

2016

Exploring Intermedia Agenda Setting Effects of Last Week Tonight with John Oliver

Andrew Abad

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses



Part of the [Mass Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Abad, Andrew, "Exploring Intermedia Agenda Setting Effects of Last Week Tonight with John Oliver" (2016). *LSU Master's Theses*. 3224.

https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/3224

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.

EXPLORING INTERMEDIA AGENDA SETTING EFFECTS OF
LAST WEEK TONIGHT WITH JOHN OLIVER

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Mass Communication

in

Theanship School of Mass Communication

by

Andrew Abad

B.S., Eastern Michigan University, 2013

May 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to extend my greatest thanks to my thesis committee for their guidance and assistance from the initial conceptualization of this paper until the final draft you will read here. To Johanna, Katie, and Martin, I appreciate your time and valuable feedback that has made this project stronger. Special and significant thanks go to my thesis committee chair, Dr. Josh Grimm, for his consistent and wholesome support of this project and numerous instances of feedback, commentary, and revisions. I consider each of the faculty members I've had the pleasure and opportunity to learn from at LSU as mentors and colleagues, and appreciate their collective wisdom and combined effort to further my understandings of communication, politics, and media.

The inspiration for this project stemmed from many sources, but I would like to specifically credit conversations with dear friends, classmates, and family members for serving as a great sounding board to my thoughts and ideas. I would like to specifically recognize two classmates that were of great help during this project, Robyn Styles and Lindsey McCluskey, for their time, patience, and assistance with the data analysis and intercoder reliability sections of this paper. I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Henderson for his support and insight throughout the process.

Lastly, I would like to thank my closest friends and family members for their unwavering confidence and encouragement through the trials and tribulations associated with putting this all together. This project was stressful and difficult, and I appreciate that I had so many folks who listened to me and helped me get through it. To my mother, Julie, and sisters, Emma, Lyric, Alexis, and Grace, I love you so much and thank you for bringing so much joy to my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | ii |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | iv |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | v |
| ABSTRACT..... | vi |
| CHAPTER | |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 6 |
| Influences of Political Comedy Programming..... | 6 |
| Agenda-Setting Theory..... | 8 |
| Agenda Setting and the Digital World..... | 11 |
| An Era of Minimal Effects?..... | 12 |
| Last Week Tonight, Intermedia Agenda Setting, and Political Activism..... | 15 |
| METHOD..... | 18 |
| Procedures..... | 18 |
| Sample..... | 19 |
| Measurement and Variables..... | 21 |
| Intercoder Reliability..... | 22 |
| DATA AND RESULTS..... | 24 |
| DISCUSSION..... | 34 |
| Limitations..... | 37 |
| Future Research..... | 39 |
| Conclusion..... | 40 |
| REFERENCES..... | 42 |
| APPENDIX | |
| A. Data from MC 7999 study using LexisNexis Academic Database..... | 49 |
| B. Detailed Scoring Information..... | 50 |
| C. Pew Top 50 Online News Entities..... | 56 |
| D. Constructed Sample of News Outlets..... | 57 |
| E. Variables, Operational Definitions, Sources, Statistics, and Data..... | 58 |
| F. Intercoder Reliability Codebook and Dataset..... | 59 |
| G. Study Codebook and Dataset..... | 62 |
| VITA..... | 67 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Cumulative Paired Samples T-Test (Entire Sample)..... | 26 |
| 2. Cumulative Paired Samples T-Test (Most Popular Segments)..... | 27 |
| 3. Cumulative Paired Samples T-Test (Least Popular Segments)..... | 27 |
| 4. Paired Samples T-Tests by Segment (Most Popular Segments – Post- and Pre-Count Periods)..... | 28 |
| 5. Paired Samples T-Tests by Segment (Most Popular Segments – Extended Period)..... | 29 |
| 6. Paired Samples T-Tests by Segment (Least Popular Segments – Post- and Pre-Count Periods)..... | 30 |
| 7. Paired Samples T-Tests by Segment (Least Popular Segments – Extended Period)..... | 31 |
| 8. Paired Samples T-Tests by Type of News Outlet (Traditional vs. Native Online)..... | 32 |
| 9. Paired Samples T-Tests by Type of News Outlet (Additional Keyword Post-Counts)..... | 33 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Intercoder Reliability Measures..... | 23 |
| 2. Descriptive Statistics (Entire Sample)..... | 24 |
| 3. Descriptive Statistics (Most Popular Segments)..... | 25 |
| 4. Descriptive Statistics (Least Popular Segments)..... | 25 |

ABSTRACT

The HBO television program *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* is a new and unique take on the typical political comedy show popularized by programs like *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. Uninterrupted by commercial breaks and with full creative control, host John Oliver and his team spend 30 minutes on Sunday nights discussing a typically underreported story at length, abandoning the monologue and interview portions reminiscent of traditional political comedy shows in favor of a long-form style investigation into a particular issue or topic. The main segment of each episode is then uploaded to the social media website, YouTube, within 24 hours of the show's airing for free viewing by anyone with an Internet connection. As a result, the show has garnered both critical acclaim and an active fanbase of millions who view, share, and interact with the show by responding to numerous calls to action that usually follow each segment.

This study seeks to analyze the show's potential effects on news production, specifically within the context of intermedia agenda setting, the ability for the show's content to lead news outlets to cover the topics discussed during each episode in the time following the episode's airing. Through keyword searches, counts of news coverage on online news entities in periods both before and after the show's air date were collected in an effort to determine if there are more articles in the days following a *Last Week Tonight* episode than in the days preceding one. Paired sample t-tests were used as the primary method of statistical analysis to compare the means of each set of counts. Results indicate at least a moderate effect of the show on levels of news coverage across 25 different episodes for both traditional and native online news entities.

INTRODUCTION

Despite its relatively recent debut in 2014, the late-night political comedy program *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* has quickly gathered both viewership and critical acclaim. The television program, which airs on *HBO* once weekly on Sunday nights, is novel, relevant, accessible and primarily political, a program many consider an improvement of the political comedy model made famous by *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart (Helmore 2014; Kenny 2014; Zoller Seitz 2014). Just five months into the show's airing, *Last Week Tonight* averaged 4.1 million weekly viewers across TV airings/DVR, on-demand and HBOGo (*HBO's* online application) playing, "narrowly ahead of *Real Time with Bill Maher's* 4 million weekly viewers, according to *HBO*" (O'Connell 2014).

One compelling aspect of *Last Week Tonight's* success is its social media presence, namely on YouTube, which offers premium content to audiences at no cost. The show's main segment is posted in full on social media after every episode, dramatically increasing viewership and reaction online. Reactions to the segments have raked in millions of views within a week, sometimes even 24 hours of premiering on TV (Helmore 2014; O'Connell 2014). Each weekly topic is selected in response to a recent lead-in story (the recap) that allows Oliver, the host and show's executive producer, to cite a current event or recent news event as the segment's tie-in. Oliver then can comment on it at length (the rant), proceeding to deeper issues and complexities associated with the major topic, largely relying on research conducted by the show's staff. The segments typically last around 15 minutes of uninterrupted air time and ends with a call to action (the crescendo), sometimes in the form of a video or celebrity cameo to help support their cause or issue (Helmore 2014; Kenny 2014).

The format of the show, which airs weekly for 30 commercial-free minutes, has led to a restructuring of the traditional 22-minute broadcast model (Kenny 2014). The extra eight minutes per show do make a difference, allowing Oliver to devote more time to relevant topics and separate the show from the *Comedy Central* format now typical of political comedy programming (Kenny 2014). The fact that the show only airs once per week has led the writers and producers to feature stories that have received minimal coverage in efforts to present a product relevant to late night TV (Kenny 2014; Sneed 2014). Tim Carvell, *Last Week Tonight's* executive producer, notes that writers and staff work through the weekend for a Sunday evening in-studio recording in an effort to ensure the material hasn't been already highly covered by other outlets:

We have some stuff that we know is going to be on the calendar that we're already going to be prepping jokes for and bits for, but generally I think we're going to let the news of the week determine what we do so it doesn't feel like three-week-old news, which is a little bit of a challenge (Sneed 2014).

Episodes so far have focused on a wide variety of domestic and international topics, such as net neutrality, student debt, special immigrant visas, voting rights in the U.S. territories, and transgender rights. Segments have on more than one occasion directed attention toward corporate America, exposing corporate behavior and injustices in the food labeling, pharmaceutical marketing, big tobacco, standardized testing, and the chicken industries.

Through its efforts to expose injustices and incite action, *Last Week Tonight's* segments are receiving attention from both the viewing public and the news media. Especially compelling to the show's study is the perceived real-life effect triggered by the rants and following calls to actions on subjects that would receive little media coverage otherwise. Oliver's use of the show

as his mouthpiece, which *Time* aptly named the, “John Oliver Effect,” has garnered both a considerable sphere of influence and attention (Fitz-Gerald 2015; Luckerson 2015).

The John Oliver effect was on full display when the show investigated the Miss America Pageant and the organization’s claim that the pageant is the largest provider of scholarships for women in the United States. The pageant stated that it gave \$45 million in scholarships, and although Oliver found that figure to be far from the actual mark, the amount was still more than any other women-only scholarship the show could find. Oliver made a specific note during the segment to reference other organizations that offered women-only scholarships and encourage viewers to donate to change that fact, and one of those organizations (the Society of Women Engineers) said that in just two days following the episode’s airing, it had received upwards of \$25,000, roughly 15% of what it receives annually in donations (Gregory 2014; Kowitt 2015; Luckerson 2015).

Perhaps the most infamous example of the “Oliver effect” came in response to the show’s viral segment on changing the net neutrality laws, a policy change lobbied by cable and phone companies that would separate web traffic into “lanes” that would allow certain types of Internet activity to supersede other, less-important traffic. Not only did Federal Communication Commission (FCC) officials watch and laugh at the episode as it aired, the FCC voted to adopt net neutrality regulations after Oliver called on his viewers to write to the commission to voice their opposition to any changes to a free and open Internet (Brody 2015). “Seize your moment, my lovely trolls,” Oliver said during the segment. “Turn on caps lock, and fly, my pretties!” Seize the moment they did, when by Monday the FCC’s comment section crashed after over 45,000 comments which many, including Oliver himself, attribute to the show’s segment (Andrews

2014; Brody 2015; McDonald 2014; Oliver 2014). Washington Post columnist Soraya Nadia

McDonald observed:

He may be just the firebrand activist we're looking for — because Oliver's rant and subsequent call to action may have crashed the FCC's Web site, or at the very least slowed it to a crawl. Oliver encouraged people to comment on the FCC's site while it decides what to do about net neutrality (McDonald 2014).

Recent events show that John Oliver's influence even extends beyond the work of his engaged viewers. The show's segment on American Territories served as the reference point for a 9th circuit court judge in a case regarding Guam's tax code (Fitz-Gerald 2015; Rhodan 2015). And the net neutrality case influenced as far as Washington state, where a state senator credited the segment as the basis for a bill introduced in the Washington legislature allowing individuals across Washington to submit testimony for legislators in Olympia to watch and respond to (Brownstone 2015). In large part due to the idea that Oliver can make a real-world impact, *Fortune* magazine ranked the host 10th of the 40 Under 40 most influential young people in business (Kowitt 2015).

While we can see anecdotal evidence of a John Oliver effect in regards to inciting viewers to take action in response to Oliver's ranting and calls to action, perhaps the more important question for scholars deals with a potential effect the show's reporting of topics can have on the production of the news in the days following a *Last Week Tonight* segment. Do news outlets cover the topics that John Oliver discusses in the days following an episode? What type of news outlets cover the topics that are discussed on that week's main segment, and in what ways? Due to the ability for segments of the show to be shared and viewed online, are news outlets that exist solely as online news websites (defined as native online news sources) more likely to cover *Last Week Tonight* and the segments they produce? This study aims to

assess the overall ability of John Oliver and *Last Week Tonight* to set the news media's agenda through selection and reporting of an underreported issue, subject, or topic each week. This phenomenon is defined as intermedia agenda setting, in which published media content influences the type and content of other media—in this case, coverage of a popular political comedy late-night television show by mainstream print, television, and online media. I intend to explore these questions regarding *Last Week Tonight's* effect through an analysis of the volume and source of online news coverage both before and after each episode date for a selection of the show's segments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Influences of Political Comedy Programming

A political comedy show is commonly defined as a television program that covers current issues using humor to make parodies or jokes about public and political figures (Cao & Brewer 2008). In the realm of late night television, parody and satire have expanded significantly into news coverage (Duffy 2013). Political comedy programs, while making fun of the politicians, public figures and events that comprise the political world, offer critiques of mainstream news programming as a more entertaining alternative in regards to keeping up with current events and political news (Duffy 2013). Although the programs are often dismissed as “fake” news, political comedy shows give viewers a different way of interacting with content by abandoning the constraints and norms of traditional newsrooms (Baym 2005). The creators and representatives of political comedy shows actively distance their enterprises from being labeled a news product, instead claiming that the purpose of the show is for comedic and satirical purposes only. Popular show hosts and personalities generally identify purely as entertainers or comedians and not journalists (Baym 2005). Governed by new technological and economic forces, political comedy shows operate in what Baym calls, “a landscape in which ‘real’ news is becoming increasingly harder to identify and define” (2005; p. 259). Viewers do not distinguish between journalism and pop culture, resulting in a more integrated media environment that ranges from political satire and entertainment to actual issue involvement and participation (Baym 2005; Duffy 2013).

Political comedy programming commonly seeks to uncover failures of mass media as well as government officials and leaders (Baym 2005). The success of these programs rely on

pop culture references, quick-witted comebacks, and mockery to captivate and entertain their audiences while also allowing for some political discourse to occur (Landreville et al. 2010; Stroud 2007). Research has shown that people watch the shows primarily to be entertained and that the shows are produced in an effort to generate laughs more than an understanding of the political world (Prior 2003; Baum 2003; 2005; Baym 2005; Cao & Brewer 2008). However, political comedy shows can have a positive impact on the public's knowledge of and participate in the political world (Cao & Brewer 2008; Landreville et al. 2010).

Communication research of political comedy programs typically concerns one of two major areas of study: features of political comedy programming and the resulting effects (Becker & Waisanen 2013). Political comedy programs have proven to be effective in taking complex political issues and simplifying them, thereby improving a viewer's understanding, which increases measures of political engagement and participation (Baumgartner and Morris 2009; Baym and Shah 2011; Cao 2008; Cao & Brewer 2008). One of the most actively researched effects of political comedy viewing is the impact it can have on political learning (Warner, Hawthorne, & Hawthorne 2015). Baum (2005) notes that soft news programs like political comedy shows "piggyback" political information on top of the entertainment functions they provide. Therefore, exposure to soft news programs is shown to make viewers more aware of political issues and lead to more political engagement (Baum 2003; Baum 2005; Young & Tisinger 2006; Dalton 2008). Another way viewers may learn from the shows is through a gateway effect, in which viewers become more likely to interact with traditional news coverage as a result of viewing the comedy programs because some political knowledge is necessary to 'get the joke' and appreciate the humorous elements of the shows (Cao 2008; Feldman &

Young 2008; Xenos & Becker 2009). It is primarily talk shows and late-night comedy programs that serve as bridges to traditional television news, especially during presidential campaigns, a prominent source of material for late-night comedians (Feldman & Young 2008; Niven & Amundson 2003). Aside from the gateway effect, viewers of political comedy may learn directly about politics and current affairs through the content featured in the programs (Warner, Hawthorne & Hawthorne 2015). However, some researchers believe that more understanding is necessary about the proliferation and diffusion of political comedy in today's media landscape. The advent of social media websites like YouTube allows the, "increasingly viral reach of both user-generated and professional produced online political comedy content" (Becker & Waisanen 2013; p. 174, Becker, Xenos & Waisanen 2010). Baym & Shah (2011) show that political comedy programming seems to be converging with Internet-based activist networks, which are re-appropriating clips of show segments using information communication technologies made possible by the advent of social media. These data suggest that the network infrastructure already exists for shows like *Last Week Tonight* to produce and distribute online media content that has the capacity to go viral and affect not only levels of political engagement and involvement, but the greater media landscape as well (Becker, Xenos & Waisanen 2010).

Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory describes a process through which the mass media communicate to the viewing public which issues and topics are important (McCombs & Shaw 1972). The theory operates upon the assumption that the media does not tell people *what* exactly to think, but rather a specific issue, candidate, or event to think *about*. Agenda-setting research most

typically focuses on the relationships between daily newspapers and the media at-large (McCombs & Shaw, 1977). Agenda-setting theory begins when the press (or news media) selects a number of issues, topics, or events to report on and discuss as “the news.” Given the constraints of time and space for any given news product, some stories and issues are judged to be more “newsworthy” than others and thus receive more coverage. These newsmaking decisions, specifically the selection of stories and their assigned value in regards to position in the news broadcast or item or the amount of space or time spent and depth of coverage, comprise the elements of the media’s agenda. As viewers consume news, their perceptions and thoughts are undoubtedly molded and shaped by the structural elements of the media’s agenda, the important and prevalent issues and topics garnering the most thorough and consistent coverage. There are three primary factors that determine the influence of agenda-setting effects: the level of interest in content (and relevance to the receiver), the degree of uncertainty about the issue, and the amount of effort required to locate reliable information (McCombs 2004). The combination of the individual’s level of interest and degree of uncertainty regarding content is defined as an individual’s need for orientation. The greater the need for orientation, the more likely one is to subscribe and attend to the agenda of the mass media (McCombs 2004, p. 66). In a study of candidate images in regional and municipal elections in Spain, McCombs et al. (1997) introduce an additional unit of analysis to the study of agenda-setting effects, second-level agenda setting. This concept builds upon the original theory of agenda setting to show that the second level of analysis are the *attributes* of each object, the characteristics and properties that “paint the picture” beyond simply a public issue and describe how news frames can impact the public agenda (McCombs et al. 1997). At the

object level, agenda-setting theory tells us “*what* to think about” – at the attribute level, media can also tell us “*how* to think about” particular objects (McCombs 2005:546; Baran & Davis 2015:266).

Iyengar and Kinder’s (1987) seminal work, *News That Matters*, demonstrated causality within the agenda-setting process through a series of controlled experiments. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) concluded that, “Americans view of their society and nation are powerfully shaped by the stories that appear on the evening news,” explaining that “people who were shown network broadcasts edited to draw attention to a particular problem assigned greater importance to that problem – greater importance than they themselves did before the experiment began, and greater importance than did people assigned to control conditions that emphasized different problems” (p. 112). In other words, agenda setting allows media outlets to dictate what becomes more or less important in the national conversation.

More recently, media scholars have spent more time investigation the agenda-setting effects media can have on one another (Sweetser, Golan, & Wanta 2008). Intermedia agenda setting refers to occurrences of one media outlet’s agenda being determined by another media outlet (Sweetser, Golan, & Wanta 2008). Others define it as the mechanism which creates a common definition of what is news and what is not (Vliegenthart & Walgrave 2008). Given the competitiveness with which media operates, scholars believe that outlets will observe and emulate a competitors’ behavior as soon as it’s made clear that doing so would be advantageous (Vliegenthart & Walgrave 2008).

Gilbert et al. (1980) argue the *New York Times* is a distinguished leader in intermedia agenda setting, as the news outlet indicates what important news and issues that other news

outlets should cover. Scholars have also found that newspapers and television networks can have intermedia agenda-setting influences on one another, which demonstrates that intermedia agenda setting can occur both within and between media (Reese & Danielian, 1989; Sweetser, Golan, & Wanta 2008). Golan (2006) showed that the *Times* had a strong intermedia agenda-setting effect with the international news agenda of three leading television newscasts. Intermedia agenda setting also is deeply rooted in studies of campaign agendas and their ability to permeate newspaper and broadcast media (Conway, Kenski & Wang 2015).

Agenda Setting and the Digital World

As traditional media entities face widespread changes in both the economics of news production and distribution, traditional media continues to lose ground to a cheaper and more robust online media. Most print and broadcast media entities have adapted with additional online components while adopting blogging and other social media forms in an effort to draw active web publics into news sites (Meraz 2011). Due to these changes, a need exists to re-evaluate the agenda-setting influence of news media as a result of a new communication landscape (Bennett & Iyengar, 2009; Conway, Kenski & Wang 2015; McCombs, 2004).

Scholars frequently question whether or not online media like blogs, online activist groups, and online news outlets can set the agenda of traditional media, partisan media, or even political campaigns' agendas (Conway, Kenski & Wang 2015; Meraz 2011; Heim 2013; Ragas & Kioussis 2010; Sweetser, Golan, & Wanta 2008). Recent studies that examine the ability of new media to affect agenda setting tend to apply the intermedia agenda setting framework to understand these relationships (Conway, Kenski & Wang 2015).

In today's media environment, intermedia agenda setting occurs among media entities competing in the online news market, even applying to foreign online media in addition to the American media markets (Jeongsub 2011). Sweetser, Golan, & Wanta (2008) provide support for the idea that online media like blogs can influence the issue and news agendas of major television networks within the context of a Presidential election season. National newspapers rely on social media platforms for reporting, but can also influence candidates and political parties on social media sites such as Twitter, exhibiting a symbiotic relationship between old and new media (Conway, Kenski & Wang 2015). And a 2008 study showed that YouTube played an increasingly large role in the creation and distribution of election media, providing political content like speeches and advertisements at no-cost to viewers or traditional media outlets to cover in their own broadcasts (Gueorguieva 2008). Neuman et al. (2014) demonstrated how the relationship between traditional and social media is also reciprocal, with social media having at least some influence on news production and vice versa. Further, the study finds that social media communicated a distinct agenda compared to traditional media and that social media activity proved to be a better predictor of traditional media than the inverse (Conway, Kenski & Wang 2015; Neuman et al. 2014). The ability for "trending" topics and stories on social media websites signal a clear role that can influence the news media's agenda (Conway, Kenski & Wang 2015).

An Era of Minimal Effects?

Agenda-setting theory is recognized in the field of political communication as one of the most important media effects theories of the 20th century. Some scholars argue that agenda-setting theory, along with other theories of the time, have been large contributors in shifting

the media effects paradigm away from one that assumes media has only a minimal effect (McCombs 2004; Shehata & Stromback 2013). However, some argue that today's new media environment is no longer conducive to the influence of media effects like agenda setting within the study of political communication. Led by Bennett and Iyengar (2008), a group of prominent scholars make the argument that changes to the media environment signal that we might be entering, "a new era of minimal effects," rendering agenda-setting theory more or less inapt as a media effects theory (Bennett & Iyengar 2008; p. 709; Shehata & Stromback 2013). As individuals continue to "detach" from a largely group-based society, they are faced with an increasing number of media to consume and interact with (Bennett & Iyengar 2008; Arceneaux & Johnson 2013). But despite the increase of political information made available through access to television news and online information, studies show that measures of political knowledge and turnout have not changed (Prior 2005; Bennett & Iyengar 2008).

As active participants in the media landscape, individuals make choices as to which media they choose to watch and consume, which can alter the extent to which media can influence them and in what ways (Arceneaux & Johnson 2013; Jerit & Barabas 2012; Prior 2005). Prior (2005) believes the gap in political knowledge and turnout created by the digital divide is shrinking and will be soon replaced by what he calls a performance-based gap – one that results in individuals choosing to, "abandon the news for entertainment simply because they like it better" (p. 578). This concept of selective exposure also contributes to the rise of political polarization along partisan lines and results in an increasingly narrowed media environment for individuals to receive information that only reinforces and strengthens an

individual's existing beliefs and worldview (Arceneaux & Johnson 2013; Stroud 2010). All of these trends, the scholars argue, result in a dilution of and challenge to media effects.

Despite these changes, others believe that media effects are not only plausible, but increasingly probable in the field of political communication. Holbert, Garnett, & Gleason (2010) offer a critique of Bennett and Iyengar's approach to the question of minimal effects, stating that the idea of persuasive effects, which they believe is equated to attitude change, has neglected other factors like the formation or reinforcement of attitudes. Instead, they argue that a broader view of persuasion is required when analyzing the minimal effects arguments and assessing the conclusions reached about the future of media effects research (Holbert, Garnett, & Gleason 2010). Another major critique of Bennett and Iyengar's argument is that the scholars exclude the influence of new technologies that may serve to facilitate political discussion like social media platforms (Holbert, Garnett, & Gleason 2010).

Central to both the debate surrounding media effects as well as this study is the concept of the inadvertent news audience. In a media landscape dominated by a bevy of choices and enticing entertainment options, scholars debate the capacity for news consumption and political learning to occur when individuals are seemingly less interested in politics and wouldn't have consumed news in the first place if given more options. The argument put forth by Holbert, Garnett & Gleason (2010) is yet again that the conceptualization of news consumption is too narrow. As we have noted previously, the fields of news media and entertainment are becoming increasingly blended. If media influence on politics go beyond the confines of a traditional news program, then more choice may not necessarily result in minimal effects. The genre of soft news allows audiences to come into contact with a wide range of

political topics in a variety of programming from animated comedies, to sitcoms, to late-night television. Indeed, Baym (2005) notes that political comedy programming operates upon the premise that viewers arrive for the entertainment and comedic value of the program but may also unintentionally learn from the political content discussed and featured on the shows, as well as to seek further clarification in some cases to understand the jokes themselves. This suggests that non-news outlets can generate a variety of unintended outcomes in regards to media effects (Baym 2005; Holbert, Garnett & Gleason 2010).

Last Week Tonight, Intermedia Agenda Setting, and Political Activism

As noted previously, the *HBO* show *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* represents a significant deviation from the traditional political comedy model due to its structure and content choices (Kenny 2014; Zoller Seitz 2014). Some believe that the show improves upon the previous format offered by shows like *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* (Kenny 2014). Indeed, the ability to produce the show on a premium, subscription-based network in *HBO* allows for creative control, the use of uncensored and sometimes explicit language, and a commercial-free time slot gives *Last Week Tonight* a distinct advantage over both its predecessors as well as its competitors (Zoller Seitz 2014). But perhaps what may separate it most from other political comedy programming is the attention to practicing what *Vulture* columnist Matt Zoller Seitz calls, “real journalism in comedy form” (Zoller Seitz 2014). Unlike the traditional structure of shows like *The Daily* and *Nightly Shows*, which consist of a monologue, taped segment, and interview or panel discussion, *Last Week Tonight* approaches political content with a clear reporting angle, intended to inform as much as it is to entertain (Kenny 2014). Further, the show’s ability to expound on what are typically complex and

multifaceted issues separate it from others who are limited by segment length and commercial breaks to tackle issues in greater detail (Kenny 2014). These changes are notable and result in a different relationship with the audience of the show, which Kenny (2014) notes, “anticipates Oliver’s extended commentary for a week,” wondering what he will rant about and how he will engage them to learn about an under-reported problem or issue. When placed into the context of a media effects conversation, this show offers the ability to both entertain (allowing those turned off by the news to laugh and escape traditional news content) and educate the audience through a nuanced and detailed account of an unknown or typically unpopular political issue or topic. Both facets of the show make the show’s segments incredibly compelling to audiences, leading other media outlets to share the material with their followers for either the entertainment value of the jokes or to spread awareness of the issue, or both.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of *Last Week Tonight’s* version of political comedy is Oliver’s willingness to take substantive action upon the issues and systems he seeks to challenge. Donnagal Young, one of the most prominent scholars in the field of political satire, noted in an interview with *The Guardian*, “He’s offering an explicit call to action that’s unique. He’s interacting with a topic, not just commenting or issuing a broad judgment” (Helmore 2014). In regards to the reaction to the net neutrality segment discussed earlier, Oliver told CBS host Charlie Rose in an interview, “We didn’t crash their website, Charlie – that’s a huge accusation. We merely pointed people to their website and told them why they should be angry about it, and they went in droves” (Helmore 2014). Oliver’s call to action signifies a marked departure from the old political comedy model and speaks to the show’s viral potential – as noted previously, each of the main segments are uploaded to YouTube within 24 hours after

the broadcast date, allowing both timeliness and reach to an army of followers and viewers that spread the message and many times, follow Oliver's calls to incite change (Kenny 2014). Ragas and Kiousis (2010) found that during the 2008 Presidential election that activist communication efforts and consumer-generated content were able to find significant levels of agenda setting between activist networks, online media, and political campaigns.

If *Last Week Tonight's* segments themselves are not picked up by other media, the resulting events of the call to action provide another opportunity to share the show's content and cover the topics discussed. Jeongsub's (2011) model for understanding intermedia responses to a competitor's breaking stories predicts three possible responses to published content mediated by the content's salience and newsworthiness: to ignore, follow, or upgrade the story with new content. With *Last Week Tonight's* content consistently viral, traditional and online news outlets may opt to reference, piggyback, or share the show's content in efforts for page clicks and higher readership. Based on the research surrounding agenda setting, intermedia agenda setting, and the potential influence of political comedy programs, the following hypothesis and research questions are proposed:

H1: There will be a greater amount of news coverage on *Last Week Tonight's* main topic in the days following the episode air date than coverage of that topic prior to the episode date.

RQ1a: Native online news entities will have a greater amount of new coverage on *Last Week Tonight's* main topic in the days after the show's episode date than prior to the episode date when compared with traditional media outlets.

RQ1b: There will be greater amount of coverage on John Oliver or *Last Week Tonight* on native online news entities when compared with traditional media outlets.

METHOD

To measure the total volume of news coverage of each specific topic or issue, this study examines levels of news coverage both before and after Oliver's telecast. If the media devotes greater coverage to the issues or topics Oliver features in the show in the days after airing, then agenda-setting effects would be plausible. As discussed in the literature, the show's producers take care to ensure little to no media coverage of the issue prior to the show's airing, which should limit the levels of media coverage during our search period. This research utilizes keyword searches of the issues or topics associated with *Last Week Tonight's* main segments in an effort to assess the volume and type of news coverage by a variety of online media outlets. Keywords in the study for each main segment topic were retrieved directly from the show's official YouTube account, in which each clip uploaded is titled with a one-word title or short phrase to describe what the segment is about. In the event that the keyword is more than one word, quotations will be used to ensure that the words are searched as a single phrase.

Procedures

Using each segment's keywords, a series of searches was performed to measure the amount of news coverage each topic or issue received. In cases when the headline or description under the headline did not bear resemblance to the keyword or segment, the result was not counted and skipped. Searches were conducted both three (pre-count) and seven (extended pre-count) days prior to the episode air date and after each episode air date (the post-count and extended post-count). By expanding the searches to both three and seven days before and after the episode date, we can discover if the depth and consistency of coverage

after the episode date can be attributed to the show's influence. The pre-count period is defined as the Friday, Saturday and Sunday before the episode airs Sunday night. The post-count period is defined as the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday after the air date. The extended pre-count period is defined as 7 days before the air date until the day the segment airs. The extended post-count period is defined as the Monday after the segment airs until 7 days after the air date. To further find evidence of news coverage that can be attributed to the show's influence, both the show's host (John Oliver) and the show's title (*Last Week Tonight*) were added as additional keywords in two extra post-count searches. Therefore, for each topic, a total of six counts are collected: 3 and 7 days before the episode date, 3 and 7 days after the episode date, and 3 and 7 days after the episode date with additional keywords. In total, only articles published between April 27, 2014, the date of the show's premiere, and November 22, 2015—the date the second season ended—are eligible to be included in the counts.

Sample

In total, the show produced 61 segments in the show's first two seasons. There are 26 topics that were prominently featured in the show's first season, which aired from April 27, 2014 to November 9, 2014. In two episodes (Episodes 1 and 9), multiple topics were discussed prominently. The second season consisted of 34 weekly episodes beginning on February 8th, 2015, and continuing weekly through November 22, 2015. Every episode but one (Season 2 Episode 8 on government surveillance aired for 45 minutes due to an interview with Edward Snowden) aired for approximately 30 minutes. For all but the first episode, video clips of the segments were posted on YouTube for full and open access by the public.

Due to the volume of episodes within the first two seasons, totaling 61 segments, it was necessary to reduce the overall size of the sample. Additionally, previous analysis suggests that each individual segment may not have significant agenda-setting effects (see Appendix A). This study narrows the sample to assess coverage of the most popular segments as defined by a popularity metric that combines the amount of views, likes, shares, subscriptions driven, likes, and dislikes as collected from each video's statistics that YouTube collects and publishes on each video's page. Every segment produced in the first 2 seasons of *Last Week Tonight* was scored on each statistic and Top 10 Lists were compiled based on each stat, with 1 point given for an appearance on each Top 10 list and a maximum score of 5. For the purposes of this study, every segment that had a score of 2 or above, 13 episodes in total, was included in the study (see Appendix B for detailed scoring information). As a control, the least popular segments by the same metrics (reverse scored) were also included in efforts to discern if noticeable contrast exists between popular and unpopular segments. The reverse scored segments featured 12 segments which -2 or more and comprised the sample. This results in a total of 25 of *Last Week Tonight's* main segments chosen for analysis.

Keyword searches will be conducted on the web pages of online news outlets as defined by Pew's Top 50 Online News Entities (see Appendix C). The Pew (2015) rankings list online news entities by both the total number of unique visitors and average minutes spent on their websites per visit for the month of January 2015. The outlets were chosen from a mix of native online news entities and traditional news entities. Half of the 20 outlets chosen for the sample comprised of the 10 native online news sources featured on the Pew (2015) list. The other 10 sources were chosen via a random sample of the remaining 40 sources on the list. Most of the

online news outlet's webpages have a search function that can be used to perform keyword searches of the issues and topics discussed in each major segment of the show. Those without a search function were eliminated from the sample. After pre-testing, 7 of the 20 news sources were eliminated from the sample due to either the lack of a search function, the inability to sort results by date, or an inconsistency of search results. Due to these challenges, *The New York Times* was randomly selected¹ and added to the sample as another traditional news entity, totaling 14 news outlets, 10 traditional online news entities and 4 native online news outlets (see Appendix D).

Measurement and Variables

The sampling frame is each segment of the show included in the sample, defined the Season and Episode Number (V1 and V2 respectively). The primary unit of analysis for this study is the segment, defined through the use of the segment's keyword as the search term. For post-count searches, the unit of analysis is expanded to include the show and host as additional keywords. An additional sampling frame will be articles collected from the searches of randomly selected online news entities. The determination of the sample size is determined by the most and least popular segments as measured by amounts of views, likes, shares, subscriptions driven, likes, and dislikes of each clip. Incidentally, the show also serves as the unit of data collection. The unit of data collection or information source are the show's weekly segments, as viewed and measured through YouTube for all segments included in the sample.

¹ The *New York Daily News* was the next randomly selected news outlet, but its sample posed similar issues. Therefore, the *Times* was the next randomly selected news outlet, and because there were no sampling obstacles, it was the outlet selected for the study.

The independent variables of the study are the weekly segments of the show and online news outlets as defined by Pew (2015). The dependent variable is the levels of news coverage as counted before and after each episode date. Because my sample is comprised of solely ratio measures, I intend to employ a difference of means through a series of paired sample t-tests for both pre- and post-count results and between news outlets and dates. Please see Appendix E for a list of variables, operational definitions, sources, statistics, and data.

Intercoder Reliability

To ensure intercoder reliability of the coding of the keyword searches and counts, a second coder was enlisted to code a test sample comprised of episodes and keywords not included in the primary sample. The test sample was comprised of two main segments/keywords, which comprises about 8% of the 25 segment main sample. To ensure consistency with the sample, the segments were chosen upon a random sample of segments based upon the same popularity metrics, the popular segment receiving a score of 1 (one appearance on a Top 10 list), and the unpopular segment receiving a score of -1.

Intercoder reliability was conducted through the use of Recal, a statistical program that compared the second coder's sample with the original coder's coded counts. After both data sets were collected, the data was analyzed to find Krippendorff's Alpha levels for each case as opposed to percent agreement. After pre-testing was complete, the data was analyzed to find Krippendorff's Alpha levels for each case as opposed to percent agreement. Alpha levels of .80 and higher (up to 1) are typically regarded as the standard for significant reliability calculation (De Swert 2012). Figure 1 shows that for pre-count and post-count periods (V7 and V8,

respectively) the alpha ratio were .861 and .872, suggesting a strong measure of reliability.

Alpha ratio levels for counts of the news articles in the Post- and Extended-Post Count (V9 and 10) periods were even higher at .886 and .88. Lastly, Post-Count measures with the additional keywords (V11 and V12) had alpha ratios of .814 and .871.

| Variable | Cases | Decisions | Krippendorff's Alpha (ratio) |
|---|-------|-----------|------------------------------|
| Pre-Count Period | 32 | 64 | 0.861 |
| Extended Pre-Count Period | 32 | 64 | 0.872 |
| Post-Count Period | 32 | 64 | 0.886 |
| Extended Post-Count Period | 32 | 64 | 0.88 |
| Post-Count Period with Additional Keywords | 32 | 64 | 0.814 |
| Extended Post-Count Period with Additional Keywords | 32 | 64 | 0.871 |

Figure 1: Intercoder Reliability Measures

DATA AND RESULTS

The central aim of this study is to assess potential agenda-setting effects of the HBO show, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. Using a sample of online news entities, searches were conducted to assess the levels of news coverage both before and after the show’s episodes. Figure 2 presents basic descriptive statistics for the entire dataset. In total, 318 counts of news coverage were recorded across 14 news outlets and 25 date ranges. The single highest count was 85 articles in the three days after an episode and 115 in the week following an episode. The level of news coverage of the issues discussed on *Last Week Tonight* was far greater for the post-count ($m = 2.75$ $s = 7.602$) and extended post count ($m = 4.22$, $s = 12.354$) timeframes in the days following the episode date than the amount of coverage in similar timeframes before the episode aired ($m = .91$ $s = 2.494$ for the pre-count period, and $m = 2.54$, $s = 6.579$ for the extended pre-count period respectively). In both post-count time frames, the mean and standard deviation outperformed their counterparts prior to the episode date.

| | Number of Cases (N) | Mean | Standard Deviation | Variance |
|---------------------|---------------------|------|--------------------|----------|
| Pre-Count | 318 | .91 | 2.494 | 6.219 |
| Post-Count | 318 | 2.75 | 7.602 | 57.787 |
| Extended Pre-Count | 318 | 2.54 | 6.579 | 43.284 |
| Extended Post-Count | 318 | 4.22 | 12.354 | 152.625 |

Figure 2: Descriptive Statistics (Entire Sample)

Although the standard deviation and variance between the pre-and post-count time frames are pronounced, comparisons of the mean between pre-and post-count measures show that in each case, there are a higher number of articles after the episode date. Higher standard

deviations in the post-count periods signal that some episodes received markedly more coverage than others, specifically in more popular segments according to our popularity metric.

| | Number of Cases (N) | Mean | Standard Deviation | Variance |
|---------------------|---------------------|------|--------------------|----------|
| Pre-Count | 165 | .89 | 2.792 | 7.793 |
| Post-Count | 165 | 2.25 | 6.083 | 37.005 |
| Extended Pre-Count | 165 | 2.95 | 8.365 | 69.973 |
| Extended Post-Count | 165 | 3.94 | 12.634 | 159.618 |

Figure 3: Descriptive Statistics (Most Popular Segments)

Figures 3 and 4 break down these statistics between the two groups of segments. As we can see, the variance and standard deviation are smaller in the pre-count periods for the least popular segments than those in the more popular grouping.

| | Number of Cases (N) | Mean | Standard Deviation | Variance |
|---------------------|---------------------|------|--------------------|----------|
| Pre-Count | 153 | .93 | 2.136 | 4.561 |
| Post-Count | 153 | 3.28 | 8.946 | 80.032 |
| Extended Pre-Count | 153 | 2.10 | 3.794 | 14.397 |
| Extended Post-Count | 153 | 4.52 | 14.397 | 145.909 |

Figure 4: Descriptive Statistics (Least Popular Segments)

These data suggest that those segments that may be receiving more coverage vary more frequently by news source. The extended pre-count standard deviation and variance for the most popular group stand out as unusual, as do the post-count statistics for the least popular segments. Otherwise, we see a somewhat varied but overall positive relationship between these time frames.

The primary statistical method of analysis was the paired sample t-test, which compares the differences in means between the pre- and post-count date ranges. While other statistical tests may be perhaps more appropriate, the data presented in Figures 2 through 4 suggest that the distributions of the dependent variable are typical considering what we expect to find and therefore allow us to accurately compare the means of the pre- and post-count periods to assess whether the relationship between the time before and after the episode date is significant.

Table 1 shows the cumulative t-test result of the entire sample. In sum, we find statistically significant results in both times of comparison between date ranges, which provides support for H1. For the 3-day pre-and post-count periods, $t(317) = 4.947, p \leq .05$. For the extended pre-and post-count time frames, which spanned a full week prior and after each episode, $t(317) = 3.136, p \leq .05$. In both timeframes, we are able to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 1: Cumulative Paired Samples T-Test (Entire Sample)

| Pairings | Mean | Standard Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t | df | Sig (2-Tailed) |
|--|-------|--------------------|-----------------|-------|-----|----------------|
| Post-Count and Pre-Count Periods | 1.833 | 6.608 | .371 | 4.949 | 317 | .000*** |
| Extended Post-Count and Extended Pre-Count Periods | 1.673 | 9.514 | .534 | 3.136 | 317 | .002*** |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

In an effort to find the greatest potential agenda-setting effect, the sample was narrowed from a potential 61 segments down to only 25. The 13 most popular and viral segments were selected into the sample based from an aggregate popularity metric that ranked the most

popular segments of the show produced in the first two seasons according to YouTube statistics like views, likes, and shares. Table 2 shows the cumulative paired sample t-test for the most popular segments, which produced statistically significant results for coverage of the issues discussed during the 3-day timeframe, but not the 7-day period. This may be in some part due to the relevancy of the topics discussed or the relative lack of the coverage in the few days prior to the episodes airing, even though the extended period was moderate and positive.

Table 2: Cumulative Paired Samples T-Test (Most Popular Segments)

| Pairings | Mean | Standard Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t | df | Sig (2-Tailed) |
|--|-------|--------------------|-----------------|-------|-----|----------------|
| Post-Count and Pre-Count Periods | 1.358 | 4.041 | .315 | 4.315 | 164 | .000*** |
| Extended Post-Count and Extended Pre-Count Periods | .988 | 7.822 | .609 | 1.622 | 164 | .107 |
| Post-Count Additional Keywords | .055 | .253 | .020 | 2.768 | 164 | .006** |

*p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001.

As a control, the least popular segments from the two seasons were also compiled by the same popularity metric and reverse scored to find the lowest performing segments.

Table 3: Cumulative Paired Samples T-Test (Least Popular Segments)

| Pairings | Mean | Standard Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t | df | Sig (2-Tailed) |
|--|-------|--------------------|-----------------|-------|-----|----------------|
| Post-Count and Pre-Count Periods | 2.346 | 8.540 | .690 | 3.398 | 152 | .001*** |
| Extended Post-Count and Extended Pre-Count Periods | 2.412 | 11.032 | .892 | 2.704 | 152 | .008*** |
| Post-Count Additional Keywords | .013 | .114 | .009 | 1.419 | 152 | .158 |

*p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001.

Conversely, Table 3 consists of the cumulative paired sample t-test results for the 12 least popular segments. Surprisingly, both timeframes were statistically significant, suggesting that the show's effect could be more consistent than originally imagined. However, one compelling difference between the most and least popular segments is the amount of coverage that references either John Oliver or *Last Week Tonight*. This suggests that the show's timing of the episodes in relation to the topics discussed could also have an effect on the levels of news coverage, especially with consideration to the volume of news coverage just before and after the episode (sig = .001). Within each grouping of segments, some episodes were markedly more popular in regards to volume of news coverage across outlets than others. This may be due to the fact that some episodes, regardless of popularity, were aired prior to an event.

Table 4: Paired Sample T-Tests by Segment
(Most Popular Segments – Post- and Pre-Count Periods)

| Segment Title | Mean | Std. Error Mean | t | df | Sig (2-Tailed) |
|------------------------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|----|----------------|
| Government Surveillance | 1.308 | .382 | 3.423 | 12 | .005** |
| Net Neutrality | 1.538 | .722 | 2.132 | 12 | .054 |
| Fifa and the World Cup | 6.600 | 4.551 | 1.450 | 9 | .181 |
| Sex Education | .571 | .202 | 2.828 | 13 | .014* |
| Televangelists | .643 | .248 | 2.590 | 13 | .022* |
| Wealth Gap | .143 | .143 | 1 | 13 | .336 |
| Miss America Pageant | .786 | .300 | 2.621 | 13 | .021* |
| Migrants and Refugees | 1.833 | 1.107 | 1.657 | 11 | .126 |
| Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements | .214 | .155 | 1.385 | 13 | .189 |
| Nuclear Weapons | 1.100 | .547 | 2.012 | 9 | .075 |
| Tobacco | 1.500 | .453 | 3.308 | 9 | .009** |
| Online Harassment | .231 | .323 | .714 | 12 | .489 |
| Canadian Election | 2.643 | .599 | 4.415 | 13 | .001*** |

*p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001.

Table 5: Paired Sample T-Tests by Segment
(Most Popular Segments – Extended Period)

| Segment Title | Mean | Std. Error Mean | t | df | Sig (2-Tailed) |
|------------------------------------|--------|-----------------|--------|----|----------------|
| Government Surveillance | 1.538 | .538 | 2.857. | 12 | .014* |
| Net Neutrality | 1.846 | .799 | 2.309 | 12 | .040* |
| Fifa and the World Cup | 15.200 | 7.824 | 1.943 | 9 | .084 |
| Sex Education | .286 | .425 | .672 | 13 | .513 |
| Televangelists | .714 | .266 | 2.687 | 13 | .019* |
| Wealth Gap | -.214 | .261 | -.822 | 13 | .426 |
| Miss America Pageant | -1.571 | .754 | 2.085 | 13 | .057 |
| Migrants and Refugees | -4.583 | 2.789 | 1.643 | 11 | .129 |
| Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements | .214 | .155 | 1.385 | 13 | .189 |
| Nuclear Weapons | -.700 | 1.795 | -390 | 9 | .706 |
| Tobacco | .400 | .427 | .937 | 9 | .373 |
| Online Harassment | .231 | .411 | .562 | 12 | .584 |
| Canadian Election | 2.143 | 1.199 | 1.787 | 13 | .097 |

*p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001.

Tables 4 shows the paired sample t-test results sorted by individual segments for the most popular groups between the post- and pre-count periods. Table 5 displays the same results for the extended post- and pre-count periods. The tables are ordered from most or least popular in descending order. Statistically significant results for the most and least popular segments within the groups listed toward the top of the figures suggest that attention and public reaction, whether it be positive or negative, matters most to the level of news coverage. While all results were not statistically significant, most show a positive relationship between the episode date and the level of news coverage for each keyword. However, we also find data

that is largely insignificant for specific segments that were less likely to receive coverage as a result of the episode airing, namely segments that either receive coverage elsewhere (like nuclear weapons and the right to be forgotten) or segments that occurred after a major event in which the keywords would show up in news coverage like the Miss America pageant, which had crowned a winner the previous week before the *Last Week Tonight* airing. In some instances, it seems as if the complexity or uniqueness of the keyword also had an effect on its significance, namely the wealth and Medicaid gaps or terms like prisoner re-entry, which can be referred to in other ways.

Table 6: Paired Samples T-Test by Segment
(Least Popular Segments – Post- and Pre-Count Period)

| Segment Title | Mean | Std. Error Mean | t | df | Sig (2-Tailed) |
|-------------------------|--------|-----------------|--------|----|----------------|
| The Washington Redskins | 6.273 | 2.684 | 2.337 | 10 | .042* |
| Right to be forgotten | -.357 | .248 | -1.439 | 13 | .174 |
| Hobby Lobby | 12.714 | 6.083 | 2.090 | 13 | .057 |
| Elected Judges | .143 | .177 | .806 | 13 | .435 |
| Patents | 4.00 | .400 | 1.000 | 9 | .343 |
| State Legislatures | 5.667 | 2.742 | 2.066 | 11 | .063 |
| The IRS | 2.400 | 1.360 | 1.765 | 9 | .111 |
| Medicaid Gap | .071 | .616 | .434 | 13 | .671 |
| Prisoner Re-Entry | .000 | .105 | .000 | 13 | 1.000 |
| Pennies | .357 | .133 | 2.687 | 13 | .019* |
| North Dakota | .231 | .323 | .714 | 12 | .489 |
| Daily Fantasy Sports | .769 | .455 | 1.761 | 12 | .117 |

*p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001.

Table 6 shows to the paired sample t-test results sorted by individual segments for the least popular groups during the post- and pre-count periods. Table 7 displays the extended pre- and post-count periods by segment. Taken together, Tables 1-7 provide moderate to high

statistical support for H1 at multiple levels of specificity in two timeframes, albeit at different levels of significance. These data suggest some evidence of an intermedia agenda-setting effect through the levels of news coverage in the days following a *Last Week Tonight* segment when compared to baseline levels of coverage prior to the segment.

Table 7: Paired Samples T-Test by Segment (Least Popular Segments – Extended Period)

| Segment Title | Mean Extended | Std. Error Mean Extended | t (Extended) | df (extended) | Sig (2-Tailed) Extended |
|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| The Washington Redskins | 8.091 | 3.614 | 2.239 | 10 | .049* |
| Right to be forgotten | -3.143 | 1.042 | -3.015 | 13 | .010** |
| Hobby Lobby | 17.143 | 7.446 | 2.302 | 13 | .038* |
| Elected Judges | .071 | .221 | .322 | 13 | .752 |
| Patents | -.300 | .803 | -.373 | 9 | .718 |
| State Legislatures | 6.083 | 3.702 | 1.643 | 11 | .129 |
| The IRS | 2.500 | 1.455 | 1.718 | 9 | .120 |
| Medicaid Gap | .071 | .616 | .434 | 13 | .671 |
| Prisoner Re-Entry | .000 | .148 | .000 | 13 | 1.000 |
| Pennies | .357 | .133 | 2.687 | 13 | .019* |
| North Dakota | .308 | .237 | 1.298 | 12 | .219 |
| Daily Fantasy Sports | -1.692 | .603 | -.378 | 12 | .016* |

*p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001.

Tables 8 and 9 seek to address RQ1a and RQ1b respectively, which concern the prevalence of news coverage specifically on native online news websites. When comparing traditional and native online news outlets, we find only modest support for RQ1a, and only when looking at the differences between the extended pre-and post-count periods. Simply stated, the *df* show that there were more than twice as much data collected from traditional

online news outlets, which may skew the results. The t-tests show statistically significant values for both the pre-and post-count timeframes among both types of sources, so it is reasonable to assume that the type of online news source is negligible at best.

Table 8: Paired Samples T-Tests by Type of News Outlet (Traditional vs. Native Online)

| Type of News Outlet | Mean | Mean Extended | Std. Error Mean | Std. Error Mean Extended | t | t (Extended) | df | df (extended) | Sig (2-Tailed) | Sig (2-Tailed) Extended |
|---------------------------------|-------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-------|--------------|-----|---------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Traditional Online News Sources | 2.222 | 2.009 | .530 | .772 | 4.194 | 2.602 | 215 | 215 | .000*** | .010** |
| Native Online News Sources | .980 | .930 | .265 | .304 | 1.506 | 1.532 | 99 | 99 | .000*** | .003** |

*p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001.

Table 9 compares news coverage that specifically included the additional keywords pertaining to the HBO show, *Last Week Tonight*, and its host, John Oliver. RQ1b suggests that these keywords will find more results on native online news sources than traditional online news sources, and the results show that to be moderately true, finding moderate positive relationships between native online news sources and news coverage during the post-count time periods, especially during the extended post-count period which is statistically significant. These data suggest that native online news sources may seek to cover the show and John Oliver moreso than the topics and subjects discussed on the show’s segments, which the news outlets and articles otherwise may not cover if it weren’t for the comedic and entertainment elements associated with the political comedy genre.

Table 9: Paired Samples T-Tests by Type of News Outlet (Additional Keyword Post-Counts)

| Pair | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t | df | Sig (2-Tailed) |
|-----------------------------------|------|----------------|-----------------|-------|-----|----------------|
| Post-Count Native Online | .075 | .826 | .046 | 1.630 | 317 | .104 |
| Extended Post-Count Native Online | .110 | .897 | .050 | 2.188 | 317 | .029** |

*p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the amount of news coverage across 14 news websites both before and after 25 of the show's main segments of *Last Week Tonight* in order to determine if intermedia agenda-setting effects would be visible. Results indicated that there was some evidence of intermedia agenda setting, although the level of specificity, namely breaking down the effects by individual segment, did play a role in the level statistical significance. Both the most and least popular groupings of segments were statistically significant in both timeframes, suggesting that regardless of the relative popularity of the clip, the topics and issues discussed received coverage by the outlets. It must be noted that because the extended pre- and post-count periods are inclusive of the pre- and post-count three-day interval that both measures would be similarly significant, although large amounts of coverage are in fact possible in the additional days of the extended time frame. When looking at each individual segment, the segments with significance were those designated as the most or least popular according to our popularity metric. This suggests that it may not be simply the amount of likes or dislikes the segment received, but the overall reaction to the segment writ large. Segments that are divisive and controversial may elicit coverage just as much as other segments that are popular and well-received.

Another major question in this study concerns the influences of native online news entities, defined as news websites that were founded and exist only online. Comparisons between traditional and native online news sources reveal only a slight difference in coverage in the extended post-count period. However, data that specifically looked at the influence of articles that mentioned either John Oliver or *Last Week Tonight* show a positive relationship

between the additional keyword searches and native online news entities, with the extended post count period showing a statistically significant result. This suggests that the native online news outlets may be more focused on covering Oliver's coverage of the event in the days following the segment, but perhaps are not rushed to share the clips immediately. This may also be due to the potential viral nature of each segment; as a clip begins to gain traction and become viewed and shared through the Internet, these outlets may find reason to cover the segments on account of their viral status more than those outlets would regarding the issues or topics that the segment concerns.

With the influences of online media and the potential for viral news events to shape the new media landscape, this research serves as an entry into the discussion of intermedia agenda setting by a political comedy program. While this study does not help to further our understanding of *how* news organizations cover political comedy programming, it does contribute to the existing literature by approaching the question of agenda-setting effects from the preview of both volume and source. By testing the timeframes before and after the episode, this study shows an overall increase in related news that carries some relevance and significance to the issues and topics discussed on *Last Week Tonight*. These data also highlight both similarities and slight differences between traditional and native online news sources in their coverage of the show. The fact that both traditional and native online news entities would be similarly likely to cover the segments produced on *Last Week Tonight* lend credence to the popular belief that the show's content is perceived more like real journalism and less like an entertainment product.

The longer, commercial-free format of political comedy programming that *Last Week Tonight* has created is also compelling to viewers both during the shows airing on *HBO* each Sunday night and online, where the clips are posted within 24 hours for anyone to view from Monday on forward at no cost. The influences of what would otherwise be premium content only available through a subscription model now made available to the public through YouTube cannot be understated when discussing the effect both *Last Week Tonight* and John Oliver can have on not only the news agenda, but on real-world events. The ease of use of YouTube as a social media platform certainly contributes to the potential for *Last Week Tonight* clips to become viral, but also to be embedded into news articles which make these clips appealing to news producers.

Within the context of media effects, the results presented in this study do suggest some effect of the show's content, specifically when considering the levels of news coverage before the episode are intended by the show's producers to be minimal. However, data presented here suggests that the influences are heavily mediated by the type of content, namely the issues or topics that each segments covers. It is not surprising to notice that segments for instance on government surveillance, which featured an exclusive interview with NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden, would be immensely popular amongst viewers. However, when comparing the uber-popular segments with less popular segments like those on patents or prisoner re-entry, we notice a significant drop-off in perceived effects. This aspect requires both more research and investigation as scholars learn more about intermedia agenda setting and the potential influences between and amongst media.

In sum, this study seeks to not only add to the existing literature on both political comedy and agenda-setting effects, but also to contribute toward uncovering the changes within these fields as they adapt to the influences of the Internet and the digital age. As more media content, specifically premium media content, is offered at heavily discounted or free cost to consumers, the latitude and reach of these media will continue to grow, especially considering the influence of social media and the potential for viral content. The new media environment also creates new questions about the mechanics and dynamics of agenda setting, especially intermedia agenda setting between social and traditional media. Political comedy programming is undergoing similar changes – the ability for a comedian like John Oliver to sign a deal with *HBO* shows that political comedy programming is in high-demand to afford the show both the structural components and creative freedom necessary to deviate from the norm of a daily half-hour of cable television into an uninterrupted, commercial-free mass media product intended for consumption to the masses through the Internet.

Limitations

While the study did find some evidence of an agenda-setting effect, it is important to discuss the several limitations of this study. Perhaps the largest limitation was the structural deficiencies of the online news website's search functions, which can be characterized as rudimentary at best for most outlets included in the sample. With the exception of *The New York Times* and *Time*, no other outlet included in the sample allowed to narrow the search returns within a date range. This made coding the data not only more time-consuming, but less effective and problematic with considerations to the fact that more than a few outlets capped the amount of search returns they would display at 5 or 10 pages. When looking for news

coverage now over two years old in some instances, this was not possible and resulted in some of the sample having a lower n of searches. Additionally, there were even more drastic issues with considerations to many of the native online news outlets. As you can see in Appendix F, 7 of the 20 online news entities originally constructed sample (5 of which were native online sources) were not able to be included in the study for various reasons ranging from the inconsistency of search returns and the inability to sort or narrow by date to the lack of a search function entirely. This significantly limited the number of searches that could be performed and analyzed, which results in low statistical power and more varied results.

The significance of the data itself must also be addressed. Although there were statistically significant results found for the levels of post- and extended post-count coverage when compared to their comparable timeframes before the episode, there is no way of controlling completely for the show's influence. In some cases, specifically the Canadian election and 2014 FIFA World Cup, the high number of articles in the post-count period could be explained away due to the timing of the events themselves, which occurred in the time after the segments aired. Whether this is intentional behavior of the show itself to choose topics that they know will receive attention in the coming days or not is also unknown. Topics like the segment on refugees and migrants seemed to completely go against the show's effects to cover underreported events, as the refugee crisis in Syria and the resulting effects in Europe and elsewhere were heavily covered before, throughout, and beyond our timeframes. In other cases, the level of news coverage varied significantly because of the outlets themselves. For example, the *Washington Post* covered their hometown football team, the Washington Redskins, significantly more than any other news outlet in the sample.

Another key limitation to the study was evident when conducting the searches for articles that matched one of the additional keywords, *John Oliver* or *Last Week Tonight*. In many cases, the effects of the show's calls to action or efforts to engage on a particular important topic were covered by the news outlets, but after the extended post-count timeframe of 7 days. This resulted in the coverage left out of the sample and thus does not give a completely accurate look at how much the outlets do cover the show itself. In some other searches, evidence of news coverage just before or beyond the date range was also observed, suggesting that the limits of 3 and 7 days respectively may not have been the most accurate barometer of news coverage of a given topic. While there will always be some articles that cannot be included in the sample, the low number of total searches does leave questions as to if the results would be different had the period be extended.

Future Research

Future research of political comedy programming and intermedia agenda setting could focus specifically on the correlation between a media clip becoming viral and the levels of news coverage that follow. Additionally, more research must be done to further investigate the differences between covering specific topics and issues associated with media content and coverage of the political comedy product itself. In regards to future research regarding *Last Week Tonight* and the so-called Oliver effect, there are multiple avenues of additional research that may be compelling. Through searches of the news articles that featured John Oliver or *Last Week Tonight*, we have some anecdotal evidence that suggests that outlets choose to cover the show in many different ways. For example, Time's coverage of the tobacco segment was varied between entertainment coverage and health coverage, referencing both the show's 'takedown'

of big tobacco in the entertainment article that shared the clip as well as embedding the clip in a health article about plain cigarette packing studies, a specific aspect of the tobacco segment that was discussed. The *Washington Post's* coverage of the *Last Week Tonight* segment on televangelism, where John Oliver creates his own church to exploit the tax-exempt status of religious groups and aptly names it, "Our Lady of Perpetual Exemption," was covered the day after the segment aired in its local politics section, two days after the segment aired in the Religion section, and a full week after in the local section with reference to the viewer response to the segment. This suggests that both the type of article and the content of the story that discusses the segment may hold significant importance to researchers, especially with considerations to Jeongsub's (2011) model for understanding intermedia responses. Another worthy research endeavor would be to conduct a survey of journalists in efforts to determine if the journalist's viewing habits of *Last Week Tonight* or interest in the show's humor may influence their decisions to publish articles about the segments featured on the show. The wealth of data possible from conducting in-depth interviews with journalists would not only provide valuable information about their media habits and influences, but also provide valuable insight toward understanding the mechanisms and pressures that mediate the intermedia agenda-setting process in the digital age.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study seeks and finds moderate support for an agenda-setting effect of the HBO show, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* on news coverage of the issues and topics that serve as the show's primary segments. An improvement of the traditional political comedy program, *Last Week Tonight* is built to flourish in the online digital environment by offering

premium content with no commercial breaks on the social media platform YouTube, where segments are uploaded within 24 hours of airing and are free to view by anyone with an Internet connection. Through an analysis of the most and least popular segments of the show, results suggest that the level of news coverage surrounding the segment's topics are greater than in the comparable date ranges prior to the episode airing, which suggests some agenda-setting effect. Despite the study's limitations, this paper serves as the beginning of a larger discussion regarding the effects of the Internet and digital media landscape on both political comedy programming and intermedia agenda-setting processes.

REFERENCES

- Andrews, N. (2014, June 3). John Oliver's net neutrality call bogs down FCC site. Retrieved from <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2014/06/03/john-olivers-net-neutrality-call-bogs-down-fcc-site/>.
- Arceneaux, K., & Johnson, M. (2013). *Changing minds or changing channels?: Partisan news in an age of choice*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Baran, S., & Davis, D. (2015). *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future*. 7th ed. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub.
- Baum, M. A. (2003). Soft news and political knowledge: Evidence of absence or absence of evidence?. *Political Communication*, 20(2), 173-90.
- Baum, M. A. (2005). *Soft news goes to war: Public opinion and American foreign policy in the new media age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Baumgartner, J. C., & Morris, J. S. (2009). My face tube politics: Social networking web sites and political engagement of young adults. *Social Science Computer Review*, 28, 24-44.
- Baym, G. (2005). The Daily Show: Discursive integration and the reinvention of political journalism. *Political Communication*, 22(3), 259-76.
- Baym, G., & Shah, C. (2011). Circulating struggle. *Information, Communication, & Society*, 14(7), 1017-1038.
- Becker, A. B. (2012). Comedy types and political campaigns: The differential influence of other-directed hostile humor and self-ridicule on candidate evaluations. *Mass Communication & Society*, 15(6), 791-812. doi:10.1080/15205436.2011.628431.
- Becker, A. B., & Haller, B. A. (2014). When political comedy turns personal: humor types, audience evaluations, and attitudes. *Howard Journal Of Communications*, 25(1), 34-55. doi:10.1080/10646175.2013.835607.
- Becker, A. B., & Waisanen, D. J. (2013). From funny features to entertaining effects: Connecting approaches to communication research on political comedy. *Review Of*

Communication, 13(3), 161-183. doi:10.1080/15358593.2013.826816.

Becker, A. B., Xenos, M. A., & Waisanen, D. J. (2010). Sizing up The Daily Show: Audience perceptions of political comedy programming. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 18(3), 144-157.

Bennett, W. L., & Iyengar, S. (2009). A new era of minimal effects? The changing foundations of political communication. *Journal of Communication*, 58, 707-731. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.00410.x.

Brody, B. (2015, February 26). How John Oliver transformed the net neutrality debate once and for all. Retrieved from <http://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2015-02-26/how-john-oliver-transformed-the-net-neutrality-debate-once-and-for-all>.

Brownstone, S. (2015, January 16). John Oliver inspired a bill introduced in the state legislature today. Retrieved from <http://slog.thestranger.com/slog/archives/2015/01/16/john-oliver-inspired-a-bill-introduced-in-the-state-legislature-today>.

Cao, X. (2008). Political comedy shows and knowledge about primary campaigns: The moderating effects of age and education. *Mass Communication and Society*, 11:1, 43-61.

Cao, X., & Brewer, P. R. (2008). Political comedy shows and public participation in politics. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 20(1), 90-99.

Conway, B. A., Kenski, K., & Wang, D. (2015). The rise of twitter in the political campaign: Searching for intermedia agenda-setting effects in the presidential primary. *Journal Of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 20(4), 363-380. doi:10.1111/jcc4.12124.

Dalton, R. J. *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation Is Reshaping American Politics*. Washington, D.C.: CQ, 2009. Print.

De Swert, K. 2012. Calculating inter-coder reliability in media content analysis using Krippendorff's Alpha. Available: <http://www.polcomm.org/wp-content/uploads/ICR01022012.pdf>.

- Duffy, M. J. (2013). Does political humor matter? You betcha! Comedy TV's performance of the 2008 Vice Presidential debate. *Journal Of Popular Culture*, 46(3), 545-565.
- Feldman, L. & Young, G. (2008): Late-night comedy as a gateway to traditional news: An analysis of time trends in news attention among late-night comedy viewers during the 2004 presidential primaries. *Political Communication*, 25(4), 401-422.
- Fitz-Gerald, S. (2015, August 28). A judge cited a John Oliver segment in a recent court decision. Retrieved from <http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a37484/john-oliver-cited-guam-decision/>.
- Gilbert, S., Eyal, C., McCombs, M. E., & Nicholas, D. (1980). The state of the union address and press agenda. *Journalism Quarterly*, 57(4), 584-588.
- Gregory, T. (2014, September 24). 'John Oliver bounce' benefits Chicago-based women's engineering group. Retrieved from <http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/tv/ct-pageant-engineer-scholarships-20140923-story.html>.
- Gueorguieva, V. (2008). Voters, MySpace, and YouTube: The impact of alternative communication channels on the 2006 election cycle and beyond. *Social Science Computer Review*, 26, 288-300. doi: 10.1177/0894439307305636.
- Helmore, E. (2014, June 14). How John Oliver started a revolution in US TV's political satire. Retrieved December 8, 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2014/jun/15/john-oliver-started-a-revolution-in-us-tv-political-satire>.
- Heim, K. (2013). Framing the 2008 Iowa Democratic Caucuses: Political blogs and second-level intermedia agenda setting. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 90(3), 500-519. doi:10.1177/1077699013493785.
- Holbert, R. L., Garrett, R. K., & Gleason, L. S. (2010). A new era of minimal effects? A response to Bennett and Iyengar. *Journal Of Communication*, 60(1), 15-34. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01470.x.
- Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. (1987). News that matters: Television and American opinion. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Jerit, J., & Barabas, J. (2012). Partisan perceptual bias and the information environment. *The Journal of Politics*, (3), 672. doi:10.1017/S0022381612000187.
- Jeongsub, L. (2011). First-level and second-level intermedia agenda-setting among major news websites. *Asian Journal Of Communication*, 21(2), 167-185. doi:10.1080/01292986.2010.539300.
- Jeongsub, L. (2011). Intermedia agenda setting and news discourse. *Journalism Practice*, 5(2), 227-244. doi:10.1080/17512786.2010.509184.
- John Oliver. (2015). Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/40-under-40/john-oliver-10/>.
- Kenny, D. (2014, October 31). How John Oliver usurped a genre. Retrieved December 8, 2015, from <http://harvardpolitics.com/books-arts/john-oliver-usurped-genre/>.
- Kowitz, B. (2015, September 29). The John Oliver effect. Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/2015/09/29/john-oliver-impact/>.
- Landreville, K. D., Holbert, R. L., & LaMarre, H. L. (2010). The influence of late-night TV comedy viewing on political talk: A moderated-mediation Model. *International Journal Of Press/Politics*, 15(4), 482-498. doi:10.1177/1940161210371506.
- Luckerson, V. (2015, January 20). How the 'John Oliver Effect' is having a real-life impact. Retrieved from <http://time.com/3674807/john-oliver-net-neutrality-civil-forfeiture-miss-america/>.
- Prior, M. (2003). Any good news in soft news? The impact of soft news preference on political knowledge. *Political Communication*, 20(2), 149.
- McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, 176-187.
- McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. (1976). Structuring the "unseen environment." *Journal of Communication*, 2, 18-22.
- McCombs, M. (2005). A Look at agenda-setting: Past, present and future. *Journalism Studies*, 6(4), 543-557.

- McCombs, M., Llamas, J., Lopez-Escobar, E., & Rey, F. (1997). Candidate images in Spanish elections: Second-level agenda-setting effects. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 74(4), 703-717.
- McCombs, M. (2004). *Setting the agenda: The mass media and public opinion*. Cambridge: Polity; Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub., 2004.
- McDonald, S. N. (2014, June 4). John Oliver's net neutrality rant may have caused FCC site crash. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/04/john-olivers-net-neutrality-rant-may-have-caused-fcc-site-crash/>.
- Meraz, S. (2011). Using time series analysis to measure intermedia agenda-setting influence in traditional media and political blog networks. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 88(1), 176-194.
- Neuman, W. R., Guggenheim, L., Mo Jang, S., & Bae, S. Y. (2014). The dynamics of public attention: Agenda-setting theory meets big data. *Journal Of Communication*, 64(2), 193-214. doi:10.1111/jcom.12088.
- Niven, D., Lichter, S. R., & Amundson, D. (2003). The political content of late night comedy. *Harvard International Journal Of Press/Politics*, 8(3), 118.
- O'Connell, M. (2014, September 25). John Oliver's talk show ratings edging out HBO colleague Bill Maher. Retrieved April 21, 2015, from <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/john-olivers-talk-show-ratings-735187>.
- Oliver, J. (2014, June 03). Tweet. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/iamjohnoliver/status/473865227654934528>.
- Ragas, M. W., & Kioussis, S. (2010). Intermedia agenda-setting and political activism: MoveOn.org and the 2008 Presidential Election. *Mass Communication & Society*, 13(5), 560-583. doi:10.1080/15205436.2010.515372.
- Reese, S. D., & Danielian, L. H. (1989). Intermedia influence and the drug issue: converging on cocaine. *Communication campaigns about drugs: Government, media and the*

public, 47–66.

Rhodan, M. (2015, August 27). This judge cited John Oliver in a court decision. Retrieved from <http://time.com/4014265/john-oliver-court-judge/>.

Rojas, R. (2015, July 08). New York City to relax bail requirements for low-level offenders. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/09/nyregion/new-york-city-introduces-bail-reform-plan-for-low-level-offenders.html?_r=3.

Shehata, A., & Strömbäck, J. (2013). Not (yet) a new era of minimal effects: A study of agenda setting at the aggregate and individual levels. *International Journal Of Press/Politics*, 18(2), 234-255. doi:10.1177/1940161212473831.

Sneed, T. (2014, April 22). Why 'Last Week Tonight' will not just be 'The Daily Show' on Sundays. Retrieved April 21, 2015, from <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/04/22/5-things-to-know-about-last-week-tonight-with-john-oliver>.

Stroud, N. J. (2007). "Media effects, selective exposure, and *Fahrenheit 9/11*." *Political Communication* 24:415–32.

Stroud, N. J. (2010). Polarization and partisan selective exposure. *Journal Of Communication*, 60(3), 556-576. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2010.01497.x.

Sweetser, K. D., Golan, G. J., & Wanta, W. (2008). Intermedia agenda setting in television, advertising, and blogs during the 2004 Election. *Mass Communication & Society*, 11(2), 197-216. doi:10.1080/152.

Vliegenthart, R., & Walgrave, S. (2008). The contingency of intermedia agenda setting: A longitudinal study in Belgium. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 85(4), 860-877.

Warner, B. R., Hawthorne, H. J., Hawthorne, J. (2015). A dual-processing approach to the effects of viewing political comedy. *Humor: International Journal Of Humor Research*, 28(4), 541-558.

Young, D. G., & Tisinger, R. M. (2006). Dispelling late-night myths: News consumption among late-night comedy viewers and the predictors of exposure to various late-night

shows. *Harvard International Journal Of Press/Politics*, 11(3), 113-134.
doi:10.1177/1081180X05286042.

Xenos, M., Becker, A. (2009). Moments of zen: Effects of The Daily Show on information seeking and political learning. *Political Communication*, 26(3), 317-332.

Zoller Seitz, M. (2014, November 11). John Oliver is outdoing The Daily Show and Colbert. Retrieved December 8, 2015, from <http://www.vulture.com/2014/11/john-oliver-is-outdoing-the-daily-show.html>.

APPENDIX A: DATA FROM MC 7999 STUDY USING LEXISNEXIS ACADEMIC DATABASE

| CD | V1 (Issue Number) | V2 (Episode Number) | V3 (Air Date) | V4 (Topic) | V5 (Time) | V6 (Keywords) | V7 (Pre-Count Searches) | V8 (Post-Count Searches) | V9 (Top 25 - PreCount) | V10 (Top 25 - PostCount) | V11 (Top 50 - PreCount) | V12 (Top 50 - PostCount) |
|----|-------------------|---------------------|---------------|---|-----------|---|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 4/27/2014 | POM Wonderful LLC v. Coca-Cola Co., food labeling | 5:58 | Pom Wonderful v. Coca-Cola, supreme court, food labeling, FTC, Indian election, election news, cable news, Rahul Gandhi, Narendra | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 1 | 4/27/2014 | Indian Election | 8:17 | Modi | 7 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1 | 3 | 2 | 5/4/2014 | capital punishment | 12:33 | conviction | 303 | 172 | 26 | 15 | 29 | 15 |
| 1 | 4 | 3 | 5/11/2014 | global warming controversy | 4:26 | debate, television right to be forgotten, EU court, the internet, google, | 114 | 170 | 19 | 16 | 20 | 16 |
| 1 | 5 | 4 | 5/18/2014 | right to be forgotten | 6:59 | privacy | 81 | 34 | 19 | 4 | 29 | 8 |
| 1 | 6 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | net neutrality | 12:17 | lobbying, FCC | 2 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 1 | 7 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA | 13:13 | Rib, Brazil, Sepp Blatter, corruption, Qatar, World Cup | 1372 | 3889 | 96 | 121 | 147 | 190 |
| 1 | 8 | 7 | 6/15/2014 | Washington Redskins, immigration reform | 4:08 | Washington Redskins, Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, name change controversy, Dan Snyder, offensive nicknames | 1 | 11 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 9 | 8 | 6/23/2014 | Dr. Oz's June 2014 Senate hearing and the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 | 16:25 | Dr. Oz, Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994, Nutritional Supplements, Diet claims, senate hearing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 10 | 9 | 6/29/2014 | Burwell v. Hobby Lobby | 6:09 | Burwell v. Hobby Lobby, contraception mandate, religious freedom, devout Christian, corporations | 0 | 28 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| 1 | 11 | 9 | 6/29/2014 | LGBT rights in Uganda | 17:33 | Uganda, LGBT rights, UN General Assembly, anti-BPM, homosexuality laws | 7 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 1 | 12 | 10 | 7/13/2014 | Income Inequality and wealth inequality | 14:10 | Income Inequality, Wealth Gap, Federal estate tax, lottery, american dream | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1 | 13 | 11 | 7/29/2014 | mass incarceration/prison | 17:42 | Prison, mass incarceration, war on drugs, drug law enforcement, race | 99 | 91 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 8 |

APPENDIX B: DETAILED SCORING INFORMATION

Top 10 Segments by YouTube Views

| Rank | Season | Episode # | Air Date | YouTube Title | YouTube Views |
|------|--------|-----------|------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FIFA and the World Cup | 12305819 |
| 2 | 1 | 18 | 9/21/2014 | Miss America Pageant | 11048846 |
| 3 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 10645588 |
| 4 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 10190359 |
| 5 | 1 | 10 | 8/1/2014 | Wealth Gap | 9656777 |
| 6 | 2 | 49 | 8/9/2015 | Televangelists | 9385104 |
| 7 | 1 | 8 | 6/22/2014 | Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements | 8672529 |
| 8 | 1 | 22 | 10/26/2014 | Sugar | 8520957 |
| 9 | 1 | 12 | 7/27/2014 | Nuclear Weapons | 8316919 |
| 10 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 8266555 |

Bottom 10 Segments by YouTube Views (Reverse ordered)

| Rank | Season | Episode # | Air Date | YouTube Title | YouTube Views |
|------|--------|-----------|------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | 2 | 56 | 11/1/2015 | Medicaid Gap | 3017789 |
| 2 | 1 | 7 | 6/15/2014 | The Washington Redskins | 3091466 |
| 3 | 2 | 57 | 11/8/2015 | Prisoner Re-Entry | 3475369 |
| 4 | 2 | 46 | 7/26/2015 | Mandatory Minimums | 3672658 |
| 5 | 2 | 27 | 2/22/2015 | Elected Judges | 3743408 |
| 6 | 2 | 34 | 4/19/2015 | Patents | 3819483 |
| 7 | 2 | 58 | 11/15/2015 | Daily Fantasy Sports | 3856464 |
| 8 | 1 | 4 | 5/18/2014 | Right to be forgotten | 3947096 |
| 9 | 2 | 59 | 11/22/2015 | Pennies | 3973925 |
| 10 | 1 | 9 | 6/29/2014 | Hobby Lobby | 4049157 |

Top 10 Segments by YouTube Shares

| Rank | Season | Episode # | Air Date | YouTube Title | YouTube Shares |
|------|--------|-----------|------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/9/2015 | Televangelists | 87589 |
| 2 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FIFA and the World Cup | 55069 |
| 3 | 2 | 55 | 10/18/2015 | Canadian Election | 54062 |
| 4 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 53703 |
| 5 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 47665 |
| 6 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 42765 |
| 7 | 2 | 52 | 9/27/2015 | Migrants and Refugees | 40346 |
| 8 | 2 | 45 | 7/19/2015 | Food Waste | 37750 |
| 9 | 2 | 36 | 5/3/2015 | Standardized Testing | 33583 |
| 10 | 2 | 26 | 2/15/2015 | Tobacco | 31491 |

Bottom 10 Segments by YouTube Shares (Reverse ordered)

| Rank | Season | Episode # | Air Date | YouTube Title | YouTube Shares |
|------|--------|-----------|------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 1 | 4 | 5/18/2014 | Right to be Forgotten | 1745 |
| 2 | 1 | 7 | 6/15/2014 | The Washington Redskins | 1803 |
| 3 | 1 | 9 | 6/29/2014 | Hobby Lobby | 3286 |
| 4 | 1 | 9 | 6/29/2014 | Uganda and Pepe Julian Onziema Pt. 1 | 4404 |
| 5 | 1 | 2 | 5/4/2014 | Death Penalty | 5374 |
| 6 | 2 | 27 | 2/22/2015 | Elected Judges | 5596 |
| 7 | 1 | 23 | 11/2/2014 | State Legislatures | 6276 |
| 8 | 2 | 34 | 4/19/2015 | Patents | 6613 |
| 9 | 2 | 59 | 11/22/2015 | Pennies | 6763 |
| 10 | 2 | 57 | 11/8/2015 | Prisoner Re-Entry | 7240 |

Top 10 Segments by YouTube Subscriptions Driven

| Rank | Season | Episode # | Air Date | YouTube Title | YouTube Sub Driven |
|------|--------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FIFA and the World Cup | 42214 |
| 2 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 41334 |
| 3 | 1 | 2 | 5/4/2014 | Death Penalty | 26683 |
| 4 | 1 | 18 | 9/21/2014 | Miss America Pageant | 20736 |
| 5 | 1 | 12 | 7/27/2014 | Nuclear Weapons | 19187 |
| 6 | 1 | 10 | 8/1/2014 | Wealth Gap | 18773 |
| 7 | 1 | 8 | 6/22/2014 | Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements | 18580 |
| 8 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 18380 |
| 9 | 1 | 11 | 7/20/2014 | Prison | 16469 |
| 10 | 1 | 17 | 9/14/2014 | Scottish Independence | 16297 |

Bottom 10 Segments by YouTube Subscriptions Driven (Reverse ordered)

| Rank | Season | Episode # | Air Date | YouTube Title | YouTube Sub Driven |
|------|--------|-----------|------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 56 | 11/1/2015 | Medicaid Gap | 2032 |
| 2 | 2 | 57 | 11/8/2015 | Prisoner Re-Entry | 2085 |
| 3 | 1 | 7 | 6/15/2014 | The Washington Redskins | 2366 |
| 4 | 2 | 59 | 11/22/2015 | Pennies | 2638 |
| 5 | 2 | 54 | 10/11/2015 | North Dakota | 2855 |
| 6 | 2 | 58 | 11/15/2015 | Daily Fantasy Sports | 3157 |
| 7 | 2 | 47 | 8/2/2015 | Washington D.C. Statehood | 3271 |
| 8 | 2 | 37 | 5/10/2015 | Paid Family Leave | 3331 |
| 9 | 2 | 51 | 9/13/2015 | Public Defenders | 3382 |
| 10 | 2 | 33 | 4/12/2015 | The IRS | 3407 |

Top 10 Segments by YouTube Likes

| Rank | Season | Episode # | Air Date | YouTube Title | YouTube Likes |
|------|--------|-----------|-----------|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 125908 |
| 2 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 124017 |
| 3 | 2 | 49 | 8/9/2015 | Televangelists | 116226 |
| 4 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FIFA and the World Cup | 104010 |
| 5 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 96915 |
| 6 | 2 | 26 | 2/15/2015 | Tobacco | 96498 |
| 7 | 2 | 52 | 9/27/2015 | Migrants and Refugees | 79002 |
| 8 | 1 | 18 | 9/21/2014 | Miss America Pageant | 75394 |
| 9 | 2 | 42 | 6/21/2015 | Online harassment | 73218 |
| 10 | 2 | 39 | 5/31/2015 | FIFA II | 69976 |

Bottom 10 Segments by YouTube Likes (Reverse ordered)

| Rank | Season | Episode # | Air Date | YouTube Title | YouTube Likes |
|------|--------|-----------|------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | 1 | 7 | 6/15/2014 | The Washington Redskins | 13691 |
| 2 | 1 | 4 | 5/18/2014 | Right to be forgotten | 22586 |
| 3 | 1 | 9 | 6/29/2014 | Hobby Lobby | 23540 |
| 4 | 1 | 9 | 6/29/2014 | Uganda and Pepe Julian Onziema Pt. 1 | 28127 |
| 5 | 1 | 23 | 11/2/2014 | State Legislatures | 31285 |
| 6 | 2 | 56 | 11/1/2015 | Medicaid Gap | 33156 |
| 7 | 2 | 27 | 2/22/2015 | Elected Judges | 34011 |
| 8 | 2 | 34 | 4/19/2015 | Patents | 35837 |
| 9 | 2 | 54 | 10/11/2015 | North Dakota | 36941 |
| 10 | 2 | 33 | 4/12/2015 | The IRS | 37811 |

Top 10 Segments by YouTube Dislikes (Reverse Ordered) – Least Amount of Dislikes

| Rank | Season | Episode # | Air Date | YouTube Title | YouTube Likes |
|------|--------|-----------|------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | 1 | 4 | 5/18/2014 | Right to be forgotten | 316 |
| 2 | 2 | 34 | 4/19/2015 | Patents | 520 |
| 3 | 2 | 27 | 2/22/2015 | Elected Judges | 574 |
| 4 | 1 | 21 | 10/19/2014 | Translators | 665 |
| 5 | 1 | 13 | 8/3/2014 | Native Advertising | 682 |
| 6 | 2 | 25 | 2/8/2015 | Marketing to Doctors | 812 |
| 7 | 1 | 23 | 11/2/2014 | State Legislatures | 819 |
| 8 | 2 | 40 | 6/7/2015 | Bail | 868 |
| 9 | 1 | 9 | 6/29/2014 | Hobby Lobby | 870 |
| 10 | 1 | 7 | 6/15/2014 | The Washington Redskins | 886 |

Bottom 10 Segments by YouTube Dislikes

| Rank | Season | Episode # | Air Date | YouTube Title | YouTube Likes |
|------|--------|-----------|------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | 2 | 42 | 6/21/2015 | Online Harassment | 29635 |
| 2 | 2 | 52 | 9/27/2015 | Migrants and Refugees | 22707 |
| 3 | 2 | 43 | 6/28/2015 | Transgender Rights | 7609 |
| 4 | 2 | 55 | 10/18/2015 | Canadian Election | 4657 |
| 5 | 2 | 50 | 8/23/2015 | LGBT Discrimination | 4377 |
| 6 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 3105 |
| 7 | 1 | 10 | 7/13/2014 | Wealth Gap | 2663 |
| 8 | 1 | 15 | 8/17/2014 | Ferguson | 2591 |
| 9 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 2336 |
| 10 | 2 | 49 | 8/9/2015 | Televangelists | 2136 |

Segments by Scoring (+1 point for a Top 10 ranking, -1 for a Bottom 10 ranking)

Top Scoring Segments (13 with 2 or more)

| Rank | Season | Episode # | Air Date | YouTube Title | Score (5 max) |
|------|--------|-----------|------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 5 |
| T-2 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 4 |
| T-2 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FIFA and the World Cup | 4 |
| T-2 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 4 |
| T-2 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 4 |
| T-3 | 1 | 10 | 7/13/2014 | Wealth Gap | 3 |
| T-3 | 1 | 18 | 9/21/2014 | Miss America Pageant | 3 |
| T-3 | 2 | 52 | 9/27/2015 | Migrants and Refugees | 3 |
| T-4 | 1 | 8 | 6/22/2014 | Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements | 2 |
| T-4 | 1 | 12 | 7/27/2014 | Nuclear Weapons | 2 |
| T-4 | 2 | 26 | 2/15/2015 | Tobacco | 2 |
| T-4 | 2 | 42 | 6/21/2015 | Online Harassment | 2 |
| T-4 | 2 | 55 | 10/18/2015 | Canadian Election | 2 |

Bottom 10 Segments Overall (Reverse Scored) (12 with -2 or more)

| Rank | Season | Episode # | Air Date | YouTube Title | Score (-5 Max) |
|------|--------|-----------|------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 1 | 7 | 6/15/2014 | The Washington Redskins | -5 |
| T-2 | 1 | 4 | 5/18/2014 | Right to be forgotten | -4 |
| T-2 | 1 | 9 | 6/29/2014 | Hobby Lobby | -4 |
| T-2 | 2 | 27 | 2/22/2015 | Elected Judges | -4 |
| T-2 | 2 | 34 | 4/19/2015 | Patents | -4 |
| T-3 | 1 | 23 | 11/2/2014 | State Legislatures | -3 |
| T-3 | 2 | 33 | 4/12/2015 | The IRS | -3 |
| T-3 | 2 | 56 | 11/1/2015 | Medicaid Gap | -3 |
| T-3 | 2 | 57 | 11/8/2015 | Prisoner Re-Entry | -3 |
| T-3 | 2 | 59 | 11/22/2015 | Pennies | -3 |
| T-4 | 2 | 54 | 10/11/2015 | North Dakota | -2 |
| T-4 | 2 | 58 | 11/15/2015 | Daily Fantasy Sports | -2 |

APPENDIX C: PEW TOP 50 ONLINE NEWS ENTITIES

Digital: Top 50 Online News Entities (2015)* | Pew Research Center

<http://www.journalism.org/media-indicators/digital-top-50-online-news-en...>



Digital: Top 50 Online News Entities (2015)*

Total number of unique visitors and average minutes per visit for January 2015 (in thousands)

| Rank (According to Pew Research Center Analysis) | Media | Unique Visitors | | | Average Minutes per Visit | | |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------|--------|---------------------------------------|---------|--------|
| | | Total Unduplicated Digital Population | Desktop | Mobile | Total Unduplicated Digital Population | Desktop | Mobile |
| 1 | Yahoo-ABC News Network | 127995 | 59099 | 93160 | 4.3 | 3.9 | 2.3 |
| 2 | CNN Network | 101540 | 53544 | 64632 | 4.2 | 2.9 | 3.3 |
| 3 | NBC News Digital | 101145 | 42207 | 69810 | 4.8 | 5.1 | 2.6 |
| 4 | HUFFINGTONPOST.COM | 100000 | 44184 | 67095 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 1.9 |
| 5 | CBS News | 84153 | 36431 | 58303 | 4.5 | 3.5 | 3.1 |
| 6 | USATODAY Sites | 78804 | 37718 | 50195 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 2.5 |
| 7 | BUZZFEED.COM | 77992 | 22749 | 57724 | 2.8 | 3.1 | 2.1 |
| 8 | The New York Times Brand | 57132 | 29013 | 34802 | 4.5 | 5.9 | 2 |
| 9 | Fox News Digital Network | 56857 | 28091 | 35406 | 5.1 | 5.6 | 2 |
| 10 | Mail Online / Daily Mail | 51181 | 21153 | 33844 | 2.5 | 2.7 | 2.3 |
| 11 | WASHINGTONPOST.COM | 47815 | 21328 | 30993 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 3 |
| 12 | BLEACHERREPORT.COM | 44429 | 14645 | 32938 | 2.8 | 2.2 | 3.5 |
| 13 | BUSINESSINSIDER.COM | 37309 | 15278 | 24101 | 2 | 2.3 | 1.7 |
| 14 | ELITEDAILY.COM | 33415 | 6534 | 27889 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.4 |
| 15 | BBC | 32774 | 21231 | 14479 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 2 |
| 16 | CNET.COM | 30482 | 21177 | 11307 | 2.4 | 2.2 | 1.9 |
| 17 | The Guardian | 28153 | 13121 | 16483 | 2 | 2 | 1.8 |
| 18 | MSN News | 26883 | 22138 | 6033 | 2.5 | 2.4 | 2.4 |
| 19 | NPR | 26573 | 11258 | 16502 | 1.8 | 2 | 1.6 |
| 20 | NYDAILYNEWS.COM | 25900 | 11294 | 15692 | 2.6 | 3 | 2.3 |
| 21 | LA Times | 24783 | 13051 | 12932 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 2.1 |
| 22 | NYPOST.COM | 22940 | 9831 | 14192 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2 |
| 23 | TIME.COM | 22688 | 10025 | 13289 | 2.4 | 2.2 | 1.6 |
| 24 | MASHABLE.COM | 20951 | 9669 | 12029 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.7 |
| 25 | SFGATE.COM | 19043 | 9948 | 10080 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 2.2 |
| 26 | SLATE.COM | 18346 | 7525 | 11533 | 2.4 | 2.8 | 2 |
| 27 | UPWORTHY.COM | 17513 | 4684 | 13202 | 1.7 | 2 | 1.6 |
| 28 | THEBLAZE.COM | 16924 | 5579 | 11855 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 2.8 |
| 29 | Telegraph Media Group | 16751 | 8378 | 9058 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 1.8 |
| 30 | USNEWS.COM | 16226 | 9442 | 7556 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.2 |
| 31 | VICE.COM | 15558 | 4198 | 9375 | 3 | 1.7 | 2.2 |

APPENDIX D: CONSTRUCTED SAMPLE OF NEWS OUTLETS

| Outlet Code | Outlet Name | Link | Notes | Included in Sample? |
|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Time | time.com | | YES |
| 2 | NPR | npr.com | | YES |
| 3 | CNN | cnn.com | Cannot see large results, limit to 10 pages | YES |
| 4 | Los Angeles Times | latimes.com | | YES |
| 5 | Washington Post | washingtonpost.com | | YES |
| 6 | The Houston Chronicle | chron.com | | YES |
| 7 | Boston Globe | bostonglobe.com | Limited to 10 pages of returns | YES |
| 8 | NBC News | nbcnews.com | Limited to 5 pages of returns | YES |
| 9 | Examiner | examiner.com | Limited to 10 pages of returns, no sorting | NO |
| 10 | Vice | vice.com | Limited to 10 pages of returns | YES |
| 11 | Huffington Post | huffingtonpost.com | No search function | NO |
| 21 | New York Times | nytimes.com | | YES |
| 12 | Buzzfeed | buzzfeed.com | | YES |
| 13 | Elite Daily | elitedaily.com | Limited to 8 results per search | NO |
| 14 | Mashable | mashable.com | Does not return accurate results, no sorting | NO |
| 15 | Upworthy | upworthy.com | | YES |
| 16 | Gawker | gawker.com | Cannot see large results, limit to 10 pages | YES |
| 17 | Vox | vox.com | | YES |
| 18 | The Daily Beast | the dailybeast.com | No articles after 2013 in search results | NO |
| 19 | Salon | salon.com | Does not return accurate results, no sorting | NO |
| 20 | Mic | mic.com | No search function | NO |

APPENDIX E: VARIABLES, OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS, SOURCES, STATISTICS, AND DATA

| Variable | Operational Definition | Source | Statistics | Data |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| YouTube Title/Keyword | The main subject of each segment | YouTube descriptions, segment video | N/A | V4 |
| News Outlet Code | The corresponding code to the news outlet searched | List of constructed sample of news outlets | N/A | V5 |
| Traditional or Native Online News Source | Whether or not the news outlet is a traditional online news source or a native online news source | Internet lookup of all news sources sampled | N/A | V7 |
| Counts of news coverage | Number of results of keyword searches both 3 days before and 3 days following the air date (V3) | News outlets in sample | Pre-Count Range: 0-21 Mean: .91 Std Dev: 2.494 Post-Count Range: 0-85 Mean: 2.75 Std Dev: 7.602 | V7 (Pre-Count) and V9 (Post-Count) |
| Extended counts of news coverage | Number of results of keyword searches both 7 days before and 7 days following the air date (V3) | News outlets in sample | Extended Pre-Count Range: 0-57 Mean: 2.54 Std Dev 6.579 Extended Post-Count Range: 0-115 Mean: 4.22 Std Dev: 12.354 | V 8 (Extended Pre-Count) and V10 (Extended Post-Count) |
| Counts of news coverage with additional keywords | Number of results of keyword searches with additional keywords both 3 days and 7 days after following the air date (V3) | News outlets in sample | Post-Count Additional Range: 0-4 Mean: .39 Std Dev: .701 Extended Post-Count Additional Range: 0-5 Mean: .42 Std Dev: .044 | V11 (Post-Count Additional Keywords) and V12 (Extended Post-Count Additional Keywords) |

APPENDIX F: INTERCODER RELIABILITY CODEBOOK AND DATASET

Codebook 1 for Intercoder Reliability: Keyword Searches for News Coverage Counts

This codebook includes instructions for Codebook 1, which will require the coder to run specified keyword searches on the websites of news outlets for the purposes of establishing intercoder reliability. Each set of keywords reflect the major topics, events, or key identifying details featured as the main segment on episodes of the HBO comedy show, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*.

The goal of these searches is to determine if evidence exists of any potential agenda setting effect on news coverage as a result of segments produced by the show. For this reason, six searches will be performed for each set of keywords: one search of news coverage 3 days prior to the episode date (pre-count), a search of news coverage 7 days prior to the episode date (extended pre-count), a search of news coverage 3 days following the episode date (post-count), a search of news coverage 7 days following the episode date (extended post-count), and two searches of the post-count and extended post-count period with the additional keywords of, "John Oliver" and, "Last Week Tonight". In this study, only news articles from 2014 and 2015 will be analyzed as part of the sample.

Results from these searches will be documented into the Excel spreadsheet by episode, not by individual search. For the purposes of establishing intercoder reliability, the sample is comprised of 2 selected keywords, which require 40 sets of searches each, a pre and post-count search on each news outlet's website.

The researcher will provide a detailed companion spreadsheet that includes the necessary segment and air date information. In addition, the researcher will provide a list of news outlets that correspond to the news outlet codes. Each site possesses their own systems for searching content, so notes will be provided if necessary to any differences or idiosyncrasies between sites.

Coder ID: Input the Coder ID Number for each Facebook profile analyzed (Andrew=1, Other=2) **[CID]**

For each row, ensure the following information is filled out:

1. **Season Number:** Enter the corresponding season number into the spreadsheet. **[V1]**
2. **Episode Number:** Enter the episode number the segment corresponds to. **[V2]**
3. **Air Date:** Enter the date the corresponding episode aired. (example: 11/02/2015) **[V3]**
4. **YouTube Title (Keyword):** Enter the title of the segment as indicated by the corresponding spreadsheet. **[V4]**
5. **News Outlet Code:** Enter the corresponding news outlet code as indicated by the corresponding list. **[V5]**

Procedures

First, open the webpage of the news outlet [V5] you will search:

1. When on the website, locate the search function, box, or link. Generally this is in the form of a small magnifying glass icon somewhere near the top of the page.
2. Enter the keyword [V4] into the search box and press enter.

NOTE: Please refer to the notes on the list of websites for detailed information on how to perform searches on specific websites. In some cases, advanced searches may not be possible and the results will have to be manually sorted by date.

3. Determine the date of the searches based on the Air Date [V3].
4. Locate or count the number of search results within the specified time frame.

NOTE: On some webpages, advanced search options may be available that allow you to narrow the returns. Otherwise, this will have to be done manually.

5. This study requires the coder to record results from two different time frames: three days before (pre-count) and after (post-count) each air date, as well as seven days before (pre-count) and after (post-count) each air date. This can either be done manually as noted previously or by altering the search terms in the advanced search functions.
6. Input the number of results into the appropriate Pre-Count or Post-Count column. For the purposes of this study, use columns [V6 through V11] to record counts.
7. Move to the next row and news outlet website and repeat searches for each date range and sets of keywords until each column is completed.

APPENDIX G: STUDY CODEBOOK AND DATASET

Codebook 1 for Code Sheet 1: Keyword Searches for News Coverage Counts

This codebook includes instructions for code sheet 1, which will require the coder to run specified keyword searches on 14 different websites of various online news outlets. Each set of keywords reflect the major topics, events, or key identifying details featured as the main segment on episodes of the HBO comedy show, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*.

The goal of these searches is to determine if evidence exists of any potential agenda setting effect on news coverage as a result of segments produced by the show. For this reason, six searches will be performed for each set of keywords: one search of news coverage 3 days prior to the episode date (pre-count), a search of news coverage 7 days prior to the episode date (extended pre-count), a search of news coverage 3 days following the episode date (post-count), a search of news coverage 7 days following the episode date (extended post-count), and two searches of the post-count and extended post-count period with the additional keywords of, “John Oliver” and, “Last Week Tonight”. In this study, only news articles from 2014 and 2015 will be analyzed as part of the sample.

Results from these searches will be documented into the Excel spreadsheet by episode, not by individual search. For the purposes of this study, the sample is comprised of 25 selected keywords that correspond to an episode segment. Since there are six counts per segment and 14 total news sources, there will be 350 rows of data and 2,100 counts.

The researcher will provide a detailed companion spreadsheet that includes relevant information for each segment to be analyzed in the study. Consult this spreadsheet when filling out items 1-6. In addition to the spreadsheet, a list of news outlet websites will be provided to detail the constructed sample of news outlets where the searches will occur. Each site possesses their own systems for searching content, so notes will be provided if necessary to any differences or idiosyncrasies between sites.

Coder ID: Input the Coder ID Number for each Facebook profile analyzed (Andrew=1, Other=2) **[CID]**

For each segment (documented in each row), first document the following information:

6. **Season Number:** Enter the corresponding season number into the spreadsheet. **[V1]**

7. **Episode Number:** Enter the episode number the segment corresponds to. [V2]
8. **Air Date:** Enter the date the corresponding episode aired. (example: 11/02/2015) [V3]
9. **YouTube Title (Keyword):** Enter the title of the segment as indicated by the corresponding spreadsheet. [V4]

NOTE: If the keyword contains more than one word, use quotations to ensure the search returns contain both words together.

Procedures

First, open the webpage of the news outlet [V5] you will search:

1. When on the website, locate the search function, box, or link. Generally this is in the form of a small magnifying glass icon somewhere near the top of the page.
2. Enter the keyword [V4] into the search box and press enter.

NOTE: Please refer to the notes on the list of websites for detailed information on how to perform searches on specific websites. In some cases, advanced searches may not be possible and the results will have to be manually sorted by date.

3. Determine the date of the searches based on the attached date chart.
4. Locate or count the number of search results within the specified time frame.

NOTE: On some webpages, advanced search options may be available that allow you to narrow the returns. Otherwise, this will have to be done manually. If the coder is unable to use the site to achieve an accurate count due to the inability to find search results, they will code 999 in the corresponding cells.

5. Input the number of results into the appropriate Pre-Count or Post-Count column. For the purposes of this study, use columns [V7 through V12] to record counts.
6. Move to the next row and news outlet website and repeat searches for each date range and sets of keywords until each column is completed.

| Air Date | Pre-Count Period (Friday, Saturday, Sunday before air) | Extended Pre-Count Period (7 days before air date to air date) | Post-Count Period (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday after air) | Extended Post-Count Period (Monday until 7 days after air date) |
|-----------------|---|---|---|--|
| 4/5/2015 | April 3 rd – 5 th | March 29 th – April 5 th | April 6 th – 8 th | April 6 th -12th |
| 6/1/2014 | May 30 th – June 1 st | May 25 th – June 1 st | June 2 nd – 4 th | June 2 nd – 8 th |
| 6/8/2014 | June 6 th – 8 th | June 1 st – 8 th | June 9 th – 11 th | June 9 th – 15 th |
| 8/9/2015 | August 7 th – 9 th | August 2 nd – 9 th | August 10 th – 12 th | August 10 th – 16 th |
| 8/16/2015 | August 14 th – 16th | August 9 th – 16 th | August 17 th – 19 th | August 17 th – 23 rd |
| 7/13/2014 | July 11 th – 13 th | July 6 th – 13 th | July 14 th – 16 th | July 14 th – 20th |
| 9/21/2014 | September 19 th – 21 st | September 14 th – 21 st | September 22 nd – 24 th | September 22 nd – 28th |
| 9/27/2015 | September 25 th – 27 th | September 20 th -27 th | September 28 th – 30 th | September 28 th – October 4 th |
| 6/22/2014 | June 20 th – 22 nd | June 15 th – 22 nd | June 23 rd – 25 th | June 23 rd – 29th |
| 7/27/2014 | July 25 th – 27 th | July 20 th – 27 th | July 28 th – 30 th | July 28 th – August 3 rd |
| 2/15/2015 | February 13 th – 15 th | February 8 th – 15 th | February 16 th – 19 th | February 16 th – 22nd |
| 6/21/2015 | June 19 th – 21 st | June 14 th – 21 st | June 22 nd – 24 th | June 22 nd – 28 th |

| | | | | |
|------------|---|---|--|---|
| 10/18/2015 | October 16 th -18 th | October 11 th – 18 th | October 19 th – 21 st | October 19 th – 25 th |
| 6/15/2014 | June 13 th – 15 th | June 8 th – 15 th | June 16 th – 18 th | June 16 th – 22 nd |
| 5/18/2014 | May 16 th – 18 th | May 11 th – 18 th | May 19 th – 21 st | May 19 th – 25 th |
| 6/29/2014 | June 27 th – 29 th | June 22 nd – 29 th | June 30 th – July 2 nd | June 30 th – July 6 th |
| 2/22/2015 | February 20 th – 22 nd | February 15 th – 22 nd | February 23 rd – 25 th | February 23 rd – March 1 st |
| 4/19/2015 | April 17 th – 19 th | April 12 th – 19 th | April 20 th – 22 nd | April 20 th – 26 th |
| 11/2/2014 | October 31 st – November 2 nd | October 26 th – November 2 nd | November 3 rd – 5 th | November 3 rd - 9 th |
| 4/12/2015 | April 10 th – 12 th | April 5 th – 12 th | April 13 th -15 th | April 13 th – 19 th |
| 11/1/2015 | October 30 th – November 1 st | October 25 th – November 1 st | November 2 nd – 4 th | November 2 nd -8 th |
| 11/8/2015 | November 6 th – 8 th | November 1 st – 8 th | November 9 th – 11 th | November 9 th – 15 th |
| 11/22/2015 | November 20 th – 22 nd | November 15 th – 22 nd | November 23 rd – 25 th | November 23 rd – 29 th |
| 10/11/2015 | October 9 th – 11 th | October 4 th – 11 th | October 12 th – 14 th | October 12 th – 18 th |
| 11/15/2015 | November 13 th – 15 th | November 8 th – 15 th | November 16 th – 18 th | November 16 th – 22 nd |

| CD | V1 (Season Number) | V2 (Episode Number) | V3 (Air Date) | V4 (YouTube Title/Keyword) | V6 | V8 | V10 | V11 | V12 | | | |
|----|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| | | | | | (News Outlet Code) | (Traditional Native Online?) | (Pre-Count Period) | (Extended Pre-Count Period) | (Post-Count Period) | (Extended Post-Count Period) | (Post-Count Additional Keywords) | (Extended Post-Count Additional Keywords) |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 1 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 4 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 2 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 10 | 0 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 21 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 12 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 15 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 16 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 32 | 4/5/2015 | Government Surveillance | 17 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 5 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 13 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 6 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 7 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 8 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 10 | 0 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 21 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 12 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 15 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 16 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 6/1/2014 | Net Neutrality | 17 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 1 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 17 | 2 | 3 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 2 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 3 | 0 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 4 | 0 | 21 | 34 | 17 | 99 | 2 | 2 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 5 | 0 | 15 | 57 | 60 | 115 | 2 | 2 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 6 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 13 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 7 | 0 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 8 | 0 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 10 | 0 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 | 999 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 21 | 0 | 10 | 24 | 12 | 31 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 12 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 15 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 16 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 6 | 6/8/2014 | FFA and the World Cup | 17 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 6 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 10 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 21 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 12 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 15 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 16 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 48 | 8/9/2015 | Sex Education | 17 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 12 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 15 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 16 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 | 49 | 8/16/2015 | Televangelists | 17 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 10 | 7/13/2014 | Wealth Gap | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 10 | 7/13/2014 | Wealth Gap | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 10 | 7/13/2014 | Wealth Gap | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 10 | 7/13/2014 | Wealth Gap | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 10 | 7/13/2014 | Wealth Gap | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 10 | 7/13/2014 | Wealth Gap | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 10 | 7/13/2014 | Wealth Gap | 7 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 10 | 7/13/2014 | Wealth Gap | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

VITA

Andrew Abad, a native of Troy, Michigan, received his Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Communication from Eastern Michigan University in December 2013. He was accepted into the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University (LSU) in 2014 for graduate study. While attending LSU, he has worked as a Research Assistant under the direction of Dr. Michael Henderson. He anticipates graduating with his M.M.C. degree in May 2016. He plans to pursue a political communications career in government and politics after graduation.