Taiwanese Political Call-In Talk Shows: Control and "Credible Participation" Hidden Behind the Spectacle

by

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Abstract

Recently, governments have leveraged a variety of new technologies, especially new social media, to create an open government, or Government 2.0 that is transparent in its policies and gives its citizens the ability to collaborate and participate. Social media has been known for its ability to instantly connect a decentralized group of users; the ease at which the technology communicates makes the results of such technologies unpredictable and elusive.

Despite television’s reputation as a “passive” medium, I demonstrate that Taiwanese political call-in shows have been a successful form of credible and “controlled participation” for over a decade. With the inception of multi-party elections, these talk shows have served a purpose beyond getting good ratings and bringing in profits for the networks; they provide politicians and viewers alike an opportunity to participate. To understand the participatory culture, I studied Taiwanese political talk shows as a media system by analyzing the style and content of Taiwanese talk shows, as well as the social, cultural, legal, political, and economic institutions, practices, and protocols that shape the technology. The call-in talk shows transforms the medium into what John Gee calls an “affinity space,” a term often used to describe the communities built using social media. Even with the culture of openness on Taiwanese political talk shows, the value system by which television is constructed and limited interactivity of the technology preserve the credibility content, and create an effective blueprint for bidirectional interaction between the government and the public.

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1. Introduction

“Honesty is a good thing, but is not profitable to its possessor unless it is kept under control.”
- Don Marquis (1878 – 1937)

For many citizens, a participation-centric strategy building open partnerships between citizens and government, at all levels, is a far cry from the massive, faceless policy-making entity Americans associate with the federal government. Recently, there has been a gradual shift from traditional public relation methods, which made the American government seem inaccessible, backwards, and even worse, corrupt, to newer public relation strategies that leveraged the interactivity and openness of the internet. The American government has accepted openness initiatives - demonstrated by President
Barack Obama's *Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government* and the Open Government Directive- as a strategy to increase government efficiency, encourage better management, improve information access, and inspire citizen engagement. At the heart of this discussion is the use of a variety of new technologies, especially new social media, to create an open government, or Government 2.0 that is transparent in its policies and gives its citizens the ability to collaborate and participate.

Social media has been known for its ability to instantly connect a decentralized group of users; the ease at which the technology communicates makes the results of such technologies unpredictable and elusive. While the immediacy of the internet provides interesting opportunities for government-citizen partnerships, the recent controversy over the use of social media to orchestrate protests in the Middle East and Egypt's unsuccessful attempts to shut down the internet brings to the forefront the tenuous relationship between “participation” and “control” and whether social media is the best medium for governments to use to communicate with their constituents.

Previous examinations of social media and its ability to allow users to communicate have found the medium to be uncontrollable. In 2009, the rise of social media prompted the Food and Drug Administration’s public hearing on whether social media was an appropriate for drug companies to use for promotional purposes. Since 1906 when the Pure Food and Drug Act passed, the FDA’s control over drug labeling has been one of the agency’s most effective tools for protecting the public’s health. Now, with numbers
upwards of 60% of Americans first turning to the internet for information on health-related problems, the “rights” of drug companies to advertise their product online became increasingly important (Greene).

The results of the hearing were resoundingly negative. The most important consideration was that the companies would eventually lose control over the content they originally intended to promote. The distinction between a company-owned website and third-party content may no longer even be feasible; with applications like Google’s Sidewiki, anonymous users can link any social network to a website, with or without the site owner’s permission (Greene). Media scholars and strategists have focused their efforts on trying and tame social media as a way for the government- as well as firms and individuals- to spread and control content. In a recent study conducted by the Government Accountability Office, almost all federal agencies have followed through the Open Government Directive, which “requires federal agencies to take immediate, specific steps to achieve key milestones in transparency, participation, and collaboration” (Obama). While many of these agencies have created new interfaces, simplifying the process of accessing information, few government agencies have leveraged the power of the two largest social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter beyond acting as a simple “brand ambassador” to interface with citizens.

In no way do I contest the importance of the 350 million active users on Facebook and Twitter, but if what is needed is bi-directional multimedia interaction with the public,
we should not overlook the potential of traditional mass mediums such as television. The concept of television as "controlled participation" has been used for well-over a decade in Taiwan in the form of political call-in talk shows. For the purpose of this thesis, I use the term "controlled participation" not to mean censorship; rather, the term points to the creator's ability to control and maintain the credibility of the meaning and message he or she has produced. With the inception of multi-party elections, these talk shows have served a purpose beyond getting good ratings and bringing in profits for the networks; they provide politicians and viewers alike an opportunity to participate. The call-in talk shows use television's close associations with concepts like a "mass medium" and Jane Feuer's idea of constructed "liveness" play an important role in transforming the medium into what John Gee calls an "affinity space," and in altering the once passive viewer into an active participant.

**Objectives and Scope**

Rather than studying television interactivity in isolation, it would be more helpful to think about Taiwanese political talk shows as a media system, which includes "communication technologies and the social, cultural, legal, political, and economic institutions, practices, and protocols that shape and surround them" (Gitelman). By taking a more ecological approach and examining the talk show as a system, we can then understand the culture and the activities of a particular community and the eventual emergence of what Henry Jenkins describes as a "participatory culture." The focus of my paper will be on participation, which depends on a function of the
communities developed surrounding a technology, instead of interactivity, which is a function of the limitations of technology. According to Jenkins, participation has five defining aspects: low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations with others, informal mentorship, members who believe that their contributions matter, and members who feel social connections with each other (8).

In the rest of my thesis, I will demonstrate how Taiwanese political talk shows meet the Jenkins' criteria of participation and serve as public sphere where viewers and talk show participants – hosts, politicians, and viewers– can openly discuss minority opinions, without compromising control over the message. In Chapter 2, I examine Taiwanese political talk shows by comparing the show to other genres of programming available to viewers in the United States. Particular attention is paid to the participatory nature of American talk shows. By understanding how different the different elements used in the Taiwanese call-in programs, we can achieve a better understanding of the intended effects of combining the different genres used. Political talk shows have been known for their use of spectacle to draw in and engage audiences. In Chapter 3, I take a closer look at the historical ties between the spectacle and citizen participation in Taiwanese politics and trace the rise of spectacle or zuoxiu since the beginning of multiparty elections. This chapter analyzes how call-in shows have adopted many of the participatory aspects of rallies and marches and have leveraged political traditions to become an indispensible part of the political system. By understanding the political and
social systems surrounding the call-in talk show, we can better examine how talk show participants—politicians, hosts, and viewers—use the call-in shows as a vehicle to participate in Taiwanese politics. Chapter 4 includes a formal content and stylistic analysis of an episode of Taiwan’s most popular call-in talk show, 2100: All the People Speak. The analysis of content found on the show is a glimpse of popular ideological stances on polarizing political topics found in current events. The stylistic analysis of the program shows how 2100: All the People Speak, with its fast camera movements and heavily hypermediated style, essentially incorporates the audience into the discussions on the show, making the program highly participatory. Furthermore, by analyzing the overall structure of the program, I show how the talk show’s producers have created a complex and multi-tiered system specific to the talk show for “controlled participation” by ensuring the content produced on the program is credible and non-reproducible through methods of carefully screening talk-show guests and enlisting the help of phone banks. Chapter 5 examines how the broadcasting model has created a well-established system that can be leveraged to control and add credibility to the message produced. I examine several cases in Taiwanese and American media, where various stakeholders—networks, producers, audiences, advertisers, and regulators—have taken actions to protect credibility and produce “controlled participation.” My conclusions and predictions for how governments and companies can “control participation” can be found in Chapter 6.

What is important to note here is that while much attention has been paid to the importance of new media as the way to organize and mobilize participation, Taiwanese
political call-in shows have leveraged traditional mediums, such as television, to create a system of credible and "controlled participation." While the thesis explores Taiwanese call-in talk shows, a small cultural phenomenon with limited viewership, it provides a counterexample to the prevailing assumption that the only way to create credible and "controlled participation" is by altering the technological capabilities and interactivity of a medium. I believe that the system in which the technology is used— the social, cultural, legal, political, and economic institutions, practices, and protocols—play just as an important, or even more important, role in protecting the credibility of the message than just the interactivity of the technology itself. By building the right system around a technology, a "passive" medium can become interactive, and an "uncontrollable" form of participation can eventually be tamed.
2. The Participatory Nature of Taiwanese Kouyin Shows

"Freedom of expression - in particular, freedom of the press - guarantees popular participation in the decisions and actions of government, and popular participation is the essence of our democracy."

- Corazon Aquinas (1933 -- 2009)

Taiwanese political talk shows, while similar in structure American political talk shows like Meet the Press or Hardball, vary greatly in the way they approach political topics and engage audiences, and have evolved into a new television genre called *infotainment*. While infotainment in the United States is often used as a term to critique "soft" news topics such as arts and entertainment, public interest, and lifestyle, the term in Taiwan takes on a more literal meaning as news-based entertainment. Political call-in talk
shows, the most popular type of infotainment in Taiwan, thrives from conflict and what Taiwanese television scholar, Alice Chu, refers to as the crisis discourse.

A crisis discourse created by the "sensationalism of popular sentiment and the recycling of political ideologies" (Chu, 91). In the Taiwanese political landscape, the two major parties, the Kuomingtang and the Democratic Progressive Party, have radically different and contradicting agendas regarding Taiwan's relations with Mainland China. The Kuomingtang supports the reoccupation of China by the Taiwanese government, while the Democratic Progressive Party supports an independent Taiwan, completely separate from China. Neither agenda is fully realizable or possible without huge reprisals from the Mainland. Therefore, any topic that refers to Taiwanese identity or independence promotes anxiety and increases engagement since there is no solution or agreement that can be reached by the two parties. This crisis discourse in the news and on political talk shows keeps Taiwanese viewers engaged in the news content. According to Xi Shengli, the host of one of Taiwan's popular political talk shows Face to Face, "Compared to the rest of the world, Taiwanese viewers like to watch the news the most. A broad audience has been developed that is willing to watch it."

Even with the variety of call-in political talk shows available on Taiwanese television, the programs combine elements from three popular genres: news, reality television, and the talk show. The ways genres interact in the political talk show often structure the types of conflicts present in each of the programs.
Taiwanese political talk shows are oftentimes considered an interpretation or a supplement to newscasts of the day. Typically hosts will take the most divisive topic straight from the day's headlines and structure debates and conversations around the issue. Most producers will actually use clips of news footage broadcasted earlier in the day. The news footage is seen as the first segment of the show and provides context for the issue that is being discussed. In the case of the "conflict panel," the show wants to maintain its non-partisan image so the news footage used is event driven and usually narrated by a news anchor. The audience sees the news segment as a presentation of the facts, and the viewers use the evidence presented to interpret and evaluate the issue.

In call-in talk shows that try and portray an unbiased view, producers are careful not to choose news clips that might influence a viewer's position before the expert panel can debate the issues; however, in more biased talk shows, in addition to the news anchor's description of the event, producers will often include interviews or statements from stakeholders to provoke an emotional response in the audience. Viewers often incorrectly associate the rebroadcasted news portion of the show as factual and unbiased, and producers often exploit this association to draw support for a particular position.

Even though reality television like *Survivor* or *Big Brother* has yet to reach Taiwan's shores, many political talk show hosts actually view their programs as a type of reality television played out in a political arena. Contrary to what the name might suggest, the
formula for reality television is not tied to the shows' ability to "capture the banal the quotidiant, the spontaneous, the unstaged, the intimate-in short how ordinary people behave in certain spaces culturally designated as sanctuaries of privacy"; rather, many producers openly acknowledge that reality television does not record the daily grind of ordinary people (Ryan, 68). In most reality shows the participants are continuously aware of the location of the cameras and many times openly admit that they are placed in a situation they would not encounter in real life. According to Paul Romer, the producer of Big Brother, "We don't see real life in these series, but sometimes, we touch on the real personalities. There is a momentary reflection of the real self- and those moments make great television." What Romer refers to as "real self" are the emotions and instincts often disguised behind civility, and it is often the very goal of political talk show hosts try and expose during the course of the show. Rather than educate, many talk show hosts believe it is their sole purpose to entertain their audience. According to Yu Fu, the host of 8 o'clock, the main purpose of his program is to introduce his audience to a side of politicians viewers rarely get to see in public by "taking politicians and playing with them for you to watch... You take their formal side and play it up for your viewers to see. Because if you make them mad, their real emotions will come out. Their real face is exposed. Otherwise on television you pretend to be very profound. They all say that kind of bullshit. That type of dogshit. So what's my job? I tease it out so the viewers can see." Both Taiwanese political talk shows as well as reality shows use the possibility of participants revealing their "real-selves" as a way to engage and entertain the viewers.
Taiwanese political talk shows borrow heavily from the traditional talk show format, which has remained relatively unchanged since the 1940s. While there are many types of talk shows ranging from sensationalist shows such as Jerry Springer to political talk shows like Meet the Press, most talk shows follow certain conventions. Traditionally, the talk show has one or two hosts with a panel of participants or experts who are well-versed in the subject. Talk shows also limit the amount of time each participant can spend talking, target a specific audience, and offer narrow topic agendas (Chu, 94). Phil Donahue, a talk show host was the first to feature audience participation as a way to enrich his television program. The talk show audience also acts as a counterbalance on the subject, many times contradicting or supporting the expert panel; in the case of Taiwanese political talk shows, call-ins are used as a way for viewers to participate as well as create content for the television program. Call-ins allow for a larger and more diverse group of fans and viewers to participate than a physical studio audience—a typical show an hour in length will take anywhere from 20-30 callers dispersed throughout the program, and each call lasts approximately 20 seconds. Another aspect Taiwanese political talk shows have adopted from more sensationalist talk shows is the concept of “toxic talk” (Abt, 6). For example, many conservative society members often blamed Oprah Winfrey for being the “Queen of Trash” by encouraging participants to engage in irresponsible behavior and brag about their behaviors on television. This same type of behavior is encouraged if not required of certain panelists. As we will explore in the next chapter, many politicians first started their political careers after
engaging in fist fights that launched them into national media, and they have had to continue to build on their volatile personalities to keep their supporters interested in engaged.

**Talk shows as Participatory**

Television is often associated with the concept of broadcasting, when content is transmitted to numerous individual households (Williams, 17), and can lead to a weakened public sphere by limiting participation. According to Jurgen Habermas, who warned against the use of mass media, the rise of television broadcasting would move societies from culture-debating to a culture consuming public, and the bourgeois sphere will become increasingly institutionalized and specialized, eventually eliminating dissenting voices (Habermas, 1989). Far from being just a fictional world, television often mediates what is accepted and what is taboo. Mary Ryan argues that “in archaic societies, the absolute truth of myth is guaranteed by the authority of the source- gods, prophets, shamans, or ancestors- but the erosion of faith in the sacred in contemporary society, as well as the general rejection of institutional forms of authority has voided the traditional sources of authentication and turned over responsibility to celebrities.” According to Ryan, one of the best examples of how celebrities have the ability to mediate beliefs accepted in society are *Mythical shows* like Roseanne, Ellen, or Seinfeld, which bear the name of the actor who plays the main character. The use of an actor’s actual name in the show’s title may signal to audiences that the actors’ personal lives mirror the lives of the character on television, and the deviation of an actor’s life from
the ‘myth’ of the show may cause the show to tank in popularity. The success of Ellen after she declared her homosexuality was often interpreted by the press as an acceptance of homosexuality in American culture, while the prompt death of “Father Knows Best” is attributed to Robert Young’s destructive lifestyle of suicide attempts and drug-use that conflicted with the ‘myth’ of the patriarch Jim Anderson and society’s standards in the 1950s (Ryan, 67). In many cases, the most popular television programs contain a ‘myth’ that is easily accessible and most resembles the viewers’ own beliefs. The audience rewards television shows that mirror their values with viewership, and punishes shows that disturb their version of the ‘absolute truth of myth.’

While television programs like sitcoms have been criticized for only following accepted cultural norms, the talk show and now the even more popular reality television show was created to explore intersections between what is accepted and what is considered taboo, and what is private and what is public. When the audience expects and enjoys hearing the minority opinion, Habermas’s theory on the elimination of dissenting voices no longer applies, and less popular beliefs are heard and given just as much credence as majority opinions (Kluge, 220). Talk show producers create conflict by discussing the minority opinion and tackling topics that are not readily accepted by mainstream culture such as infidelity and homosexuality. While it is often argued that non-conforming guests are exploited and sold to advertisers of tabloid talk shows such as Jerry Springer, Joshua Gameson suggests that exploitation is merely the starting point, and not the conclusion. Guests who engage in “taboo” behaviors are positioned on the
talk show as experts and speak to the audience about their experiences. Topics often associated within the private sphere—conversations between a husband and wife or a mother and her child—would be publicly addressed in front of the talk show host, the audience, and the viewers at home. The viewers tune in to watch different conflicts unfold and expect panelists to discuss their private matters in a public sphere with others, even when panelists are faced with others who did not agree with their minority opinions. Talk shows offer a space where citizens can meet and interact with 'institutional representatives' or those representing the majority opinion in a public forum, and erodes the barriers between a public and private sphere. According to Helen Wood, the collision of the public and the private creates an oppositional public sphere that encompasses both the views of the citizens alongside the views of the bureaucracy (65). Gameson states in an interview, "I'm interested in the fact that exploitation is exactly what has increased the diversity of racial and economic backgrounds of the gay people you see on the screen, for example, or in the fact that anti-gay bigots are turned into "freaks" by the show as well—often in ways that make the sex and gender outsiders look just fine." In many cases, facilitating open communication between the majority and minority opinion holders creates a connection that generates knowledge and a mutual understanding, which could overcome the separation of the two realms (Lunt, 180), and explains how what was once considered a taboo and private topic, is now a publically accepted topic. Television programming like talk shows allow for topics that might be considered too controversial for mainstream acceptance to be openly discussed and mediated for a sympathetic audience.
Throughout the history of television, the concept of “liveness” has been defined as television’s ontological essence. Production theorists like Herbert Zettl have argued that, “the essence of television is a temporal, ephemeral experience whose only record is memory” ensures that “each television frame is always in the state of becoming”; therefore, television’s existence as a process establishes the medium as live (Zettl, 8). Production theorists are not the only people who promote television’s relationship with liveness. In the 1950s the television industry embraced the concept as a way to separate itself from the more developed film industry by popularizing anthology dramas, exploiting television’s liveness as a “badge of dramatic honor and prestige” (Caldwell, 28). Even today, the television industry continues to tout the medium’s association with liveness by producing programs such as talk shows to showcase television’s immediacy and authenticity.

Television’s close relationship to liveness supports the rise of an even more participatory form of a Taiwanese talk show called the kuoying jiemu. Playing on the English words “call-in,” kouying directly translated from Mandarin means “knock and answer.” The name addresses the interactive nature of the programming, as well as the audience’s appreciation for the subtleties of the language of politics. In a kuoying jiemu, viewers are allotted a 20 second slot on the show to call in and share their opinions regarding the topic on the day’s show. The show’s call-in concept hinges on the network’s ability to broadcast the program live and the viewers’ ability to identify and
understand the implications of live television. Callers introduce themselves by providing a surname, the city from which they are calling, and cite a qualification that would make them an experienced expert on the topic. The show involves real people, talking about real life experiences in real time, which gives them a claim to authenticity that assists in the talk show's championing of the ordinary citizen. By calling in and expressing a non-institutionalized opinion that is as highly regarded as an expert's opinion, a viewer can make a clear impact and help resolve the conflict addressed in the show. Many times, experts sitting on the panel will address the viewer's concerns in a later portion of the show, or even build an argument from the caller's statement. This interaction has actually made the kuoying jiemu a popular conduit for politicians to interact with their constituents, and according to recent study, "more campaign media budget has been allocated for this emerging political medium and campaign candidates and staff are taking a proactive role in expending their cable airtime, especially in popular political call-in/debate programs" (Chiu, 490). The kuoying jiemu's format ensures that viewers are not only consuming the content, but they are also creating content for others to consume by actively participating in the production process and openly communicating with political representatives.

The culture surrounding the way television is consumed is shaped by its presence in the home and as a part of everyday life (Feurer). The intimate setting of the television set in the home and the way television easily fits into a person's schedule increases the accessibility of television programming, lowering the barriers to participation. Unlike
other forms of participation like scheduled demonstrations or marches, which required marchers to participate in elaborate stunts, watching television is not an event. From the safety of their own living room, participants can contribute in various ways according to their skills and interest, creating what James Gee calls an affinity space. Affinity spaces are seen as the most attractive tool to facilitate participation because they bridge age, class, race, gender, and education level and allow contributors to feel like an expert while tapping into the expertise of others (Jenkins).

The success of a call-in talk show is dependent on establishing an affinity space for the panelists as well as the audience at home. The construction of the program, such as cues that serve to blur the distinctions between the studio audience and the home audience, establish a space where the audience can fully participate from their homes. In 2100, a popular Taiwanese call-in show, the expert panelists sit around a rectangular table with the host at the head of the table. The other end of the table is empty, “reserved” for the armchair pundit at home to participate in and even lead the discussion. Taiwanese viewers are encouraged to call-in and engage in the discussion as appropriate. Callers are not prioritized by their educational, financial, or experiential background, and any viewer can participate in the conversation as an expert. The content of the phone call itself is not screened, and viewers have often called into the show to criticize the hosts and experts or engage in mudslinging. The open communication between callers, the panelists, as well as other viewers at home creates
an atmosphere where people's contributions are appreciated and encouraged regardless of their background or the content they contribute.
3. Spectacle: The History of Putting on a Show

"We live in a society of spectacle." – Guy Debard

The use of spectacle shown on call-in talk shows did not begin as a way to engage viewers and strengthen ratings, rather, the concept of putting on a show, has been an important aspect of political campaigns and elections and can be traced back to the first multi-party election in Taiwan. A careful examination of the history spectacle used in Taiwanese politics can be used to explain and understand customs or behavioral norms, adapted from political speeches at rallies and events, currently used by politicians and activists on political talk shows.
Political journalists often evaluate candidates on their ability to zuoxiu, a “symbolic-laden performances whose efficacy lies largely in their ability to move specific audiences”, and spectacle is often expected from successful campaign candidates. Zouxiu is a broad term, and candidates can be judged on their ability to “make speeches, take part in electoral stunts, attend funerals and weddings, make good television ads, hold moving election rallies, debate on talk shows, and even fight.” Putting on a show is only one factor in political success and is often overlooked by political scientists. The use of spectacle certainly does not guarantee a political victory; however, the successful use of spectacle in notable campaigns has encouraged Taiwanese politicians to continue the use of highly symbolic language and behavior to attract their constituents. With the liberalization of the media in Taiwan, zuoxiu has taken a more prominent role in recent years, and the results of candidates are often tied to their ability to attract and engage an audience. In Taiwan, a politician’s platforms are so closely aligned with their political party’s beliefs, an individual politician’s policy is the voters’ main concern, which is not the case in many other political systems. Since a politician’s political affiliation determines the policy he or she is supposed to support, a politician’s “celebrity” becomes the determining factor in whether or not a candidate is elected. Essentially, the more airtime and attention a politician receives for speeches and debates, the “harder” the politician works in supporting the viewpoints of his or her constituents.
The Martial Law Era

Taiwan was under Martial Law from 1949 to 1987, and during this time, the Kuomintang (KMT) had full control of the government and media outlets leaving very little room for theatrics in the political sphere. The Republic of China claimed to be the only legitimate government in China, and elections at the national level in Taiwan were postponed until the government reclaimed Mainland China. Elections at the local level were held within Taiwan; however, parties opposing the KMT could not run, guaranteeing independents and KMT backed candidates victory. Furthermore, campaign restrictions and a complicated system using vote brokers and constituent support groups meant that KMT party candidates were the only ones with the resources necessary to win an election and virtually won all elections. During the Martial Law era within Taiwan, 86% of KMT backed candidates were elected into office and, many times, months before the first vote was cast.

Print and electronic media outlets were also owned by the KMT during this time. The KMT owned the Broadcasting Corporation of China, which was the most influential radio network, as well as all three of the television stations. The press was only mildly more liberalized, however, the two largest papers in circulation, the “China Times” and the “United Daily News,” were both party controlled publications. Strict restrictions were placed on the content shown through these outlets. Broadcasted candidate rallies and campaign advertisements were prohibited, preventing oppositional candidates from
engaging and educating the public about their political ideas. Furthermore, if candidates spoke against the national government of Taiwan, they faced harsh punishments. For example, a cartoonist Bo Yang wrote a newspaper column teasing President Chiang Kai-shek, and received a ten-year jail sentence for being sympathetic to the communist cause. Scholars believe that the strict prosecution of journalists and activists during the Martial Law era in Taiwan has played an important role in the over-liberalization of media, especially political talk shows. In recent years, there has been a rise in “huang” or yellow journalism, or news designed to be exploitative and sensationalist. Suggestions to change or restrict the more exploitative news coverage have been met with disdain. Networks have been slow to set new guidelines, fearing that they would be accused of “washing” the news and associated with biased reporting from the Martial Law era. Without restrictions on content networks depend solely on the free-market system, and is only confined to what the audience wishes to view. While this system keeps the government and media entities separate, it also provides audience more power to determine what type of content shown than in most societies where the government has a stake in the content that is broadcasted.

Even with the limitations on campaigning during the Martial Law era, candidates still found ways to bring in colorful theatrics as a part of their campaign strategy. Incorporating ancient Chinese traditions into election campaigns became a way to skirt the restrictions placed on campaign behavior and allowed candidates to engage and entertain large audiences without the use of media. Large campaign flags reminiscent of
ancient battle flags with a candidate's name and slogan would be posted throughout the voting areas. These flags were so common that they would often block traffic lights creating chaos in the cities. Firecrackers, traditionally used to scare away evil spirits during Chinese New Year, were used to by candidates to attract attention when they traveled through town in their open-air vehicles waving to voters. Finally, large scale election banquets were held to announce candidacies. Candidates often competed against each other for the largest most festive banquet. The banquets, often lasting for weeks, gave candidates a chance to interact with the voters. Towards the end of the Martial Law era, oppositional parties would often use “Taiwanese democratic holidays” to hold policy forums where there was relative freedom of expression to display their speech making skills. While these speeches were rarely controversial since those who stood up against the KMT risked long prison sentences, these holidays were often the most effective campaign method available during the time. The successful use of policy forums would inspire a future generation of candidates to use spectacle in their own campaign activities.

**Democratic Transition**

Immediately after the Martial Law era ended, most of the campaign restrictions were removed; however, the KMT was still the only party that had the organizational clout and resources to reach voters. The KMT still had control over the nation's media outlets so oppositional candidates from the newly formed Democratic Progressive Party
adopted two new theatrical tactics to educate voters about their political platform: 1) street marches and 2) campaign rallies. Both of these methods rely heavily on constituent participation and are often used as a way to measure the success of an activity.

During street marches, DPP candidates would call for “full national elections, direct presidential elections, freedom of speech and application to rejoin the United Nations.” The novelty of political street marches, which were strictly prohibited during the Martial Law era, attracted large audiences and spread the DPP’s agenda. These marches became a staple of city life, in “Song of Madness” Taiwanese rapper Dog G described how outsiders were amazed at the marches and asked policemen on the street “When the marchers were preparing to invade the Chinese Mainland?”

Political rallies also attracted thousands of participants. For the first time, speeches at the rallies were given in Hokkien as a way for DPP candidates to separate themselves from the Mandarin-speaking KMT party. Politicians would make passionate speeches with unrealistic demands as well as remind voters of the tragedies that occurred under the rule of the KMT. The radical demands appealed to the audience’s curiosity, and passionate recounting of tragedies under the KMT tugged at the emotional heartstrings of the crowd. Even though rallies have long fallen out of favor, the use of unreasonable demands are still used in political talk shows today as a way to create what Alice Chu describes as a “perpetual crisis.” Neither the pro-China unification nor the Taiwanese
independence groups have the ability to carry out their political agenda without meeting large reprisals from China. Taiwan's unstable sociopolitical identity and uncertain future provides a constant stream of original material for political talk shows, and millions of viewers are drawn by the anxiety the "crisis" produces. The emotional appeal of past atrocities is often used by audience members who call into political talk shows to attack or support guests. Since each caller is given only twenty seconds to make a point, guests often choose to make references that appeal to emotions instead of making a rational argument.

One of the most notable rallies in Taiwanese history was one held in support of Guo Peihong. Since Guo, a political exile, was smuggled into the country and the authorities were eager to arrest him at the rally, it attracted a large crowd. After giving his speech, when the police were ready to arrest him, Guo and the crowd put on identical masks distracting the police, and allowing him to escape. Large theatrical performances like Guo's escape fascinated and engaged the audience by allowing them to take part in engineering and creating spectacle. This same concept is used in call-in political talk shows today when the audience is encouraged to call in and voice their opinions. The audience members not only consume the media they watch, but actually participate in creating a spectacle when then either cheer or jeer for different guests; essentially, they are just as responsible entertaining viewers and conforming to behavioral expectations 'putting on a show.'
The only way for DPP members to receive media attention was to gain exposure using violence. KMT television stations would often broadcast DPP candidates in violent acts as a way to discredit the party as radical, but politicians such as Huang Zhaohui skyrocketed into popularity after overturning tables at the President's banquet in the March 1990 National Assembly. While politicians did not support violence at rallies or marches, in a realm saturated with symbolism and metaphor, constituents supported candidates who would be willing to "fight" for their ideas and beliefs. The custom of fighting quickly found its way into parliamentary sessions, and large brawls before controversial topics were voted on became a way to show fierceness and party loyalty. Once the sessions in parliament were televised, politicians who were the fiercest fighters were often given honorary nicknames and were often expected to act out in a public. This same expectation of behavior followed the candidates when they appeared on political talk shows. Many times, volatile behavior was often rewarded with more airtime as well as a higher salary since the violence engages and draws in more viewers.
4. 2100: All the People Speak - Content and Style Analysis

“All men have an instinct for conflict: at least, all healthy men.”
-Helaire Belloc (1870 -- 1953)

Historically, talk shows can be used as a space to discuss minority opinions and push the boundaries between private and public spheres. Producers of Taiwanese political call-in shows choose content and employ stylistic devices to involve the guest participants and the audience at home in the discourse. In order to understand the mechanisms used to encourage the participatory nature of the kuoying jiemu, we should analyze the content and stylistic devices used to engage the guest participants and the audience at
home in the discussion. While there are numerous Taiwanese political talk shows that air every weeknight, I examined an episode of 2100: All the People Speak, the most popular call-in show known for its complex system of checks to ensure credible participation.

The Taiwanese political talk show, 2100: All the People Speak, derives its name from the show’s 9pm airtime as well as its identity as a call-in show, inviting viewers to participate in a discussion about the state of Taiwanese politics. Modeled after popular American political talk shows like Hardball or Meet the Press, the producer and moderator Li Dao is known for his ability guide guests from different backgrounds and varying opinions to discuss the nuances of the day's controversial topic. The purpose of the show is to educate and entertain viewers, but is also used as a way for the guests who represent different disciplines and political parties to eventually come to a mutual understanding.

**2100: Overall Structure of the Show**

Each episode of 2100: People Speak starts with a 10 second montage of the moderator Li Dao from previous episodes which is cut in between shots of 2100 “behind the scenes,” including the studio space, props showing the preparation that has gone into a typical show, as well as the phone bank ready to take viewers' calls. Li Dao starts the discussion by welcoming the viewers to join the discussion as a “distinguished audience”
or *gui bing*, who are news savvy and well-aware of the state of current affairs. He starts this segment with a lead-in—“as you may already know…” or “a topic you might have strong opinions about…”—to the current event, suggesting that the audience may already be aware and discussing the topic already. By referring to the audience at home as knowledgeable and distinguished, Li Dao creates an environment for viewers to openly share their opinions others as colleagues.

The moderator provides brief introduction to the main topic of the day, selected from the day’s headlines. Since 2100 is aired later in the day than many other political talk shows, Li Dao and his staff put considerable effort into ensuring that topics and arguments presented on other shows are not regurgitated on the program. The 2100 staff often puts together a chart of previously discussed topics from other shows so guests can use the airtime on the show to address the different accusations or topics mentioned in previously aired television programs. The main topics for the show typically thrive from unresolved conflict from crisis discourses and fall under two categories: 1) strait and mainland relations or 2) corruption. A crisis discourse is created by the “sensationalism of popular sentiment and the recycling of political ideologies” (Chu, 91). In the Taiwanese political landscape, the two major parties, the Kuomingtang and the Democratic Progressive Party, have radically different and contradicting agendas regarding Taiwan’s relations with Mainland China. The Kuomingtang supports the reoccupation of China by the Taiwanese government, while the Democratic Progressive Party supports an independent Taiwan, completely
Neither agenda is fully realizable or possible without huge reprisals from the Mainland. Therefore, any topic that refers to Taiwanese identity or independence promotes anxiety and increases engagement since there is no solution or agreement that can be reached by the two parties. Once a popular topic in the 1990s, strait relations have now fallen to the wayside in many political talk shows since Chen Shui-Bien, representing the Democratic Progressive Party, won the presidential elections in 2000 and 2004. Much of the 'crisis discourse' hinged on the belief that a president from the DPP would end the détente between China and Taiwan, and Taiwan would face economic sanctions or even an invasion. Since this has not happened with the shift in political power, the topic of Mainland relations is no longer viewed as an attractive crisis topic.

With the threat gone, cross-strait relations quickly lost its importance, and relations have been indirectly addressed through other topics. An example of how current political talk shows indirectly address cross-strait relations would be the ban of A-mei’s music in China. During Chen Shui-Bien’s inauguration, A-mei, an aboriginal pop singer known as the “pride of Taiwan” sang the Taiwanese anthem. She was met with strong disapproval from the mainland, and the Chinese government banned her from entering the country. Under pressure from Beijing, radio stations stopped playing her songs, and her contract with Sprite was cut. While the topic of Taiwanese independence was never directly mentioned in the episode, A-mei became a vehicle for politicians and experts to examine the negative effects of a dysfunctional relationship with China.
Currently corruption at a national or local level is one of the most popular topics addressed in Taiwanese political talk shows. In ‘Democratisation and Political Corruption,’ Dafydd Fell examines the relationship between Taiwanese politicians and corruption, and has discovered that since the fall of martial law, the Democratic Progressive Party has adopted the fight against government corruption as the most important tenet in their campaign strategy. According to Fell’s study on corruption and elections in Taiwan, frequent allegations of corruption in the past administration are strongly correlated with the successful election of the challenger, and candidates often use airtime on Taiwanese political talk shows to accuse their competitors of corruption as a way to encourage viewers to vote for him/her in the upcoming election. In 2100, guests will often accuse government officials of corruption—acts of wasteful spending or even fake assassination attempts—as a way to demonstrate their disapproval for government corruption.

Since there is no way to conclusively prove many of the accusations made on the talk show, many of these accusations remain unresolved and gradually turn into a form of crisis discourse. In 2010, when former Taiwanese President Chen Shui-Bien and his wife were accused of embezzling campaign funds, open accusations of corruption on political talk shows continued for months. When both he and his wife were convicted, many experts maintained the former president’s innocence, and blamed party biases and corruption in the Taiwan’s Supreme Court for the unfair verdict. This crisis discourse
and the indefinite nature of Taiwanese political talk shows keep Taiwanese viewers engaged. According to Xi Shengli, the host of one of Taiwan’s popular political talk shows *Face to Face*, “Compared to the rest of the world, Taiwanese viewers like to watch the news the most. A broad audience has been developed that is willing to watch it.”

During the introduction of the topic, the day’s question appears on the bottom of the screen, which remains there for the duration of the program, and a brief news clip from a previous newscast is shown to remind the audience of the topic. Once the news clip ends, Li Dao makes a quick introduction of the six guests on the panel disclosing their names, political affiliations, and expertise (legislator, doctor, professor, and journalist), and allows each guest 2-4 minutes to explain his or her stance on the topic. After each of the experts shares their opinion, Li Dao constructs a brief summary, quickly extracting the important information from the expert’s argument. This technique re-engages the audience at home and diffuses the tension in the discussion and prevents panelists from trying to speak over one another or launching attacks against each other. On the rare occasion that the debates become too heated, Li Dao will frequently remind his panelists to address their arguments to the audiences and not at each other. The style of heavily moderating the guests keeps 2100 tame relative to its political talk show counterparts.

In addition to keeping guests on the program civil, Li Dao is also known for his sudden improvisations on the show. While a typical episode of 2100 will contain 4-5 breaks
with three segments featuring viewer call-in responses, Li Dao has often abandoned this structure to accommodate an additional topic of interest is mentioned by an expert or a caller. Instead of going to commercial, Li Dao will often proceed with the discussion to further explore the topic, expanding segments from 10 minutes to 30 minutes. When closing out each segment, Li Dao takes 3-5 callers and gives each caller 20 seconds to share their opinions. At the beginning of the final segment, each guest is given 15-20 seconds of airtime to summarize their main points before the crisis discourse topic is tabled for the episode. Each episode is still perceived as highly-structured since the show has built-in flexibility and natural transitions. By altering the time dedicated to each expert, the length and frequency of Li Dao's summaries, the number of callers that are taken in each segment, and even the length of the overall television program, Li Dao is given the option of veering away from the previously determined script. 210°s tendency to run over the allotted time and the show's growing popularity actually led the network to extend the show from sixty minutes to ninety minutes; however, even with the extended time, the show still often runs 5-10 minutes over.

Due to the nature of the crisis discourse, even at the end of the 210° episode, there is not a consensus reached among the guests. Since the producer cannot predict whether tomorrow's news day will be eventful or slow, the major discussion topics are often shelved and discussed on a later date in the event that newer news topics are not available. Since the purpose of the show is to reach consensus in the group, Li Dao will often bring up 1-2 smaller topics that are sensational, but not conflict prone towards the
end of the program. The shorter discussion topics usually involve “moral panic” issues -- accusations of pedophilia in the police department or severe bullying in the Taiwanese school system — lead to an overwhelming agreement in the group of experts. This wrap-up is the only topic where Li Dao openly shares his opinion and warns the audience about the further implications of ignoring various moral panic issues. The topic brings the experts to an agreement, representing the common space the experts now share, and signals the end of the program. Li Dao then respectfully closes out the program and invites the viewers to return and join the discussion in the next episode.

**Guests on 2100**

The staff of 2100 typically selects a group of guests who are divided by their political affiliations and include politicians, journalists, political pundits, and scholars. While guests often seize the opportunity on political talk shows to defend their views, the most famous guests are those who act as guides navigating complex political and legal systems for the audiences at home and can engage the moderator, other guests, and the audiences in a discussion by providing opportunities for others to respond.

Preliminary phone interviews are conducted with each of the guests to determine the guests' stances on the selected topic. The pre-interview process ensures that the crisis nature of the program is continued by selecting guests with dissenting opinions. The production staff often selects guests on their ability to both inform and entertain by...
selecting experts who are both knowledgeable and willing to articulate dissenting arguments and represent unpopular views.

Guests can be divided in two categories: “A-list” guests and subject matter experts. “A-list” guests are guests who have demonstrated a television presence that resonates well with other guests, the viewers, and Li Dao. Many times, these are guests who are well-known with “star power” or what Alice Chu refers to as “friends of Li Dao,” a group of just guests who are consistently invited back to 2100 to act as guest panelists regardless of the topic chosen. “Friends of Li Dao” often act as “a group of safety air bags” ensuring that the show runs smoothly and representing a viewpoint with which the audience is already familiar in negotiating the crisis (Chu, 67). While these guests may not be well-versed in every topic that is chosen for the program, they are well-aware of sociopolitical issues in Taiwan and have the linguistic ability to engage audiences. As Shih Hsin University communications professor James C. Hsiung explained, “If you are not dynamic enough, you simply don’t have enough” (Interview, 2004: Chu, 91).

Subject matter experts, on the other hand, might lack the “star power” of the politicians or political pundits, but offer valuable expertise and a necessary ideological stance towards the episode. These experts might be invited to the show to explain the specifics of a crisis discourse, but once the topic is no longer considered a relevant crisis discourse, the guest may never return to the show. New experts might also be brought in as “fresh faces” to lend a new voice to a crisis discourse that is repeatedly featured yet
still controversial and relevant. The expert might infuse the discussion with new ideas and lead the crisis discourse in a new direction.

Guests on the program are usually rewarded with a sizable payment and the opportunity to gain visibility and raise their "star power." The terms are so lucrative that an invited guest will rarely turn down an invitation from the program. The rise in popularity of other competing political talk shows has made the competition for experts even more intense. Fearing that experts will make their rounds on multiple talk shows recycling arguments and using appearances as a way to supplement their income, the 2100 production staff has become extremely territorial with its guest lists. In an attempt to keep the topics and arguments fresh and the experts with the most "star power" tied to 2100, the program has developed a system of blacklisting experts who appear on other programs. Some guests, however, flout this tacit contract with the program and agree to appear on other programs, which eventually results in penalties that include not being invited back to the show for a period of time after this transgression. Since 2100 is the most popular and highly acclaimed political talk show, the program usually has the luxury of being very selective with their guest list, often selecting guests who can leverage the televisual to engage, educate, and converse with audiences at home.
Armchair Pundits and Viewers at Home

A total of twenty to thirty viewers are given the opportunity to share their opinions on 2100 in each episode distributed through the program. When viewers call into the phone bank, the production staff takes the phone call and asks for the sex, surname, and location of the viewer. The phone banks of 2100 play an important function in “controlling” the participation of the different callers, and will be addressed in a later chapter.

Even though the audience at home is addressed in a respectful manner, the time constraints of the show require the host to greet each of the callers curtly due to the 20 second time cap. Li Dao answers each phone call by quickly stating the surname and location of each guest and gives the floor to the caller. At this point, the guest has the freedom to share his thoughts and comments or on the very rare occasion even verbally attack the politicians or panelists involved in the discussion. To end the discussion, Li Dao gives the caller a 5 second grace period to wrap up his comments, thanks him, and then introduces the next caller.

The time cap has actually created an interesting phenomena where callers establish their credibility within the first few seconds of the phone call so viewers at home and guests on the program will perceive their comments as trustworthy. Alice Chu in Political TV Call-in Shows in Taiwan: Animating Crisis Discourses through Reported Speech even suggests that the language is highly unique, and help create signal the
participatory and discursive nature of the talk show. Callers on the program will usually make several descriptive statements describing the experience or their knowledge-based expertise that makes them uniquely qualified to make a certain judgment. On episodes regarding school yard bullying, viewers such as teachers or parents would call in identifying their personal concerns dealing with the issue. This often adds a layer of credibility to the comments each guest lends. Callers will also switch smoothly from Mandarin to Taiwanese and back again to signal to audiences that their opinions do not align perfectly with Chinese or the Taiwanese identity. These callers hope to demonstrate that their opinions are separate from the party and strait tensions that might lessen the credibility of their expertise with viewers or the guests. “Credible” callers whose phone calls are taken in the middle of the program play a crucial role in the way the program develops. As previously discussed, Li Dao often deviates from topics he has selected for the program, and commentary from credible guests are often one of these triggers. Experts on the program are able to use the use the expertise given by the caller to restructure their arguments around the given topic, eventually taking the discussion in a different direction.

Other guests have strategically developed ways to try and “convince” viewers of their point of view by strategically mentioning tragedies or instances of clear corruption with which a sociopolitical savvy audience would be familiar. The caller “abbreviates” the introduction necessary to understand the situation by mentioning examples similar to the current situation. By using strong emotional associations tied to these events, the
armchair pundit is able to appeal to the audience's emotions instead of using logic to argue his point. These strategies have been developed by callers as a way to establish their credibility, explain their position, and sway the viewers even with the 20 second time cap.

**Intimacy and Hypermediacy**

Certain stylistic aspects of *2100* are created to blur the distinctions between the studio audience and the home audience and establish a space where the audience can fully participate from their homes. Other times these same techniques are used in the program to serve the opposite purpose and reinforce the divided opinions among each of the guests, the host, and the callers, perpetuating the crisis discourse.

The way the studio is arranged mimics the way a conference might take place in the corporate workplace or even a group discussion over dinner among friends. The expert panelists sit around a rectangular table with the Li Dao at the head of the table. The other end of the table is empty and “reserved” for the armchair pundit at home to participate in and even lead the discussion. The audience is given a brief glance at the table in the opening credits, which establishes the relative positions of the host and the guests. The camera adopts the viewpoint of the viewer at home and quickly zooms in focusing on the host just as Li Dao welcomes the viewers to join the discussion. At this point, the viewer is expected to quickly orient himself and metaphorically take the seat at the head of the table as he begins to watch the program.
The rapid zoom sequence depicting the layout of the room only happens twice during the broadcast of each show. The first zoom is can be found immediately before Li Dao’s welcome to the viewers at home, and the second zoom occurs at the midpoint of the program. Li Dao often uses the start of the third segment to reintroduce the topic and the various stances of the experts for the viewers who might have just started watching the program. The zoom carries out the same function as before, showing new viewers of their important function in the television program and welcoming them to the discussion. This zoom sequence is shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: This shot is captured mid-zoom as the camera briefly shows the head of the table, “reserved” for the armchair pundit at home. This shot briefly shows the viewers how the room is set-up and invites the viewer to participate or even lead the discussion.

Once the zoom stabilizes, as shown in Figure 2, the camera never shows Li Dao from another angle throughout the program. The camera films him straight-on adopting the
viewers’ point of view, whether he is introducing the topic, asking the experts a question, or summarizing information for the viewers. Li Dao has become famous for his hunched-over posture which shows him engaged in the discussion and centered in the frame. This creates stability and calmness in the program even as debates get heated between the panelists and producers use face-paced camera movements to capture the tension and excitement in the discussions. Li Dao further maintains his status as the unbiased moderator by never sharing the frame with any other guests. This allows Li Dao to represent the viewer at home and ask difficult questions without seemingly revealing his personal biases.

Figure 2: This is the end of the zoom where the camera movement has stabilized and adopted the viewer’s perspective at the end of the table. This is also the shows Li Dao’s engaged pose that he uses throughout the program to stabilize the conversation.
Some of the devices we examined earlier help blur the line between the guest panel and the viewers at home; other stylistic devices in *2100*, however, are used to remind viewers of the uniquely televisual nature of the call-in show. Some of these devices are used to clarify the discussion points for the audience at home, allowing them to easily participate in the discussion even when they've just joined the discussion, while others help add to the intensity of the crisis discourse for the audience at home.

Hard cuts when the discussion switches from one expert to another is a stylistic device commonly used in *2100*. While disorienting at first, the cuts remind the audience that each expert is an individual with different viewpoints and opinions. By not allowing the scenes to "bleed" into each other the camera separates each of the guests from one another, preventing the audience to group one guest with another using attributes such as party affiliation or experience. If the experts do agree on the topic, the guests have reached the common conclusion on their own through logical discourse during the program, instead of pre-formed alliances.

Hypermediacy, a visual style used to exemplify the attributes of a medium (in this case television), is also used by producers to engage the audience and explain the sometimes complicated nature of the topic for less sociopolitical savvy viewers. These devices remind the viewer that he/she is watching the program from home; however provide a wealth of information to the viewer that he/she could not deduce immediately when joining an physical discussion.
The first example of hypermediacy in the program is the use of the split screen, shown in Figure 3. On the left, a news clip previously shown at the beginning of the program is set to play silently in a loop, while the expert explains his position on the subject. The question the expert is answering is placed at the bottom of the screen. The viewer is constantly provided with pieces of pertinent information, allowing new viewers to immediately engage and participate in the discussion.

Figure 3: This figure shows the split screen of the news (shown earlier in the broadcast) and the guest speaker sharing his opinions on the topic.

Once the discussion begins and guests disagree with each other on a particular topic, the three-way split screen technique is used, as shown in Figure 4. In the center, the news clip plays in a loop in the middle of the screen. It is then overlaid by the two guests
with opposing opinions currently debating the topic. The editing technique acts as a metaphor, physically placing the two guests on opposite sides of the issue. The three-way splits typically happen before the viewers are asked to call-in to the program, and help clarify the divided positions of each guest on the show. This helps the callers to address their comments and questions to the relevant guest pundit.

![Image of three-way split screen](image)

**Figure 4:** The three-way split screen helps clarify the opinions discussed by showing the news clip in the middle, while guests with opposing stances on the topic are placed at different ends of the screen.

When viewers start to call into the program a 4-way split screen is used by the production staff to demonstrate the impact the viewer comments have, as shown in Figure 5. While the camera work does not quite simulate an intimate conversation among friends or colleagues, the split screen does provide the viewers with the information they would look for in a conversation. Using the 4-way split screen
method, the viewers at home are able to track the reactions of the expert panel and better understand the discourse taking place in the show.

![Image of four-way split screen](image)

Figure 5: The four-way split screen used exclusively when the moderator Li Dao starts taking phone calls helps provide viewers at home with the information crucial in understanding the discussion. In the top right corner, the news is still played in a loop, while viewers can observe the reactions of the guest panelists to the comments shared by the caller. The hypermediacy is not used to mimic a conversation; rather, the technique is used to provide the viewers with information important in understanding the mood and future direction of the discussion.

Props are also used by guest panelists to clearly and effectively explain their arguments, as shown in Figure 6. While some guests choose to use neatly written diagrams on sheets of paper, others choose to use pre-printed charts provided to them by the show. Others opt to use iPads or white boards to demonstrate their point. Each of these props is used by guests to demonstrate their viewers to the audience in a clear and concise
way and to allow new viewers who have just joined the program to better understand the discussion that is already underway.

Figure 6: A guest uses a prop to briefly summarize the two opposing arguments he is addressing in his argument. The prop is used to clarify his argument for the new viewers who may have tuned in halfway through the argument.

Stylistic components serve the purpose of drawing the audience with different levels of interest and engagement into the ongoing discussion. The constant replay of the news clip, props, and reminders of the day's main discussion topic is used to quickly remind or educate the audience about the main points of the discussion, lowering the barriers to participate. While some stylistic elements such as the camera zoom and the placement of the table create an inclusive atmosphere where audiences at home are encouraged to join the discussion at the head of the table, others such as the three-way split screens
and hard cuts are used to demonstrate the divisive nature of the different topics. The producers of 2100 employ numerous stylistic devices to create a space where viewers with different interest levels and opinions can freely participate in the programming.
5. Television as Controlled Participation

"We need, first of all, for there to be accountability, for there to be somebody who is responsible for enforcing standards and holding people's feet to the fire."

- Jennifer Granholm (1955)

Even with the culture of openness, control mechanisms exist to monitor the accuracy and quality of the content that is shared through political talk shows. Although far from perfect, the system of controls successfully regulates the type of content aired on call-in political talk shows; the controls, which have been built into the nature of television broadcasting—such as the ability to assign responsibility and "consumption culture" associated with the televisual nature of the medium—create a system that does not deteriorate even as the level of participation or the number of participants increase.
The self-regulating system found in television broadcasting is lacking in newer forms of social media, and media strategists and scholars commonly address the control issue by altering the interactivity of social media systems. Since the controls in social media are based on the *interactivity* of the technology instead of the "participatory culture" surrounding the technology, the controls either limit participation or decrease in its effectiveness as people choose to participate more.

Twitter's *retweet* function is marketed as a way for users to quickly share a message with their followers, but also functions as a way for users and the company control the content that is spread. Before the launch of the *retweet* function, users would manually type-in the *tweet* and attribute the *tweet* to the original user who posted the message. The manual *retweeting* system gave the user the opportunity to remediate the message for his followers by adding an additional comment or reinterpreting the meaning of the original *tweet*. The new *retweet* system functions as a control in mechanism in two ways- by preserving the message of the original user, and ensuring that the message in the *tweet* is attributed to the right user. The new system of *retweeting* attempts to control the information passed through the user network, limiting the abilities of a user to remediate content and participate by confining the interactivity of the technology and turning users into conduits for information.

Television controls the credibility of content by attributing responsibility. A common occurrence on Twitter or other social media sites is the spread of false information, such
as the rumored death of a celebrity. Twitter’s Basic Terms of Service, protects the firm from any wrongful or harmful information a user could potentially post on the site.

"You are responsible for your use of the Services, for any content you post to the Services, and for any consequences thereof. The Content you submit, post, or display will be able to be viewed by other users of the Services and through third party services and websites (go to the account settings page to control who sees your Content). You should only provide Content that you are comfortable sharing with others under these Terms."

When wrongful information is spread using social media, users usually cannot determine the handle from which the false information originates. Twitter’s decentralized nature prevents responsibility from being assigned to a single user since users are rarely held accountable by anyone else except their followers.

Television is structured in a much more centralized fashion. When deciding on creating the television show, producers have to consider four important stakeholders in the process 1) the audience, 2) the network, 3) the advertisers, and sometimes 4) the government.

In order to understand the way the television system works, we should examine how each of the stakeholders interacts with the other.
A television producer's responsibility is to create content for networks and distributors (some of these distributors are cable companies), which is then distributed a continuous flow to viewers at home. The Neilsen company measures the number of viewers who watch the content produced and sells the information to networks in the form of ratings. Television networks then use the ratings as a form of currency to persuade advertisers to purchase advertising time on the program. While the system has been more complicated with new media such as streaming television or TiVo, the traditional structure still remains, which is what we will examine here. The television system is shown below.

Figure 7: Broadcasting Model with Different Stakeholders.
Without the support of all the industries, the television distribution system falls apart, and content producers have to balance the interests of all the parties. This more centralized system makes producers accountable for wrongful and hurtful information that is presented in the program. In recent years, wrongful or exploitative information that has been presented on talk shows have faced harsh consequences. Each of the following examples will demonstrate how each stakeholder has control over the credibility of information presented on the program.

**Networks and the Audience**

Networks act as the distributor of programming to viewers. When incorrect information is distributed through the network, the reputations of the television program producer and the network are hurt. Viewers may even distrust other forms of programming the network distributes; therefore, distributors expect television producers to produce credible and responsible content for viewers to consume.

In 1999, the British talk show industry was rocked with scandal when it was revealed that a researcher knowingly allowed several “fake” guests on the talk show *Vanessa*. The two women were recruited from an entertainment industry to pretend to be feuding sisters. The fake guest scandal was far too scandalous for the BBC, who stated, “audiences must be able to believe in the integrity of our programs.” Executives took swift action, firing the researcher, and eventually, cancelling the show. In this case, the
distributor felt that the "fake" guests harmed its reputation with the viewers, and took
steps to remedy the situation. The producers of Vanessa were held responsible for
knowingly producing false content for an audience that believed the information to be
credible.

Ironically enough, in the United States the practice of guests "faking it" was already a
well documented practice. In 1994, a paper by Nelson and Robinson, Nelson recounts
his experience a talk show. As a sociologist with research interests on gender and
sexual deviance, she was invited on a show about male escorts. Her role was scripted
along with the guests on the show. According to Nelson, "the women who paid men for
sex" were recruited from an escort agency, and posed as a lawyer and a public relations
executive. While Nelson believed that the program did not engage in serious
investigative journalism and produced false content, viewers have been known to
embrace the idea of "faking it" on the programs. The most dedicated fans have actually
created sites for "fake guests" or guests who have made multiple appearances on
different shows for various topics. The action of "guest-spotting" actually becomes a
way for fans to exemplify their dedication and media savvies by not falling into the
"fake" talk show trap. In the United States, distributors were under no pressure to
produce credible stories because audiences, who realized guests were fakes, were often
proud of their ability as the select few to not be duped. In this instance, we can assert
that viewers choose to watch this particular type of show for reasons—such as the
performance of spectacle—rather than investigative journalism.
In the context of Taiwanese call-in programs, expert guests are usually well-known politicians, journalists, or political pundits, who undergo an extensive interview process so “faking” on the panel is difficult, if not impossible. In the 2000 election, it became apparent that Taiwanese political talk shows would play an important if not crucial role in deciding the results for the election. As a way for candidates to receive more “airtime” on the talk shows, candidates started to place “fake” callers on television programs. Campaign staff created phone banks paying individual callers to share their support for the candidates on-air. Each “fake” caller would repeatedly call the show’s phone lines, and they were on-air would read script developed by the campaign staff. The callers would then receive bonuses for each program they were able to “fake-on.”

Much of the appeal of Taiwanese political call-in shows is the ability for viewers to have an open and candid discussion with the experts on the television program. The networks believed that the “fake” callers serve only as a propaganda machine, preventing real viewers from sharing their opinions and disturbing the balance of the television program. The network and producers from 2100: All the People Speak took quick actions to stop the phone bank phenomena from taking over the television program. By working with the phone company, producers were able to screen the calls from phone banks by blacklisting the numbers of fake callers and employing strategies to actively filter out numbers that were more likely to be phone bank numbers, such as high frequency callers or numbers that end in multiple zeros (Chu). Since the Taiwanese political talk show audience expected serious discussion on the program and
the opportunity to call-in themselves to participate in the discussion, the network had to put in place a rigorous screening method, adding credibility to the information shared in the program and ensuring “fake callers” would not monopolize the discussion.

**Advertisers and the Audience**

In the current network television model, advertisers purchase time from networks to place ads so the television audience can be exposed to their products. The amount the advertisers pay to place advertising on a program depends on the number of viewers and their demographic, given to them by the Neilsen Media Research. While the efficacy of the “exposure” method has come under attack lately, it is still the most dominant method in which the television network system functions. Through the years, the exposure method has slowly become a less mysterious process, as new technologies have entered the market disrupting the network and shedding light on the way the system is run. This has led viewers to take their grievances directly to advertisers, bypassing the entire Neilsen system entirely.

In preparation for the 2000 elections, Taiwanese political talk show experts became more confrontational than ever. The disputes and brawls found only in the Legislature were taken onto the different political talk shows, and many programs turned from a place where politicians could address the concerns of their constituents to a platform used to launch attacks on other politicians. Hosts often lost control of their guests, and the experts would resort to cursing at other guests or even engaging in fights on air. In
one episode, a legislator viciously attacked a political pundit throwing punches and kicking him on air, shocking the host and audiences at home.

Figure 8: A brawl in the Legislature.

Figure 9: A fight between the Legislator and a political pundit on television.
When a group of Taiwanese political talk show viewers felt like their favorite political call-in shows were becoming too offensive and divisive, instead of turning off the television programs or writing letter to the producers, they formed a group that actively boycotted advertisers who purchased time on the programs they disliked. The group wrote letters to the advertisers supporting the show and threatened to boycott their goods unless they pulled financial support from mean-spirited programs. The group immediately attracted the attention of advertisers, and pressure was placed on the television producers and the hosts to choose expert guests who would more audience friendly on the program.

The audience is able to participate on the talk show during the call-in portion, but the viewers are also able to shape and control the content of the show as well. The audience understood their value in the television network system and pressured advertisers to negotiate with the network and talk show producers on their behalf. Viewers understood that by leveraging their power to purchase goods from certain companies, they were negotiating with a more valuable form of currency than the Neilsen rating system. While this type of participation off-screen has not been widely adopted in the United States, for the past ten years, political talk show viewers in Taiwan have been able to effectively organize and control the type of content they want by interfacing directly with advertisers.
Government and Television Producers

Generally, the network television model works well, and the government does not need to step in to regulate the system. In certain incidents, the courts have issued decisions in order to protect those unprotected by the market-run system of the network television model.

In 1995, a man named Scott Amedure, went on the Jenny Jones Show to confess his feelings for his friend, Jonathan Schmitz, a heterosexual male (Tolson, 1). Three days after taping the show, the Schmidt felt that he was humiliated on air and shot and killed Amador. Four years after Schmidt was found guilty of murder, Amedure’s family initiated a lawsuit against the production company Telepicture Productions and the distributor Time Warner. Schmidt’s interview transcripts later revealed that while the production staff did suggest that the crush could be a male, female, or transvestite, he was led to believe that his secret crush would be a female. In his preshow interview, Schmitz also stated, “I don’t want a man saying this to me on air.” The television producers noted the psychological distress Schmitz might feel, even stating that when he [Schmitz] finds out that his secret crush is Amador, he will die (Oakland County). In the end, jurors rewarded Amedure’s family $25 million after concluding that talk shows cannot trick guests to come on a show, elicit a strong emotional response to make a profit, and then fail to care for the emotional aftermath. This was the first time an “effects” agenda was introduced in the American court system, citing media as a direct cause and a legally responsible party of a crime (Tolson, 1).
While the Jenny Jones lawsuit introduced the concept of media as a direct cause of a crime in the United States, a similar case of negligence has reached the Taiwanese political talk show circuit. In February of 2011, five talk show guests went on the political talk show “Taiwan Speaks,” and started a rumor that the swine flu vaccine created and distributed in Taiwan did not contain the same contents as the vaccine in the United States, which led to multiple deaths in Taiwan. The talk show caused mass panic in Taiwan as viewers refused to become vaccinated, and those vaccinated flooded hospitals. The Taiwanese Food and Drug Administration also came under fire when they were unable to prove that the vaccines were without harmful side-effects. When test results proved the contents of the two vaccines to be identical, the political pundits faced considerable retribution. In Taiwan, there were over 50 deaths caused by the flu, but none of the deaths could be directly connected with rumors of the vaccine. The director of the Taiwanese Food and Drug Administration filed a lawsuit against the political pundits accusing them of irresponsible behavior and making wrongful remarks without conclusive proof. While the lawsuit is pending, audiences upset by the harmful information spread on Taiwan Speaks have chosen to support the director of the FDA in his lawsuit by organizing an auction and bidding on the director’s old briefcase and giving the proceeds to families affected by the vaccine scandal. Television’s ability to assign responsibility and punish those who spread dishonest information ensures the credibility of the content that is shared through the medium.
Besides the network television’s centralized model with multiple stakeholders, the content is controlled by the “televisual” nature of medium. Television’s medium-specific identity as a vehicle for narrative with underlying set of behavioral norms places restrictions on the type of content that can be presented through the medium. While some of these restrictions are due the interactivity or the technological limitations of the medium, the focus of the rest of the chapter will be on the communities and behavioral norms that thrive within them.

Television programs, especially the genre of talk shows, follow a set of production rules. Helen Wood refers to the constraints as the performance of talk, or the construction of the talk show is located at the intersection of audience participation and spectacle because the discourse follows a particular institutional agenda of the televisual” (66). Even though call-in talk shows are live, highly participatory, and unique, the discussions topics fall under three main categories—strait relations, corruption, and societal panic— and are still governed by sets of rules or poetics. The concept of the “crisis discourse” is an example how the same topic can be recycled over different episodes if a feeling of panic is produced in the audience and resolution cannot be found within the episode. Each episode is spontaneous and different; however, each of the episodes follow a similar structure of heated discussion between the experts and viewers on the crisis discourse identified in the episode and the final societal panic, which brings both sides of the crisis argument together. Like other television programs, the call-in show is produced— the expert guests and their views are carefully researched before
they are offered a spot on the show, the topics covered are pre-scripted so producers and
expert guests can bring in props to support their argument, and the host shapes the
conversation focusing on the more interesting topics—and can be considered a
performance. Much of the control is to ensure that television’s “entertainment bias”
remains intact by creating conflict and televisual drama; the careful topic selection,
guest interviews, and props are made for entertainment purposes but also prevent the
spread of misinformation.

The other aspect of control on television is the behavioral norms set in place by simply
watching other guests interact on the program. Many of expert guests on call-in talk
shows are “A-list” guests, who are invited back due to their ability to handle tough
topics, deepen discussion, and engage viewers at home. These guests are expected to
follow what Grice refers to as the *cooperative principle* (1975). The principle suggests
that contributions to the conversation should be “appropriate in quantity (length of
time), quality (truthfulness), relevance, and manner.” If expert guests are fail to meet
any of the criteria above, they are deemed uncooperative by the show’s producers and
audiences at home and may face consequences for their behavior. Guests will “A-list”
guests do not want to lose their status on political talk shows and will conform to
norms expected of them on talk shows; and experts who wish to be “A-list” guests will
try to mimic the behavior of their colleagues to build viewer support. Currently, social
media has no direct reward system for those who follow Grice’s cooperative principle,
reducing the incentive for users follow the behavioral norms of those who do. The
prioritized guest list system rewards the experts who are cooperative and follow behavioral norms established by those before them, and punishing others who fail to meet those norms.

One of the strengths of television is the ability to provide context. Context plays a crucial role in television narratives by providing the viewer with a lens with which to view the story by heightening conflicts, and providing a series, season, or episode logic to the television program. Television's narrative structure has created a savvy audience on the lookout for additional context to better understand the story presented. In the case of social media, limitations on the amount of content, such as Twitter's 140 character limit, often prevent the user from providing adequate context for his/her post. These statements can often be misrepresented or 'taken out of context'. Since social media was designed to follow a network structure to act as a conduit for information, instead of a narrative structure, social media users rarely provide or look for context in posts increasing the possibility that unreliable information is presented. Television programming, on the other hand, was created to be broadcasted to the masses; the network television model we explored earlier in the chapter supports this concepts since networks greatly benefit from more viewers consuming the content they produce, while social media content is not always intended for mass consumption. Like Twitter’s character limit, callers on Taiwanese political talk shows also face a time constraint of 20 seconds forcing callers to adapt and develop a special language to explain or engage viewers at home (Chu). Instead of using logic or a well-researched argument, which is
barely defensible in 20 seconds, viewers who call in use a series of analogies to further explain or explore the discussion. Often, viewers will compare and contrast the topic to another event in which the administration has acted differently to illustrate hypocrisy or offer a possible compromise to the discourse. Analogies will bring in previous historical events that evoke powerful emotions or memories binding the topic to a more familiar topic, providing context for the viewer. Because television audiences have been conditioned to expect a narrative with many layers of context, the possibility of accidental misinformation is greatly lessened.

Another way information is commonly taken out of context on social media, is when information necessary to create a complete story is distributed to different people. In the Red Lion Broadcasting Co., Inc., et al. v. Federal Communications Commission, the Supreme Court decided on the importance of the fairness doctrine. According to Steve Rendall of the Fairness and Accuracy of Reporting, “the Fairness Doctrine had two basic elements: It required broadcasters to devote some of their airtime to discussing controversial matters of public interest, and to air contrasting views regarding those matters. Stations were given wide latitude as to how to provide contrasting views: It could be done through news segments, public affairs shows, or editorials. The doctrine did not require equal time for opposing views but required that contrasting viewpoints be presented.” One of aspects of fairness doctrine is the opportunity to share the different viewpoints or respond to attacks to the same audience. In the event that wrongful information is presented by a caller on a political talk show, the experts or the
moderator is able to immediately refute the caller's allegations to the same audience that originally heard the accusation. The immediacy of the response and the access to the same viewers limits the impacts of the incorrect information. We have previously determined that television is a mass medium, while social media is unique in that each person's network is unique to that individual user. If incorrect or harmful information is spread by a single user, the affected party 1) has to be aware of the existence of the information, and 2) address the allegation. Unless the affected party shares the same social network as the user who shared the wrongful information, the affected party cannot refute the accusations to the same audience, lessening the credibility of the information and intensifying the effects of false information.

As the popularity in social media rises, the credibility of information that passes through the medium will become a prominent concern. Instead of simply dismissing television as an outdated form of passive consumption, media scholars could benefit by leveraging some of the control mechanisms used in participatory television, especially Taiwanese political call-in shows. By fusing the immediacy and network of social media with the "consumption culture" of televisual elements, users may be able to preserve the accuracy and credibility of the message while encouraging others to participate.
6. Conclusion and Further Work

"I envision a future where there'll be 300 million reporters, where anyone from anywhere can report for any reason. It's freedom of participation absolutely realized."

-Matt Drudge (1966)

During a time when instantaneous participation through social media such as Twitter or Facebook is prevalent and so much focus is placed on interactivity of online media, we may be surprised that there are still important lessons to learn from more traditional mediums such as television. My thesis shows how Taiwanese political talk shows provide an example of how even media that was once considered passive can be altered to create participation by providing an affinity space where minority opinions are presented to viewers interested in hearing them. Callers are able to directly interact
with the hosts, expert guests, and other viewers by openly sharing their opinions without being prescreened. Not only are audiences simply consuming the content, they are actively creating the content within the broadcast model, one of the attributes found only in new media.

Most importantly, when we study media systems to try and create participation we cannot merely alter the interactivity of the medium; rather, we must examine the “ecology” of a media system since \( \textit{how} \) users choose to use media is not merely a function of the interactivity of the technology. Users will often choose from a variety of material and content available to them to create a “consumption culture” surrounding the technology. Recent scandals where private messages have been surfaced and shown in a public manner have made people question whether people have different \textit{mindsets} when using different media. Why is it that users are more likely to send inappropriate messages through digital mediums such as texts, Twitter, or e-mail than by letter? Why are mediums that occupy the space between private and public spheres so easy to use, yet its implications to difficult to understand?

In order to even scratch the surface of that question, we must first take into account the entire \textit{system} by taking into account the social, cultural, legal, political, and economic institutions, practices, and protocols that shape the technology as well as the content that is delivered through the medium. By understanding the ecology of the Taiwanese political talk show, we have found a vehicle to examine the affinity space between the public and private spheres, and the spaces between the domestic realm where television
is often consumed and the realm of highly visible programs when viewers openly participate on the call-in show. The ability to mediate and add credibility between multiple spaces is what makes the call-in show in Taiwan unique, and is something social media such as has not yet learned how to do.

While much focus has been placed on adding credibility to a highly participatory medium, little attention has been paid to making a highly credible medium into a more participatory medium. Watching television has always been a private act, conducted inside one’s home; however, broadcast television is “one of the key sites at which a sense of national (or other) community is constructed” (Morley 1996:329) and is “the private life of the nation-state” (Morley 1996: 329 in Li 2009: 116). If broadcast television is used for constructing the nation-state, credibility is already built into the broadcast model and audiences will often associate the message passed through the medium as credible. In the case of the Taiwanese political call-in show, audiences already know that the information shown is credible due to the program’s televsual nature, but it also blurs the division between the audience and the public that critics often claim exist. Daniel Dayan states that, “a public is born when member of an audience decide to join and go public. Going public involves on their part the construction of a problem, a reflexive decision to join, commit, perform... Most audience members do not feel the urge to enter the process.” Here, the audience is encouraged and inspired to actively create the content that will be broadcasted to others. Content is no longer constructed for the audience; rather, it is constructed by the audience. By increasing the audience
involvement, Taiwanese political talk shows are an example of “controlled participation,” where increasing participation does not negatively affect the credibility of the message.

Currently, the closest medium that follows the concept of “controlled participation” are the Facebook Town Squares used by President Obama to address a series of questions raised by the public. During the Facebook Town Square, the President selects questions pre-submitted to answer live while millions of Facebook users watch the broadcasted stream. While the medium is televisual in nature and leverages the power of the social network, critics are disappointed in the “softball” and prescreened questions that are asked, as well as the lack of “conversation” that is present.

While Taiwanese political talk shows have been a huge success within Taiwan, the talk shows have spread to other countries in Asia. In many East Asian countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, where government-controlled media prevent lively debates, open discussion and criticism of the government on national television is strictly forbidden. Viewers will often watch the program as a type of spectacle, astonished by the freedom given to Taiwanese callers to openly criticize their government and elected officials. Websites, like YouTube, are popular for ways for ethnic Chinese outside of Taiwan to view the fights and debates on political talk shows forbidden by their governments.
The pull of Taiwanese political talk shows are said to be so strong that Chinese authorities had to limit the number of tourists traveling to Taiwan during the 2008 election season. Without access to popular video sharing sites that give Chinese citizens access to Taiwanese political talk shows, many Mainlanders chose to travel to Taiwan and watch a democratic election unfold. Many tour guides reported that tourists were eager to get back to their hotel after dinner to watch the electrically-charged programming rather than go sightseeing at night.

As Taiwanese political talk shows flow throughout the region, we may see certain changes start to take shape. Since political talk shows inform audiences about the controversial issues discussed in Parliament, viewers may find themselves with allegiances to certain issues instead of parties. Audiences are encouraged to develop and voice their own opinions on each issue instead of supporting the actions and opinions of a specific party. Furthermore, the very open criticism of Taiwanese government officials and policies allow viewers from other countries to watch “democracy-in-action.” Eventually, access to the Taiwanese political content may also have a liberalizing effect on neighboring countries and their views regarding national identity construction and participation, especially in fledgling democracies.

At the surface, Taiwanese call-in shows are a spectacle, trying to achieve the highest ratings by inviting guests who understand the concept of putting on a show to receive higher advertising revenues; however, the shows also point to the importance of the
“consumption culture” surrounding a medium. The call-in talk show program provides a credible space for audiences to negotiate the tensions of between the majority and minority opinions in both the public and private spheres, creating “controlled participation.” The interactivity of a medium, whether it is new or old, or interactive or passive, is just one component in a complex system that impacts participation, and if we truly want credible, “controlled participation” we must build a technology and “consumption culture” that is supported by the political, social, cultural, and economic drivers surrounding it.
7. Works Cited


