editor of *Political Behavior*.

She currently serves as co-P.I. of Timesharing Experiments for the Social Sciences, an interdisciplinary infrastructure project -- you will have to explain all this to me -- that promotes methodological innovation across the social sciences. She is also part of the graduate group in the Population Studies Center in the Department of Psychology at Penn.

Before coming to Penn, Professor Mutz taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Ohio State University. We will have to ask who she is rooting for in football. She received a Ph.D. and an M.A. from Stanford University and a B.S. from Northwestern.

I will introduce Jonathan and Gregg afterward.

It is a really great pleasure to introduce Diana Mutz. You are going to have a lot of fun. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. MUTZ: Thanks very much for that generous introduction.

What I want to do this afternoon is basically give you an overview of the arguments that are made in the forthcoming chapter on the Role of Media in Political Polarization. Basically, these are theories that are out there about how media may be implicated in greater polarization among the American electorate.

Given the topic we are talking about, it would be fairly easy for this discussion to deteriorate into a media-bashing exercise, and I want to warn against this although it is extremely popular and difficult to resist, I know. As you can see from this poster, this is a movie that came out in the early 1930s and already television was being blamed for all kinds of murder and mayhem and it didn't even exist yet. This is a common pattern that we see of blaming media, not just for the political ills but virtually everything that plagues American society. I think it is far too easy to make that kind of argument, and it would be unfortunate if this were interpreted in that same light. People are quick to blame the media, and yet media, it is important to remember, are only one element of a many faceted complex web of institutions.

The way I like to describe what I am doing in this chapter is really outlining what it is about contemporary mass media that may push citizens in the direction of greater polarization. Now, what that means is that regardless of whether or not

the public as a whole has become more polarized, these are forces that push in those general directions. They may in the aggregate be countered by other forces, and as a result, we don't see a huge sweeping impact on the mass public. For those of you who are familiar with some of the work in the book that will be coming, there is a tremendous amount of disagreement about just how much polarization is really taking place among the American public.

Four different theories predict that media may be pushing citizens toward stronger, more extreme political views, and I am going to go through each of these very, very briefly today. I say that they are theories, but I don't want that to be mistaken for the idea that these are just pie in the sky ideas that are out there. These are actually theories that have been tested and that have produced some degree of empirical support. On the other hand, what these studies don't do is suggest that all shifts in mass opinion in the direction of polarization are really about mass media.

First of all, there are really two different theories that suggest that the media are helping to polarize the mass public basically because they give us such an incredible array of choices in mass media and in television in particular these days.

First of all, we have a huge number of choices among sources of political news these days compared to what we had about 40 years ago or so, an absolutely enormous array of not just your standard kinds of evening news programs but also talk shows, commentary. As the news hole has increased through cable, through

the expansion of the amount of hours of programming that are on television, it has become a very crowded environment. There is just a huge number of sources, and this is something that very few people dispute.

What does that mean? Well, it means we have to choose. We can't obviously watch all of these programs. There are only so many hours in a day. The real fear is that people may be choosing essentially based on partisanship. As we have sources like Fox that tend to attract of a particular partisanship, people may essentially be listening to an echo of their own voices, so that if those with more liberal political predispositions mainly view, read, and listen to more liberal political voices and those with more conservative ones, vice versa. Then what we have essentially is a process where we are all increasingly convinced that we are right and that the other side has very little worthwhile to listen to.

Obviously, in the case of CNN and Fox News, this is one example where we know the audiences tend to be quite different in terms of their politics. Whether or not they are simply drawn to those stations because of their politics or actually become more intensely liberal or conservative as a result of their viewing is the real question at hand. A number of studies have been done that suggest that not only do people choose on the basis of something that is more similar to their own political views but being exposed to those views does in turn also reinforce their initial beliefs, their initial political predispositions. This obviously suggests that we end up with more polarized audiences as a result.

There is a second kind of choice that is also important that I think is far less

often paid attention to, and that is whether we choose to watch political news at all. The choice that we face or that most Americans may face -- I won't say necessarily the people in this room because you are all probably very political interested -- but it is a choice between watching news or you can watch Seinfeld reruns, Law and Order, CSI, Monday Night Football -- that is what I saw last night -- the Simpsons, and so forth. All of these things are on at the same time that news programs are. So if you are not a person who is heavily political interested and involved, you may simply opt not to watch the news.

Now, many years ago when I was growing up, if you watched television during that hour -- let us say the six o'clock hour -- that is all that was on. You really didn't have a lot of choice. Thus, even for those who weren't particularly political interested or involved, you got exposed to a little bit of the political scene.

The reason this type of choice is also implicated in the process of political polarization is that if people who are only marginally interested in politics, people who aren't going to choose to watch political news regularly, if they are now watching entertainment instead, they are not likely to be drawn into the process. Those types of people also tend to be more politically moderate. So the argument here is that it is not that any one individual has been made more extreme in their views by virtue of all these competition that political news now has from entertainment programming, but it is that the overall pattern that we already have has been exacerbated. What I mean by this is that we already know that the

likelihood that someone will turn out to vote is far higher if they are on the left or the right than if they are in the middle. Political moderates tend not to be as active and involved in the political process as do people at either end of the spectrum.

The argument is perhaps what happened when we had all this competition from entertainment television is that we lost a lot of the middle. The people who used to be drawn in from the fringes who were moderates are now less likely to turn out, and the people on the extremes are more likely to turn out. So what that suggests is that nobody has changed their opinions. The reason the electorate looks more polarized is that different groups of people are now voting than used to. So we have moderates less likely to turn out and those on the ends of the political spectrums more likely to turn out as a result of the fact that we are not pulling the middle in through this kind of exposure that was more or less not chosen by incidental exposure in the past.

Those are two arguments, really distinct arguments, but both tie to the idea that we just have incredible amount of choice in mass media these days.

There is another argument that again I think has received less attention than it potentially deserves that suggest that media, not by any purposeful intent of this kind but it may be promoting the idea that the other side of the political spectrum regardless of what that other side might be from where you sit is really illegitimate. Here, this argument is based on the idea that after any given election happens, we have to decide what it means. Essentially, elections are a very crude

instrument for understanding what the public wants or what it is trying say.

When the people have spoken, how do we decide what they have essentially said to their elected leader? Well, the answer is, of course, all of us play a role in deciding what an election outcome means, but for the most part, citizens form their impressions and their interpretations based on media coverage of the outcome of the elections. Journalists are obviously scrambling to try and explain what happened after any given election as well. Why did people vote the way they did? Why did certain people stay home and others rush to the polls?

This process of constructing interpretations of the election outcome may have important implications for how we feel about the outcomes of the election after it is over. Particularly, it has implications if we are on the losing side, and that is why I refer to this particular argument has being about losers' consent in the context of the aftermath of elections.

What we know from a huge amount of research on the content of mass media coverage of elections is that the kind of explanations that are likely to be emphasized by journalists are of a particular type and they are not the kind of explanations that would reassure people who are on the losing side of an election outcome that really justice was done and the other side won fair and square. Instead, what tends to be emphasized is that really election outcomes are about who had the better ads, who had the better campaign manager. They are all about tactics and strategy and about manipulation.

The reason this is important is that obviously if you are on the losing side

after an election, you are going to feel bad. Everybody does when their side doesn't win and they are invested in that outcome. On the other hand, if your side loses and you think the other side won simply because of a particular ad campaign they ran, then you are likely to be even more strongly resentful of the other side. Now, the opposition isn't just the worthy opposition. It is the evil opposition. It is people who won for the wrong set of reasons.

In the aftermath of elections, these types of explanations for why what happened happened can intensify the anger of people on the other side about election outcomes.

Another explanation that has a tremendous amount of support, as simple as it seems, suggests that a way that media influence the range of views that are out there in the mass public has a lot to do with media coverage of a range of opinion and how narrow or broad that range of opinion is. Many studies of this particular phenomenon come out of the studies of wars and particularly the Vietnam War, the War in Iraq, and so forth.

When does mass opinion become divided in reaction to a war? The answer tends to be it becomes divided around the time that the elite opinion becomes divided. The argument here is that when political elites become more polarized, and this is something that there is a lot more agreement about than the idea that the mass public has become more polarized. Journalists are essentially covering elected officials as they always do. When they cover those elected officials and those elected officials are espousing viewpoints that are now, as a result of

polarization, covering a broader range of viewpoints than they did previously, then what happens is the public begins to mirror those same kinds of political viewpoints; that is, they are more divided as well in terms of their opinions on issues. We have certainly seen that progression happen in terms of attitudes toward the War in Iraq as well as in attitudes toward the War in Vietnam.

Again, it is simply the case that when an issue is seen as a consensus issue, it rarely gets a lot of coverage that suggests there are people with opposing views and here is one extreme and here is another. On the other hand, once elected officials are espousing views of those kinds, we do see that regularly in the media and we hear the public espousing those views as well.

The fourth and final reason that media may be pushing us toward greater extremes in terms of our political views has to do with something I call in-your-face politics, and by that, what I mean is the type of highly uncivil shout show types of political discourse that are pretty common these days on television and on radio as well. These types of exchanges are purposely set up so that there are people of opposing views, vigorously debating or screaming at one another as the case might be.

Why do they do that? Well, the fact of the matter is it is extremely entertaining to watch. Even though someone will tell you up and down that they hate this type of programming, they watch it a lot and are highly entertained and aroused by it. O'Reilly's quote here about the popularity of this type of shout show is something that there is a tremendous amount of support for in

experimental laboratories as well.

It is really hard not to pay attention to a fight. It is really hard not to pay attention to people are in the same room that you are, screaming at one another. We, in a sense, automatically orient toward conflict and the more bitter and heated that conflict, the more attention we pay to it. The problem is that the impressions we come away with about what political partisans are like are highly negative as a result, and I will explain why this is.

Part of what is going on is television tends to violate the kinds of norms that we have for face-to-face discussion, and it does it all the time. It does it, first of all, in terms of the level of civility and politeness that we normally afford one another. Now, there are situations in which people in face-to-face context will scream and yell at one another and jump up and down, but usually that is only if a TV camera is present. Most people most of the time in their exchanges with opposing partisans are fairly polite. Furthermore, when we have a discussion that involves strong differences of opinion, we have a hardwired tendency to back off physically, to put more space between ourselves and the other person. You have all seen that, no doubt, in arguments you may have had with one another as well. We instinctively put greater distance between ourselves and others.

Now, you might say what difference does that make, because we are talking about television here, not people in a face-to-face situation. Well, interestingly, it does make a difference. When television shows us people whose views we really hate and shows them to us as if they were up close and personal, cornering us at a

cocktail party somewhere, we respond much more strongly to that. So, for example, if we had you watch television from that back wall and exposed you to a politician you really disliked, we would get far less of a reaction from you, far less polarization than if we made you watch it from here in the front row and that person seemed like they were right there in your face.

That makes no sense that people react this way, that it intensifies our reactions, and yet if we look at the studies of human media interaction, it makes a lot of sense. From the very early days of social psychology, there have been studies that show that physical proximity intensifies people's feelings. For example, there is a classic experiment where they put a person in a room and they give them a questionnaire that has supposedly been filled out by someone they are about to meet and it is purposely filled out so that they think the person they are about to meet is really different from them in political views or it is a person who is very similar to them in political views. Of course, that person comes in, and they like better the person they think shares their views than the person who doesn't.

But what is interesting is when they randomly assign that person to either sit right next to the subject in the experiment or across the table, it makes a huge difference. If someone you think is different from you sits right next to you, you really dislike them. It intensifies your dislike for them.

My argument is that television, by presenting us with politics that we hate in our faces, is essentially producing the same kind of outcome. It is a highly

intimate, unnatural perspective that we have on political leaders through television, and this is an effect that doesn't happen when people get the same information through newspapers, for example. By violating these face-to-face kinds of norms, television essentially exacerbates whatever feelings we may already have.

Now, just to show you what I mean by this intimate perspective, if you think about this perspective on George Bush, for you to see George Bush in your field of vision like this, you would have to be nose-to-nose with him. This is not going to happen even if he is in this room. It is a very unnatural type of intimate perspective that we have on our politicians, including those we don't like.

Ultimately, what this suggests is that when we take the intimate perspective of television, marry it with the kind of incivility that is common in order to attract audiences on shout show television, we essentially intensify the kind of negative attitudes that people have toward the opposition.

Interestingly, what we know from these studies is that it doesn't change people's views of the person on their own side at all. If the guy that I support is screaming mad, well, it is just righteous indignation and we discount it and we don't respond negatively to that at all. But the person on the other side, we definitely punish for this type of behavior and we punish them even more if we are seeing them in an extreme close-up perspective.

Just to give you an idea of the kind of implications this has from a recent exchange that took place, "Wallace-Clinton Combat Draws Big Ratings" was the

headline accompanying this. Indeed, it did. It was hard not to watch. It involved conflict. It was heated. It was tense in a way that draws our attention. What likely happened to opinions as a result of this? Again, what this field of research suggests is that overall people who liked Clinton saw him as entirely justified in the way he acted and people who disliked him thought even less of him as a result of viewing this.

So there are all kinds of implications that suggest the way that televised politics is set up may be terrific in terms of drawing viewer attention because indeed we do pay attention to these kinds of exchanges, but essentially it is a marked failure in that the kind of thing that draws us to television of that kind leaves us with a bad taste in our mouths and leaves us more polarized in the aftermath of this kind of viewing.

Just to summarize, these are the four different theories I have discussed that suggest that media may be pushing us toward the extremes in ways that we are unaware of. Just to emphasize once again, that is not to say that is the only thing pushing on people. Media are obviously just one player in a very complex political world. But to the extent that these kinds of phenomena are taking place suggests that media are certainly not helping the state of affairs.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. DIONNE: I want to say that as a result of Diane's presentation, my respect for Bill O'Reilly soared. Now, did you see that quotation? "The best host

is the guy or gal who can get the most listeners extremely annoyed over and over and over again.” Never has anyone set himself a goal and lived up to it so consistently and successfully. I admire that.

In the question period I want you, if you would, to explain to us what did the people in the middle think of the Chris Wallace and Bill Clinton exchange. I was starting at the picture. Maybe they sided with the plant, but I want you to let us know.

I brought up the wrong notes.

I just want to introduce two of the smartest people here at Brookings who are two excellent journalists and two of the most independent-minded thinkers in town. I guess Gregg volunteered to go first.

Gregg Easterbrook is a Visiting Fellow here at Brookings, a senior editor of the *New Republic*, a contributing editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Washington Monthly*, but he has the biggest audience of any of us here at Brookings because he is a columnist on the NFL for ESPN.com. He just said what I agreed with about the Patriots-Bears game. So, of course, I side with him and would be happy to have him in my face.

His areas of expertise are Christian theology, environmental policy, global warming, professional sports, quality of life issues, and well-being research. He is the author of *The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse*, *The Here and Now*, and *Tuesday Morning Quarterback* as well as many other books. He received his M.S.J. from Northwestern, his B.A. from Colorado

College.

Jonathan Rauch; they figured we were the least likeable people, so they stuck Jonathan and me at the end here, and Diana and Gregg are the truly likeable people, so they can be in each other's faces.

Jonathan is a Guest Scholar at Brookings, a senior writer and columnist for *National Journal*. He is also a correspondent for the *Atlantic Monthly*. In 2005, he received the National Magazine Award for Columns and Commentary. He is author of *Government's End: Why Washington Stopped Working*, originally published as *Demosclerosis*. His latest book is *Gay Marriage: Why It Is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America*.

He is written on many topics besides public policy -- I love the list he has provided -- adultery, agriculture, economics, gay marriage, height discrimination, biological rhythms, and animal rights. It would take up the rest of my time if I listed all the publications he has written for.

He graduated from Yale. He was a reporter on the *Winston-Salem Journal* in North Carolina before moving to Washington in 1984.

Gregg, why don't you start us off?

(Applause)

MR. EASTERBROOK: Thank you, E.J. As soon as this forum is over, I have to run to the Brookings TV studio -- we have in-house TV studio which is very convenient because we have lots of opinions to spew out -- and do Sports Center on ESPN. So I get to go directly from a Brookings panel discussion to

ESPN which I guess tells you that this really is the 21st Century.

To honor Diana's thesis correctly, we are doing this discussion all wrong. First of all, we should have angry red-faced shouting at each other. We should probably have our faces projected on huge screens and be speaking to each other face-to-face. There should be an obvious raving conservative and wimpy left-wing liberal. The worst part of it is that we all get to finish our sentences which, of course, would never happen in modern media.

I hope you all will read Diana's paper in the book. The book itself, when it comes out in a month, is a valuable project, and of course, because it is a book critiquing polarization in politics, we are now here at Brookings all desperately hoping for more partisanship and destructive polarization in Congress this year. I think we will get it, so I am not too worried about that.

Diana's article or chapter which lays out especially the details of her own research on the mechanisms of how the media causes people to sense polarization and how they promote it is very powerful and deeper than the brief précis that she gave you. I urge you to read it because a lot of it will open your eyes. It is very important stuff.

However, my reaction to this is skepticism on some counts. My first big point of skepticism is that I think a lot of what looks to us like increasing polarization in the media is actually increasing opinionization or the greater presence of opinion in American public life. As recently as the beginning of the post-war era, most people considered it impolite to express opinions in public,

especially strong public, especially opinions about politics and religion. Now, within the public sphere, we have very little but opinions about politics and religion. The assumptions on these points have changed in sociological terms.

As recently as let us say one generation ago, school teachers would discourage children from expressing strong opinions. Now, if you don't express strong opinions in class, you get a lecture from your teacher.

We live in a society where the volume in decibel terms of opinions is increasing and also the volume in numerical terms is increasing. More people have stronger opinions all the time, and the media reflect this. What the media is reporting on is a rising number of opinions and an intensification of those opinions and the loss of taboo about opinions. In fact, now media reporters wandering the streets expect everybody they stop on the streets to have an opinion about everything -- the Iraq War, global warming, the budget deficit. If you don't have an opinion about it, something is assumed to be wrong with you. If we live in a society that is extremely opinionated and becoming more and more opinionated, we would expect the media to reflect this and that is what they do.

At the same time, as society becomes ever more opinionated and superficially more polarized -- I don't doubt that, superficially, we are more polarized -- the things that we really care about, tolerance and discrimination, are all showing positive arcs. Discrimination has never been lower in American life. Discrimination against women and minorities, cultural and religious minorities has never been lower. Tolerance has never been higher. Polling data shows that

two-thirds to even three-quarters of Americans now think it is not only wrong to discriminate against homosexuals and people of other religions, but they think it is actually shameful to discriminate against people like that. This is a hugely positive trend in the United States.

Now, still, you can find millions of Americans who don't like minority group members, who don't like gays, who don't like foreigners, but the expression of tolerance at the same time rises, and the country is changing in a very positive way in that regard.

If you had to make a trade-off between a superficially hostile society where people on television are screaming at each other but an ever more tolerant society where in the structure of society, people are kinder and gentler and more open to each other and the reverse, I think we have picked the better of those two outcomes.

The next point that concerns me about polarization in the media is the simple First Amendment point that even if you don't like it, there really is literally nothing you can do about it. The First Amendment forbids government from tampering with the mechanisms of the press and expression. The First Amendment is absolute. It was designed to be absolute. It makes it all but impossible for government to interfere with media and artistic expression. It should be all but impossible for government to interfere with media and artistic expression.

The basic bargain of the First Amendment was always that stupid speech

must be protected in order to safeguard important speech. When the framers were writing the First Amendment, they knew that inevitably the result would be that idiots screaming would get the same protection that great philosophers speaking truth would get, and they accepted that because they couldn't figure out a way to protect one without protecting the other.

The First Amendment bargain is that we have to accept the O'Reilly show in order to guarantee that the Pentagon Papers get published. We have all made the First Amendment bargain. We all benefit by it, and the result is if you don't like polarization in the media, there is really just almost nothing you can do about it, at least from the standpoint of government.

The next point that I would make to you is I will make two points on the structure of the news business. One is that -- Diana alluded to this some -- obviously, negative news sells more than positive news. We see over and over again that people are more willing to click on channels showing negative things or more willing to buy newspapers reporting negative news than they are to click to or buy positive news. This is the voice of the market speaking. I think the market is often wrong about this, although negative news is sometimes what we most urgently need to know. Government corruption, disease, threats, et cetera; those go to the top of what our news priorities should be.

I wish the media told us a lot more about reforms that work, programs that were successful, communities that have changed. The positive news like that is really lacking in our modern media. But when the modern media focus on

positive news, it doesn't sell very well. There doesn't seem to be a solution to that.

There is a wonderful publication of the United Kingdom that is called *Positive News* that is a newspaper that does nothing but report on --

MR. DIONNE: Gregg is the only subscriber, by the way.

MR. EASTERBROOK: In fact, I am getting to that. I am, basically. This is one of my favorite topics, reforms that work. This is a subject that I love to write about, so I read *Positive News* because the newspaper is all about reforms that worked. *Positive News* is a quarterly because its subscriber list is so small.

There is a new web site called Changing World.com or .org that is about reforms that work, so maybe this concept of reporting reforms that work will work on the web in a way that doesn't work in print. But attempts to sell positive news have not been successful whereas attempts to sell negative news and screaming and shouting have been successful and that is just a reality of the marketplace.

The next point that I would make on the reality of the marketplace is the way in which changes in technology make it easier to polarize and segment the market. Technology gets more complex and more specific all the time. The news media, especially via news channels, get better and better at scaring us all the time. The ability of the news media to generate anxiety is increasing, so we feel more anxiety and more stress all the time because the media generate it for us.

The ability of the news media to take you directly to whatever is exploding

anywhere or burning anywhere in the world within minutes is ever more impressive. It used to be as recently as a generation ago that if something was burning somewhere in the world, you might read about it the following day or you might see an image of it on the Huntley-Brinkley Report at 6:30 at night over the dinner table. Now, if something explodes somewhere in the world, you can see the image of it within a minute by snapping on the TV or looking on the internet. So all these anxiety-increasing things are more accessible to us.

Technology makes it easier for us to break down the demographics of the population, zip code by zip code or even now in politics, block by block, to find out what people are likely to believe and likely to be interested in and to cater to that.

We don't necessarily like these things, but technology cannot be undone in most senses and I don't see any way to stop it, especially when you look at the expansion in the media of the last 25 years, both internet media and cable media.

When there were only three networks and your choice if you wanted to watch TV was ABC, CBS, or NBC -- or turn off the TV -- all of those networks could offer you very similar, which they did at that time, very calm, very gentle, polite products, especially on their news programming, knowing that if you didn't like it, your only option was to turn off the TV. Now, there are 200 channels or 198 or whatever there is on my Comcast system, and in order to differentiate themselves, they differentiate politically by appealing to specific targeted groups or they differentiate themselves in noise terms by shouting at you or flashing red

colors or all that other stuff.

Our ability to choose among these channels -- of course, this is a thousand times more complex on the internet -- our ability to choose among these things is both by looking for things that catch the eye and physically by channel surfing which you couldn't do before. It used to be that you had to get up to change the channel. If you didn't like what was on CBS, you would have to get up and walk across the room. Now, we are all carrying remote control devices that control all the electronic media around us. Soon, it will be implanted in our prefrontal lobes, and you will just press like this if you want to change a channel. So we surf around to see what we like.

If Fox is showing a helicopter above a burning building and C-SPAN is showing a panel discussion from the Falk Auditorium of The Brookings Institution, what are you going to flip to? In fact, I think everyone who is watching this on C-SPAN just as I said that, flipped to Fox. We have now completely lost them.

We may not necessarily like these things, but I am not sure what we can do about them. Technology and expression of opinion are two unguided missiles of democracy. Nobody controls them. Nobody can control them. To a certain extent, we have to accept whatever the outcome is, and the current outcome is a lot of polarization and noise and shouting, especially on television shows.

My final point is that we should weigh that against what we have gained in the experience. Many of us might say, well, the Huntley-Brinkley Report, I

would like to go back to that era in 1965 of much more responsible news shows -- and they were -- and much more in depth. A sound bite on Huntley-Brinkley in 1965 was five minutes instead of ten seconds like it is today.

In that era, if you opened *Time* or *Newsweek*, not only were the news sections much substantive than they are today but would typically include reprints of entire speeches by world leaders, unedited, so you could read them on your own, et cetera. At that time, *Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker* sat on the coffee table of every educated household. Today, all those aspects of the old system are gone. But on the other hand, at that time if you wanted the news, you could only watch the news between 6:30 and 7:00 at night and at no other time. Now, 24 hours a day, you have your choice of two, three, sometimes four reasonably responsible, reasonably accurate news stations.

There was no internet, obviously. At that time, if you wanted to read what people outside of your own city were saying about the news, you would have to subscribe by mail to the newspaper which not only inconvenient but was very inexpensive; only the rich could do it. Now, you can go to your internet, which costs you less per month than a mail subscription to one newspaper, and basically read any newspaper published anywhere in the world. Some days, I look at *Pravda*. Some days, I look at the *Pakistan Times*. I look at newspapers from all over the world. I have a choice of languages and what language I want to read them in.

It is immediate. It is fascinating. When something goes wrong or when

something interesting is happening, instead of listening to the Western media filter, you can just go to the internet and see what the indigenous journalists on the scene are writing about it.

I wouldn't trade 2006 for 1966 in media terms in a minute, and I doubt most other people would either. Even though I hate the O'Reilly Factor and I wish it didn't exist and I hate all those shout shows, I think it is just the price we pay.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. DIONNE: O'Reilly is going to get back at you by saying Easterbrook gets all his news from *Pravda*.

MR. RAUCH: Thank you, E.J.

Diana, you ignorant slut. I have always wanted to say that. Does everybody get the reference? Do you all know what that is?

Some of you may actually be too young. I tried that with a college crowd once, and they all gasped, and I realized they had not seen Saturday Night Live in the seventies.

You may remember if you tune your mind back to 1976, Point/Counterpoint on I think it was 60 Minutes, where James J. Kilpatrick squared off against Shana Alexander for what was then the equivalent of today's shout TV where both sides would very sedately, pointedly but politely express an opinion and quickly get off the air.

You remember, of course, Saturday Night Live's take on this which was "Jane, you ignorant slut," the famous words of Dan Aykroyd to Jane Curtin. As so often in life, as indeed today with Jon Stewart, comedy anticipates life. Little did we know in 1976 that "Jane, you ignorant slut" was well on its way to being established as a new kind of model for the media. Well, here we are, 30 years after Saturday Night Live.

It has been said you can locate your view of all of history by which side you think was the good side in the French Revolution or, as Bill Clinton said, you can make your whole take on modern history by which side you think was the good side in the sixties. A good divide on the media question today would be: Do you think the McLaughlin Group is good or bad?

Actually, let us try this. Raise your hand if you think, on balance, the McLaughlin Group was a good thing for American TV and media. That is about six.

Raise your hand if you think it was a bad thing? That is a larger number.

Raise your hand if you have no opinion. That is an even larger group.

Well, I am going to tip my hand and say I am going to spend the next five minutes explaining why I think the McLaughlin Group was a good thing. It debuts in 1981. I remember turning on my TV in the early eighties and being stunned by the McLaughlin Group. I had never seen an entertaining talk TV show about ideas before, and it was entertaining because, of course, it was confrontational. These guys were rude to each other. They were rude to the host.

The host was self-parodyingly reductive: Nuclear War! One to Ten! Morton!

This was childish. This was the World Wrestling Federation brought to TV. But I was stunned by it because until that moment I had never been entertained by people talking about political ideas and that was what Fred Barnes and Jack Germond and those people were doing.

MR. DIONNE: And they made him what he is today.

MR. RAUCH: Right; since then, of course, we have had Crossfire. The McLaughlin Group was just the beginning -- Crossfire, Hardball, O'Reilly Factor, Dobbs, Hannity, and Combs, the famous Comedy Central spinoff which I believe was Crossball, now leading of course to Borat, Ali G., Bruno's funky site, and the blogosphere.

Now, I am, of course, a print journalist. So I don't like TV at all. I view them with a mixture of condescension and envy. I am a consumer of the *New York Times* and National Public Radio, and I work for *National Journal* which is the definition of sedate, responsible journalism and the *Atlantic Monthly* which is the definition of old media; it is now 150 years old. So I can tell you my natural sympathies are not with the McLaughlin Group, but my first reaction then and my reaction to this day was this is a good thing because it is a good thing to prove to people that they can be entertained by politics and by ideas. It is good to increase the interest in public affairs to motivate people, even if that means stooping a little low. It is good to increase the audience for people who watch these shows.

The only people I know who ever watched the talk TV shows on Sundays

in the sixties and seventies were people who had absolutely nothing better to do or there was nothing else you could watch. There were only three stations. But I remember those shows. They were incredibly boring, just incredibly boring.

I also feel that a lot of the attacks on confrontational-style discussions on TV are subtly anti-critical. They rely on an epistemological model which I feel is false which is that you get good knowledge by intelligent, sensible, like-minded, civil people sitting around a room, having a very thoughtful discussion. Well, that is, in fact, not how knowledge advances whether in society or in science. The philosopher of science, David Hull, has studied biology and found out that the best motivator in all of science is I am going to get that son of a bitch. That is what gets a lot of the best biologists to do a lot of their best work. They feel attacked, so they want to go after somebody.

Indeed, sharp criticism, as we know from the last several hundred years of experience, advances knowledge. Now, it is not always fun. It can be ugly. It can be nasty. Sometimes it goes away over the line. Nonetheless, a good way to get to the core of an issue is to pit people against each other with very different views and not necessarily always be polite about it.

I was out flogging a book on gay marriage -- which E.J., shame on him, forgot to mention is available for only \$10 on Amazon.com -- and did a lot of radio and a lot of conservative radio which is not big on gay marriage and you had the callers and the debates and everything. I was really struck by how substantive these conversations were. Conservative talk radio may be kind of nasty and may

be kind of bullying and all that, but it is also very interested in ideas. The callers, the people who listen to these shows, are interested in ideas, and they will nail you if you get on that show and don't know what you are talking about or try to skate through without talking about ideas.

This notion that media polarizes the country; if you read Diana's fine chapter, you will find out that there is virtually no hard evidence that it does as far as we can tell. I think it is at least as likely that the country polarizes the media. It is not a coincidence that the same period in which we have seen polarized media with more ideology shouting at each other is the period when the country has gone that direction, and we know to some extent why that is that case. It is because Americans have sorted themselves by ideology and party, so all the Blues are on one side and all the Reds are on the other. Two different parties make it much easier to have concentrated shout fests when people are separated this way instead of intermingled through party and ideology. Well, it is no surprise that the media would follow that or people, too.

I expect there is causality in both directions. The people polarize the media and vice versa. But I suspect a lot of what is going on is to some extent shooting the messenger -- blaming the media for, in fact, reflecting changes in society.

Something else that is going on that Gregg alluded to; you may have heard the expression, the long tail, which Chris Anderson over at *Wired Magazine* has posited to describe the way markets have changed in the last 20 years, so that instead of everybody having to buy a few things distributed by a few big

corporations because distribution costs were so high, we can now get online and it is profitable to sell 10 copies of a song, for example, online which means you get the long tail factor of a much more dispersed market with people buying many more things but in much smaller quantities and a few things aggregating into it.

Media is no exception to that. Of course, we are talking today about TV primarily and big TV -- Fox, CNN, the three networks. What we forget is the fact that we have this tremendous proliferation of sources, many of them very small, many of them virile. We have gone from a hub and spokes system of media where everybody passes through a few major hubs to a network system of media where people are just all over the place. So it is not even clear to me that polarization in the most visible media outlets, the ones that we had on the screen just now, is really all that important. I certainly, like Gregg, welcome the diversity of sources and the fact that the public can now serve to a large extent as its own editor.

Thus, it is not clear to me if polarized dialogue is a bad thing. I think it may be a good thing. I think it is more likely to be a good thing than polarized politics in any case. It is also not clear to me that the media are more than minor players in polarization of dialogue, if that.

What I do worry about is -- Gregg and I did not rehearse these comments and I didn't know he was going to say this but I share exactly the same worry -- not the ratio of the civil to the uncivil, the hot versus the cool, and the loud versus the mild but of opinions to reportage. It concerns me that opinion is very, very

inexpensive to produce. Anybody can get on TV and spout dribble. Anybody can stand here at this podium spout dribble. I cite myself as evidence of that fact right now.

It is very expensive to produce news, to go out and find things out, to send correspondents around the world, to get them edited sensibly and responsibly. All that costs real money. What we are seeing over time is the diversification, I believe, away from news and toward opinion. My hope is that will put a higher market premium on the value of news and increase over time the price that it commands. But my fear is that instead of looking at polarization, what we ought to be looking at is what Gregg calls opinionization, that is, the proliferation of cheap sources of words that fill the air but actually are awfully short on content.

Thanks.

(Applause)

MR. DIONNE: I will say amen to the last comment. I was just thinking the smallest web site ever created would be moderatepositivenice.com, no audience.

Just in keeping with Jonathan's injunction there, let us all get really nasty now and increase our level of knowledge. What I would like to do is ask Diana to reply to these, and I want to ask one question myself. Then we will open it up for discussion. We have a mic that will go around.

Do we have a mic? Good.

Diana, just start by responding to Jonathan's opening comments. No, never

mind.

MS. MUTZ: I do remember Saturday Night Live.

I basically agree with a lot of the comments that have been made here, that is, it is deadly boring to watch civil political discourse. But I think what we have to realize is that the level of competition for our attention these days is so much greater, that that is going to force political shows, which are not the big drawers of audience, obviously, to spice things up, to liven it up, to draw our attention. I don't think it is simply a reflection of a culture where rank and file citizens are just more opinionated in their day to day lives.

One of the comments I found interesting -- I think it was Gregg's -- was the idea that somehow things have changed and that it is now polite to have vigorous political discourse over the Thanksgiving dinner table. Actually, in my recent book that you didn't mention that came out this year, one of the quotes that I think is right on was from the last Presidential election. It was Miss Manners' column. Someone was writing in to complain about the dearth of political discourse over the dining room table at dinner parties and such in the United States and what is wrong with this country. Miss Manners basically told this person to be quiet and talk about entertainment television. That was her response in a nutshell, indicating that it is not polite conversation to talk about differences of political opinion when you are at a dinner table. That is not to be done.

MR. DIONNE: Was this recent?

MS. MUTZ: Yes, the last Presidential election, election, saying this is in

appropriate.

So I think we are wrong if we think, even though it may happen in our own social circles, if we think that is generalizable to the country as a whole and that people feel quite comfortable doing this or see it as polite conversation. Most research suggest that they still don't and they still back away from political conversations regularly if there is likely to be disagreement in a face-to-face situation. They do that because they value social harmony. They don't want politics to create divisiveness in their personal relationships. So I don't buy the argument that that has really changed about American culture.

Certainly, there are huge cultural differences between the U.S. and other places in terms of how much vigorous political disagreement is tolerated among friends, for example.

Let us see, other comments that were made; I think Gregg hit it right on when he talked about how negative news is just always going to draw more attention than positive, and I would say the same thing about conflict over consensus. From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, this is as it should be, that is, if there is conflict going on, you need to pay attention so you don't get eaten or smashed. If there is positive news, there is nothing to worry about; you don't need to pay attention. So there is a reason that our brains work the way that they do. It makes a lot of sense. We go around scolding the public for acting this way, yet I think this is highly functional and highly adaptive in terms of how we allocate our intentional processes over different types of events ultimately.

Other comments I will make; one comment that I think is a really common observation these days and it brings back memories for me because when I was in graduate school, the argument about what was wrong with the press was precisely the opposite of what we are talking about right now. In the 1980s, it was all they do is tell us facts about this happened and that happened and we don't get any opinion in the press. We don't hear the arguments that we need to hear about why we should support this side or this policy or the other side and so on and so forth. The critique was very much that we lacked opinion, we lacked argument, and it was just a recitation of facts and that wasn't what politics was really all about.

I find it interesting that now we have flipped sides, and now we are critiquing the press for being overly opinionated.

I don't have a solution here in terms of the correct balance, but I think that when we have a proliferation of voices out there like we do now -- it is clear there are more voices out there in the media environment than there were before, more diversity out there -- the mistake is when we assume that leads to diversity of exposure for any given individual. In fact, what people do when faced with huge amounts of choice is that they narrow things down and take a very narrow range of sources, so that they don't have to deal with the overwhelming realm of choice in front of them. It is great to say there is a diversity of voices out there, but unless we can show that the average citizen really exposes himself to views on both sides, for example, and really uses multiple sources on an ongoing basis, it is hard for me to be too reassured by that.

I will stop there.

MR. DIONNE: Can I just make one quick point in support of what Jonathan said in terms of opinionization? To me, the problem is not that you have the proliferation of opinions. I actually like all the diversity of view and the mobilizing effect of the blogs and all of that. It is that I think the financial resources to support reporting which is really difficult and really important may be under threat, at least for the moment until we figure out a new model to make money online and all the rest. So it is not the rise of opinion. It is if opinion crowds out basic reporting. The person risking his or her life in Iraq to tell us what is going on is hard, dangerous, and expensive. It is easier to set up here and spout an opinion.

Let me just ask a quick question. You had that little chart on moderates dipping compared to liberals and conservatives. I just happened to have the exit poll from the 2006 election here. It sounds McCarthyite -- I have in my hands. This is just the content of the electorate, self-described: 20 percent liberal, 32 percent conservative, 47 percent moderate. That is a lot of moderates. What does one make of that?

There are a lot of moderate people who actually participate politically, and they made a big difference in this election. They voted three to two, better than three to two Democratic. Could you talk about that? Then I want to open it up.

MS. MUTZ: Yes, without looking at those same figures from previous years, it is hard to know what that means.

MR. DIONNE: It was pretty consistent with the 2040 election.

MS. MUTZ: Okay, so it is not a change of context.

MR. DIONNE: No, it wasn't a change.

MS. MUTZ: Well, again, the question is whether or not the same people are turning out who would have in previous decades or whether we have people who are more opinionated. Even though they may label themselves moderates, we know from public opinion research, they may or may not be too moderate in terms of their stances. I guess I am not sure what that particular statistic means.

But the argument that I was discussing there is really Markus Prior's at Princeton University, and his argument is just that it is a shift in what portions of the electorate turn out that we are looking at, not a shift in the entire population becoming more extreme. There are shifts just historically but also from mid-term elections to Presidential elections in how many moderates are likely to turn out and so forth, huge ones. As a result, we have to look at this over an extremely long period of time historically in order to see whether or not that trend is really correct.

I do think the whole idea of incidental exposure to politics is something that really is a thing of the past in many ways because it is so easy to avoid, political television in particular, given all the choices that we have these days. I was shocked actually on election night how much trouble I had finding hundreds of election results. It was not the case as it used to be that every single station had nothing but election results on all night from the time the polls close on. Instead,

I was finding sitcoms and all kinds of other things. So if I wasn't a person who cared about politics, there are lots of other things that I could watch.

I think that idea of his, that it is important for people who don't choose politics themselves out of an inherent interest in the topic to nonetheless be drawn into the excitement of it and the importance of it, that I think is something that is increasingly difficult when we have so many other choices.

MR. DIONNE: Well, then the chart does work well in partisanship because it was 38 percent Democratic, 36 percent Republican, 26 percent Independent was the content. It appears that it is more about partisanship than ideology.

Who wants to start? Sir, wait for the mic and if you could say who you are.

QUESTIONER: Jeff Snider from New America.

My question is: To what extent do your observations about national media also apply to local media?

I think you can make an argument that the great divide between national and local media is like the Red and Blue states. If you think about how Americans actually consume the news, most of the news they get is local news. There are a few national newspapers, but there are more than a thousand local daily newspapers. If you look at, for example, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page versus the *New York Times* editorial page, you get real diversity of viewpoints there.

But when I go to my local newspaper -- I live in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, population of a half-million, the same size as Vermont, Wyoming, or

Alaska -- there is essentially no diversity. This world of polarization, it is a monopoly local newspaper, and they operate with the old norms of the objectivity of a monopoly newspaper, and you get none of this. This world you are describing has no relevance to what most of my neighbors spend their time reading in terms of news.

There is no television news by the way, no local television news in Anne Arundel County between Baltimore and Washington.

What you are describing is so far different than the world that I inhabit with my neighbors, I think. Could you comment on that?

MS. MUTZ: Are you addressing that to me?

QUESTIONER: Yes.

MS. MUTZ: Okay; there is much less research on local news, although to a certain extent, it is less distinct than you might think in the sense that they don't have the resources either to do the kind of enterprise original reporting that you are talking about. They are relying on information that comes to them through wire services, through so on and so forth. It is not as if they are going out and digging up original stories of political importance.

I don't know of a lot of good research on local news media in particular other than their response to the same problem of how do you get people to watch something that isn't inherently exciting is to put a lot of crime on to the local news because that is exciting to watch, but that is obviously not the same as looking at political differences of opinion being presented. So I don't think you

see as much of that.

You certainly see an effort to make dramatic whatever difference of opinion you might have. If you have a difference of opinion on a local issue, you don't pick the two people on opposite sides but closest to the middle to interview. You pick the ones furthest out and with the strongest views on the issue and contrast them to one another on the local news. Now, in a sense, that is doing the same kind of thing, but whether or not that is increasingly likely, I don't know.

On the newspapers, part of it is the people who are reading the newspapers are very likely to be voters, very likely to already be drawn into the process and politically involved and so forth. It is television that really has the capacity to catch the people who are more politically marginal in terms of their participation rates.

Do you have anything to add?

MR. DIONNE: There is historically a very high correlation between reading a newspaper and voting.

MS. MUTZ: Extremely high.

MR. DIONNE: I assume that is maybe even truer as circulation declines, that there is an even more civic kind of crowd.

Ma'am, please.

QUESTIONER: Peggy Orchowski; I am a long-time print journalist. I am concerned about the way journalists; I think a lot of kids going into journalism now and I don't know what you are teaching them, but they think it is opinion.

When you call a blogger, a journalist, or someone like Chris Matthews a journalist or you were even saying, well, journalists analyze what happens to the elections. That is, to me, not what a journalist does. A journalist is someone who reports, and then they are edited. I think if they don't fall under those two definitions, they are not really a journalist.

But I am worried about editors too. I follow the immigration debate a lot, and you get a news report that says: Anti-Immigrant Republicans Voted for a Draconian House Bill Today. That is in a news report. That wasn't analysis. It is just full of bias, and it wasn't edited. You see that in the *Washington Post*.

What is going on that these kids who blog think they are journalists? Are you doing this in journalism school, telling them it is okay to do analysis and opinion when they are supposed to be reporters?

MS. MUTZ: No; I don't teach journalism, so I can't tell you the answer to that question. But I think it is true that we are in an era when there is no agreed upon definition of what a journalist is.

I know the perspective that you are coming from, and yet as the number of sources that people turn to for news, now you might not call it news and I might not call it news, but they are using it a news source. As that changes, we have never had any way of officially designating somebody as a journalist. There is no particular training required. There is no certification required and so on and so forth. Right now, we are in a situation where anybody who wants to call themselves that can call themselves that. Yes, you can wish that the world were

otherwise, but the truth of the matter is we don't have any means of making that distinction.

I find it really funny that Jon Stewart who argues up and down that "I am a comedian, not a journalist," he keeps winning all these journalism awards from these journalism societies.

MR. DIONNE: He is going to be the best speaker they can possibly get, good move on their part.

MS. MUTZ: Again, I don't have an answer to that, but we don't have a certification system, certainly.

There is a really interesting study that just came out of the Annenberg Public Policy Center about, I think, two weeks ago that had to do with they went to the mass public and they asked them about a list of people who are out there and asked them if they considered them journalists or not. The public is not discriminating. Basically, if you appear on TV, you are a journalist.

MR. DIONNE: I am just curious what Gregg and Jonathan think.

My sense is if you go out there to good local newspapers; I was up in New Hampshire in September and sat down with a staff at the *Concord Monitor* who are mostly young people getting their first or second job, and these are really smart journalists in the old-fashioned sense. I think anybody can call themselves anything they want. I think there is still a big cadre of people out there who are interested in reporting, at least that is my sense.

What do you guys think?

MR. EASTERBROOK: Well, the technology and the craft have changed so fast. We live in a society where most economic sectors are changing very fast. Remember, it was only the 1920s that the drive to professionalize journalism began. As recently as the 1920s, you bought newspapers and they were wild. It was the era of yellow journalism, wild scandal sheets. You can't romanticize the past. I think the era in which most journalists were conventional and very tightly disciplined and objective, that era is only about one generation long.

Within that era, you had all kinds of problems that you mentioned. You made a glancing reference to McCarthy. If you read some of today's coverage of the McCarthy era, during that period of conventional, regimented, disciplined journalism, all the journalists who reported on Capitol Hill knew that McCarthy was an alcoholic, they knew that he was inventing his charges, and they never told their readers to that because the old structured journalism said only who, what, where, why, ma'am. While objectivity is an important form under some circumstances and I want most of what appears on the front page of the *New York Times* to follow the form of objectivity, it is no golden magic solution to your problems either.

MR. RAUCH: My take, for what it is worth, is to agree certainly with where Peggy -- I think that is your name -- is coming from. I know I have a representative sample to draw on, but when young people come to me, I am amazed at how often they want to get right into the business of punditry at age 23 or 24. I pass on to them the best advice I ever received at that age which was

from Bob Samuelson of *Newsweek* and the *Post* which was I would resist the urge to pontificate for as long as I could if I were you. It is still very advice. I am concerned about that.

On the other hand, I think it is absolutely inevitable that we will see a broadening of the market and more people coming in because the channels of distribution are now very cheap.

I agree with E.J. that the first priority isn't to worry about all the newcomers who don't know the journalistic standards; it is to figure out a model to support the old comers who still understand the difference. There will, I hope, always be wire services and news organizations like the major newspapers, the major dailies, and broadcast outlets, that care about getting it right the first time, that do things which bloggers almost never do like call the other side for a comment. When was the last time a blogger did that? The comments are what come after you publish in the blogosphere.

So I think the first priority is to make sure that we find the model that sustains and finances that end of journalism. The rest is going to happen whether we like it or not.

MR. DIONNE: I think the last thing we want is to certify journalists. That is a nightmare.

MR. RAUCH: Unless I can do it.

MR. DIONNE: Please, in the back.

QUESTIONER: Hi; Carrie Funk (?).

I wanted you to address E.J.'s, I think, first question which is how do moderates react to in-your-face TV and talk a little bit about that when you don't have a side or a dog in a fight, if you want.

Then if you have the memory to think about this: Are there versions of this for print and internet media that are in-your-face quality?

MR. DIONNE: Actually, the answer to your question is to say watch Gregg on ESPN, but go ahead.

MS. MUTZ: Basically, moderates react negatively too, that is, they watch these people interact, interrupt, be impolite and so forth, and they think: Gosh, what a bunch of jerks; these people obey the same norms for social behavior that the people I know do.

They see them in a very negative light pretty much across the board. It really doesn't matter your own partisanship and so forth. Moderates, liberals, conservatives, all have the same sense of social norms, and it is violated for all of them in those cases.

In terms of whether or not this kind of in-your-face politics really can translate outside of television, my answer to that at the moment is no, and I will tell you why. I tried this. We did a study where we took the same kind of in-your-face presentation where people are screaming and yelling at one another on television and so forth and we did an audio only version of that that we exposed subject to a laboratory situation -- same heated conversation, same decibels, same everything, but no picture in front of the viewers' face.

Then we took the text from that same shout fest and printed it on the page of what it looked like in a newspaper. It looked more or less like what the New York Times prints after a debate of how each person responds and so forth. So we had the same political substance but obviously you can't hear anything, you can't see the intense emotion on their faces, and so on and so forth.

When we did this experiment, what was really fascinating is that people did not see the print version as uncivil at all. Reading the words does not convey the same kind of emotional intensity that watching it on television does. I think, again, part of this is because it is in our faces.

This is another thing that speaks to this question. We do all kinds of measurements of whether you are a conflict-averse person or whether you really kind of like to argue because there are interpersonal differences in the extent to which people like that kind of thing. It doesn't matter. People who like conflict and people who don't like conflict, both respond to the same extent to this kind of in-your-face thing. It doesn't seem to be something that is really mediated by our cognitive thought process where we say: Oh, well, of course, they are acting that way. They are supposed to. This is a TV show.

Instead, the reaction seems to be far more of a gut level one where we also tap their levels of physiological arousal in the lab while they are watching, and boy, do they get excited as things heat up. Their levels of attention go up. Their heart rate goes up. What you see is everything you would expect to see if you were threatened, essentially. I think that is how we respond even though it makes

virtually no sense for us to.

It is just like, as one of these folks alluded to earlier, watching a fight, watching the World Wrestling Federation. We all know this person isn't going to jump out of the TV screens into our laps and beat on us. Nonetheless, our bodies get all jazzed up as if we were preparing to react, as if this were in our real social context. I think that the argument you would get is that the human brain fundamentally hasn't adapted to the kind of technology we have now, where we have a representation of an actual human being right there in the room with us. Now, if you ask anybody, of course, they are going to say he is not really there, but we react at a gut level emotionally as if he is. We experience a level of intensity of emotional reaction.

We get a little bit of it with radio, but we get nothing with print. In fact, people don't see one version or the other of the exchanges as more or less civil than the other, no effect at all.

MR. DIONNE: Could I follow up?

One of the questions I had watching your presentation also the last time is about when you are talking about the audience that actually watches any of these shows. O'Reilly is one the biggest and he is in quotes "only" I think a million and a half or two million, something like that, and that is a lot of people. We would all like that audience. But that is not a big percentage of people. There are many more people who watch the CBS, NBC, and ABC evening news. Many more people watch the football game we watched last night. How big an effect can all

of this have? What is the cumulative number that we are talking about here of the real confrontational shout sort of TV?

MS. MUTZ: It is relatively small, but pretty much every political program has a relatively small audience relative to Monday Night Football these days. Because of the fragmentation of the market, there is no one program that we can point to that has a massive amount of impact in terms of numbers of people.

On the other hand, if you look at the people who watch these programs, they tend to have strong political views themselves. When you have strong political views, on one hand you are already fairly polarized; on the other hand, you also get really angry. We have had people in our laboratory yell at the TV and scream at the people because we purposely expose them to views that we don't like. They get mad. They don't like it, and they yell back. To some extent, I think this suggests that at least for the kind of people who are watching this and who are politically opinionated, they are going to respond pretty strongly to what they do see.

MR. DIONNE: Sir?

QUESTIONER: Steve Stiles (?) from Hamilton College.

As an up and coming moderate, I watch a little bit of Fox News, a little bit of CNN, and a little bit of the News Hour with Jim Lehrer because mostly I don't want to be caught in an argument and be hearing the opposite side for the first time.

But for me, the best hour of television in terms of news is from 11:00 to

12:00 on Comedy Central with Jon Stewart and Steven Colbert because I get kind of tired of hearing people being so negative about the headlines and things like that. It is nice to have at the end of the day people being able to laugh about what is going on because there is so much bad stuff out there and people do get aggravated at having to listen to all the confrontation. For me, it is nice to hear people actually sitting down and joking about things, and it is a little more pleasant.

I was wondering if you saw that as a way to get moderates back into the political arena?

MS. MUTZ: Yes, I think it has some potential to do so. I have a grad student who has a study showing that at least the kinds of things they talk about on the Daily Show, Daily Show viewers do seem to know more about and pay more attention to than their levels of political interest would suggest they should know. I think, again, we are talking about a relatively small audience. It is a fun show. I watch it regularly as well.

But I think the more general point that you hit on there is that we need another hook to bring people who aren't political junkies already into political television. It is not going to be conflict and exciting shout matches. Maybe it will be comedy. It has to be something else that draws attention to these programs because they are not going to come for the politics. They are going to come for something else.

It used to be or many argue at least that there was more suspense in political

television. For example, if the political conventions were on, it wasn't the case that you already knew absolutely everything that was going to happen in advance and thus, the suspense factor drew people to watch it even though they weren't political junkies already.

Canada has a program called the Naked News that uses nudity to draw people into the news. People watch.

MR. DIONNE: What are the ratings? Do moderates like nudity?

MS. MUTZ: I am sure they do. Again, it is completely serious news.

MR. DIONNE: Nudity is non-polarizing. Actually, probably not.

MS. MUTZ: This is a problem not just in the United States; it is a problem everywhere. How do you bring it if you are not going to force-feed people by saying there is no choice, you must watch political news at a certain time of day?

If we are going to have choice, then we better have something that attracts people to the content. It is not the case that I think people are any less civic-minded now than they ever were. It is simply that we have more choice and given choice, we tend not to choose politics.

MR. DIONNE: Pietro?

QUESTIONER: I have a question for Gregg.

On the phenomenon of opinionization which you discussed, I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the economics of that. You are basically talking about a product here, opinion, which has a zero marginal cost. Therefore, in Economics 101, it would basically take control of the entire market and gradually drive out

all factual information at the end of the day.

I guess my question is: Are there any penalties that you could foresee that could be applied to this sort of market imperfection, penalizing forms of misinformation? Should we strengthen our libel laws? Are there other remedies that can put some kind of a break on this potential downward slide into total misinformation?

MR. EASTERBROOK: I do see this mainly in economic terms. The line I used in the *Red and Blue Nation* book is that opinions are cheap, so we are producing more of them. If you have a graph in supply and demand, as the supply of something increases and the price of it falls, et cetera, not only has opinion always been cheap but the cost of it has fallen dramatically in the last 20 years. Basically, the cost of opinion has fallen at about the same rate that the cost of computer chips has fallen.

Twenty years ago if you wanted to generate opinion and publish it in any way, you had to buy a New York Times or read a book in the library or going into the microfiche room of the library and elaborately pull those spools. There was some cost and time associated with generating opinion other than just a formless I hate you sort of opinion, but for an opinion that was supported in any marginal way by facts or references, there was a time cost involved.

Now, it is just all in your computer. You use Google or Yahoo. You go to Google and you type in define and you type in the term or you go to Wikipedia and you type in the term and you have instantly got references. The price of

opinion production has gone so far down that the result is we have far more of it.

My big worry involves the base of the opinion food chain is clearly the *New York Times* in every sense for all the bloggers and opinion writers, even the right-wing foaming-at-the-mouth types. Basically, if you draw some kind of food chain for where opinion originates in the United States at least, it all in some way ties back to the *New York Times* and then it gets filtered through other newspapers and the respectable television shows and then it gets filtered through opinion magazines like the *New Republic* and then it gets filtered through blogs and Comedy Central and then it is loose out on the street and it cannot be recalled. But if you knock the New York Times out from under the pyramid, the entire thing would collapse.

My big economic worry is that the five or six really original, responsible major news organizations in the United States and the five or six in Europe, if they fail because of market forces, then we have a problem because we have all these people generating opinions and no factual chain that they are based. Without the *New York Times* and a few others similar to that, Wikipedia and everything else would eventually run out of gas because they are all just interpreting the stuff that has been put together by professional news gatherers.

Now, in market terms, the best thing I would say is that in the last 50 years, the market at least in the United States, not so much in Europe but the market in the United States has voted for quality in the newspaper business. The big winners of the last 50 years of newspaper marketing, the really profitable

publications, are the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. The fourth winner is *USA Today* which at least is accurate and has some factual content. But the three of the four big winners in the newspaper business are the most responsible, serious publications, and they are all very profitable products although you may be following the Tribune Company's complaints about the *L.A. Times*.

In big television news, there is some profit attached to production of serious news programming. The situation is somewhat different in Europe where the irresponsible journalism tends to be in newspapers and the high silver journalism tends to be on television. But there has been some market of success for sobriety in news in the United States.

How you would maintain that though, how you could regulate it, I don't have any idea. I don't see how government could interfere with these processes at all because of the First Amendment.

The only other thing that I will say is there is a hidden force in the quality of successful newspapers in the main readers for select *New York Times*, *L.A. Times*, and similar quality publications. In local news, more people get their news from small newspapers than big ones. In competitive markets, people tend to select the more responsible newspaper. Advertisers -- this is the hidden force that you don't see -- big corporate advertisers have pressured newspapers hard to be more responsible and more accurate because they think that advertising is more effective when it runs next to accurate journalism than when it runs next to

slapdash stuff. So there are some economic forces that support the news pyramid, but I do worry that at some point, it could just all fall on its side.

MR. DIONNE: Just 30 seconds; I don't think it is the supply of opinion that is causing the problem. I think it is the fact that the traditional news organizations were in a monopoly position and used their profits from advertising and that monopoly position to support good reporting. Now that monopoly is being challenged by the various new media. The print version which is the one that paid the most with both classified advertising which is now fleeing to the web and other forms of advertising, you just don't have the same economic model to pump the money in that supports the core reporting. I think eventually that will be solved, but I think you could have a 10- or 15-year transition that is going to be very difficult for all these traditional news organizations.

The *Times* tried to tax opinion by having Times Select. It was a very interesting model. As far as I can tell, I am not sure how much money they are actually making on it, but it was a straight effort on the web to see if they could generate revenue from opinion to support the rest of the operation.

Gary?

QUESTIONER: Thanks; Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report.

On the one hand, I would agree with Gregg's model of the food chain. On the other hand, I think this wasn't where the discussion was originally supposed to go. But let us not forget that two of the most responsible elements in the food chain were brought to their knees by bloggers. There are probably no pure

winners in this game.

We started out with a question about whether the media were creating this polarization. Gregg has offered the notion that it isn't really polarization as much as it is opinionization. Jonathan has talked about how the big concern is that opinionization is pushing out news.

On observation and then a question, and that is that the other -ization that we are really witnessing in this situation is commercialization. All of these entities are engaging in fierce commercial fights to stay profitable so that there is such a thing as the free press, and the way that they do that is to develop the branding mentality that Madison Avenue has been working on for a long time and branding means that you are going to do things that are inconsistent with the Edward R. Murrow view of things. It seems to me that while we talk about the media, they don't. They talk about their brand, and they talk about their brand personality and how their brand is doing versus the other brand.

So, having said all that, the question that I am really interested in is if we go back to your fundamental question about is the mass media causing polarization, I sense that your answer is maybe. I don't know if that is correct, but that is my reading of what you said. Correct me if I am in error about that.

Then secondly, if the media isn't causing this polarization or isn't the prime mover in polarization or opininization, what is? What are those other factors that we have made reference to but not named?

MS. MUTZ: That is the rest of the book.

With respect to whether the mass public has become more polarized, on that issue itself, I remain somewhat agnostic. I am not convinced that that is the case. I am more convinced that the electorate has become more polarized, that is, the people who actually turn out to vote look more extreme than I am that the U.S. public as a whole is more polarized in their opinions. That is a different question in a way. I am not convinced in terms of long-term history that that is actually true now.

Now, there are some excellent scholars investigating precisely that question. There is a lot of consensus on the idea that elected officials are more politically extreme than they used to be, but very little consensus on the issue of the mass public.

My argument about the media is regardless of whether or not the mass public has become more polarized historically, I think these aspects of the media that I outline do push in that direction. Now, it may be that the net effect is not that great because they are being countered by other forces like the fragmentation of the market because any one of those influences can only affect so many people. Perhaps, in the end, the net effect is not really substantial. I don't know. The contexts in which these particular theories have been examined have been contemporary contexts and they haven't been applied to try to explain historical change over time.

Yes, that question I can't answer, but I suspect that the media plays a role. It is just one player in a far more complex process that involves many of the other

factors that are outlined in this book.

MR. DIONNE: Could I just try something? The word, extreme, makes me very uncomfortable for the following reason: I don't think this is an extreme country at all. You do not have people calling for the nationalization of heavy industry or jailing all who don't believe in God or some set of extremes like that. We are actually a moderate country. We have become more partisan, not more extreme. Does that make sense to you?

In other words, people have very strong party feelings, but it doesn't necessarily put them off at some far end of somebody's spectrum.

MS. MUTZ: It can. But again, the way people use these terms does differ, that is, we have always had partisans, but the idea is are the partisans further out on the spectrum than they used to be or are people increasingly more partisan than they used to be. All of those things have been interpreted in light of this term, polarization.

If you are talking about relative to other countries, that is a different frame of reference than relative to our own past as a country. I think changing the frame of reference can change your interpretation of what these shifts that exist out there mean.

I guess partisan extremity can be what we are talking about here, but we can also mean how much difference do we think it makes whether our side or another side. For example, it is one thing to say I am really strongly in favor of whatever my position is. It is another thing to say that the alternative is absolute

disaster. In that case, the gap between my opinion and the other side is huge. It might be that the gap between my opinion and the other side could be far narrower. In many cases, it is that difference which is interpreted as evidence of more extreme views and more polarization. It is not so much that there is some absolute spectrum as in the distance between people on different sides has grown in terms of how far apart they are.

But you are right; the term itself has a lot of different meanings.

MR. DIONNE: Without wasting all our time arguing about it, I would argue that you probably have more diversity of view in the 1912 election than in the 2004 election, that you opened up farther to each end.

Sir, welcome back.

QUESTIONER: Al Milliken, Washington Independent Writers.

It seems to me the intimacy you describe with television is what really unites rather than divides us. The forced intimacy on television described often, it seems to me, can be a substitute for real intimacy. Everybody wants and needs some kind of intimacy, and if you are not getting it in marriage or friendship or sexuality or a sport like Borat engages in on-screen, what takes place in the interaction between screen and viewer is intimacy even if you rightly call it abnormal. The talking heads are who we relate to on TV, often on a personal level it seems like. Whether we hate them or love them, we are responding. They make a difference rather than just dealing with them with indifference which seems to me that can be the most dangerous kind of reaction, not caring at all.

It seems like it becomes even more pronounced when you talk about with movies. People more these days seem to talk about, well, I guess it is has always been true, but they often talk about movie stars as friends. They talk about them on a personal level more so than they do with the real life people they are interacting with on a daily basis in their lives.

I am just thinking about when you are talking about talking heads, maybe a prime example of where the forced abnormality of television actually became true normal intimate reality is look at the case of Mary Matalin and James Carville. They eventually went from shouting at each other to marriage and real intimacy and the production of children.

MS. MUTZ: I am not sure what the question is here, but I think you are right; there is lots of evidence out there that people do relate to even fictional characters on television or in movies the way that you described. The example of Carville and Matalin is a very, very unusual one. If you look at the percentage of people in the country married to someone of different partisanship, it is teeny-tiny, way under 1 percent, every unusual.

On the other hand, the kind of intimacy that we are talking about, I think I probably wouldn't recommend that it be with politicians. By that, what I mean is these are not people who are up there to express empathy for our personal situations and so on and so forth. They are on television to talk about matters of public policy.

MR. DIONNE: I would point to the success of Bill Clinton.

MS. MUTZ: It is a double-edged sword. For example, what we see in the example I described during my talk of liking those who are similar to us even more if we are intimate with them in an up-close and personal kind of way but disliking those who are different from us even more if they are in our faces and we just want them to get away, it can work both ways. It can mean that we really like Ronald Reagan. Again, he was a master of the close-up, the intense, extreme close-up on television, and he often looked directly at the viewer which we know makes a big difference in how people respond to television if it seems like the person is actually looking at you.

MR. DIONNE: I know Jack Nicholson talked about Reagan doing a performance as President that he never did in the movies.

MS. MUTZ: I guess what I am saying is it is a double-edged sword. It can make us more intensely dislike them as well as more intensely like them.

I guess if I had my druthers, people would have real world relationships and they certainly wouldn't rely on politicians to fulfill those roles even if they do rely on mediated personalities.

MR. DIONNE: I want to defend the media personalities just for a second. There are people whom I don't necessarily know who when I see them on television, I find them, and I could be wrong in my judgment, but I either find them intelligent or likeable or warm. I actually like it when they are on. They are not necessarily a substitute for other things. So there is something peculiar about this medium, I think, which you show from your research on the difference

between paper and radio and television.

MS. MUTZ: But I think you hit the real nail on the head there, and that is we have talked a long, long time about how television has fundamentally changed the political process and yet we don't really have an explanation for what is fundamentally different. Yes, it is a visual medium. But so what? What does that ultimately change?

I think we are starting to find out what changes is that the process of coming to know another person -- there is a whole lot of research about when you first meet someone, how you form your impressions and how things progress from there -- that same process is going on when we get to know politicians on television. Now, a hundred years ago, that wasn't possible. A hundred years ago, that is not how we came to know them, and that is certainly not how people process print content even if it is the very same content.

MR. DIONNE: A couple more here, this gentleman and that lady; you are a gentleman.

QUESTIONER: Thanks. My question is for Gregg. You talked about increased polarization is increased opinionization, but you also did talk a lot about polarization. Is it that you see that polarization does exist but you think that the real problem is increased opinionization? Do you see them as interchangeable?

I am a little confused on what your definition of polarization is as it relates to opinionization.

MR. EASTERBROOK: Everybody is confused on the definition of

polarization. If you want to stay confused, read the coming Brookings book on it.

MR. DIONNE: That is the weirdest blurb I have ever heard.

MR. EASTERBROOK: Like partisanship, polarization is what your opponent is guilty of and, of course, your own views are enlightened and moderate and reasonable, et cetera. I don't see either of these things, more opinion and more polarization, I don't see either of them as necessary bad. I think they are just social trends that we are living with at the moment. It is a big, complicated country that is in all kinds of ferment. It has been in all kinds of ferment since its founding. Two current trends are more and louder opinion everywhere around us and more sensitivity about opinion in terms of the polarizing aspects of exactly who you agree with or what you endorse. We are more sensitive to that at the moment than we used to be.

At the same time, we are more tolerant. We discriminate less. We are lot more open-minded. We are more accepting of others. There are all kinds of tremendous things going on at the same time. I don't really see them as good or bad. I just see them as what we are stuck with at the moment.

MS. MUTZ: Just to follow-up on that, I think it is really important to distinguish between the argument that media encourage polarization and then the issue of is polarization a good or a bad thing.

MR. EASTERBROOK: Right.

MS. MUTZ: There are good aspects of polarization. Nothing motivates a person more to get involved politically than having really strong views, and more

extreme views are very motivating. Political participation is really helped by that. So, to the extent that you value that, you might be very happy to see greater polarization in the American electorate because it is very hard to energize people about moderate viewpoints. It just doesn't have the same power to motivate.

I was going to say I think the other really important point that Gregg made is that even if opinionization should take over the media entirely, it is really important to have some historical perspective. We have been there. We have done that as a nation. We have had a press that was massively about opinion and not about factual reporting and yet, obviously, we lived through that period as well. Now, you can argue that things are better or worse in one period or another, but we have been there before. This isn't new in that sense.

MR. EASTERBROOK: It is important that we not forget the potential benefits of polarization as Diana says. In all policy discussion, we tend to fixate on costs to the exclusion of benefits. Ideas, movements, Federal programs tend to have both costs and benefits, but we talk too much about the costs. One of the benefits of polarization may be keeping people interested in politics, and maybe political interest and voting trends would decline even more if it weren't for polarization keeping people excited.

When you look at the opinionization of the world, you don't have to be a psychologist to wonder if, well, maybe the fact that we can now express our negative emotions in these anonymous blog-like formats -- anybody can denounce imaginary opponents all they want on the web and leave it out there for the world

to see -- helps us to be more gentle and pacific and tolerant in our personal day to day dealings. We transfer our emotions into the cyberspace where they harm no one, and then we act more kindly toward each other. Maybe there is a huge benefit to opinionization there.

MR. DIONNE: I think we should all spend a week with Gregg. Everything, everything has a positive side. We refuse, stubbornly refuse to see.

I think there is no question that polarization has increased participation. The rise and turnout in 2004 was clearly driven in part by polarization. Then in this year's election, 22 percent said they voted for Congress to support Bush and 36 percent said they voted the way they did to oppose Bush. So there is a driving force out there, and it can negative consequences, but I do think drawing people to the debate and into politics is a positive outcome, at least up to this point until it drives us off some edge.

Please.

QUESTIONER: Good day, I am Claire Young (?). I am on a Fulbright from Australia.

I wonder whether you or anyone else involved in the book has done any work on how the changes in media which you all describe have affected the way that America is viewed internationally. When I was a girl growing up in Australia, I thought that America was full of cops and robbers and cowboys and Indians. Then eventually in my 20s, there were lots of feminists running around. How do you think all these changes in your media might be changing how

someone growing up overseas might be seeing America now?

MS. MUTZ: I don't know of any research that addresses that specifically, but I think it would depend a lot on where you are coming from as well and what kind of media system you yourself are accustomed to. I hear all this time from students from mine who are in other countries that in some cases, the level of vituperative debate that we have seems to them like nothing at all. It doesn't seem particularly intense or negative or any of that. So I think it would depend on your source of comparison how that would lead you to view the American case. I don't know.

MR. EASTERBROOK: I have no data for you. I would ask you the question since you are an actual foreigner. I am afraid I couldn't contribute much.

MR. DIONNE: I am not sure, but if you look at the changes over the last five or six years, I doubt it is driven primarily by media. I would be surprised if it is driven by media.

I always loved the fact that Dallas was the most popular show in the world for a while, and I thought that was perfect because people who loved America because we were rich and had all these things, they loved Dallas. People who hated America because we were materialistic and rude, they loved Dallas too. So it covered absolutely everybody in the world.

Anybody else? Sir?

QUESTIONER: Thank you. My name is Bruce Levy (?). I am from the country that brings you the Naked News. I can assure you that it is more about

promoting nakedity than it is the news.

MR. DIONNE: Nakedity, that goes with opinionization. I like that.

MR. EASTERBROOK: They are using the news as a hook to get people interested in nudity. How kinky is that? What will you Canadians think of next?

QUESTIONER: We would have thought of Borat.

You talked about various -zations: polarization, opinionization, and so on. One -tion that I would ask you to maybe address by first making an observation is that of repetition. You have all talked about the multiplicity of media in the last 20, 30, 40 years, obviously.

When I, in my role with Embassy, do outreach to university groups or others on both sides of the border, a question that inevitably comes up, especially since the Iraq War, strictly about Canada and the U.S., is this perception that relations are strained between Canada and the U.S. and in an extreme way, i.e., for the people asking the question, certainly more than they can remember them being. What I do by way of reply is cite a few examples in my lifetime, sort of going back starting in the late fifties where undeniably relations were strained over various instances. But then I actually acknowledge that, yes, I do believe there is a perception out there for the strain. What is the explanation for that? If, in fact, based on events, nothing much has changed, what is it that has led to that perception that there is a strain?

One of the answers I have come up with is the fact that every time there is a disagreement, in this case between two countries, it doesn't get played once or

twice or three times. It gets played a hundred times over and over and over again. I am not just putting a good diplomatic spin on this. I am not talking about differences over the invasion of Iraq which are serious and consequential. I am talking about really minor league stuff, some two-bit Parliamentarian of whom nobody has ever heard outside of their own constituency, making a silly comment about the United States and this getting played and played and played in Canada and then repeated again and again in the U.S., particularly on a certain television channel.

MR. EASTERBROOK: Fox, there you go.

QUESTIONER: From the man with the good French-Canadian name.

I guess that is my question because it is my observation that that also would support that thesis that supports polarization, in this case, internationally. It perhaps addresses the question posed by the woman from Australia as well.

MR. DIONNE: That is really interesting.

MS. MUTZ: Yes, I think you are absolutely right, that is, when there is an excerpt of an interaction like the Clinton-Wallace or anything like that, that has some sting to it, that it draws viewer attention, it gets played over and over and over again, even on the regular news as a source of controversy. As a result, the number of people who are exposed to those kinds of altercations or insults or whatever the case might be is going to be far, far greater than the number of people who would have watched that particular broadcast originally.

We see the same kind of thing when candidates say nasty things about one

another. That is what is going to get picked up and repeated on absolutely every news source there is.

I think we are back to the same problem of how to get people to pay attention. What is it that is going to draw viewers that isn't also going to polarize them, other than nakedity?

MR. DIONNE: I think that is really interesting as you think of the word, macaca, and how often that appeared in print after George Allen or how often that video played or the so-called botched Kerry joke, that I do think there is something to this argument about repetition. There was a funnier one that came to mind, but I lost it.

I want to invite you to our next meeting which will be on nakedity. Is that the new word we have learned today?

I remind everybody that Pietro is going to run the seminar with David Brady. The new book launches on December the 8th. For those of you who are Catholic, that is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception which is perfect for this new book on polarization.

I really want to thank Diana, Jonathan, and Gregg for a great discussion and thank you all.

(Applause)

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