Are the Voting Patterns of College-Aged Students and the General Public Influenced by Award-Winning Celebrities’ Political Opinions in Presidential Elections?

Andrew S. Blouin
The University of Southern Mississippi

Are the Voting Patterns of College-Aged Students and the General Public Influenced by Award-Winning Celebrities’ Political Opinions in Presidential Elections?

by

Andrew Blouin

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Approved by

________________________
Wilbur Justin Martin, J.D., Thesis Adviser
Professor of Radio Production

________________________
Christopher Campbell, Ph.D., Chair
Mass Communication & Journalism

________________________
David R. Davies, Ph.D., Dean
Honors College
Abstract

This thesis study is entitled “Are the Voting Patterns of College-Aged Students and the General Public Influenced by Award-Winning Celebrities’ Political Opinions in Presidential Elections?” This thesis examines primary data from award shows, government campaign financing data, and student survey data obtained at the University of Southern Mississippi. The study investigates both whether award-winning celebrities have a political impact on presidential elections and specifically whether celebrities have a political influence on college-aged people. Data analysis from this study reveals that celebrities do not have a substantial impact upon either presidential elections or upon the voting patterns of young people. This study did find, however, that many people believe that celebrities have more of an impact than they really do. Various reasons for this lack of celebrity political impact and persuasiveness are discussed, including source credibility, trustworthiness, and desensitization. It is hoped that this thesis will add information and insight into the fields of media and political science. It is also hoped that this study will encourage both the general population and young people to think carefully and critically about their voting choices.

Key Words: Award Shows, celebrities, celebrity influence, college-age, contribution, credibility, Democrat, desensitization, endorsement, Independent, overexposure, persuasiveness, political influence, Republican, source credibility, trustworthiness
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my beloved brother,

Alexander “Alex” Blouin,

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I would like to gratefully acknowledge the many kind and gracious individuals who helped to make this thesis possible. Many of these individuals are associated with programs that I have been involved with while at USM. Therefore, I would also like to acknowledge the numerous programs that I have been honored to be a part of, including Honors College, the Mass Communications Department, the Political Science Department, the Luckyday Program, and the University of Southern Mississippi.

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# List of Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-list</td>
<td>A Top-Rated Celebrity, Typically an Actor or Actress</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Democrat/Democratic</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>Entertainment Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELM</td>
<td>Elaboration Likelihood Model</td>
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<td>FEC</td>
<td>Federal Election Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOTV</td>
<td>Get Out The Vote</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td>IRB</td>
<td>Institutional Review Board</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>Republican</td>
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<td>US/U.S</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>USM</td>
<td>University of Southern Mississippi</td>
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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

A. General Topic

The lives and opinions of celebrities are a daily topic and focus of media attention. Entire networks, such as the E, or Entertainment Network, are devoted to following the every move of various celebrities. Dr. David T. Morin, and colleagues at the School of Media and Communication at Bowling Green State University, write, “The line between celebrity and politician has blurred in recent years. Although celebrities have long been tied to politics, only recently have celebrities become so vocal regarding political matters,” (Morin, Ivory, and Tubbs 413). Many celebrities are outspoken concerning political matters in their personal lives, and sometimes their artistic creations also have a political focus. While some films and art forms are clearly political in nature, often films, music, and other art forms involve stories and situations that are unrelated to current politics. *The Wiley-Blackwell History of American Film* substantiates this situation. This publication also provides an important historical context concerning the wide variety of topics that are considered of acclaim and merit.

While some well-known and highly respected films are also artistic and entertaining, some also have a very distinct political message and perspective. Specifically, the 1939 film, *Gone With the Wind*, (Fig. 1), which won an Academy Award for Best Picture, is a drama concerning the Civil War. *Casablanca*, (Fig. 2), an Academy Award winner, completed in 1942, covers the subject of World War II. *The Patriot*, produced in 2000, involves a Revolutionary War theme. Additionally, *Braveheart*, from 1995, concerns the 13th Century Scottish War of Independence. While these, and a great many other films, songs, and artistic productions involve a historical-political viewpoint,
many other artistic pieces are also non-political. For example, Arthur, a Golden Globe Winner from 1982; Pretty Woman, and Almost Famous also Golden Globe winners from 1991 and 2000, respectively, are comedies that are not political in nature. Regardless of this fact, however, some research indicates that celebrities wield a substantial degree of political clout and influence upon the American public, and specifically on young people.

Figure 1                                                               Figure 2

*Gone With the Wind*                                                                 *Casablanca*

(www.amazon.com)                                                      (themotionpictures.net)

Despite the content of the films or music produced, many celebrities choose to voice their opinion and use their public appeal. Many celebrities are very outspoken on a wide array of topics, including politics, and particularly their choice of a presidential candidate. The general topic that is covered in this thesis is the possible influence between high profile celebrities and the outcomes of presidential elections as well as students’ opinions’ regarding the topic of celebrity influence.

**B. Specific Problem**

The specific problem to be researched is the issue of celebrity political impact upon the voting patterns of college-aged students and the general population in presidential elections. The problem examined focuses on the impact of celebrity political opinion, as measured by the correlation between political party affiliations of major
United States entertainment award winners, and the impact upon Presidential elections, as well as what students say about celebrity influence. These celebrity/political party affiliations are examined for correlations between corresponding political party affiliation and the political parties of presidential winners, to examine the possible and potential effects of celebrity endorsements upon the American public. Additionally analyzed are the first-hand opinions of students concerning celebrity influence, and whether students currently vote in similar or different ways than the American public.

C. The Problem’s Significance

The significance of this study is to examine whether or not there is a statistically relevant correlation between the political affiliations of prominent actors and actresses and other high profile celebrities and the outcomes of presidential elections. The problem is also significant because it takes both a look at the general voting population, as well as a close look at college-aged people and their opinions on celebrity political influence. The data examined investigates the political party of prominent actors and actresses and other celebrities, and examines whether these people are either Democratic, Republican, or Independent, and whether there is a correlation to the political party of winning candidates during presidential election years. This study also looks at a segment of the general voting population, specifically that of college-aged students’ views on this topic of celebrity voting influence and their impact upon presidential elections. This study is unique and contributes to the overall scholarly research on the topic because it examines a specific time period and specific presidential elections and very specific high-profile celebrities. In addition, it utilizes both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data, including original survey data, to examine both the historical correlations of celebrity
voting behavior and college-aged students’ first-hand survey reporting of their impressions concerning the political influence of celebrities. This study is also significant because the voting public and celebrities themselves can become more consciously aware of the effect of high-profile celebrities on election outcomes. Research indicates that “Increasing young adults’ voting behavior can potentially increase voter turnout in the future as well as strengthen the current democratic system,” (Trevino 2). Therefore, a major goal of this thesis has been to encourage responsible and thoughtful voting choices and campaign endorsements. In relation to this concept, researchers Sternthal, Dholakia, and Leavitt state that: “In experimental investigations of the effect of source credibility, it has been frequently demonstrated that highly trustworthy and expert spokespeople induce a greater positive attitude toward the position they advocate than do communicators with less credibility,” (Sternthal, Dholakia, and Leavitt 252).

Unfortunately, the specific impact of celebrity endorsement is not always carefully understood, and more research is necessary on this topic for use by presidential candidates, celebrities and the general voting public. American culture, in general, can benefit from more knowledge concerning the impact of celebrity opinion on the political process. One researcher, Grant McCracken, comments on the need for additional research on this topic. He states, “The received wisdom on celebrity endorsement is modest and imperfect, and existing models fail to capture several of the most interesting and central characteristics of the endorsement process,” (McCracken 310). This study is significant because it will add to the body of research on this topic and specifically focus on the most high profile celebrities. This study will also take a careful look at students’ opinions on this topic.
D. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study is to evaluate the extent to which prominent Hollywood actors and actresses and other high profile celebrities such as musicians, producers and directors influence the outcome of United States presidential elections, and specifically the particular influences on young people. In previous years, particularly in the 1950s era of McCarthyism, many celebrities did not voice their opinions. This is explained by Greg Krizman and Larry Ceplair in their article “Fifty Years: SAG Remembers the Blacklist,” “many celebrities were silenced and their opinions were censored,” (Krizman and Ceplair 1). The United States guarantees all citizens certain freedoms, and this historical fact was an unacceptable situation. On the other hand, while the First Amendment to the United States Constitution provides for free speech, and all U.S. citizens are guaranteed this right, it is important to recognize where significant spheres of influence exist. This is important so that individuals can make their own free and informed decisions. Celebrities can, and should continue to voice their opinion in a free democracy. In fact, they are frequently able to raise awareness and support for worthwhile political causes. Thus, a significant purpose of this study is to highlight the implications of source credibility, specifically as it relates to the impact of high-profile celebrities upon the outcome of presidential elections, and importantly, how this impacts young people. More will be stated later concerning the topic of credibility as it relates to celebrity endorsement of political candidates. The findings of this study can, therefore, subsequently be applied by political candidates for use in their campaign strategies. Furthermore, both celebrities and the general public can think more critically about their voting behavior and the significance of celebrity endorsements. As researchers Dholakia,
Roy, and Sternthal state, “Communication practitioners appear to share the belief that a communicator’s attributes of character have a significant impact on the persuasiveness of an appeal. Thus, politicians marshal the support of nationally prominent dignitaries to endorse their platforms,” (Dholakia, Roy, and Sternthal 223).

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

A. History of Celebrity Involvement and Politics

One significant study concerning voting behavior and the influence of celebrities entitled Hollywood Left and Right: How Movie Stars Shaped American Politics, by Steven J. Ross, takes a detailed and specific look at the important role that movie stars have played in shaping American politics, particularly voting behavior. The source states that “it appears that much of the research done on the topic of celebrity influence within politics has focused on surveys and personal interviews,” (Ross 1). For example, in “1993, researchers Prindle and Endersby surveyed 35 Hollywood ‘opinion leaders’, and compared their answers to similar questions used in a nationally-representative poll,” (Kendall 2). In a study published in 1984, Rothman and Lichter “surveyed 95 writers, producers, and directors of top fifty box office grossing films between 1964 and 1982, and compared their answers to other ‘elites’,” (Kendall 2). A recent study conducted by Todd Kendall at Clemson University, however, focuses on more economic and other quantifiable data. In the Kendall and Clemson study, the author attempts to look at several criteria that appear relevant to political party affiliation including race, gender, country-of-birth, and educational level.

Celebrity status resulting from acting roles in successful Hollywood films has garnered a great deal of media and public attention since the development of the first
silent film produced by Eadweard Mybridge sometime in the late 1870s. The public interest in celebrities and everything surrounding their lives has continued to grow following the introduction of the first Academy Awards at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel on May 16, 1929, for the 1928 film year. Currently, celebrity influence can be observed in many different elements. Music and current trends are several areas of celebrity influence that are fairly obvious. While politics is another sphere of influence, the degree to which celebrity impact on current political choices requires further investigation. *Forbes Magazine* recently asked a related question: “How do people we know little more about than the parts they play on screen have influence over the things we watch, the decisions we make, and the people we become?” (Rose 1). Journalist Andrew Glass writes that: “From the 1930s when studio moguls dominated the scene, to today’s celebrity-strewn fundraisers, members of Hollywood’s elite have sought to influence national political campaigns,” (Glass 1).

As James A. Thurber writes in *Campaigns and Elections American Style*, “Campaigns are wars, battles for the hearts and minds, but mostly for the votes of the American people,” (Eddins 1). Originally, at the outset of United States Presidential history, George Washington did not campaign for himself, and he was unanimously elected to the presidency in 1789. Very shortly after this, however, in the 1796 campaign between John Quincy Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the use of mudslinging began to be used in presidential campaigns. Other campaign tactics, including grassroots campaigns, carefully crafting an image, utilizing railroad whistle-stop tours, and front-porch strategies, have contributed to successful presidential campaigns over the years. More recently, technological advances and the use of star power have added a new dimension
in the war for the hearts and votes of the American people.

Geri Zabela Eddins writes in “Persuading the People: Presidential Campaigns,” that: “Florence Harding was the first spouse of a presidential hopeful to play a significant role in a campaign, and it was her idea to recruit popular movie stars and celebrities to endorse her husband, Warren Harding’s campaign,” (Eddins 5). In this campaign, Florence Harding encouraged the movie star and singer Al Jolson to visit the Harding’s front porch in Marion, Ohio. Warren Harding was a newspaper mogul, and not surprisingly, the newspapers took pictures of the Hardings on their front porch with Jolson and other celebrities. Harding’s 1920 Presidential campaign was successful, and ever since that time, celebrity endorsements have been used by presidential candidates.

B. 2012 Celebrity Presidential Endorsements

Currently, the issue of celebrity endorsement of politicians is an accepted phenomenon, and according to Lacey Rose, author of “Hollywood’s Most Influential Actors,” “…many people follow celebrities and value their opinions,” (Rose 1). For example, Current Israeli President Shimon Peres addressed the issue of celebrity endorsement of politicians when he spoke at the DreamWorks Animation Studio on March 9, 2012. On this occasion, President Peres stated, “Hollywood often wields more influence across the globe than world leaders do, and that children believe actors more than politicians,” (“Israel’s Shimon Peres” 1). Author Andrew Majoran, for instance, writes, “The measurable span of celebrity endorsement goes far beyond the realm of advertising and product promotion; it has also in recent years become a valuable tool in politics,” (Majoran 1). Additionally, Dr. Bruce Clark, Professor of Marketing at the D’Amore-McKim School of Business at Northeastern University, states concerning
celebrity endorsement that, “When it works, it works fabulously,” (Clark, qtd. in St. Martin 1).

Clearly, when well-respected U.S. publications, such as Life and Time magazines, and highly regarded political leaders comment on the political influence of Hollywood actors, the topic is of major importance. The topic of celebrity influence has been a significant issue for many years. For example, a May, 1968 Life magazine cover featured a picture of Paul Newman, along with the headline: “The Stars Leap Into Politics,” (“1968 Presidential Race” 1). The 1968 Time magazine states that: “In no other election have so many actors, singers, writers, poets, professional athletes and assorted other celebrities signed up, given out and turned on for the candidates,” (“1968 Presidential Race” 1). In the 2012 election, many famous faces lent their appeal to one of the presidential candidates. Both the databases “Academy Awards Best Pictures” and “Academy Award Winners and Categories” provide historical primary source data concerning the precise award winners since the inception of the Academy Awards. This data can be correlated with the database, “Tables, Charts, Data,” that is published by the Campaign Finance Institute in order to determine the high profile actors, actresses and directors that have donated to and supported the various political parties. The journal article “Political Money and the Oscar Aisle” by Chris Conway also is significant because it establishes a political connection and interest between Hollywood and Washington, and it supports this claim with specific names, facts, and figures. For example, Conway writes that, “Since 1990, the movie, television and music industries have contributed more than $200 million to federal candidates and parties,” (Conway 1). Additionally, the book, American Film and Politics from Reagan to Bush Jr., by Philip
John Davies and Paul Wells, concurs with Conway’s findings. Both studies agree that celebrities influence politics, however, this thesis strives to sort out both these theories, as well as conflicting theories and studies, and evaluate independent data to reach an informed conclusion concerning celebrity influence.

In one of the more famous celebrity political endorsements, Oprah Winfrey has been an outspoken supporter of Democratic Candidate Barack Obama before the 2008 Democratic Convention, and before Obama was even the party’s official nominee in the 2008 Presidential election. Ms. Winfrey’s endorsement of Obama is credited with “securing one million votes, helping him to win the 2008 Presidential election,” (Falkenthal 1). Oprah has continued her endorsement of President Obama throughout the 2012 Presidential campaign as well. Although this author’s research has indicated that Oprah’s endorsement in the 2008 election was worth a minimum of one million votes, other researchers may not necessarily agree. For instance, The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press found that, “Most Americans say endorsements by celebrities and other well-known figures, including Oprah, would not affect their voting decisions,” (“The Oprah Factor” 1). In fact, Pew research conducted a recent study that strongly conflicts with the theory and figures presented by Falkenthal. Pew Research continues their premise with the following data, and states that, “Nearly seven-in-ten Americans, (69%), say that if they heard Winfrey was supporting a presidential candidate it would not influence their vote. Among those who do see an impact, the net expected effects are so mixed as to cancel each other out. Among the roughly 30% who say they would be influenced by a Winfrey endorsement, 15% say they would be more likely to vote for the candidate and 15% say they would be less likely to do so,” (“The Oprah Factor” 1).
Additional authors, including David Morin and colleagues, state, also, that there is mixed literature on the topic of celebrity endorsements and their effects upon voting behavior. In an article published in the *Social Science Journal*, Morin and colleagues write that, “Although celebrities are becoming more outspoken in terms of political issues and candidates, research is mixed on whether their endorsements and pronouncements are effective in altering attitudes and behaviors,” (Morin, Ivory, and Tubbs 413).

Additionally, some research seems to indicate that the value of celebrity opinion lies in garnering attention for a particular candidate. For example, “Daniel Schnur, a campaign strategy expert and director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at USC, agreed that celebrities give candidates increased media coverage, which helps candidates gain exposure and spread their ideas,” (Schnur qtd. in Madans 1).

Some researchers, who believe the theory that celebrities have an influence upon political elections comment on the reasons for this impact. For example, Sternthal, Dholakia, and Leavitt state that: “Highly credible sources inhibit counterarguments to assertions made in the message, and the cognitive response predicts the superior persuasive power of a highly credible communicator,” (Sternthal, Dholakia, and Leavitt 252). Therefore, according to this theory, in the Oprah example, since Oprah is generally revered as a highly respected and credible source, her opinion carries a great deal of influence and many people will be persuaded by her voice due to her perceived status. In another study conducted by researchers McGinnies and Ward, it was found that highly respected individuals can sway people to change their original opinion on a topic. In this regard, the authors state, “Overall, the expert and trustworthy source generated the most opinion change,” (McGinnies and Ward 467). More will be stated in the Discussion.
section of this thesis concerning what comprises being a credible and trustworthy source. It is, however, important to note here, preliminarily, that wealth and fame does not necessarily and linearly correlate to credibility and trustworthiness. The topics of credibility and trustworthiness, as well as the topic of desensitization, as they relate to celebrity political persuasion, are covered at length in the Discussion.

Both Obama, as well as Republican Presidential candidate Mitt Romney had various lists of celebrity endorsers. In addition to Oprah, “…some of Obama’s other A-list celebrity endorsers for the 2012 election have included George Clooney, Robert De Niro, Will Smith, Antonio Banderas, Katy Perry, Beyonce, Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, Jay-Z, Meryl Streep, Denzel Washington, and Leonardo DiCaprio…,” (Falkenthal 2). Celebrity endorsements for Mitt Romney also included an extensive list. Among Romney’s endorsers were Kirk Cameron, Robert Duvall, Clint Eastwood, Kelsey Grammer, Sylvester Stallone, and Wayne Newton. According to The Washington Times, “The campaigns know megawatt stars can deliver crowds. More important, many of them can deliver money in the form of appearances at fundraisers … There is a serious benefit of proximity to stardom that can reap big benefits for a politician where it counts: the campaign coffers,” (Falkenthal 1). As far as celebrity campaign fundraisers are concerned, “Robert Duvall raised $800,000 for Governor Romney at Duvall’s Virginia farm, and George Clooney, Jay-Z, and Beyonce each raised over $20 million for the Obama campaign,” (Falkenthal 2). Clearly, evidence points to the fact that celebrity endorsements matter, both in terms of votes and campaign funds,” (Falkenthal 2). Additional relevant information and specific examples of celebrity endorsements of political campaigns are available in a number of credible sources including “The 100
Most Influential People in the History of Music”; the Open Secrets database “TV, Movies/ Music”; and “Republicans in Hollywood.” Additionally, the database “Hall of Fame: Political Donations of Celebrities, Musicians, and Authors,” is a significant source of information concerning celebrity political contributions and affiliations. Although this information is presented here, more will be stated in the Discussion section of this thesis concerning a data-based conclusion. This discussion will also cover if and how celebrity endorsements have an impact upon political campaigns.

C. The Impact of Celebrity Presidential Endorsements Upon Young Voters

The idea of using the star power of celebrity endorsements to reach young voters is not a new idea. It has been previously proven quite successful in motivating and mobilizing large groups of young voters. What is being discussed in this instance, however, is how celebrities can encourage young people to utilize their privilege to vote. This concept does not necessarily indicate if celebrities are able to encourage these same young people to vote for a certain candidate. One such successful instance of celebrity appeal to younger voters occurred in the 1960 Kennedy campaign for the presidency. In this situation, Lesley Gore, a pop singer who sang “It’s My Party” and other celebrities such as Patty Duke, Candace Bergen, and Jefferson Airplane, actively toured the country as spokespersons for then Senator Kennedy. The campaign tried to get at the “First Voters for Kennedy.” Lesley Gore, a young, popular celebrity during John F. Kennedy’s presidential campaign, was quoted in the New York Times as saying, “I understand there are 13 million first time voters this year. After my graduation from college next month I intend to give more of my time to visiting colleges and universities around the country,” (“1968 Presidential Race” 7). Current information also discusses celebrity targeting of
young people and their voting behavior. For example, in an article entitled “Celebrities’ Effect on Elections”, the author writes, “Celebrity endorsements are targeted towards young adults,” (Madans 1).

In addition to influencing the specific voting choices of young people, celebrities may also impact voting statistics in general. For example, according to a study conducted at Washington State University, research prior to 2004 “indicated that many young adults did not possess a strong interest in voting, and turnout among 18 to 24 year olds historically had been lower than any other age group,” (Austin 1). This same study found that in recent years, the ranks of young voters has substantially increased. For example, the Washington State University study reported that: “Between 2000 and 2004, the turnout in voters within that age group increased 11%,” (Austin 1). This particular study focused on the “get-out-the-vote” programs conducted in the 2004 presidential campaign. These “get-out-the-vote” campaigns targeted young people in particular, and involved celebrity participants and spokespersons such as Kayne West, Beyonce Knowles, and Christina Auguilera. What the Washington State University researchers found was significant. According to these researchers, there was a “dramatic increase in voter participation by young people in 2004 that was largely attributable to celebrity ‘get-out-the-vote’ promotions,” (Austin 1). These researchers further conclude that celebrity encouragement of the voting process can have both immediate as well as lasting effects. That is, many young people that decide to vote due to celebrity promotions also say that they plan to continue to vote throughout the years to come. Specifically, Austin and her colleagues state in their report that: “Appeals based on wishful identification with celebrities can increase young adults’ belief that participation can make a difference.
These results therefore indicate that celebrity–based GOTV campaigns may produce real benefits to the political process, regardless of celebrities’ grasp of the specific issues at hand,” (Austin 1).

**D. Theories Related to Celebrity Endorsement and Voting Behavior**

1. *William Domhoff’s Class Domination Theory of Power*

   Primary source documents of studies conducted by original theorist-research author G. William Domhoff will be utilized to frame and explain the possible reasons for any correlations that exist between award-winning celebrities’ political affiliations and the outcomes of presidential elections. For example, the Class-Domination Theory of Power, developed by researcher G. William Domhoff, states that “those who have money, particularly those who have income-producing land and businesses have the power, and have the ability to affect those who obtain and remain in power,” (Domhoff 1). Therefore, for example, if respected celebrities contribute monetarily to a candidate and speak out for a candidate, this can affect which candidates are elected and remain in power. This theory is highly important to this thesis, and it relates significantly to the development of the research questions and the hypothesis. For example, an important question that is generated from William Domhoff’s Class Domination Theory of Power, would be, “Due to the financial resources of celebrities, are they able to help support and elect political candidates of their choice?”

2. *Agenda-Setting Theory by Drs. Max McCombs and Donald Shaw*

   Another theory that will be discussed in relation to the interpretation of the data is the Agenda-Setting Theory by Drs. Max McCombs and Donald Shaw. In this theory, the authors focus on “the media’s presentation to the public of what it determines are the
relevant issues and viewpoints,” (McCombs and Shaw 1). Clearly, in this age of multimedia cultural relevance, this can include presenting celebrities’ opinions and perspectives on the current political candidates. This theory is very important to the research, and it is centrally related to the questions investigated. In particular, a relevant theoretical question generated by this theory would be, “Since the media selects which celebrities to portray, which can be related to celebrity status as reflected by awards show presentations, do the celebrities that are presented in the media the most also carry the most national political influence?”

3. Culturalist Theory of Political Change by Harry Eckstein

In Harry Eckstein’s Culturalist Theory of Political Change, the author discusses the premise that “people do not respond directly to situations, but respond to them through mediating orientations,” (Eckstein 790). In other words, people filter their behaviors (and for the purposes of this study, this includes voting behaviors) through their belief systems. Therefore, for example, if respected celebrities speak out for a candidate, this can intersect with an individual’s belief system and influence their voting behavior. This theorist’s body of work is highly relevant to this research paper both for the relationship to the research and to the development of the research questions. For example, an appropriate research question relevant to the Culturalist Theory of Political Change would be, “Do celebrities that have high status and national respect carry significantly more political influence nationally due to their public perception and level of status and respect?” This topic is also investigated by researcher Craig Garthwaite and discussed in his publication: “Celebrity Endorsement of Political Candidates Can Make a Difference at the Polls,” (Garthwaite and Moore 1). Each of these three theories will be
discussed in relation to the data and the findings of the study.

4. Additional Studies of Celebrity Influence on Voting Behavior

Additional research conducted during this thesis has proven useful in explaining the research data. One recent study of the interaction between celebrity opinion and voting behavior was conducted by Scarborough Research. The study was entitled “Voting Influenced By Celebrity.” The large-scale study involved 34 million adults, which translates to approximately 18 percent of the United States population. The Scarborough Research study particularly analyzed whether registered voters say that celebrity endorsements influence them to buy a product or vote for a certain candidate. In this study, celebrity influence was measured according to how registered voters agreed with the statement, “A celebrity endorsement may influence me to buy a product,” (“Democrat Voter Base” 3). Although there are variations according to various demographic characteristics, overall, the Scarborough study found that “statistics find celebrity endorsements do not necessarily translate into actual votes,” (“Democrat Voter Base” 1).

This particular 2012 study, conducted by Scarborough Research, also looked at varying characteristics and differing factors. For example, the Scarborough Study looked at whether respondents were Republican, Democratic, or Independent, and how celebrities influenced voting behavior within these parameters. What the study found in this dimension is that those registered as Democrats were somewhat more likely than other political affiliations to be influenced by celebrity opinions. Specifically, the Scarborough study determined that while thirty-one percent of all voters admitted being influenced to select a particular product by celebrity endorsement, Democrats, as a block of voters, admitted to being influenced by celebrity endorsements forty-six percent of the
time, or 15% more often than the general voting population.

The Scarborough Study also found other interesting characteristics related to the interaction between celebrity endorsements and voting behavior. In particular, this study determined that social networking characteristics are related to the influence of celebrity endorsements upon voting behavior. Specifically, voters who follow celebrities find out much of their information from social networking sites, and these particular individuals are influenced by what is presented on these social networking sites. According to Scarborough, for instance, “Voters influenced by celebrities are more likely to take to Twitter, Facebook and other social sites to access news and information, find out information about services, and comment on brands,” (“Democrat Voter Base” 2). Not surprising, these voters tend to be much younger than the average voter. Additionally of interest, as well, the Scarborough study found that those registered voters who claim to be most influenced by celebrity endorsements are divided along both geographic and racial lines. For instance, “Scarborough demographic statistics found that voters influenced by celebrities are 73% more likely than other registered voters to be African-American,” (“Democrat Voter Base” 2).

In another very recent study conducted by Valerie R. O’Regan, entitled “Celebrities and Their Political Opinions: Who Cares?” O’Regan also noted findings similar to both the Scarborough study as well as the data presented in this study. The O’Regan study stated that, “In fact, trust in a celebrity for political information was minimal, and the results were not statistically significant,” Furthermore, when administering a questionnaire on the topic of celebrity influence upon voting behavior, “a majority declared that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that
celebrities are more politically informed than average citizens,” (O’Regan 6). O’Regan did determine, however, people perceive that although celebrities are not any more informed about political candidates or issues than the average citizen, they are in fact, “influential as far as drawing attention to a political issue or candidate; that is, getting the public’s attention,” (O’Regan 10). When it comes to who to trust, however, it appears that voters, and young voters, particularly in the case of this study, “are more likely to trust the endorsement of someone active in politics, such as a politician or interest group, or someone they know like their family or friends,” (O’Regan 10). Another study published at American University corroborates this finding. The author writes that, “When asked how much influence various people have on their political views, young people named parents as the top influence, with 54% saying they had a great deal of or moderate influence on their vote,” (“Analysis of Young Voters in the 2008 Election” 13). The study continued with additional evidence, and presented the statement, “Despite the rock stars, sports figures and talk show hosts dotting the political landscape, 68% of young people say celebrities do not influence their vote,” (“Analysis of Young Voters in the 2008 Election” 13).

Other recent studies, such as the study conducted by Kaye Usry and Michael Cobb entitled “Seeing Stars: Are Young Voters Influenced by Celebrity Endorsements of Candidates?”, also looks at the interaction of celebrity influence and voting behavior. In this 2010 study conducted at North Carolina State University, the researchers found similar results to the Scarborough and O’Regan studies, as well as to the findings in this study. In this 2010 North Carolina State University study of college students concerning the persuasion effects of celebrity endorsement upon voting behavior and a political
candidate’s effectiveness, the authors, Usry and Cobb, stated in their findings that, “Overall, we fail to find evidence that celebrity endorsements positively affect college students’ evaluations of political candidates or influence their voting decisions,” (Usry 1). As with the previous studies cited, however, there were some unanticipated findings derived from the data for this study. One such unintended finding involves a “backlash effect,” (Usry 1). In this situation, while celebrities’ endorsements of political candidates do not yield political clout or results as measured by voting behavior, it does, however, put celebrities at risk for affecting their own perceived reputations. While Usry and Cobb noted that celebrity presence at a political event can have the effect of boosting attendance, they also stressed that, “The images of celebrities who endorse a candidate, however, are prone to backlash effects, mediated by respondents’ partisanship. Celebrities’ endorsement of a particular candidate can cause a celebrity to become alienated from whole sections of the population who do not support that particular candidate. In short, celebrities are unable to directly affect political outcomes but they risk harming their reputations by trying.” (Usry 1).

In a separate study entitled, “Celebrity Endorsements Do Not Help Political Candidates,” conducted at North Carolina State University by Dr. Michael Cobb, a collaborator on the above-mentioned study, Cobb found similar results. In addition to the backlash effects upon their own celebrity status, celebrities’ associations can also harm a political candidate’s reputation as well. For instance, Cobb states that, “Celebrity endorsements do not help political candidates—but they can hurt them. We found that by exposing young people to a celebrity endorsement, they liked the candidate less and were less likely to vote for him,” (Cobb 1).
Other studies continue to echo the findings of each of these studies. A 2008 study conducted by the Pew Research Center during the 2008 presidential campaign found that the endorsements of very well-known celebrities had very little impact upon voting behavior. The study found that “endorsements by Jay Leno, Bill Gates, Kayne West, Angelina Jolie, Jon Stewart, Donald Trump, among others, made no difference whatsoever in the voting plans of over three-quarters of the voting public,” (Willett 1-2). In fact, a study conducted by Roy Subhadip seems to corroborate this data. In, “To Use the Obvious Choice,” author/researcher, Subhadip, found that, “Trustworthiness is a significant factor impacting celebrity influence and frequently an underexposed celebrity is more influential than an overexposed celebrity,” (Subhadip 1). The Primary Field, however, is an arena where the celebrity endorsement factor, can make a difference. Cobb states that, “In the U.S., in particular, where candidates have to win over large numbers of the voters in their own party primaries before being presented to the general electorate as a candidate, a celebrity endorsement can help a candidate stand out in a crowded field,” (Cobb qtd. in Willett 2). Cobb continues by concluding that “although celebrities can possibly have a positive effect upon a Primary candidate within a venue of like-minded individuals at a campaign rally, this does not translate across the voting population, and can, in fact, have a negative impact within a country-wide Presidential election,” (Cobb qtd. in Willett 2). As a result of his research, Cobb consequently advises, “Once a candidate is actually up for election, the celebrities would be doing the candidates and themselves a favor by fading into the woodwork,” (Cobb qtd. in Willett 2).

While it is highly questionable and controversial whether or not celebrity opinion has an impact upon voting behavior in presidential elections, as researcher Michael Cobb
mentions, there may, in fact, be a meaningful impact when it comes to celebrity influences in primary elections, and perhaps in fundraising efforts beyond that point. The reason for this, however, is not so much in terms of actual voting, but the value lies in fundraising during the primaries and beyond. Author Howard Koplowitz notes that the impact in this venue cannot be widespread because “The turnout in these events is really low,” (Koplowitz 1). However, in terms of fundraising, for example, on September 18, 2012, pop singer, Beyonce Knowles and her husband rap artist Jay-Z held a fundraiser at their New York City 40/40 Club for President and then-Presidential candidate, Barack Obama. “Tickets are priced at $40,000, and the event will be limited to about 100 guests,” (Bingham 1), wrote author Amy Bingham of ABC News. This fundraiser translated to roughly $4 million in support for the Obama Presidential Campaign. Since campaigns clearly require significant financial resources for such things as travel, campaign staffing, and various forms of media advertising, many qualified applicants can be prevented from campaigning in the presidential race because they are never financially able to make it to the primaries. This highly significant and crucial step is often financed by relatively few wealthy individuals, with celebrities increasingly among the members of this financing group. Author David Walsh, for example, writes that, “As everyone in America knows and the media brazenly acknowledges, winning the presidential nomination of one of the two major parties depends on large measure on collecting more money than any of your rivals,” (Walsh 1). Thus, it is entirely possible, and a topic for another study in itself, that celebrities may wield their influence, not so much by impacting the general voting population as a whole, but by playing a large role in who makes it, financially, into the arena to be voted upon in the first place. Again, to restate,
while this is a topic for another study, if this premise proves to be true, then, in fact, celebrities could play a major role in deciding who becomes president, just not in the way that was originally hypothesized. In fact, the very small percentage of the wealthiest citizens of the United States, which in a very great many cases are celebrity actors and musicians, are helping to choose from a pool of over 300 million U.S. citizens, those two or three individuals who will run for President. If this premise is true, then William Domhoff’s Class-Domination Theory of Power would seem to make sense. However, the issue of celebrity influence in the primaries is a topic for another study.

Based on the evidence presented in numerous studies, it appears that many celebrities and political candidates have, over-the-years, made the incorrect assumption that celebrity endorsement would be beneficial in terms of direct votes to a candidate. They have also believed that celebrity support would directly translate and correspond to gained votes in a political election. While actual evidence derived from recent studies is reflecting the opposite to be true, this remains a little-understood phenomenon. A great many people, including highly talented celebrities and intelligent political candidates, assume that their association will have a positive effect upon the desired voting behavior of individuals. It appears that this is an assumption, based on perceived observable logic, but not upon factual evidence. Both celebrities and politicians alike, in addition to the general voting populace, have assumed that these associations and endorsements have been positive, while in actuality, often the opposite has been true. In a very interesting study by Jennifer Brubaker, of the University of North Carolina, entitled, “It doesn’t affect my vote: Third-person effects of Celebrity Endorsements on College Voters in the 2004 and 2008 Presidential Elections,” Brubaker attempts to explain this phenomenon.
Essentially, Brubaker’s study finds that it appears that a great many people believe that the opinions of celebrities will influence others’ voting behavior, but they state that it does not, however, affect their own behavior. This was exactly what was found in the college survey as well. In summary, people think, incorrectly, that celebrities’ opinions have a dramatic impact upon people and their voting behavior, but essentially a very small percentage of people claim to be influenced. It could be generalized to conclude that most people believe that celebrity opinion matters, but hardly anyone admits that it matters to them. There is a discrepancy, therefore, between what people believe to be true and what is actually true in regard to celebrity influence. Brubaker states that, “Specifically, individuals exposed to a persuasive communication will expect the communication to have a greater effect on others than on themselves,” (Brubaker 1). Brubaker goes on to explain that, “In 2007, Pew research reported that only 15% of respondents believed that Oprah’s endorsement of Obama would positively affect their vote; however, 60% believed that the endorsement would benefit Obama,” (Pew qtd. in Brubaker 1). Clearly the actual evidence obtained through research and study indicates that celebrity opinion does not match up to the public’s perception of the significance of this opinion. Furthermore, data indicates that, contrary to popular belief, celebrity endorsement does not positively impact voter behavior. In addition to the studies covered here, there are also a number of interesting studies and theories, discovered during the course of this research, that have relevance to the data findings. These studies and theories include George Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory, including the topic of desensitization. The Yale Approach, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and the Information Integration Theory are all theories that have relevance to the data and that are
applied in the Discussion section of this thesis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

A. Specific Research Question

The specific research question for this study is related to the collection of various sets of data. This data is interrelated for the purposes of this thesis topic. The specific relevant research question for this thesis is: “Does there appear to be a statistical correlation between award-winning celebrity voting patterns and winning Presidential candidates, and if so, does it appear that high-profile celebrities are influencing students and the general voting population?” In other words, another way of framing this same thesis question is: “Do major, award-winning celebrities dramatically impact the political choices that Americans will make, particularly in Presidential elections, and how do students feel about celebrity influence?”

B. Specific Additional Research Questions

This research thesis will potentially examine several additional research questions that have relevance for current society. These variables and research questions principally apply to quantitative methodology analysis and measures. Some questions for close consideration and analysis include: “How did high-profile celebrities vote in presidential elections?”; “Do celebrities vote for more Republican, Democratic, or Independent presidential candidates?”; “What percentages are reflected by these political parties?”; “Do celebrity voting records mirror popular voting records for presidential election years, or are they different?”

Additionally, several important questions concerning the variable of the voting patterns of college students will be addressed and measured through the quantitative,
measurable aspects of the methodology survey. Some of the questions for consideration include: “Do male and female voters tend to vote the same or differently?”; “How do college-aged students feel about celebrity influence?”; “Do college students feel that celebrities influence others’ opinions?”; “Do college-aged people feel that celebrities should publically state their voting preferences?”; “Are there voting differences based on age?”; and “Are there voting differences based on political party affiliation?”

C. Hypothesis

“Early research supported the intuitive belief that positive sources on credibility, as indicated by indicators of trustworthiness, expertness, and attractiveness, enhance persuasion,” (Wiener and Mowen 1). This research thesis attempts to look at a specific segment of high profile individuals; that is, top, award-winning celebrities and their impact upon some of the most important political events in American history, the presidential election process.

This research paper presents the hypothesis that celebrities do have an impact upon Presidential elections specifically through influencing college-aged students and the general population and their voting behaviors. It is postulated that the statistically prevalent political party affiliation of award-winning actors, actresses, producers, directors, and musicians during election years will correlate to the political party of the elected presidential candidate during these years. This is expected due to the anticipated overwhelming influence carried by celebrities upon the American public and also upon the voting behaviors of young people. It is believed that this will be borne out by a correlation between prevalent political party affiliation, as defined by personal campaign contributions of the award-winning actors, actresses, producers, directors, and musicians,
for election years. It is expected that celebrity contributions will correlate to the political party of the elected presidential candidate during election years. It is the hypothesis of this thesis that this correlation will be found in the data due to the overwhelming influence carried by celebrities upon the American public, and particularly upon young voters.

D. Type of Methodology / Overall Quantitative Design

Although the methodology of this study will refer to both qualitative data and quantitative data, every effort has been made to quantify and measure the data in objective, mathematical terms for both the campaign contribution data as well as the student, survey component. This thesis will principally focus on a quantitative design methodology because this type of research design is oftentimes most easily replicated for future studies. For example, a separate research study by Todd D. Kendall and Craig Garthwaite indicates that correlations between celebrity contributions and political influence can be analyzed.

The method of study for the campaign contribution data includes the listing of all award winners specified for the years 1989 through 2012 for six separate Award Shows. All of this data concerning officially recorded winners is primary data that is obtained from the official sites for the Awards shows. The political contributions by these individuals have been researched through the FEC database, a primary-source of archived government databases, and all relevant information has been placed in a table next to their names. A monetary amount, if applicable, has been recorded in each of the categories of Democratic, Republican, and Independent. Following this, the winning Presidential candidate and party has been listed in the table according to the
corresponding year. The monetary contributions have then been examined and correlated to percentages in regard to the winning political party campaign totals. After all the data were collected and tabulated, the data measures were then examined for statistical correlation and to determine whether principle Hollywood actors, actresses, directors, producers, and musicians have consistently wielded a significant influence on recent American political history.

The Addendum of this thesis includes all of this data used for this analysis. The headings at the top of the chart indicate the awards shows that have been used for the purposes of this study. The six awards shows include the Academy Awards, the Golden Globes, the American Music Awards, the Emmys, the Country Music Awards, and the Grammys. Each of the six Awards shows have five specific awards listed for the years 1989 through 2012. The entry includes the name of the winning individual and the monetary amount of any campaign contribution to the Republican, the Democratic, and/or the Independent party for each of these award-winning years. (The operational definition of the Independent Party Candidate for the purposes of this study is listed as the frontrunner of the various Independent parties.)

The operational top five specific measures or categories selected for the Academy Awards include: 1) Best Actor; 2) Best Actress; 3) Best Supporting Actor; 4) Best Supporting Actress; and 5) Best Director. The specific five categories chosen for the Golden Globes include: 1) Best Actor, Motion Picture, Drama; 2) Best Actress, Motion Picture, Drama; 3) Best Actor, Motion Picture, Comedy; 4) Best Actress, Motion Picture, Comedy; and 5) Best Director. The American Music Awards categories chosen for this study include: 1) Favorite Group of the Year in the Pop-Rock Category; 2) Male Artist of
the Year in the Pop-Rock Category; 3) Female Artist of the Year in the Pop-Rock Category; 4) Male Artist of the Year in the Country Category; 5) Female Artist of the Year in the Country Category. The exact categories selected for the Emmys include: 1) Best Actor in a Drama Series; 2) Best Actress in a Drama Series; 3) Best Supporting Actor in a Drama Series; 4) Best Supporting Actress in a Drama Series; and 5) An Average of the Previous Four Subcategories. (This fifth category is listed as an average and in this manner because there was not another major, consistent award given throughout 1989 to 2012 for the Emmys.) The Country Music Awards categories are: 1) Entertainer of the Year; 2) Male Vocalist of the Year; 3) Female Vocalist of the Year; 4) Musician of the Year; and 5) New Artist of the Year. In the case of a group award, the lead singer will be recorded along with their campaign contributions. The final award show in this study, the Grammy’s, includes the categories of: 1) Record of the Year; 2) Best Pop Vocal Performer- Male; 3) Best Pop Vocal Performer- Female; 4) Best Rock Vocal Performer- Male; and 5) Best Rock Vocal Performer- Female. With the Grammys, sometimes these last two awards were presented as a single award to either a male or a female. When this occurs, this final entry figure will be doubled so that there will always be five categories per award per year.

With the selection of each of these categories an effort has been made to choose categories that are equivalent in prestige and of some roughly equal stature. Additionally, some effort has been made to choose somewhere near a 50% probability for both males and females to represent a total of the entire awards. Great effort has been made to include both a representative and comprehensive measurement from the various high-profile United States awards shows. In each case, either the individual award winner has
been listed, or in the case of some music awards, the lead singer. In the case of a group award, such as a collaboration of directors, the first winner listed has been recorded, in order to account for consistency. The amount of the contribution is listed next to the individual names, and the political party that received the donation is indicated by the letter R, D, or I. In many cases, the award-winning celebrity donated to a political party in years other than their award-winning year. When this was the case, a plus sign, (+), was indicated next to the R, D, or I in the political party affiliation column.

E. Type of Methodology / Principally Quantitative Survey Component

(Partly Qualitative)

Another mainly quantitative aspect of the study focuses on a one group design survey, which includes specific voluntary reporting of college-age students’ voting behavior in the 2012 presidential election. After discussions with both the Thesis Director and the Thesis Advisor in the Thesis Prospectus Class, it was determined that both the Awards data and the Student Survey data would be included for analysis in this study. The survey will be considered the principle focus of the data analysis. Analysis of the survey data has focused on similarities and differences of student voting behavior as it relates to celebrity influence. While an opinion survey, by its very nature, involves some level of qualitative data, the goal has been to measure and quantify the quantitative aspect of the data for objective, mathematical analysis and display.

The sampling technique and general guidelines for this non-directive, self-report, face-to-face questionnaire survey have been discussed with the thesis advisor for this paper. For the purposes of this study, a 16-question survey was developed to ask 100 college students on the University of Southern Mississippi campus their opinions
concerning the 2012 election and their views on the political influence of major national celebrities. Students were also asked whether or not United States celebrities had any impact on their own personal voting choices. A copy of this survey is labeled as Survey 1-1, and included in the Addendum.

A quota sampling technique was used for this questionnaire survey. Of some of the main survey sampling techniques, which include random, systematic stratified, cluster, spatial, and quota, it was determined that quota sampling was the best choice. There were various reasons for this choice. Quota sampling is a non-probability form of stratified sampling. This form of sampling is frequently used for studies involving survey participants. As with stratified sampling, in quota sampling, the population is first stratified into mutually exclusive subgroups. The mutually exclusive subgroups for this survey included college-aged students at the University of Southern Mississippi. After the population characteristics are classified in a stratified sampling, the random sampling occurs within the classifications. Random sampling means that all members of the group have an equal chance of being selected. In a quota sample, after the population qualities are achieved, then a target number of surveys are obtained. Although random sampling is frequently best for generalization to the larger population, often constraints such as time, access to sample information, and finances, do not allow for this form of sampling.

In the case of this survey, it was decided to survey 100 students for this quota sampling. In order to arrive at this figure, a survey random calculator was used to determine an appropriate sample size. The population from which the survey subjects were drawn was the USM population. Although this figure varies from year-to-year, the figure currently is approximately 15,000 students. A 95% confidence rate for this quota
sample is considered a desirable and valid confidence rate. To achieve this confidence rate, 95 students were required. It was decided that it was better to round up to 100 both because larger numbers yield more reliable results and because 100 is an easier and more logical figure to work with when considering percentages.

This survey reflects the tunnel format. In the study, demographic data is included as well. All questions are asked in the exact same order and wording, in order to keep the format consistent from individual to individual. The location selected for administration of the questionnaires was in front of the main cafeteria within the Thad Cochran Center, and, I, as the survey researcher, administered all of the questionnaires. IRB approval, including submission of all proper forms, submission of the sample survey questionnaire, successful completion of all on-line courses, and all necessary and appropriate signatures, was obtained and is documented, before any questionnaires were given. Permission to conduct this survey was originally intended to be applied for in January, 2013 in order to conduct the surveys the following April. However, after revisions and final committee approval, the survey was administered in March through May of 2014. Although the survey was not piloted at an earlier time, it was reviewed and approved by both the thesis advisor and the IRB Committee to meet all appropriate standards. This date was intended to be after the students have had some time to reflect on their November, 2012 voting behavior. Essentially, the survey investigates college students’ personal reports concerning celebrity influence on their voting choices for the 2012 Presidential election.

Although the data from the award-winning celebrity political contributions and the student survey could initially appear unrelated; in fact, for the purposes of this study, they are used for comparison, and are, therefore, highly interrelated. The college student
survey looks at whether celebrities impact students politically. The Awards data looks at whether celebrities influence the general population in elections over time. It is interesting to analyze whether current students and the general population, over the span of time, feel that celebrities have a meaningful and impactful political influence. It is interesting to analyze whether students and the general population have the same or different voting behaviors as it relates to celebrity influence.

Chapter 4: Results

All results for both the celebrity political campaign contribution data as well as the Student Survey data are discussed in this Results section. Wherever, possible, within the body of the work, there are charts and graphs and tables to discuss the parameters described. The charts and graphs displayed include the data specified in the original thesis prospectus as well as additional data discovered during this research. Additionally, all original surveys, conducted according to IRB specifications have been saved and are available for review and/or storage by Honors College.

A. General Summary of Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

The results of this study and all other data obtained are included in this Results section of this thesis. Many of the results are displayed in tables, charts, and graphs within this section. After obtaining and recording all of the data, the data was then examined and analyzed in two parts. The first part included the celebrity contribution data, and the second part included the student survey data on celebrity political influence. The findings were then interpreted in light of the hypothesis, the specific research questions, and the theories and concepts discussed within this thesis, as well as additional studies and theories obtained during the course of this research. As mentioned in the
In a cumulative research study entitled “The Evolution of Media Effects Theory,” conducted by Russell W. Neuman and Lauren Guggenheim, the authors comment on public behavior and public policy effects. One previous study, for instance, by Craig Garthwaite at Northwestern University had stated that since Oprah Winfrey decided to support Barack Obama, Obama probably received somewhere in the vicinity of one million additional votes in the presidential primary race for his 2008 presidential campaign due to her celebrity endorsement. Garthwaite stated that: “If you look at the commercial landscape of Oprah, her influence exceeds that of any other celebrity—perhaps in history,” (Garthwaite 2). It was mentioned in the prospectus that it will be interesting to know if there would be any similar effect of Oprah in the 2012 election. Now, in 2014, this question appears to be answered negatively according this thesis data.

B. Specific Findings Related to Celebrity Contribution Data

After comparing total donations of celebrity award winners and available campaign election totals, it was found that the contribution of celebrity donations is approximately 0.01% of the total campaign funding. This figure is for the total available campaign donations for 1989 to 2012. Therefore, it has been determined that celebrity donations, as measured by campaign donations, have a very negligible influence upon presidential election campaign outcomes. From the following charts and tables, it can be seen that award-winning celebrities do not generally donate large amounts of political campaign funds during their award-winning years. Sometimes these celebrities donate large amounts of money during other years, but these donations are not contained within the scope of this study. The results of each of the award show categories are displayed in a series of tables contained within the Addendum section of this thesis.
Although there is no correlation between celebrity giving and the winning presidential party, there are interesting results for each of the six analyzed awards shows. For the Academy Awards, for example, there were a number of outstanding contributors throughout the years 1989 to 2012. These contributors include Robin Williams, who contributed $50,000 to the Democratic Party in 1997 and Steven Spielberg who donated $32,000 to the Democratic Party. In 2011 Meryl Streep also gave a substantial contribution to the Democratic Party in 1998. In 2012 Anne Hathaway also gave a contribution of $50,000 to the Democratic Party. For all the years involved, there were ten identified award-winners that made political contributions, which totaled $147,300. Of these ten, all contributions went to the Democratic Party. Only two award-winners, Jack Nicholson and James Cameron, contributed $1000 each to the Republican Party during non-award winning years.

From the data obtained, it appears that most Academy Award winners contribute to the Democratic Party. For instance, for the year 1997, the Award-winners, their contributions, and their political party affiliation included: Best Actor: Jack Nicholson, who did not contribute in 1997, but did contribute to the Republican Party in other non-Award-winning years. For that same year, Robin Williams, who won for Best Supporting Actor, contributed $50,000 to the Democratic Party, and he also contributed to the Democratic Party in other years. Helen Hunt won for Best Actress in 1997, and contributed $1,000 to the Democratic Party in this year as well as other years. Kim Bassinger, who won for Best Supporting Actress did not contribute to any political party, either that year or in other years. James Cameron, who won for Best Director, did not contribute during this award-winning year, but he did contribute to the Republican Party
in other years. The specific Academy Award data, including names, dates, amounts, and political party, are displayed in Table A1-1 of the Addendum.

Figure 3

Anne Hathaway

Jack Nicholson

(www.hollywoodreporter.com)

(www.huffingtonpost.com)

The Golden Globes also exhibit similar data to that portrayed by the Academy Awards. It is also not very common to see an entry for a political contribution from a Golden Globe winner during a winning year. Additionally, here again, there are substantially more Democratic contributors than there are Republican contributors. Specifically, during the years 1989 to 2012, there were eleven political contributions from award winners, which totaled $140,675. Martin Scorsese contributed during three separate award-winning years. During these years, the only Republican to contribute was Robert Downey Jr. In 2010, Robert Downey Jr contributed $4,600 to the Republican Party. The balance was contributed to the Democratic Party. The largest Golden Globes contributors were Steven Spielberg in 1999 with a $47,000 contribution; Julian Schnabel in 2008 with a $28,500 contribution; and Meryl Streep in 2012 with a $40,000 contribution. The specific Golden Globes data are illustrated in Table A1-2 of the Addendum.
The American Music Awards also yield some interesting results. Again, as with previous awards shows, the most common entry for a political contribution is zero. In fact, during this time period, there were only two award winners that made political contributions during their award-winning years. Both contributors donated to the Democratic Party. Sheryl Crowe gave $1,000 in 2003 and Mariah Carey also gave a substantial contribution of $100,000 in 1993. What is also interesting about the American music Awards is the absence of political contribution giving in other years as well. With several of the other awards shows, a notation with a + sign was made next to an R or D to indicate that these celebrities contributed during other years. This was not the case for the American Music Awards. The American Music Awards information is illustrated in Table A1-3 in the Addendum.

Figure 5

Mariah Carey

(www.rollingstone.com)

The Emmy Awards show category had the lowest contribution totals thus far. For the Emmys for this time period there were six political contributors. Blythe Danner, of Huff contributed $1500 to the Democratic Party, and Kyra Sedgwick, who gave $8,700, also contributed to the Democratic Party. Bradley Whitford of The West Wing contributed $8,950; John Spencer, also of The West Wing, contributed $28,750. West Wing
actress Alison Janey contributed $2,000, and Alan Alda, also of *The West Wing*, contributed $1,000. All *West Wing* contributors donated to the Democratic Party. This is an interesting fact to note, and it appears possible that these actors and actresses may have influenced each other, but this is a topic for another study. Emmy Awards contributions by award-winning celebrities during award-winning years totaled $50,900. The details of the Emmy Awards data are displayed in Table A1-4 of the Addendum.

Figure 6

Alan Alda

(www.bergproperties.com)

The Country Music Awards category was the least political category of all the awards shows. Although some award winners made contributions in other years, there was not a single contribution by an award winner during their award winning year. The specific winners and other details for the Country Music Awards are portrayed in Table A1-5.

The Grammys also followed similar characteristics of the results of the other awards shows. In this instance, as well, there were very few contributions by award winners during their award-winning years. All contributors from the Grammys made donations to the Democratic Party. The contributors in this category for this time frame
included Sheryl Crowe and Rob Thomas. Rob Thomas contributed $1000 in 2002. Sheryl Crowe contributed twice. In 1999 she contributed $6,000, and in 2002 she contributed $3500. The details are displayed in Table A1-6. An additional graph that displays contributions by award classification is also included here, and labeled Graph A1-6.

Additional tables and graphs, that display contributions by award classification, are also included here, and labeled Table A1-7, A1-7-1, and Graph A1-7.

Table A1-7
Contributions From 1989-2012 By Award Show

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>Academy Awards</th>
<th>Golden Globes</th>
<th>American Music Awards</th>
<th>Emmy Awards</th>
<th>Country Music Awards</th>
<th>Grammy Awards</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$ 4,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$ 4,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>$ 147,300</td>
<td>$136,075</td>
<td>$ 101,000</td>
<td>$ 50,900</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$ 10,500</td>
<td>$ 445,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$ 147,300</td>
<td>$140,675</td>
<td>$ 101,000</td>
<td>$ 50,900</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$ 10,500</td>
<td>$ 450,375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph A1-7
Total Contributions From 1989-2012 By Award Show

Graph A1-7-1
Award Show Contribution Percentages

Contribution Percentages 1989-2012
Although the result appears intuitive as a result of the displayed celebrity contribution data, it is still important to analyze the celebrity campaign contributions in relation to the totals. There was not found to be a correlation between celebrity contributions and the political party of the winning presidential candidate. This was determined based on total available campaign contributions reported to the FEC for the years 1989 to 2012, which totaled $15,605,480,000. When the celebrity contribution figures of $450,375 for these years are analyzed and correlated as a percentage of the total, the result is a figure very close to zero. Therefore, according to this study, it was not found that there is any correlation between celebrity contributions and winning presidential political party. This is especially so, considering that for the years discussed in this study, 1989 to 2012, there were six complete presidential terms. George H. W. Bush, (Fig. 7), was President from 1989-1992. This was followed by two terms of Bill
Clinton, (Fig. 8), from 1993-2000. George W. Bush, (Fig. 9), was President for two terms during the years 2001 to 2008. President Barack Obama, (Fig. 10), served his first term of presidency between 2009 to 2012. During this time, $445,775 of $450,375 in award-winning celebrity dollars, or 99%, went to the Democratic Party. Both statistically and logically, since there were both three Republican and three Democratic Presidential terms, there does not appear to be a correlation between celebrity influence and the political outcome of Presidential elections.

Figure 7
President George H.W. Bush
(www.timesunion.com)

Figure 8
President Bill Clinton
(www.learnnc.org)

Figure 9
President George W. Bush
(www.georgewbushlibrary.smu.edu)

Figure 10
President Barack Obama
(www.nbcbayarea.com)
One characteristic that can clearly be seen from this data is that celebrities tend to vote Democratic in Presidential elections. Of the over $450,000 in celebrity political contributions in award-winning years, 99% was given to Democratic candidates or the Democratic Party. This does not even account for all of the funds given by these same celebrities during non-award-winning years or by other high profile celebrities who did not win an award. Clearly this monetary figure would be much higher if all of these contributions were accounted for as well. Various sources also corroborate the large donation figures by celebrities in the entertainment industry to the Democratic Party. For example, David Walsh writes in a February, 2007 article that, “In 2002 entertainment ranked first among all industries funding Democratic Party committees, and roughly 80 percent of the industry’s party contributions went to Democratic candidates and committees; just 20 percent went to the Republican party,” (Walsh 2). There are some interesting theories concerning some of the reasons why celebrities tend to vote Democratic. Walsh points out that films tend to be more appealing to the public and do better in a permissive culture. Walsh states that, “The dominance of the Christian Right, for example, would not be helpful to those often attempting to market violence and sexual aggressiveness,” (Walsh 3). Author Greg Mitchell additionally adds a historical perspective and states that much of this situation has to do with information concerning Hollywood’s outcry against Upton Sinclair. Mitchell writes that, “The studio chiefs were so afraid of famed Socialist writer Upton Sinclair winning the race for Governor that they took several outrageous actions that inspired liberal actors, writers and directors to finally organize and speak out. And, as we all know, they haven’t stopped since, (Mitchell 1).
C. Specific Findings Related to Student Survey Data

This survey was designed to find out more about young people’s opinions concerning the relationship between award-winning celebrities and their impact on presidential elections. The data for this quota questionnaire was collected by distributing the 100 surveys among students at the USM Hattiesburg campus. After data collection, first, the demographic data was analyzed. Of this sample size of 100, 50 are females and 50 are males. The distribution of the age groups includes 62-18-21 year-olds, 34-22-25 year-olds and 4 individuals 26 years of age and older. Of these age groups, 37 are females 18-21 years-old, 25 are males 18-21 years-old; 12 are females 22-25 years-old, 22 are males 22-25 years-old; and 1 is a females 26 and older, and 3 are males 26 and older. 94% of the respondents are full-time students and 6% are part-time students. 40% consider themselves to be Democratic, 20% Republican, and 40% Independent. The study was designed to analyze young people’s answers to the question, “Do National Entertainment award-winning celebrities have a significant impact on Presidential Elections?” by considering the categories in the following paragraph:

After completing basic statistical descriptive analysis, it was found that 41% of the 100 total participants said that they were influenced by certain celebrities. Similar results were found when the data was analyzed according to the demographic criteria of gender, age, student status, and political party. For example, when this data is further analyzed according to gender, the data can be broken down in the following manner: As question #7 indicates, among the total 100 participants, 21 out of 50 females stated that they were influenced by certain celebrities. Also for question #7, 20 out of 50 males admitted to being politically influenced by a certain celebrity. This data is displayed in the following
Table 1-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 1-1

Participants Influenced By Certain Celebrities (Gender)
For this same question concerning whether a participant was influenced by a certain celebrity, the data can also be analyzed according to age. The following table and bar graph shows the breakdown of the study participants who indicated being politically influenced by a certain celebrity.

**Table 1-2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 and Over</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph 1-2**

Participants Influenced By Certain Celebrities (Age)
Again for question #7, the demographic classification of full-time student versus part-time student can also be further considered. The following analysis applies to this demographic characteristic, and is illustrated by the following table and bar graph:

**Table 1-3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Status</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Time Student</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Time Student</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph 1-3**

Participants Influenced By Certain Celebrities (Student Status)
The last demographic characteristic considered for question #7 involves the topic of political party. On the survey, respondents indicated whether they considered themselves to be Republican, Democratic, or Independent. The independent variable of political party was considered in relation to the dependent variable of political influence by a certain celebrity. The results are indicated in the table and bar graph below:

### Table 1-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Graph 1-4

Participants Influenced By Certain Celebrities (Political Party)
Although there were some small variations, respondents generally answered questions 7 through 12 in a very similar manner. These questions consider the influence of various celebrity categories such as actor, actress, musician, and director. Most people who answered “no” to question #7 answered “no” to all of the questions in this category. Similarly, most people who answered “yes” to question #7 also answered “yes” to many of the specialties within this category. It is important to note, though, that there was some variability, and there was not a pure one-to-one correlation for these responses. Some of the specific results of the survey indicated that for question #9, 36 out of 100 respondents indicated that they were influenced by a certain actor, and for question #8, 34 out of 100 respondents indicated that they were influenced by a certain musician. The category of director for question #11, did, however, receive the least number of “yes” responses, with a total of 20 out of 100 positive responses for director influence.

For question #15 concerning whether a respondent feels whether a celebrity endorsement helps a political candidate, the results are different from many of the other questions. In many cases, the respondents’ answers for question #15 contrasts with their answers for question #7 as well as many of the questions in the #7 through 12 grouping. Of the 100 total survey participants, 89% indicated a “somewhat” or “yes” response to the question, “Do you feel that celebrity endorsements help a political candidate?” Although this survey utilized a multi-point rating system involving three points, for the purposes of this answer, a “somewhat” was counted in the “yes” category. As with question #7, question #15 can be further analyzed according to various demographic data. The following tables illustrate these results:
The independent variable of gender can be viewed in the following table and bar graph:

**Table 2-1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph 2-1**

Do Celebrity Endorsements Help A Political Candidate? (Gender)
In addition to the independent variable of gender, age can also be analyzed as an independent variable for question #15. The following table and bar graph displays these results:

**Table 2-2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 and Over</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph 2-2**

Do Celebrity Endorsements Help A Political Candidate?

(Age)
Respondents’ answers concerning the question, “Do you feel that celebrity endorsements help a political candidate?” can be viewed according to the following table and bar graph:

**Table 2-3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Status</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Time Student</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Time Student</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph 2-3**

*Do Celebrity Endorsements Help A Political Candidate? (Student Status)*
Respondents’ viewpoints regarding the independent variable of political party can also be viewed according to the independent variable of political party. The following table and bar graph displays these results:

**Table 2-4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph 2-4**

*Do Celebrity Endorsements Help A Political Candidate? (Political Party)*
Statistical correlation was performed for the results of this survey. For the entire 100 student survey sample, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to factor the following variables: \( x = \) all questions related to celebrities and \( y = \) political satisfaction. Using SPSS Version 20, it was determined that the correlation coefficient is .069, which is only a very small correlation. Correlations were then analyzed for several specific dimensions. For question # 7, for example, the number of students saying that they were influenced by celebrities equals 41. This was then calculated as a percentage of the 100 total students. This resulted in a percentage figure of 41%. The correlation formula used to obtain the correlation coefficient was obtained by using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient to factor the following variables, which were computed by using SPSS Version 20. For question 7, \( x = \) celebrity influence, which was correlated with \( y = \) political satisfaction, yielding a correlation coefficient figure of -.037. Therefore, there was only a statistically very weak correlation between these variables. The findings would indicate very little impact of celebrity influence upon voting behavior for this survey sample.

The results of the survey questionnaire indicate that, according to question #15, respondents do believe that celebrities do have a political influence upon other people. In this case, the number of participants involved in this thesis study that have indicated that celebrities’ opinions have an impact upon other voters equals 89. This was then calculated as a percentage of the total figure of 100 participants. This resulted in a percentage figure of 89%. The correlation formula used to obtain the correlation coefficient was also the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, which was used to factor the following variables. For question 15, \( x = \) effect of celebrity political endorsements on
others, which was correlated with \( y = \) political satisfaction, yielding a correlation coefficient figure of -0.177. This figure was calculated using SPSS Version 20. It was found that for question 15, there is a statistically strong correlation, and that many of the students surveyed believed that celebrities have a political impact upon others. All of this data was reviewed by a statistical expert. In summary, the student-participants involved in this thesis study have indicated that celebrities’ opinions do not have a significant impact upon themselves personally. Students have, however, indicated that they perceive celebrities as having a substantial political impact upon others. This is the only statistically significant correlation found.

Chapter 5: Discussion

A. Quantitative Limitations of the Celebrity Data

Although it has been stated that celebrities may have had an influence upon politics for a significant part of history, for the purposes of this study, the years for quantitative analysis was intended to include only the years from 1989 to 2012. From 1978 onwards, United States federal law required all campaign contributions to be recorded. However, after discussions with representatives at the Federal Election Commission, it was determined that accurate and complete campaign contributions were only fully recorded and enforced after 1989-1990. Therefore, the data included in this study will account for accurate and complete recordings of campaign contributions. Although there are many categories of celebrity figures in the United States, this study and the quantitative analysis will be limited to only the categories specified in the Designed Methodological section and Applied Methodology sections of this thesis. This thesis has been limited in this area due to serious restrictions in the area of publically
recorded campaign contribution data. Data had to be analyzed for the years that accurate and complete data was available.

**B. Quantitative Limitations of the Survey Component**

For the purposes of this study, the quantitative data has been limited by several parameters as well. First of all, the survey has been limited to 100 college-aged people. Next, the people selected for the survey were located at the University of Southern Mississippi. These people, who may or may not be full-time students, were selected on the Committee-approved and scheduled survey days, times, and locations. Although the general target date for the survey administration and participation was April, 2013, due to various unforeseen issues, the surveys were all administered and completed on the USM campus, according to IRB standards and approval in March through May, 2014.

Specific limitations for this aspect of the thesis data included the fact that the survey contained only 100 participants, which is a small scale study relative to the entire voting population. Additionally, the students were, in many cases, limited in their knowledge base. Many were from varied disciplines, and not necessarily knowledgeable or experienced regarding politics and political campaigns. Due to their youth, perhaps, many had not chosen to vote in the 2012 election. Although this study finds similar results with other recent research, more research is needed in this area on a larger scale to either corroborate or disprove these findings.

**C. Discussion of Applied Background Literature**

Contrary to this thesis's hypothesis, celebrity endorsements do not have the influence upon voter behavior that would logically be expected or assumed. As with product endorsements, it is has been assumed that what high-profile celebrities have to
say, and their opinions, has had a significant impact upon what other people choose to do and believe. However, despite this logical assumption, assumptions require testing, and, in this case, this testing does not bear out the premises of the assumption. Both the Awards data and the Student Survey data used for the analysis of this thesis hypothesis have yielded the same findings. Essentially the data findings for both sets of data indicate that celebrities do not have a statistically relevant political influence. However, in the case of the survey data, students seem to think that celebrities do have a political influence upon other voters. This is also corroborated by other studies. The three main theories presented in the Background Literature review, including William Domhoff’s Class Domination Theory of Power, Drs. Max McCombs and Daniel Shaw’s Agenda Setting Theory, and Harry Eckstein’s Theory of Political Change; however, do not corroborate the findings of this thesis. As with the research data obtained in this study, the findings of other newer, very recent studies are more relevant to this thesis’ findings, which has determined that celebrity opinion has very little, if any, influence on the voting behavior of the general population.

Specifically, to review, William Domhoff’s Class-Domination Theory of Power states that those with money, businesses, and income-producing land have the ability to influence those who are elected to positions of authority and power, as well as those who remain in power. This theory was used as a background source, and it was assumed that celebrities would use their considerable financial resources to influence those in power. However, it has been revealed by the data of this thesis that far fewer celebrities contribute to political campaigns and parties than originally projected. Therefore, this celebrity segment of the United States high-income population did not have the political
influence anticipated, and consequently, William Domhoff’s Class-Domination Theory of Power has not proven applicable to this specific thesis data. It should be noted, however, that the possible relevance and impact of celebrities upon voting behavior, as it relates to the Class-Domination Theory of Power, will again be mentioned as a possible correlation as it relates to campaign primaries and campaign financing at a future point in the Discussion.

The Agenda-Setting Theory by Drs. Max McCombs and Donald Shaw was also presented in the Background Literature section of this thesis, as well. This was used as a way to possibly explain the general hypothesis that celebrities have a significant impact on the award-winning presidential candidates, and that there will be a correlation between celebrity political affiliation and candidate affiliation. Since the data, again, does not bear this out, and it has been determined by this study that celebrities do not have the political influence anticipated, the Agenda-Setting Theory has not proven applicable or relevant. In fact, as it will be explained by an additional theory, oftentimes celebrity endorsements can backfire and actually hurt a candidate.

In addition to the Class Domination Theory of Power as well as the Agenda-Setting Theory, Harry Eckstein’s Culturalist Theory of Political Change also has not proven useful to explain the data results found in this thesis research. The Culturalist Theory was also used in the Background Literature section of this thesis as a possible explanation for why it was postulated that celebrities’ opinions have a strong impact upon political elections. This theory, essentially, put forth the premise that since celebrities are respected, when they voice their opinions, then their opinions will often be followed and adopted. However, this theory was based upon the assumption that celebrities are well-
respected. Further reflection reveals that this assumption and premise upon which the theory was built upon and founded may have many aspects and dimensions. The idea of being ‘well-known’, may, in fact, have been confused with the idea of being ‘well-respected.’ Not all well known people, or celebrities, are also well respected. In fact, additional studies, as described in this section, have indicated that people, particularly young people, turn to family members and other mentors for political guidance and advice, and not really to celebrities.

Again, it is important to point out that being famous does not necessarily translate to being well respected; however, sometimes the two concepts are confused both by celebrities themselves as well as by those in charge of managing political campaigns. There are important factors involved related as to whether or not a celebrity will be taken seriously, and it is important to understand this concept. The concept of ‘source credibility’, for instance, is an important issue to be considered by a politician seeking a celebrity endorsement. Researcher David Morin and fellow-researchers write that, “Celebrity credibility may influence how consumers respond to endorsements. Source credibility is the term commonly used to imply a communicator’s positive characteristics that affect the receiver’s acceptance of the message,” (Morin, Ivory and Tubbs 414).

There are various components that go into source credibility including competence, goodwill, dynamism, and not surprisingly, attractiveness. Also not surprising, is Morin and associates’ conclusion regarding source credibility. They state, “Evidence shows that higher credibility sources are more persuasive in terms of attitude and behavior change than low credibility sources,” (Morin, Ivory, and Tubbs 414). Clearly, therefore, it is important for politicians to take into account celebrities reputations and personas before
accepting and utilizing their potential and possible influence, because such influence can have positive or also, unintended negative influences.

D. Additional Relevant Theories Applied to Discussion of Data

As the data of this study indicates, perceptions and facts do not always match. Several studies mentioned in the Literature Review section corroborate the findings of this study. For example, Pew Research, Scarborough Research, and the O’Regan study all found that there is no correlation between celebrity political opinion and political outcome. Many people, including celebrities, politicians, and the general public, believe that celebrity endorsement of political candidates is beneficial. However, recent scientific analysis has repeatedly indicated that this is not warranted. On the contrary, the opposite is largely the case. Yet, despite the actual evidence, for years celebrities have endorsed their favorite political candidates. The results of these endorsements have often been detrimental to both celebrities and political candidates alike. This practice of celebrity endorsement of politicians does not show any signs of waning. In addition to the theories discussed here and mentioned in the Literature Review, there are also other potential explanations.

The theory of George Gerbner offers an insight into why people may incorrectly believe that celebrity political endorsement is helpful. Gerbner, who was affiliated with the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, began his famous ‘Cultural Indicators’ project and developed his Cultivation Theory in the 1960s. Gerbner conducted research on the effects of long-term television violence upon television viewers. On December 15, 1992, Dr. Gerbner testified before the Justice Oversight Field Congressional Hearing On Violence in Television. The information
contained in the published transcript of the Hearing is part of a continuing body of work by Gerbner concerning the negative effects of television violence upon American culture. Gerbner, and his colleague, Dr. Michael Morgan, of the University of Massachusetts, researched this topic over the course of numerous decades, and presented much of their findings in a 2009 scholarly, two-part video report entitled: “The Mean World Syndrome-Media As Storytellers” and “Further Effects of Mean-World Syndrome-Desensitization and Acceleration.” In this video production, Gerbner discusses the “Violence Index,” a collaborative governmental and educational research project that seeks to quantitatively measure “many aspects of the role and functions of television violence in life and society,” (Gerbner Testimony). One of the main effects of this television violence, according to Gerbner, is desensitization, and furthermore, Gerbner argues, the mass media serves to cultivate and promote attitudes and values which are already established in a culture.

In particular, Gerbner’s concept of desensitization can be applied to celebrity influence upon voter behavior. Gerbner designed his concept of desensitization to apply to the idea that greater amounts and frequencies of observed television violence required even greater degrees of observed violence to obtain a response. In one such example, for instance, Gerbner cited the Rambo film series. In this series, greater amounts of violence are expected by the viewing audience to maintain viewership and interest. Specifically, speaking, in the first Rambo movie, there was one serious instance of violence, but in the second film, there were 69 instances of significant violence; in the third Rambo movie there are 161 episodes of high-level violence. The fourth Rambo film contains 305 episodes of extreme violence. (Gerbner).
According to Gerbner, repeated viewings of violence create desensitization to the concept and observance of violence. Gerbner’s concept of desensitization can be applied to other effects upon society resulting from media exposure as well. As applied to the findings of this thesis data, it is important to understand that celebrity media overexposure creates desensitization. Celebrities are continually voicing their opinions. They can be seen in newspapers, tabloids, magazines, news programs, talk shows, reality shows, late night shows, public appearances, music and dance shows, radio talk shows, Facebook, Twitter, and so forth. All this overexposure creates a culture where the average citizen is desensitized to celebrity opinion. Just as with Gerbner’s studies on television viewer violence effects, wherein more violence is continually required to create an effect, the same is true with the expression of celebrity opinions. Dr. Ed O’Brien, of the University of Michigan, writes that, “As people experience additional exposure to stimuli, their emotional reactions tend to change, typically in the direction of desensitization, which is often referred to as habituation,” (O’Brien, et. al. 6). So many celebrity opinions are expressed so frequently, that it has appeared to create the effect of desensitization within the American public. People have heard so much unscreened information, that when celebrities do speak out on an important topic, the public is less likely to listen. Like excessive television violence, so much celebrity overexposure blended into all the rest and caused desensitization. Individually, this opinion no longer holds the same value that it could have. Just as with television violence, the unnecessary violence takes importance away from what ultimately should hold value. The continual presentation of comments that are not important, takes away value from what should be or could be of significance. Therefore, George Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory, and in
particular the concept of desensitization, can also be applied to the topic of celebrity overexposure. It appears that the lack of significant celebrity impact upon voting behavior can partially be explained due to systematic media desensitization.

This concept of desensitization is also presented in a slightly different framework by sociologists Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton. These researchers also agree that too much coverage and too much information can create an atmosphere where individuals fail to care about topics that would have otherwise been of concern to them. Lazarsfeld and Merton term this phenomenon, “Dysfunction: The Narcotizing Effect. In this case, the media perform a dysfunction. In this phenomenon, the media provide such massive amounts of coverage that the audience becomes numb and fails to act on the information, regardless of how compelling the issue. Interested citizens may take in the information but make no decision or take no action,” (Schaefer 3).

In addition to the theory of George Gerbner, and those who theorize that the media creates a state of desensitization or dysfunction within the American public, there are several other new theories that could be useful in explaining the data findings of this thesis. Yale University, for example, reviews a number of these theories concerning the topic of persuasion. Persuasion, essentially, is what celebrities are trying to do when they endorse a political candidate. They are utilizing their right to free speech and expressing their opinion, concerning the worthiness for public office of a particular candidate. Some of the theories covered include, *The Yale Approach; Social Judgment / Involvement Theory; Cognitive Dissonance Theory; Congruity Theory; The Information Integration Theory; Theory of Reasoned Action; and The Elaboration Likelihood Model*. There are similarities between each of these theories of persuasion, yet there are subtle differences
as well. Each of these theories takes a look at some of the reasons and motivating factors why a person may or may not accept another’s viewpoint and message. Several theories that are most relevant to the interpretation of the data findings of this thesis are examined here.

Briefly, The Yale Approach states that while credibility is important in persuasion. With celebrity endorsements, what is essential is, “audience perceptions of the source,” (“The Yale Approach” 1). The description continues by stating that, “The most important factor in persuasion is not whether the speaker really is an expert or trustworthy, but whether the audience thinks the source is an expert or trustworthy,” (“The Yale Approach” 1). The Yale Approach also proposes that people naturally evaluate whether the speaker of a message is both an expert on the topic he or she is speaking on, and whether the person speaking is trustworthy or not. When evaluating actors, actresses, producers, directors, and musicians regarding their persuasiveness in endorsing a political candidate, it is important to take into account both the dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise. The findings of this study have indicated that celebrities do not have a measurable impact upon voting behavior in presidential elections, and other studies have also corroborated these findings. In light of these data findings, the Yale Approach Theory appears highly relevant and applicable. Of course, trustworthiness of individuals, whether they are actors, musicians, or anyone else, is generally viewed on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes, however, politicians may unintentionally choose a famous person as an endorser, who may-or-may-not be esteemed very highly, and this could present an unintended problem. As far as expertise is concerned, this appears to be the greatest pitfall for politicians who use celebrity endorsers. Actors and actresses, for example, are
not typically educated in politics, economics, law, and foreign policy. While many of
these people may be very well-read on these topics, it does not appear, according to this
data, that the American public believes that celebrities are experts on politics. Thus, their
opinions are not adopted as readily as one might originally think. Basically, according to
The Yale Approach, “We are more likely to accept a message when we respect and trust
the source—and we are unlikely to yield to a message when we don’t trust the source,”
(“The Yale Approach” 1).

Another highly relevant theory that can be applied to the data findings of this
thesis involves the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). This theory was first developed
by researchers Petty and Cacioppo. In this theory, the model states that persuasion occurs
either when learning occurs or when an already-held message is strengthened and
reinforced. In this theory, the model indicates that, “receivers, or audience members, can
be active participants in the persuasion process. For example, in this theory, persuasion is
not caused directly by messages; we are only persuaded if we have thoughts that agree
with the message, and/or we learn and understand the content of the message,”
(“Elaboration Likelihood Mode”, 1). Therefore, in application to the findings of this
thesis, since the data reveals that people’s voting attitudes and behaviors are not very
influenced by celebrities’ opinions, it would seem to indicate that either learning does not
occur as a result of the celebrity message and/or thoughts that agree with the message are
not generated as a result. Consequently, it is possible that either celebrity messages are
not clear, and this is sometimes possible, or that these celebrity messages do not generate
favorable thoughts, but instead generate unfavorable ones. These researchers continue by
indicating that arguments central to the topic generate more favorable thoughts than those
that are peripheral to the argument. In other words, as stated by The Yale Approach, as well, celebrities would need to know what they are talking about in order to be credible. If, however, they are not well-informed and articulate on the important issues, and they talk about peripheral or unrelated personal issues, their presence would tend to generate a preponderance of unfavorable thoughts. The lack of knowledge on the part of some celebrities concerning current political topics, coupled with their willingness to act as an endorser or spokesperson, would actually harm and not help a political candidate.

A final theory to be discussed here in relation to the outcome of the data findings involves the Information Integration Theory, which was first developed by Norman Anderson in 1971. In Anderson’s Integration Theory, there is an “exploration of how attitudes are formed and changed through the integration, (mixing, combining), of new information with existing cognitions or thoughts. Specifically, Information Integration Theory considers the ideas in a persuasive message to be pieces of information, and each relevant piece of information has two qualities: value and weight,” (“Information Integration Theory”1). In this theory, the value of a piece of information equals either a favorable or unfavorable response and the perceived importance equals its weight. The value and weight of each statement a person hears is processed in very individualized and personal ways based on attitudes, experience, and expectations. Basically, this model states that all new messages and ideas are filtered in light of past messages and ideas and the most politically impactful messages with the greatest voter engagement are both relevant and salient. People are continually mixing and integrating new information with old information and attitudes to come up with a continual processing of evolving thoughts and assessing the salience of each message for personal relevancy. In
application to the data findings for this thesis, it would appear that the voting impact of celebrity endorsements of political candidates is not as beneficial as intended because the value and weight of the celebrities’ statements do not have the influence that was intended. Their value and weight is minimal, which would also seem to corroborate the other findings of studies and theories concerning source credibility.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study, for both the celebrity campaign data, as well as the college survey data, do not corroborate with the original hypothesis. Celebrities do not have the political voting influence and impact that was originally hypothesized. What was found, and is corroborated by other studies, is that a great many people, including college students, think that celebrities have an impact upon others, but just not upon themselves. There are a great many theories, as described herein, that can be used to explain the reason for this lack of celebrity political impact. Essentially, however, what remains a common thread throughout these theories is that the message sent by a celebrity on political issues does not persuade the average voter or college students, specifically, to change his or her mind concerning their voting preferences and their presidential candidate of choice. Much more research needs to be done on this topic, particularly in the area of large scale fundraising in the presidential primaries, to determine any celebrity impacts upon the American political system and the elected officials that are part of this political system.
References


“Actor Alan Alda Pays 3M for another unit in Manhattan’s Park Milenium building.”


Mar. 2014.


12 Apr. 2014.


“The 100 Most Influential People in the History of Music.” Film 100. n.d. Web.

16 Sept. 2012.
12 Apr. 2012.


Appendices

Appendix A

Survey 1-1 Administered for Study Including Consent and Introduction

1. What is your gender?
   a. Male   b. Female

2. What is your age?
   a. 18-21   b. 22-25   c. over 25

3. What is your primary occupation?
   a. Full-time student   b. Part-time student   c. Employed, non-professional
      d. Employed, Professional

4. Did you vote in the 2012 Presidential election?
   a. Yes   b. No

5. Do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?
   a. Republican   b. Democrat   c. Independent

6. Are you satisfied with the winner of the presidential election?
   a. Yes   b. Somewhat   c. No

7. Do you feel that certain celebrities have an influence on your political opinions?
   a. Yes   b. Somewhat   c. No

8. Do you feel that certain high-profile musicians influence your political opinions?
   a. Yes   b. Somewhat   c. No

9. Do you feel that specific, high-profile actors have an influence on your political choices?
   a. Yes   b. Somewhat   c. No
10. Do you feel that specific, high-profile actresses have an influence on your political choices?
   a. Yes  b. Somewhat  c. No

11. Do you feel that specific, high-profile directors have an influence on your political choices?
   a. Yes  b. Somewhat  c. No

12. Has any celebrity ever had an effect on your political opinions?
   a. Yes  b. Somewhat  c. No

13. Do you feel that celebrities should be voicing their political opinions publicly?
   a. Yes  b. Somewhat  c. No

14. Do you feel that certain categories of celebrities are more influential than others?
   a. Yes  b. Somewhat  c. No

15. Do you feel that celebrity endorsements help a political candidate?
   a. Yes  b. Somewhat  c. No

16. Do you feel that celebrities are more vocal now than in the past on political issues?
   a. Yes  b. Somewhat  c. No
# ORI | Office of Research Integrity

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

### SHORT FORM CONSENT

### SHORT FORM CONSENT PROCEDURES

This document must be completed and signed by each potential research participant before consent is obtained.
- All potential research participants must be presented with the information detailed in the Oral Procedures before being signing the short form consent.
- The Project Information section should be completed by the Principal Investigator before submitting this form for IRB approval.
- Copies of the signed short form consent should be provided to all participants.

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**Today's date:**

### PROJECT INFORMATION

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<tr>
<td>Principal Investigator:</td>
<td>Phone:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College:</td>
<td>Email:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Participant's Name: 

Consent is hereby given to participate in this research project. All procedures and/or investigations to be followed and their purpose, including any experimental procedures, were explained. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected.

The opportunity to ask questions regarding the research and procedures was given. Participation in the project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. All personal information is strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided if that information may affect the willingness to continue participation in the project.

Questions concerning the research, at any time during or after the project, should be directed to the Principal Investigator using the contact information provided above. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-5997.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant</th>
<th>Person Explaining the Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Date | Date
Thank you very much for your participation in this survey. I appreciate your time and value your opinions. The purpose of this voluntary survey is to obtain data for my Honors Thesis that will analyze whether or not there is a correlation / causation between the political parties of prominent celebrities and the political parties of winning presidential candidates during election years.

The survey data collected will assist in the analysis of this topic. This survey utilizes the one group design survey concept. One hundred college-aged students will be asked to complete a non-directive, self-report, face-to-face questionnaire survey. The survey should take less than ten minutes.

This survey is completely voluntary, and there are no expected benefits of participation, other than possibly the intrinsic benefit and satisfaction of assisting a fellow student in his academic pursuits and contributing to the body of scientific knowledge that can possibly be of some small use to mankind.

There are no anticipated risks involved in participation within this study. At all times, participation is completely voluntary, and subjects may choose not to complete the survey if they desire. Incomplete surveys will not be tabulated in the data.

Each survey is completely anonymous and your identity and information is kept confidential. No sensitive identity data such as name or any other identifying information is asked or recorded.

This study will be conducted over several days this semester; so many students have the potential to participate.

This project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which insures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions
or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Manager of the IRB at 601-266-5997. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Any questions about the research should be directed to me, Andrew Blouin at 601-543-9092. Thank you very much for your participation.
Appendix B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Dr #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4577 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the “Adverse Event Report Form”.
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 1401/1502
PROJECT TITLE: Honors Thesis: Do National Entertainment Award Winning Celebrities have a Significant Impact on Presidential Elections?
PROJECT TYPE: New Project
RESEARCHER(S): Andrew Elouin
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Arts and Letters
DEPARTMENT: Mass Communication and Journalism
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 03/18/2014 to 03/17/2015

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board
Appendix C

Celebrity Contribution Tables:

1. Academy Awards
2. Golden Globes
3. American Music Awards
4. Emmy Awards
5. Country Music Awards
6. Grammy Awards
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Best Actor</th>
<th>Donation to Parties</th>
<th>Best Supporting Actor</th>
<th>Donation to Parties</th>
<th>Best Actress</th>
<th>Donation to Parties</th>
<th>Best Supporting Actress</th>
<th>Donation to Parties</th>
<th>Best Director</th>
<th>Donation to Parties</th>
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<td>Denzel Washington</td>
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<td>Jessica Tandy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Brenda Fricker</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Oliver Stone</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>Jeremy Irons</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Joe Pesci</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Kathy Bates</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Whoopi Goldberg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Kevin Costner</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Anthony Hopkins</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Jack Palance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Jodie Foster</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Mercedes Ruehl</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Jonathan Demme</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Al Pacino</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Gene Hackman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Emma Thompson</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Marisa Tomei</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Clint Eastwood</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Tom Hanks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Tommy Lee Jones</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>Holly Hunter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Anna Paquin</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Steven Spielberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Tom Hanks</td>
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<td>Martin Landau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Jessica Lange</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Dianne Wiest</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Robert Zemeckis</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Nicholas Cage</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Kevin Spacey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Susan Sarandon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Mira Sorvino</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Mel Gibson</td>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Frances McDormand</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Juliette Binoche</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>Jack Nicholson</td>
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<td>Robin Williams</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Helen Hunt</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>Kim Bassinger</td>
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<td>Robert De Niro</td>
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<td>Michael Caine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Hillary Swank</td>
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<td>Angelina Jolie</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Russell Crowe</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Benicio Del Toro</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Julia Roberts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Guy Harman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Steven Soderbergh</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Denzel Washington</td>
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<td>Jim Broadbent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Isabelle Huppert</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Jennifer Connelly</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Adrien Brody</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Chris Cooper</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Nicole Kidman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Catherine Zeta-Jones</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>Tim Robbins</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Charlize Theron</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Reese Witherspoon</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Jamie Foxx</td>
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<td>Morgan Freeman</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>Hilary Swank</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Cate Blanchett</td>
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<td>Phillip Seymour Hoffman</td>
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<td>George Clooney</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Reese Witherspoon</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>Rachel Weisz</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>Alan Arkin</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Helen Mirren</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Jennifer Hudson</td>
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<td>2007</td>
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<td>Javier Bardem</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Marion Cotillard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Tilda Swinton</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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<td>2300</td>
<td>Heath Ledger</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Kate Winslet</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2009</td>
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<td>Christoph Waltz</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Sandra Bullock</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>Michael Haneke</td>
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<td>2010</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>Jean Dujardin</td>
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<td>Christopher Plummer</td>
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<td>Meryl Streep</td>
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<td>Anne Hathaway</td>
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A plus sign (+) indicates that this celebrity also gave to this political party during other year(s); however only contributions for their award winning year(s) was recorded. This is also true for all other award show entries.
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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Best Actress M. P. Drama</th>
<th>Nominations</th>
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<td>Dustin Hoffman ( Kramer)</td>
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<td>Shelley MacDonald ( Moonlight and Valentino) &amp; Eugene Roat (Cocoon, The Milk)</td>
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<td>Tom Hardy ( The Big Bang)</td>
<td>0/D</td>
<td>Melanie Griffith ( Working Girl)</td>
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<td>Clint Eastwood ( Bird)</td>
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<td>Michelle Pfeiffer ( The Fabulous Baker Boys)</td>
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<td>Morgan Freeman ( Driving Miss Daisy)</td>
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<td>Jessica Tandy ( Driving Miss Daisy)</td>
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<td>Kevin Costner ( Born on the 4th of July)</td>
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<td>Kathy Bates ( Misery)</td>
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<td>Gerard Depardieu ( Carnac the Head)</td>
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<td>Julia Roberts ( Pretty Woman)</td>
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<td>Jodie Foster ( Silence of the Lambs)</td>
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<td>Robin Williams ( The Fisher King)</td>
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<td>Bette Midler ( For the Love of Mike)</td>
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<td>Sean Connery ( Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade)</td>
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<td>Emma Thompson ( Howards End)</td>
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<td>Tim Robbins ( The Player)</td>
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<td>Miranda Richardson ( Dressed in Pink)</td>
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<td>Holly Hunter ( The Paper)</td>
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<td>Angelina Jolie ( What's Love Got to Do With It)</td>
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<td>Jessica Lange ( Blue Sky)</td>
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<td>Tom Cruise ( Jerry Maguire)</td>
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<td>Jack Nicholson ( As Good as It Gets)</td>
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