

Serious news – a laughing matter?

**How four segments from the satirical news program
Last Week Tonight with John Oliver were portrayed in
American news outlets**

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Abstract

Satirical news programs are a very popular concept where people tune in to them for a laugh and might leave with a bit more knowledge on the subjects reported. With the popularity of such shows growing the media's covering of them grows as well. The question is then how the media portrays these satirical news shows. In this study a framing analysis is used to analyse articles by four American news outlets – two traditional and two modern – to assess how the media is portraying the newer satirical news program *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. There has been a lot of research done on how satirical programs affect the world around them but this study instead looks at how the media chooses to portray such a show. The focus is on whether the media treats the program as entertainment or more like another news outlet and what kind of effect that could have on the two genres satire and news. This study shows that the media presents the program as not just a comedy show that makes fun of news but also as a credible source of information. It is portrayed as a bit of both and one is not shown to contradict the other. This indicates that the distinction between genres such as satire and news is blurring which in turn can make it harder for the audience to separate the two and thereby make it more difficult to know what is news and what is not.

Keywords

Framing analysis, genres, Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, news, satire

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1. Introduction

Tongue-in-cheek criticism; mockery; poignant sarcasm; ridicule intended to expose the truth – call it what you will but the use of satire to criticise serious political events is not a new phenomenon. Take the ancient Greek Aristophanes for example: a comic poet active in Athens into the fourth century BCE and known for his obscene language that somehow still managed to resonate with people. Not only would his boisterous ridicule of people in power make his audiences laugh but it would also teach them something (Rosen, 2012). Today the genre of satire is still very much alive and it is thriving. Comedians such as Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert are seen as celebrities and are most known for their comedy shows where they give their satirical take on political news. And viewers are not only tuning in for the laughs. A poll from 2014 showed that ten percent of the American public said they get news from *The Colbert Report with Stephen Colbert* and twelve percent said they get news from *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (Pew Research Center, 2014). Satirical news programs clearly resonate with people and not only for their jokes. For the media to write about them is therefore not an oddity – it is popular, why wouldn't they write about it? It's *how* they write about it that changes a discussion about comedy into something more serious.

News and journalism in general is not having a good time as of late. Trust in newspapers are at an all-time low (Swift, 2016) and information has emerged showing websites producing fake news played a part in influencing the U.S Presidential election (Isaac, 2016). What is news and what is not is more important than ever. Comedy programs such as *The Daily Show* might every now and then be called “fake news” (Maslin, 2016) but they are not actually that – the news they use are not fake, what's fake is rather the façade of comedians playing anchor-men and reporters. The big difference is that the people watching satirical news programs are in on the joke. But what happens when the joke everyone is in on is instead taken more seriously?

There has been a lot of research on the two big satirical shows *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* but in 2014 a new instalment in the ever-growing sea of satirical entertainment came to be: *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. It differs from the earlier shows as it does not necessarily focus on the current events like breaking news. It has reached widespread critical acclaim and one of its segments even broke HBO's viewing record (Stelter, 2016) but what kind of image do the media portray of the show? This study endeavours to add to the already existing research on satirical shows by studying how the American media portrays the newer satirical show *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. If the media reports about satirical news programs, not as entertainment as one might expect but rather as something

more – as something newsworthy – that gives such programs credibility. It is all in how the media portrays it. Is it given the same sort of treatment other news gets, or is it written about as part of entertainment and then that's it? Is the media giving satirical shows credit for having an impact on businesses, organisations, politicians – public actors of all kinds – that the media themselves can have trouble affecting? And are they showing that public actors that suffer the ridicule of satirical programs are worried enough about the effects it might have that they offer up counterstatements to get out ahead of a potential disaster? People might be aware satirical news programs are for fun and entertainment but if the media treats them differently then why shouldn't the audience as well? The research aim of the study is not to judge whether or not it is a good idea to portray satirical news programs in a certain way, but rather to shine light on how such a show is portrayed and what kind of effects that could have on the relationship between satire and news. John Oliver, the host of *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, is clear on what kind of show it is, dubbing it comedy only (Carr, 2014). If this was the only perceived reality there wouldn't be an issue but depending on how the media portrays the show, the audience could be getting information that contradicts each other. This brings us back to what is news and what is not, and how important that is to differentiate. Because, as mentioned earlier, even if people are in on a joke; if the joke changes to something more serious, the punchline can in turn be something more of a knockout.

1.1 Research questions

These research questions will be used to ascertain what kind of effect the media's portrayal of satirical news program can have on the genres of news and satire:

1. How are four segments from *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* portrayed in four American news outlets? Is the program seen as credible or as humour without substance?
2. How do the news outlets portray the various impacts the show had on the subjects it covered in the four segments? Are public actors shown to have been affected by the program?

2. Background

The background section will first delve into the history and the effect of *The Daily Show*, the forerunner of satirical programs. After this the history as well as the structure of *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* will be presented. Lastly, the four American news outlets used in this study will be introduced. Why these specific four were chosen is later explained in the methodological section.

2.1 The Daily Show

Satirical news programs are flourishing at the moment and they are getting more and more popular. The forefather for satirical television programs can rightfully be said to be *The Daily Show*, a show that is still going strong to this day. *The Daily Show* was first introduced in 1996 with comedian Craig Kilborne as its first host. *The Daily Show* then was very different from what it would later become; the focus was not so much on analysing weighty current events but rather a balanced mix of entertainment and politics. However, due to disagreement between Kilborne and the co-creator, the host left the show after only two years. As Jon Stewart became Kilborne's successor and hosted his first episode in 1999, the show was now known as *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. And with Jon Stewart at the helm it became something new. One of the big contributions to the change was the hiring of the new head writer Ben Karlin, who was known from working on the satirical newspaper and website *The Onion* (Brooke, 2016). Karlin and Stewart shared a common outlook for what the show could be, as Stewart put it: "Ben seemed to be concerned with hypocrisy and the silly façades of politics. He seemed to know where the absurdity was, and that was an important change in focus for what we wanted to do" (Smith, 2016). The new outlook of the show turned out to be a success. The show became known for critiquing not only politicians but the media as well. Stewart, calling himself a "fake newsman", had no problem confronting politicians with questions that some journalist wouldn't ask out of politeness – earning him plenty of appreciation but also criticism (Keishin Armstrong, 2015). Stewart hosted the show for 16 years before he left it in 2015. This did not mean the end of the show, however, as Stewart handed over the torch to South-African comedian Trevor Noah. Noah adds both an international and more youthful perspective to the show and it's all done with Stewart's endorsement (Itzkoff, 2015).

Jon Stewart has been called "a voice of sanity" for shining the light on partisan bickering during the 2000s (Keishin Armstrong, 2015), in 2009 he was deemed "the most trusted newscaster in America" (Poniewozik, 2015) by Time magazine and through his show a great number of talented people have made the viewers laugh and also gone on to build something on their own. The most noticeable amongst them being Stephen Colbert. Colbert was a correspondent on *The Daily Show* before he went on to start *The Colbert Report* in 2005. On *The Daily Show* there were some commercials for "The Colbert Report" a show that did not exist but rather poked fun at the Fox News figures like Sean Hannity and Bill O'Reilly. Thanks to Stewart and his power of persuasion Comedy Central decided to give Colbert an eight-week try-out with his own show. Colbert's character – the swaggering right-wing hotshot who holds the belief that a flaming moat should be built around America to stop immigrants coming into the country – was on its own, to put it mildly, a success. Throughout the years the Colbert persona has been a part of some major events. He briefly ran for president in 2008, not as a Republican as one might think

but rather as a Democrat as the Republican primary was too expensive. He was also invited to testify before Congress about the problem of illegal-immigrant farmworkers – an invitation the comedian of course accepted. One of Colbert’s major achievements was, however, the way his show went from being a parody to taking part in the real world. The best example of this is the super PAC (a political committee that can spend money, not on a candidate, but on campaigning) Colbert created in 2012 – with it he showed the viewers exactly how the system worked and then allowed them to make up their minds about what they thought of it (McGrath, 2012). The show ran for nine years and even though it ended in late 2014 Colbert was not off-screen for long. The year after Colbert dropped his right-wing persona and replaced David Letterman as the new host for *The Late Show* (D’Addario & Rothman, 2014).

Stephen Colbert might be the first one who comes to mind when thinking of the comedians that had their start on *The Daily Show* but there were many others. Such as the now well-known Steve Carell who was a correspondent for the Daily Show before he starred in *The Office* that launched his career as a movie star. The former “senior black correspondent” Larry Wilmore launched his own show *The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore* (Keishin Armstrong, 2015) that ran for a year and a half but was cancelled in August earlier this year (Koblin, 2016). Correspondent Samantha Bee began hosting her own show *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* in February of 2016 (Levin, 2016) and last but not least: the “senior British correspondent” John Oliver, who went on to host his own satirical news show on HBO called *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* (Carter, 2014).

2.2 Last Week Tonight with John Oliver

John Oliver had done stand-up as well as a couple of radio and TV gigs in the U.K before he began his career in America. It was after being heard on a radio show where he and the creator of *Veep*, satirist Armando Iannucci, talked about British politics that *The Daily Show* became a part of his life. Comedian Ricky Gervais, who is a friend of Jon Stewart, had heard the radio show and suggested him when Stewart asked him about young talent in Britain. Oliver moved to the U.S to work as “senior British correspondent”, a role people became very fond of. It was during the summer in 2013 that he truly had a chance to show off what he was bringing to the table. Stewart took that summer off and substituting for him was none other than Mr. John Oliver. Those three months of constant screen time meant lots of new job offers for Oliver. One of those job offers was hosting a new satirical news program on HBO (Carter, 2014).

Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, or *Last Week Tonight* as it is also known, first aired on HBO on April 27, 2014. Even though Oliver came directly from *The Daily Show* the new program differs in many ways. In an interview with U.S News the former head writer at *The Daily Show*, Tim Carvell, who went with Oliver to become the executive producer of *Last Week Tonight* mentioned some of the major differences between the two shows. First of all is the structure of the show different which means there are no commercial breaks on *Last Week Tonight*. However, to break up the show there are smaller segments in the episodes that are acting as commercial breaks. For example the segment “How is this still a thing?”. In this segment a phenomenon – be it dressing up as other races, the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue or Columbus Day – is described and questioned as to how it still exists today. Because the show airs only on Sundays it cannot have the same instantaneous response to news as *The Daily Show* that is on every weekday. The focus with the new show is instead to spend some time mentioning the biggest news during the week and then spend more time going through the details of a specific event. *Last Week Tonight* also differs from most other late-night shows in that it doesn’t focus on guests. If there are guests, and often there isn’t, they are more seen as an expert witness on the subject the show is covering than simply a guest there to have a chat. The last thing Carvell points out as making the show different is because it’s on HBO. HBO is well-known for its series such as *Game of Thrones* or *Westworld* where violence and full-frontal nudity is used in plenty. By being on HBO, *Last Week Tonight* has a lot more freedom to do what they want without worrying about if it will offend sponsors (Sneed, 2014).

Thanks to the show’s success and, more importantly, thanks to the impact it has had on the subjects it reports about – be it little impact or big – John Oliver has earned many titles from the media. He was dubbed “one of the World’s Greatest Leaders” by Fortune in 2016, a list he shares with prominent names such as Angela Merkel and Pope Francis (Fortune, 2016). The expression “the John Oliver Effect” was coined in Time Magazine (Luckerson, 2015) in response to the show having a real-life effect. Others have labelled Oliver and his show journalism (Poniewozik, 2014; Suebsaeng, 2014) but according to the comedian himself this is simply not true. According to Oliver, he and the others working on the show hold themselves to a high standard which includes fact-checking everything but what they do is still comedy. In an interview he stated that: “We are making jokes about the news and sometimes we need to research things deeply to understand them, but it’s always in service of a joke. If you make jokes about animals, that does not make you a zoologist” (Carr, 2014).

2.3 The Washington Post

The morning daily newspaper *The Washington Post* is often counted as one of the greatest newspapers in the United States and it is also the leading newspaper in the U.S capital (Britannica Academic, 2014). It was founded in 1877 as an organ of the Democratic Party. The newspaper was then sold and bought several times throughout the years. It was bought by the financier Eugene Meyer in 1933 and it was with this that the newspaper's reputation for thorough and well-written reports began. Two reporters from *The Washington Post*, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, were the ones responsible for reporting on one of the most well-known political scandals: the Watergate scandal. The scandal led to President Richard M. Nixon's resignation and earned the newspaper a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the case. As of today it has won over 60 Pulitzer Prizes as well as a large number of other awards (Britannica Academic, 2014).

2.4 The Huffington Post

The Huffington Post is a relatively new news-and-commentary website as it was founded in 2005. It was founded by the political activist Arianna Huffington, former America Online executive Kenneth Lerer and Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab graduate Jonah Peretti. The reason for creating the newspaper was for it to be a liberal counterpart to a conservative news-and-commentary website called *The Drudge Report*. The newspaper features over 1600 blogs – by unpaid bloggers – about subjects like politics, entertainment and business. *The Huffington Post* also produces news updates as well as hyperlinks to news sources and columnists. After being bought by AOL in 2011 the newspaper also expanded. It launched editions in Canada, the U.K, France, Spain, Italy, Japan and Germany. In 2012 it was awarded its first Pulitzer Prize (Britannica Academic, 2016).

2.5 The New York Times

The New York Times is a morning daily newspaper. It is published in New York City and it is considered to be one of the world's greatest newspapers. Its strength is, however, in its editorial excellence and not in terms of circulation. The newspaper was founded in 1851 as a cheap so called penny paper. The newspaper's mission was to report the news objectively and in a constrained manner. It set a high moral tone as it appealed to intellectual readers but even though that had initially led to success it was losing money when it was bought by Adolph Simon Ochs in 1896. It was Ochs that helped make *The New York Times* into the internationally respected newspaper it is today. Reporting on the sinking of the Titanic in 1912 as well as publishing the "Pentagon Papers" – reports based on the secret government study of the Vietnam War and the U.S involvement – are some of the newspaper's

biggest achievements. *The New York Times* is not only considered one of the world's greatest newspapers but also the news organisation with the most Pulitzers – by 2015 the newspaper had won 114 Pulitzer awards (Britannica Academic, 2015).

2.6 Politico

In their mission statement from when *Politico* was founded in 2007 the editor in chief, John F. Harris, and the executive editor, Jim VandeHei, describe why it was created in the first place. *Politico* can be read either online or in print as a newspaper version is distributed in Washington with a circulation of 25,000 copies. *Politico* was founded with the goal to gather journalists to take on national politics in three arenas: Congress, 2008 presidential campaign and lobbying and advocacy. Congress means the everyday life on Capitol Hill; the power struggles as well as the flow of agendas. Since it started in 2007 a big focus would be on the 2008 presidential campaign. The last arena is one Harris and VandeHei feel is insufficiently covered: the business of lobbying and advocacy. The stories that *Politico* focuses on isn't necessarily the story of the day but rather the "backstories" that show what is being played out in the shadows (Politico, 2007).

3. Theories and former research

3.1 Intermedia agenda setting

Agenda setting, a theory that got thorough recognition through a well-known study by journalism professors Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, is the theory that the media helps set the agenda for what people think about. That is, media doesn't influence the people how to think about something but they are responsible for what people think about (McCombs, M, & Shaw, D, 1972). For this study, however, a theory that was developed from the theory of agenda setting will be used – the theory of intermedia agenda setting. Intermedia agenda setting is the theory that media affects other media's issue attention; they emulate each other and adopt each other's stories (Vliengenthart, R & Walgrave, S, 2008). Vliengenthart and Walgrave (2008) set three reasons for why one news media might affect what another reports about. The first reason is that since media has little or no contact with their audience they have to rely on other media to get their cues on what are the biggest issues at the moment. The second reason is that intermedia agenda setting helps uphold the norms concerning news in the journalistic community. When one media outlet chooses to copy another it thereby validates the first medium's decision; the medium that copies another then agrees that the news is newsworthy. By doing

that, intermedia agenda setting helps define what is considered to be news or not. The third and last reason is that it is the right move to do in a competitive market. A medium imitates another only if there is a competitive advantage to do so. The media competes with each other and to stay on top they adopt their competitor's successful news stories.

These three reasons for why intermedia agenda setting happens will be used as one of the basis for answering the first research question that is deciding whether or not *Last Week Tonight* is treated as credible news or simply as comedy. As the research aim of this study is to see how the comedy show is portrayed by other media rather than how it has affected what other media reports, a complete intermedia agenda setting analysis will not be necessary. For example, the second reason by Vliengenthart and Walgrave (2008) state that the medium that copies another validates the first medium's decision. This would mean that if another medium reports on segments from *Last Week Tonight* they indirectly deem the show as – if not credible – at least newsworthy.

3.2 Mediatisation

In short, mediatisation is a concept that refers to how the media influences both culture and society as well as how social institutions and cultural processes have changed in response to the media (Hjarvard, 2013). The influence that the media exerts is in many regards because of the fact that they have become an essential part of other institutions' operations and at the same time the media is able to force institutions to defer to their logic thanks to the self-determination and authority it possesses. The media is not only its own institution but also a bridge between other institutions as well as providing an arena for public discussion. The way media is used as well as perceived by both sender and retriever is affecting relations between people (Hjarvard, 2013). Mediatisation differs from mediation, though it is a related concept. Mediation is, simply put, the use of communications through media; sending and receiving messages. This is an important part of mediatisation but in comparison mediatisation is a much broader process (Strömbäck and Esser, 2014).

Strömbäck (2008) suggests a framework from which it is possible to establish four phases of mediatisation:

1) The first phase of mediatisation

This phase is reached when the media – in a certain setting – is seen as the most important source of information. It is also the most important channel of communication between the people and parts of politics such as political parties, governmental agencies, political interest groups, political institutions

and political actors. This is then, as mentioned before, the concept of mediation and how it is a part of mediatisation. This phase also concerns the media's power over their audience as the media is the most important source of information which means they can influence perceptions, attitudes and opinions. It can then be assumed that when politics reaches this phase, the reality showed by the media have an impact on peoples perceived reality and in doing that also help form people's opinions. As people's opinions play an integral part in their views on politics this then forces, for example, political actors to take the media into consideration when they react to public opinion (Strömbäck, 2008).

2) The second phase of mediatisation

The second phase is illustrated by the media becoming more independent of governmental or other political actors. They are not governed by the political logic but rather according to the media logic. This means that the media do not automatically mediate the messages preferred by sources – they instead make their own judgement on what they deem to be the appropriate message for their audiences as well as in regards to their own mediums norms and values. This does not mean, however, that the media is ever completely independent of political influence. Instead of thinking of the relationship between the media, politics and other groups as dependent or independent it should be seen as interactive. The media can be said to be semi-independent; that is, they mainly control their own content. Even though political actors and institutions might have the advantage they still cannot control the media or completely use them to further their own interests (Strömbäck, 2008).

3) The third phase of mediatisation

The third phase differs from the second as the independence of the media has increased even further, and it has become so independent and important in its daily operations that political as well as social actors now have to adapt to the media. In contrast to the second phase where the media were semi-dependent and where politics had the advantage, the advantage now lies with the media. The independence of the media is now so strong that no social or political actors, who are dependent on interaction with the public or influence on public opinion, can ignore the media. The media logic is now so important that political actors and social actors must adapt to it. As they adapt to it the distinction between the perceived reality shaped by the media and the real world lose its significance. This situation forces political actors to have to consider their actions or inactions carefully as they have little control of how they are played out in the media (Strömbäck, 2008).

4) The fourth phase of mediatisation

In the fourth phase the way social and political actors perceive the media changes from external to internal. The mediated reality is now understood to be more important than objective reality and any other perceived reality, causing political actors to have to consider the media not only when campaigning but also during governing and other processes. Therefore the fourth phase is reached when

political and social actors not only adapt to the media logic but actually adopt it and internalize it to become part of the governing processes. The media is now even more independent from political institutions but complete independence is not possible (Strömbäck, 2008).

The theory of mediatisation will be used as a basis to answer the second research question about how the impact of the segments have been portrayed and whether or not public actors have acknowledged the reports from *Last Week Tonight*. If the perceived reality portrayed by the media is that public actors have acknowledged the segments, and thereby the show be placed in one of the phases of mediatisation, this will indicate to the audience that companies and others not only have to take the actual news media into consideration when making decisions and responses but also satirical news programs.

3.3 Genres in journalism

The traditional definition of genre puts the focus mainly on textual regularities. Different genres are for example defined by their form and content. Different types of discourse separate genres from each other (Freedman and Medway, 1994). To distinguish genres from one another, and to define genres are then done by researching repeated patterns in various parts of text, such as style, rhetoric and structure. Structure refers to the individual components that can be found in a text, there can for example be guidelines for what to add in a certain text such as introduction or summary. Rhetoric moves that exist and that help define genres are for example how evidence is provided, what kinds of citation practices are used and how to deal with authority. Examples of styles used in texts are how long or short paragraphs are, if the writer references to her-or himself or the reader and also the type of tone set by the writer (Paré and Smart, 1994). These textual regularities then connect with both social and cultural understanding of language in use – by using certain words and styles in text the writer and the audience share the understanding of what kind of genre is being used (Freedman and Medway, 1994). At first the study of genres in writing focused heavily on textual patterns but genres can also be seen as social action. Genres as social action means that genres cannot be based solely on finding textual patterns but rather textual patterns in relation to social and cultural situations. In short, our social understanding as well as the form of a text is what constitutes a genre (Paré and Smart, 1994).

Five examples of genres in journalistic texts are:

News: What defines a news story is mainly that it is straightforward – there isn't a lot of use of flowery language but the language is instead quite simple and easy to read. The information is presented in a factual manner. They tend not to go into as much detail as investigative stories but rather just provide the information at hand. The news presented speaks for itself – it is the basis for the story

therefore not a lot more needs to be added (Häger, 2014). According to Häger (2014) the reporter should not be sensed in a news text – there should be a sense of objectivity towards the subject being reported – nor should the reporter use too many synonyms for a word that is already good enough. For example when the reporter is to describe that someone has said something – one might want to use a word such as “proclaim” or “declare” to change things up but it is enough to simply say “she/he said” to keep it objective, simple and make it easy for the reader.

Investigative: Investigative reporting focuses on gathering facts which then will be used to expose wrongdoing by, for example, big companies or powerful people. Some argue that the phrase is quite unnecessary as all reporting involves some kind of investigation while other would simply call investigative reporting more in-depth and a lot more time-consuming than other kinds of journalism. Unlike reporters writing pure news stories – where objectivity is something to strive towards – investigative reporters are more frequently subjective as they write articles. The presented information is obtained through thorough research, like sifting through documents or interviewing people with a connection to the subject being researched. Sometimes to get the information needed investigative reporters have to work undercover so they can witness the injustice first-hand. Even if investigative reporting is important to keep an eye on people in power the line between it and sensationalistic newsmonger can be a fine one that can easily be crossed (Feldstein, 2009).

Column: Unlike reporters whose job it is to present the audience with an accurate and objective description of a news story, a columnist has a lot more creative freedom. The text produced by a columnist has a lot more personality than those of a news reporter. A columnist job includes adding their personality and worldview to a story; to allow it to colour the way they view a public issue. A columnist can therefore take sides – objectivity is not a goal for these kinds of writers. There are also more writing devices at a columnist’s disposal than for other reporters. This is all so columnists can add a personal touch to the stories they write. It has become quite popular with columnists of all sorts, for example columnists who specialize in sport, entertainment, finance and so on (Riley, 2009).

Feature stories: Unlike news stories, that are straightforward and matter of fact, feature stories are the opposite. Feature stories combine the fact that people need to be entertained with informing people about an event of public interest. Feature stories can be written in different ways. Reportage can be written in a narrative structure or written in first-person describing what they experienced – all in a style that is a lot more colourful than that of news stories. There can also be a profile interview, which means there is an in-depth interview with someone that is then presented in a personal way with colourful writing. The focus of a feature story is to convey emotion; to involve the reader. This means that the reporter has a different role than a reporter writing news stories where she or he most preferably should not be noticed in the text. When writing a feature story the reporter can use

her or his own experience to elicit emotion from the reader. The focus is often on the human interest (Steensen, 2011).

Satire: Satire is a genre that uses humour, irony or ridicule to make commentary and criticise the behaviour of people, organisations, political parties or the like. To help a satirist there are literary devices such as parodies, sarcasm, exaggerations and analogies that they can use to get their point across. When used in journalism the genre of satire criticises current events and politics or makes a parody of something and depicts it as conventional views. Even though humour is at the very heart of satire, the genre often has an underlying objective to get a point across. This point can be about people, events, trends, the media, and policies and so on, and the point is made to criticise and influence change. This, of course, makes it virtually impossible for satirists to be objective as they use wit to argue a point about a subject they disapprove (Lubeck, 2009).

Genres are, however, not necessarily something static. Genres are, as mentioned earlier, partly a social construction and not set in stone which means they can change over time (Freedman and Medway, 1994). Genres are constantly influencing and changing one another as well as evolving and dissolving. Schryer (1994) therefore calls them “stabilised-for-now” or “stabilised-enough” sites of social as well as rhetoric action. One example of a changing genre is that of infotainment; a mix of two genres that together created a new one. Infotainment is defined as a television program that presents news in an entertaining way. The genre is a result of the blurring between information and entertainment in news. What constitutes infotainment can be both the selection of news stories, for example more focus on crime stories or celebrity gossip, as well as the way information is presented – the use of flashy graphics and sound effects for example. The creation of infotainment came to be because of the fact that the media environment has changed; people are not reading newspapers as much, they’re not watching the major network news programs the way they used to and they have turned to other news sources. Entertainment sells, which is why some news programs try and incorporate it in their programs and thereby blurring the distinction between the two genres. Infotainment is generally used as a synonym for “soft” news, that is, news that aren’t as relevant as news about politics, business and other topics that could have an international or national impact. Examples of television shows that are considered infotainment are *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and *Entertainment Tonight*, but shows like *The Daily Show* are also referred to as infotainment by some (Matthews, 2009).

For this study, journalistic genres are an important part. As it’s not only the form of a text that constitutes a genre but also our social understanding (Paré and Smart, 1994) it provides a basis for how something is perceived. This study isn’t about perception but rather about media content; how the media

portrays a satirical program. However, by using the theory of genres can, not only, the relationship between the genres satire and news be analysed but some conclusions about how the show is perceived by the public can also be made.

4. Methods

The segments used from the show were chosen because of the fact that they generated some kind of buzz – that is, they were referenced in other media – and had some sort of impact on the subject they were about. Not all episodes from the show gets written about in the same extend and quite a few other episodes also generated a lot of buzz but a selection had to be made. To use the segment about net neutrality was a given as it is one of the most popular segments and it's credited by several lists (Kowitt, 2015; Boboltz, 2015; Luckerson, 2015) as being one of Oliver's segments that's has had the biggest real-life effects. The lists presented in the Huffington Post (Boboltz, 2015) and Fortune (Kowitt, 2015) also mentions the segment 'Chickens' which was one reason for it being chosen. The other reason is that I read the article by Brooks Boliek, Alex Byers and Bill Duryea in Politico and thereby had previous knowledge about the impacts of the segment. The same reason goes for the segment 'Charter Schools' as I was aware of the video contest that had been made by charter school advocates. It was also one of the segments that had the most hits when searching for it on Google. The last segment about journalism was chosen for a slightly different reason. As the research questions aim to answer how the media – and thereby how journalists – portray the subject reported in the segments and the impact it had, the use of a segment concerning a subject directly of importance for journalists felt like a good aspect to bring to the study and also something journalists would write a lot about which in turn provided much material.

To determine what newspaper to use as source material a series of searches was made. The first search that was made was to simply find which newspapers had written anything about the program at all. These searches were made on websites of various news outlets to see what they had written about the specific segments. The selection was made to have a variety of different news outlets. *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* are newspapers considered to be among the greatest in the U.S and even though *The New York Times* had not written articles about all segments I made the choice to keep both newspapers as they represent two traditional news outlets. It then felt important to have other kinds of news outlets – that is, not traditional newspapers – to show another side of where people get their news. The news aggregator *The Huffington Post* was chosen, as well as *Politico*. *The Huffington Post*, as both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, had quite a few articles – many quite short and some longer – about the chosen segments. *Politico*, however, had only written a few and only about three of

the four segments but these were much longer articles that went into detail. *The Huffington Post*, as mentioned earlier, is a newer form of news outlet and consists of blogs and is more of a media enterprise than traditional newspaper. *Politico* is also a newer news outlet and not a traditional newspaper. By adding these two news outlets the study can use articles from two traditional newspapers as well as two new and modern news outlets; adding variety to the analyses. To find the relevant articles searches were made in each news outlet. The search included John Oliver's name, alternatively the name of the show, as well as the name of the segment. Most articles that were written in each news outlets were analysed but some were not included. The reason they were not included was because they differed but a little from other articles used – there could be only a small addition to a text otherwise quite similar to other articles and therefore the articles were left out. In short, articles where the program or John Oliver was only mentioned very briefly were not used as there was too little to use in a text analysis. That was the only exception made; otherwise articles about the various segments were all used. The genres of the articles had no importance for the searches made as I was not looking for specific genres but each article's genre will be introduced in the analyses. The articles were not necessarily directly about the segments, but all articles mentioned *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* to a certain extent. To then analyse these articles a framing analysis was used which is why the articles had to include more than a short mentioning about the show – there had to be enough to do a framing analysis on how the show was portrayed.

4.1 Framing analysis

Framing is how information is presented; how the author of a text chooses to describe a person or an event (Shehata, 2013). In one of his most famous quotes, communications researcher Robert Entman describes the definition of the use of frames in the news as “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993). Ben-Porath (2009) calls the term itself a metaphor that suggest the media either include something, that is to say the things we see inside the frame, or the media excludes something; the things we cannot see. The concept of framing is therefore not only about what kind of selection of words and ideas the media uses but also about how these selections affect the public.

When used in practice frames are revealed by observing and analysing the linguistic and rhetorical organisation of journalistic texts. A story has many ways of being told and the editorial decisions concerning a text are what decide what the perceived reality of the audience will be like. For a journalist this means they first have to collect the information needed for an article and then incorporate it into

what most likely will be a relatively short news story – some things might have to be left out and the journalist have to choose what to tell the audience and how to tell it. The media frame news by underlining certain aspects of people or issues while placing less emphasise on other aspects (Ben-Porath, 2009).

Frames are likely to shape the way people think about events, issues and people. It can happen by the choices of particular words that activate a certain way of thinking. Take for example a presidential health initiative. Depending on how the media is framing it – if it's discussed as an election gimmick or it is discussed for its merits and shortcomings – will then help form the audience's broader outlook on the world. If the media presents the health initiative as a gimmick the audience is more likely to perceive it as a political ploy which can result in future initiatives also being regarded as political ploys. This can happen if frames are often repeated and are therefore fresh in people's minds. It is important to remember that people process information differently. Every frame might therefore not register with the audience. A person might simply ignore new information and instead go with what they already know as people tend to take in information that fits their pre-existing outlooks (Ben-Porath, 2009).

There are different types of frames that can be used. There's, for example, value framing, attribute framing, responsibility framing and strategy and issue framing:

Value framing: Value framing is the types of moral, religious or social values that people apply when they read a news story. There are linguistic differences that can be made where the journalist choses what values to give a person or an event. For example, when talking about abortion there are two terms often used, partial-birth abortion and late-term abortion. The first one that uses the words partial-birth draws the mind more to the unborn foetus while the other frames the issue more in the context of the pregnancy. Both words trigger a different set of emotions and whichever the journalist choses to use will predetermine how the audience might feel about the abortion issue (Ben-Porath, 2009).

Attributes framing: Attributes framing is about how the media affects the audience's attitudes by putting emphasis on certain characteristics of an issue or a person. If the media attaches desirable attributes to an issue or a person, people will think more positively about an issue or a person in response. Researchers have, for example, found that when buying meat, people prefer the beef that has the label 75 percent lean on it rather than the beef that has the label 25 percent fat on it, even though that means they're the same product. The wording of one, however, sounds more positive (Ben-Porath, 2009).

Responsibility framing: Responsibility framing is about how the media affects who or what people think is responsible for various social problems in society (Ben-Porath, 2009). An example used by Ben-Porath (2009) is to look at how the problem with homelessness can be framed. One way to frame it is to just present the facts and figures of what the elemental cause is, which could be because of the economy. The media could also choose to put faces on the problem; personalising the story. They can focus on the people affected by homelessness and thereby illustrating the issue. Researchers found that the people presented with the straightforward facts were more likely to fault systematic factors while those who were presented with the more personalised stories more likely faulted individual factors.

Strategy and issues framing: Strategy and issues framing is connected to political news coverage. It is about how, for example, a campaign is presented. The media can focus on the strategy part where it focuses on polls and tactical manoeuvring by candidates, that is, the parts that make the campaign seem more like a race one has to win. The media can also choose to focus directly on the issues the different campaigns talk about. Researchers found that people's level of political trust is connected to which of these types of framing they've been exposed to (Ben-Porath, 2009).

For this analysis an adapted version of Baldwin Van Gorp's (2010) method in how to conduct an inductive framing analysis will be used. What makes it adapted is that Van Gorp's purpose with his framing analysis is to reconstruct the culturally embedded frames in a text while the frames embedded in the articles used for this study does not need to be cultural. The basic use of the method is however the same and can therefore be applied on a study with another purpose. According to Van Gorp (2010) there are four steps to a framing analysis. In the first step the source material needed is collected. The second step is where the coding starts. To do an open coding means that the text is analysed without any predefined coding instruments. What's important here is to focus not on what the text is about but rather how the story is told. When telling the story the journalist has made a series of selections and these are what to look for. The third step is to find the framing devices and the reasoning devices, that is, to arrange the codes so they can be connected to general ideas and then form a purpose. In the fourth and last step a selective coding is done where names are given to the different frames that have been found. This is done by creating a frame matrix. In the first column the source text is presented, in the second column the framing device used is described and in the third and last column the reasoning device is described as seen in table 1. The model was applied directly and the only adjustment made was in the presentation. For each article a frame matrix was made which was then turned into running text, for aesthetic reasons as well as practical ones – it made it easier to understand and the flow of the text was not compromised.

Table 1. Example of a frame matrix by Baldwin Van Gorp (2010)

Source text	Framing devices	Reasoning devices
Even with its stunning scenery, the mountains and the rich farmland that surround it, it is like any other community in Canada: threatened by drug users use and uncomfortable with the rising tide of homelessness.	Description of visual scene with contrast: idyllic scenery vs. misery; metaphor “rising tide” that refers to an unstoppable overwhelming force	Drug users but also homeless people are perceived as threatening

5. Result and analysis

The results from the frame analysis will be presented below. Each segment will be presented on its own, with all articles concerning it being analysed. Before each segment a description of the segment as it was described on *Last Week Tonight* will be added. A summary of the similarities and differences of the articles will be displayed in the end. Instead of having each analysis in a frame matrix they will be presented in the running text.

5.1 ‘Net neutrality’ (2014) Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, Season 1, Episode 5, HBO, June 1

“Yes, net neutrality. The only two words that promise more boredom in the English language are: ‘featuring Sting’.” (‘Net Neutrality’, 2014) Oliver begins the segment with describing just how boring it is to hear people talk about things concerning net neutrality. He goes on to show clips from C-Span where politicians are talking about it to prove his point. Oliver’s point is that even though it is incredibly boring it is also hugely important. He explains that net neutrality means that all data essentially has to be treated equally, no matter who creates it. Several clips from news outlets show that the FCC endorses new rules that would make it possible for cable companies like Comcast and Verizon to charge tech companies to basically send content to consumers more quickly. Here’s where the idea of fast lanes and slow lanes come in as ending net neutrality would basically mean it is possible for companies to buy their way into fast lanes which leaves everyone else in the slow lanes. Oliver does points out the fact that companies say they would never slow down a website to get more money out of them but continues with an example where that’s happened. Oliver shows a chart of Netflix download speed on various providers as they were negotiating with Comcast – during these negotiations the download speed from

Comcast plunged downward but went right back up as they reached an agreement. Net neutrality has made an unlikely alliance of big corporate players such as Facebook, Google and Netflix and activists as they all support it. With so many against it one might think that would be the end of it but Oliver says it is still happening because cable companies stand to make a lot of money if these new rules are passed. He points to cable companies having Washington in their pocket as Comcast is number two on the list of who buys government influence – only second to the military industrial complex Northrop Grumman. To show an example of the troubling relationship between cable companies and Washington, Oliver call attention to the fact that President Obama appointed Tom Wheeler, former top lobbyist for cable companies as the head chairman of the FCC which, as Oliver puts it, is like needing a babysitter and hiring a dingo. Cable companies get away with providing poor services and Oliver believes that is because they have figured out the greatest truth of America: “If you want to do something evil, put it inside something boring” (‘Net Neutrality’, 2014). Oliver ends the segment by telling his viewers there might still be something to be done about it. He mentions that the FCC will be taking comments from the public and Oliver therefore, with dramatic music playing in the background, addresses the internet commenters – or monsters as he calls them – directly. With the website address on a big screen behind him, Oliver urges the commenters: “Seize your moment my lovely trolls! Turn on caps lock and fly my pretties! Fly! Fly! Fly!” (‘Net Neutrality’, 2014).

5.1.1 John Oliver’s net neutrality rant may have caused FCC site crash, by Soraya Nadia McDonald, published in The Washington Post on June 4, 2014.

McDonald’s article is published online in the Morning Mix section, which includes stories – national or international – that will be the talk of the morning. There is no obvious genre when reading the text but with the rather colourful language it mostly resembles a column. McDonald allows for Oliver’s own words to make up a part of the article, more specifically the last monologue of the segment where Oliver addresses the internet commenters directly and tells them to comment on the Federal Communication Commission’s web site, or as he puts it “turn on caps-lock, and fly my pretties!” (McDonald, 2014). McDonald also includes tweets from the FCC where they address the problems they’ve had with their web site. The technical difficulties are due to heavy traffic, the FCC wrote and added another tweet later that day as the difficulties they were having went on the whole day.

John Oliver went on a 13-minute bender to explain neutrality and the parties involved in protecting or dismantling it on his weekly satirical news show ‘Last Week Tonight’. (McDonald, 2014)

The word bender is most often used when referring to someone who, over a relatively short period of time, drinks an excessive amount of alcohol. That is, they let go of everything else and just focuses on one thing: to drink. Referring to Oliver going on a bender brings to mind him going on nonstop about the subject and not stopping until he's done. McDonald is also clear about what kind of show this is, dubbing it a satirical news show. By doing this people now have this in mind when continuing the article.

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. (McDonald, 2014)

Calling Oliver an activist is quite a loaded term as it brings to mind a person fighting to change something they deem an injustice. The word firebrand not only visualises the image of fire that can burn down everything but also makes the reader think of a person so passionate about a cause there's a fire burning in them. Fire is a word that makes it hard not to create a vivid image of. Using the word crashed, even after the use of "may have", creates a visual of something breaking into little pieces or something being completely destroyed; like a vase dropped on the floor or a car driving straight into a wall. That the FCC's web site "at the very least" have been slowed down to a crawl makes it feel like it is in a really bad shape – before it was running now it can't even keep up a walk but instead has to crawl.

By Monday, the FCC's commenting system had stopped working, thanks to more than 45,000 new comments on net neutrality likely sparked by Oliver. (McDonald, 2014)

By using the word likely, McDonald gives more credit to Oliver than if she had used another word with a similar meaning, such as possibly. Both words could have been used and by choosing likely over possibly McDonald says the cause is probably due to Oliver's segment rather than another cause. By saying Oliver's "sparked" the crash of the FCC's web site again brings to mind fire but this time in the way of a match. By just the strike of a match there can be a spark and one can fan a spark into a flame – giving the impression Oliver is but the start of something that will take on a life of its own.

5.1.2 The head of the FCC just proposed the strongest net neutrality rules ever, by Brian Fung published in The Washington Post on February 4, 2015.

Fung's article is published online in the section called The Switch, for stories where technology and policy connect. As this article is not directly about John Oliver's segment about net neutrality and as it was published months after the segment aired it appears more like a hybrid of a feature story and a news

story. The article does, however, mention the segment as it describes what led to the head of FCC proposing the strongest net neutrality rules so far. Fung goes into detail about how the chairman of FCC, Tom Wheeler, changed from siding with the cable providers to proposing strict rules, including President Obama's statement that the rules should be the strongest possible.

Then came a late-night comedian named John Oliver. Oliver, who'd made a name for himself on 'The Daily Show' with Jon Stewart, took on the FCC's initial proposal with a blistering 14-minute rant that accused the agency of undermining net neutrality and even lobbed a few bombs at Wheeler himself. (Fung, 2015)

The introduction of John Oliver followed Fung describing the first proposed rules by Wheeler that were a lot less strict which meant the cable companies liked them. This kind of introduction then brings to mind an introduction of the hero in a story or the solution to a problem; then came the one who would change everything. And the solution came in the form of a blistering rant – a heated rant that scorched everything in its way. Fung is, however, clear that Oliver's rant consisted of accusations, that is, he does not paint it as the absolute truth but rather things that could be true. Not only did Oliver criticise the FCC but he "lobbed a few bombs" at the chairman, Tom Wheeler. This gives the reader the feeling that Oliver hurled insults like exploding weapons that would surely hurt whoever they were aimed at.

Oliver's net neutrality segment kicked the grassroots organising machine into overdrive. (Fung, 2015)

By saying that Oliver's segment "kicked the grassroots organising machine into overdrive" it first of all gives him the credit of getting others involved. It also says all the grassroots organising machine needed was a kick-start that Oliver then provided and not only did he start it, he put it in overdrive – his segment enthused those already opposed to the proposed rules to take it one step further than thought possible.

After introducing Oliver and the effects of his segment, Fung also described the alternative proposals advocates of strong net neutrality had put forward. This followed by introducing the statement made by President Obama and adding a quote from an industry official saying "Oliver and the President were probably the two most prominent [turning points] and then a series of ongoing drip, drip, drip every day for several months by grassroots protesters". This quote gives the reader the feeling that Oliver's segment was of a major importance for these new rules now being proposed – putting his segment in the same category as a statement made by the President.

5.1.3 John Oliver’s dramatic appeal to “Monster” internet commenters: You can save net neutrality, by Carol Hartsell published in The Huffington Post on June 6, 2014

Hartsell’s article is published in the comedy section which is a part of the Huffington Post’s entertainment category. As Hartsell does not directly insert herself or her views in the article it can’t fully be called a column but rather a review of what the show was about. This also fits with the fact that it was in the entertainment section of the newspaper. The article begins by describing the program’s greatest strength as Oliver’s ability to dig into subjects that many are uninformed about and net neutrality serves as such an example. However, this article mentions none of the responses made by those affected by the segment.

According to Oliver, it’s because cable companies know how we think. If you’ve ever seen a report on net neutrality, you’ll get where he’s going. Oliver explains, ‘If you want to do something evil, put it inside something boring.’ (Hartsell, 2014)

The beginning of the quote is in reference to why people aren’t more concerned about net neutrality. By using “according to” it shows this is Oliver’s explanation of the reason – not what is objectively true. If Hartsell had instead used something like “Oliver says” the word explain would then have a different meaning. It would have meant he explains how something really is; now it simply means Oliver explains his earlier statement. By putting it this way Hartsell says none of it is the objective truth.

The segment also takes pains to outline the “evil” at work, comparing cable companies to drug cartels and pointing out President Obama’s appointment of Tom Wheeler to Chairman of the FCC. (Hartsell, 2014)

To take pain to do something means to try really hard which in this case gives the reader the feeling Oliver went above and beyond to show how many things concerning net neutrality are done incorrectly. By using the word evil in quotation marks is creates the image of it not being truly evil but something akin to it. It also adds a dramatic touch as evil, even in quotation marks, creates a much stronger image than for example bad or corrupt. Evil makes one think of Darth Vader rather than a common corrupt businessman.

But the segment reached its apex when Oliver revealed that consumers have 120 days to give the FCC their thoughts on the proposed changes to net neutrality, by leaving a comment at fcc.gov/comments. That was when he made a dramatic appeal to all the internet “monsters” out there to finally do some good. (Hartsell, 2014)

This part of the article creates the image that what came before in the segment merely built up to this part. To the climactic state; the most important piece of the segment. Then by describing Oliver’s appeal as dramatic add to the feeling of importance. Not only is the appeal the apex of the segment but it is also a powerful moment.

5.1.4 John Oliver’s army of internet trolls broke a government website, by Taylor Casti published in The Huffington Post on June 3, 2014

Casti’s article isn’t published in any particular section but rather just published as part of the latest news although it is not a pure news story. It reads more like a hybrid of a review and a news story as Casti uses quite colourful language at times.

John Oliver and an army of Internet trolls managed to break the FCC’s website Monday night. (Casti, 2014)

The article starts off with this sentence and thereby giving credit to Oliver’s segment for the FCC’s technical issues. The credit is not only given to him, however, but also to an army, or as the headline of the article calls it “John Oliver’s army”. Using this word leaves the reader with the feeling that he has a horde of loyal internet trolls ready to do his bidding. The word managed also gives the feeling of Oliver and his army accomplishing what they set out to do, that is to destroy the FCC’s website.

On the Sunday, June 1, episode of ‘Last Week Tonight,’ Oliver issued a rallying cry to angry online commenters to ‘focus your indiscriminate rage in a useful direction’ against the Federal Communication Commission’s proposed changes to net neutrality regulations. (Casti, 2014)

By using the phrase “issued a rallying cry” Casti paints an image of Oliver, dramatically and energetically trying to motivate people to unite and to act. This phrase is often used when describing military leaders trying to motivate their soldiers before a battle, drawing to mind an image of Oliver inspiring people to undertake something very important.

Oliver’s Sunday segment explained the ongoing issue of changing net neutrality rules to potentially allow content companies to pay Internet service providers in exchange for faster service to the companies’ customers. (Casti, 2014)

Not only does Casti call the possible rule changes concerning net neutrality “an ongoing issue” he also says that Oliver explained these issues in his segment. The choice of word says Casti agrees there is an issue and that Oliver simply clarifies what is going on and what should be considered to be the objective truth.

This number will undoubtedly grow as Oliver’s clip helps to bring more publicity to the comment system. (Casti, 2014)

This sentence gives the reader the feeling that Oliver’s segment about net neutrality was so powerful and had such an effect that there is no doubt the amount of comments made on the FCC’s website will

grow. In short, Oliver's segment will be the reason many people are made aware of a very important and complex issue.

5.1.5 FCC begins investigation into quality of internet download speeds, by Edward Wyatt published in The New York Times on June 13, 2014

Wyatt's article is published in the Media section which covers everything that concerns media. As a genre it is a news story. The article concerns the FCC's investigation into deals between entertainment companies and internet service providers that allows entertainment companies, for example Netflix, to pay for faster video delivery and in doing so creating fast and slow lanes of internet service. The article points out that the chairman for the FCC watched the segment from Last Week Tonight. It adds both of his comments that the segment was a funny and creative piece but that it can't be seen as C-span.

Mr. Wheeler said he had viewed, 'a couple of times,' a recent comedy segment by John Oliver on HBO's 'Last Week Tonight' that explored the net neutrality debate. (Wyatt, 2014)

By calling the segment a comedy segment it makes clear what kind of show Last Week Tonight is and thereby informs the reader. After calling it a comedy segment Wyatt continues and writes that the segment "explored the net neutrality debate" which is a very neutral way to describe it compared to how other articles put it. Oliver did not describe or explain but rather explore which gives the feeling he analysed it without any ulterior motives. Wyatt also calls it a debate which then leaves the door open for both sides having valid points.

Mr. Oliver urged viewers to contact the F.C.C and protest against net neutrality rules that would allow fast and slow lanes. So many people did so that the comments section of the F.C.C.'s website became gridlocked. (Wyatt, 2014)

Even though he is more neutral when talking about the program, Wyatt still gives Oliver's segment credit for inspiring people to take action. Wyatt writes that Oliver implored his viewers to protest; he advocated for them to take action, to directly show their outrage against the new rules. "So many people did so" is what leaves the reader feeling it was thanks to Oliver's segment that the FCC website experienced technical problems.

Calling the sketch 'creative and funny,' Mr. Wheeler also noted that 'satire is not C-Span,' suggesting that Mr. Oliver stretched some facts in the interest of comedy. (Wyatt, 2014)

Here Wyatt makes the interpretation for the reader. Wyatt equates Wheeler saying "satire is not C-Span" to mean that Wheeler believes Oliver stretched some facts in the interest of comedy. This could very

well be the case but by using the word suggesting, Wyatt gives the reader that idea and does not leave it open for further interpretation in a way he could with the use of another word or simply not mentioning what his understanding of it was.

5.1.6 The FCC chair's internet pivot, by Brooks Boliek, Alex Byers and Bill Duryea published in Politico on February 2, 2015

The article by Boliek, Byers and Duryea is published in the section Politico Pro which provides reporting on the politics of energy, technology and health care (POLITICO Staff, 2010). This is a clear feature story as the focus is in Tom Wheeler himself and a lot of colourful language is used. This article is long and goes into descriptive detail how the chairman of the FCC Tom Wheeler came to change his mind about the net neutrality rules. It takes a more personal look on Tom Wheeler, for example describing how he was staying at his family's vacation home when he had to decide to turn against the companies he once lobbied for.

Then John Oliver unleashed the dogs of wonk comedy war. (Boliek, Byers and Duryea 2015)

This introduction of Oliver's segment comes after mentioning how Wheeler still preferred the initial rules that left the door open to the so called fast lanes so it is presented as one of the big turning points for Wheeler changing his opinion. The phrase "dogs of war" brings to mind the famous Shakespeare play *Julius Caesar* where Mark Anthony utters the phrase after the assassination of Caesar. The phrase also creates a vivid image of unleashing weapons of war; letting loose something meant to destroy its chosen target.

He lampooned Wheeler's past as a cable industry leader and suggested that his pro-industry rules were the broadband equivalent of 'a dingo guarding a baby.' (Boliek, Byers and Duryea, 2015)

Boliek makes it clear that equating Wheeler with a dingo is all Oliver and not the author himself, as the word suggested implies. What is also clear is that Oliver mocked Wheeler's past, making fun of his connection to the cable companies yet being in charge of setting rules for said cable companies. Still, Boliek made the choice to add that quote from Oliver in this article that is focused on Wheeler, suggesting that he thought it something worth knowing for the people getting to know the chairman of the FCC.

Free Press rented a Jumbotron and at one point put it across the street from the FCC's headquarters on 12th Street. The screen played testimonials on net neutrality and Oliver's takedown. A broad coalition of progressive groups — including Public Knowledge, Consumers Union, the New America Foundation's Open Technology Institute, Demand Progress, Fight

for the Future, Engine Advocacy, CREDO Action and the National Hispanic Media Coalition — capitalized on the sudden burst of attention to mobilize opposition. (Boliek, Byers and Duryea, 2015)

This passage in the article tells the reader three things about Oliver's segment. First of all, by using the word takedown, Boliek not only shows that Oliver criticised and judged Wheelers action but it also creates an image of an attack where the victim is left humiliated and licking their wounds. A takedown brings to mind a person being taken down a peg. Secondly it shows one organisation using the segment, along with other's endorsements as part of their message to the FCC. And third, it shows that a large number of organisations took advantage of the attention Oliver's segment created which in itself creates the feeling that many agreed with what Oliver was saying.

Emails by the hundreds of thousands began to hit the FCC's inbox. Wheeler, meanwhile, hit the road in an attempt to turn the tide. (Boliek, Byers and Duryea, 2015)

This comes directly after the part about John Oliver and his segment which then creates two strong images. First, that Oliver's segment caused people to write hundreds of thousands of emails to the FCC and thereby having a big effect. Secondly, the consequences of this were very negative for Wheeler who had to try and reverse what was happening. As the word tide refers to the ebb and flow of the ocean's tides it creates the image of swimming against the ocean's strong currents – something that can be next to impossible. In this case, a massive wave had just swallowed Wheeler up and was threatening to drown him.

5.1.7 FCC: Unclear if Oliver caused site woes, by Tony Romm published in Politico on June 3, 2014

Romm's article is published in the section On Media, where the politics meets the press and the article is a news story. It is a distinctly shorter article, whereas the others from the same outlet have been longer and in fuller detail. Various public actors' statements or comments are not the focus of the article; Romm merely mentioned that a spokeswoman for the FCC says it is unclear if Oliver's segment was the reason for the website's shutdown.

The Federal Communications Commission's portal for public comments experienced a disruption Monday, sparking speculation that comedian John Oliver's recent rant about the agency's net neutrality proposal had caused a system overload. (Romm, 2014)

The initial feeling of this article – especially considering the headline – is that there is uncertainty whether Oliver is the reason for the FCC website's technical issues. Romm points out that Oliver is a

comedian and that his recent rant, that is his recent monologue dedicated to the new net neutrality rules, have inspired various speculations to arise. Romm still leaves it open for interpretation; Oliver's segment might be the reason but they have no real proof.

Oliver, on his HBO show 'Last Week Tonight' on Sunday, railed against the net neutrality plan, which has sparked criticism for allowing Internet service providers like AT&T and Verizon to charge companies for a fast lane to deliver content.

(Romm, 2014)

Even though Romm does not give absolute credit to Oliver's segment being the reason the FCC website shut down he does somewhat validate Oliver's point. Romm says Oliver berated the new net neutrality plan but he did not stop there – Romm goes on saying that this new plan has actually received criticism. By mentioning this it leaves the reader thinking maybe Oliver had a point in his segment as others are saying the same thing.

5.1.8 Summary

The segment 'Net Neutrality' was portrayed not as only a credible news program or as a humour program without substance but rather as a mix of both: it is portrayed as both funny and as an influencing force. The two facts are never presented to contradict each other. From many different genres – where the majority of the journalists referred to Oliver as a comedian – the segment is portrayed as having had an impact on a government employee and thereby on the government agency as well. The articles makes this clear either because of the journalist's choice of wording when discussing the circumstances or by presenting Oliver's segment and the effect it had on the FCC website as one of the things that made the chairman of the FCC, Tom Wheeler, change his mind regarding the rules. The credit of affecting the FCC website is given – somewhat or completely – to the segment regardless of using neutral or colourful wording. In his feature/news story, Brian Fung goes as far as using a quote from a person involved in the FCC that points to Oliver's segment as being the of the two most prominent turning points, the other being President Obama's statement thus sending a crystal-clear message to the readers about Oliver's influence. By having various genres – amongst them news stories – talk about a satirical new program like *Last Week Tonight* as something akin to a credible news source, as well as talking about John Oliver, a comedian, as basically the voice of reason is an apparent sign that the two genres of satire and news are overlapping.

5.2 ‘Charter schools’ (2016) Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, Season 3, episode 22, HBO, August 21

The main segment about charter schools kicks off with Oliver reminding people it is back to school season and that for millions of children that means returning to charter schools. Charter schools, which basically are public schools that are tax-payer funded but privately run, educate almost 3 million students and some even have celebrity backers like the artist Puff Daddy, former tennis player Andre Agassi and the artist Pitbull. As Oliver put it “When Pitbull has a charter school it seems like it might be worth taking a look at them”(‘Charter Schools’, 2016). Oliver starts by showing clips from various politicians from both parties praising charter schools. He also states that he knows it is a controversial subject as there are charter schools that are successful but critics argue charter schools overstate their success, siphon off talented students and divert precious resources within the school district. So for the segment Oliver put aside if charter schools are good in principle and looked at how they operate in practice. During the segment Oliver show clips of a school closing its door in the middle of the day, findings from newspapers that showed one charter that received more than 5 million in tax-payer money was turned into a bar by night as well as findings that showed that at least ten executive or top administrators in Philadelphia had pleaded guilty in the last decade to charges such as fraud and misusing funds. Oliver also mentioned online charters that serve approximately 180,000 students. A study by the Washington Post found that compared to children in other schools, kids in online charter schools lost, among many things, an average of 180 days of learning in math during the course of a 180-day school year to which Oliver responded “And 180 minus 180 is – as those kids might put it – three” (‘Charter Schools’, 2016). The overall point Oliver is making is that the way charter schools are operating have to be monitored way better than they are today (‘Charter Schools’, 2016).

5.2.1 John Oliver Hysterically savages charter schools – and charter supporters aren’t happy about it, by Valerie Strauss published in The Washington Post on August 22, 2016

Strauss’s article is published in the section Answer Sheet which is about news concerning education. The article has the feeling of a column as Strauss uses a lot of colourful language and also adds her own opinion. Strauss allows John Oliver to speak for himself; writing out large portions of his monologue in between her own reflections. She sets up the scene to then let John Oliver deliver the punchline. In the end of the article Strauss adds a transcript of almost the whole segment as well as a link to where the video of the segment can be watched.

In September 2015, John Oliver did a hilarious segment on his HBO show ‘Last Week Tonight’, skewering the country’s obsession with standardized tests. He’s done it again. (Strauss, 2016)

The opening line of the article praises the show for being funny but yet it does not refer to it as a comedy show. For those not aware of what the show is or how it presents itself, this might give them the impression it is a different kind of show. Although, the reason for not specifying can also be that she expects the audience to know who Oliver is and what kind of show he has. By using the word skewer, Strauss not only refers to Oliver’s segment as harsh criticism but it also brings to mind a sharp object piercing through flesh to then be held over fire; like a roast slowly being cooked with the intent of being devoured.

[...] Oliver says that he is not going to address whether or not charters are a good idea, but takes a serious yet sadly funny look at charters that are terribly – and sometimes criminally – operated. (Strauss, 2016)

By using the phrase “takes a look” Strauss takes the position that what Oliver presents is the observed truth; anyone else that looks at it would see the same thing and come to the same conclusion. Strauss not referring to the show as comedy and then saying Oliver’s take on the issue is serious opens up for the show being more than just a comedy show and also brings that observation to the reader. That his take is sadly funny also adds to the notion that what Oliver presents is the observed truth; what he says is funny but it is sad because this is the tragic reality of charter schools.

And then Oliver savages the notion that public education would improve if it were operated like a business in an unprecedented way on a popular television show. (Strauss, 2016)

Oliver not only attacks the notion that public education would improve if it was managed like a business – he savages it. It is a very loaded term and brings to mind images like a lion ripping into its prey. With the use of this word Strauss not only says Oliver took on the charter schools and taught them a lesson, instead he destroyed them and left very little behind. Strauss separates this show from others like it by calling Oliver’s way of reporting unprecedented. It builds it up as something unique in the business.

Naturally, charter supports were shaken by the segment – and some actually issued a statement about it. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools issued a release Monday that tried to minimize the impact of Oliver’s message. (Strauss, 2016)

Without the word naturally in the first part of the sentence it would not have the same impact. With it, however, the reader is now left with the feeling that of course the subjects of John Oliver’s segments should be affected by his reporting. Naturally, the report from the show has made the organisation worried. As the second sentence puts it, the organisation then tried to “minimize the impact”. This also

points to the organisation fearing what the effect of the segment could be and in doing that, saying the show could indirectly, or directly, influence organisations.

The statement released by The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools in also included in the article. The organisation stressed that the charter schools that were focused on in the segment – and that were shown to be poorly operated – were “not representative of charter schools nationwide” and that some of the examples used were “years-to-decades old”. They end their statement saying: “We take seriously the issues raised by *Last Week Tonight*, and we will continue our work to strengthen charter school oversight in areas that are falling short.”

5.2.2 John Oliver, they’re after you! Charter school backers sponsor \$100,000 anti-Oliver video contest, by Valerie Strauss published in The Washington Post on August 30, 2016

The second article by Strauss is also published in the section Answer Sheet. This article as well as the earlier by Strauss is written as a column.

[...] John Oliver recently did a segment on his HBO ‘Last Week Tonight’ show blasting troubled charter schools in several states around the country. It was very, very funny – but charter supporters were not in the slightest bit amused. (Strauss, 2016)

Once again Strauss refers to *Last Week Tonight* as a show, leaving out the comic and satirical part. By using the word blasting to show just how fierce Oliver’s criticism was, Strauss draws the mind to the effects of an explosion; a bomb exploding takes everything with it and shows no mercy. The word does not just leave one with the feeling Oliver reprimanded charter schools but rather destroyed them. Strauss then says the segment was not only funny but very, very funny which then creates a contrast with the charter supporter’s lack of amusement.

[...] The Washington-based Center for Education Reform, a non-profit pro-charter organisation, is offering \$100,000 to the school that creates the best rebuttal video to Oliver’s rant. Really. (Strauss, 2016)

After Strauss has explained how those affected by Oliver’s segment has reacted she ends it with a “really”. The response from the pro-charter organisation is described in a straightforward manor but the use of the word “really” then changes how the reader sees it. It adds the feeling that it’s unbelievable or ridiculous that the organisation would actually react like they do. The journalist thereby reminds the reader that what they’re reading is actually true; it is the organisations reaction in response to a comedy show.

[...] all applicants have to do is come up with a retort explaining why charter schools are fabulous [...] (Strauss, 2016)

With the earlier quotes from the article in mind, this use of the word fabulous feels like it was made to mock. Strauss started by stating how funny Oliver's segment was and then went on to remind people that what they're reading is real and that the organisation's reaction is a serious one. To then use fabulous, a word the organisation does not use themselves as the reader can see later in the article where the organisation's statement is added, makes it seem to be in use somewhat sarcastically.

The response from the pro-charter organisation Center for Education Reform in form of a video contest was not the only way they reacted. When the Center's website presented the information on the video contest they also gave a review of the segment, calling it "a very unfair, unfortunate, unbalanced, unwarranted and generally unhinged tirade". They tried their hands at comedy themselves, writing: "Here's a brief summary of Mr. Oliver's presentation: 'Some charter schools have been mismanaged. Ergo, ipso facto, presto change-o, all charter schools are bad, bad, bad'". They also say it has been used as propaganda for those against charter schools. In this article as well, Strauss ends it with a transcript of Oliver's piece to give the reader a sense of the content the article is based on.

5.2.3 Pro-charter school group is shelling out \$100,000 to prove John Oliver wrong, by Rebecca Klein published in The Huffington Post on August 31, 2016

The article by Klein is published in the "Politics" section where one can find news, opinion and analyses concerning politics. As a genre it is news story as it discusses, in a straightforward manner, how Oliver's segment has resulted in a video contest from a pro-charter school group.

Ever since comedian John Oliver attacked charter schools in a "Last Week Tonight" segment earlier this month, advocacy groups both for and against the educational institutions have been fired up. (Klein, 2016)

The word attacked creates a more aggressive tone to Oliver's segment than if another word, such as criticise had been used. This leaves the reader with the feeling Oliver's segment was an assault on charter schools and the effects of it is something they will be feeling for a while. This is also supported by saying advocacy groups from both sides have been "fired up" since after the segment aired. Fired up implies Oliver's rant stirred up a wide set of emotions; a fire has been lit inside supporter and opponents of charter schools alike.

The Center for Education Reform is one of groups that feel like the segment misrepresented charter schools. This week, the nonprofit decided to put its money where its mouth is by announcing a "Hey John Oliver, Back Off My Charter School!" video contest with a \$100,000 prize. (Klein, 2016)

The phrase “put its money where its mouth is” means that the group will not stop at voicing their opinions of the segment but rather take action. By doing this the feeling is created that the group is worried enough about the effects the segment could have that they consider a direct counteraction to be necessary.

Oliver highlighted the successes of KIPP Charter Schools Network, but spent most of his time excoriating the worst schools, school leaders and the irresponsible laws that allow them to flourish. (Klein, 2016)

By including this part of the article, the part where Klein points out that Oliver took the time to highlight the accomplishment of successful charter schools, the author chooses to let the reader know Oliver’s rant wasn’t completely negative. This creates a feeling of fairness; sure, he was negative towards those who acted inappropriately but he also acknowledged charter schools that are legitimate. The word excoriating lets the people know Oliver criticised charter schools that committed wrongdoings but it also creates the image of Oliver scraping the layers of charter schools; he did not show anything that wasn’t already there.

The Huffington post reached out to Last Week Tonight for a comment about the video contest and the response they got was from a spokesman from HBO saying: “John does a piece/rant and then moves on to the next thing. He is first and foremost a comedian although all his rants are well researched”. When asking the advocacy group for a comment the founder and CEO of the Center for Education Reform, Jeanne Allen, said that Oliver treated charter schools like a fringe concept in public policy even though they have existed for around 25 years. The article ends with a quote from Allen: “We want John Oliver to know there’s a much deeper, richer and more impactful ... outcome of this reform called charter that is affecting not only kids in school but throughout the country”.

5.2.4 Summary

Two of the three articles are rather clear on the fact that Oliver was right in his criticism of charter school – in both her articles, Strauss heartily agrees with Oliver, thereby portraying the satirical show as having a valid point. However, the main focus of all three articles is on the effect the segment had. All articles portrayed the segment to have had a clear impact as the Center for Education Reform created a video contest in response to it. Public actors are thereby shown to be not only disagreeing with what was reported but also finding the reporting from a comedy show to be worrying enough to issue both a statement as well as creating a video contest. One of the articles goes as far as portraying this as a natural reaction to something from a satirical news program. This goes to show just how far public

actors are adapting to another medium except for the regular news. The fact that media portrays this whole event as something natural is adding to the fact that public actors now have to respond to satirical shows in this way – the media is helping to blur the distinction between what is entertainment and what is news. If the media treats a comedy show as something worth listening to – as a source of valid information – why shouldn't the companies, organisations and politicians do the same?

5.3 'Chickens' (2015) Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, Season 2, Episode 14, HBO, May 17

This segment delves into the relationship between poultry companies and the poultry farmers. The production of chickens has doubled from 80 million a week to 160 million in the last 25 years. This means there is a huge pressure on farmers to perform and poultry companies would have people believe farmers have it made – mainly by making promotional videos with smiling farmers talking positively about their job over jangle guitar music. Oliver, however, points out that many farmers have a different experience. To show why that is, clips from documentaries such as *Under Contract* from 2015 and *The Sharecroppers* from 2010 are shown and farmers describe how difficult it can be to live as a farmer. Something that is backed up by studies that show many chicken farmers live below or near the poverty line. Oliver says this is thanks to a system called contract farming which means farmers own the property and the equipment and the companies own the chickens. This means farmers typically get into a great deal of debt to get into the business and as they sign the contract, chicken companies have a lot of leverage over them – even if farmers try to pay off their debt, companies can keep them in it by forcing them to make expensive upgrades. Oliver then shows a clip of business journalist Christopher Leonard who explains how farmers are paid according to a tournament system by ranking farmers against each other and giving those in the top bonuses and punishing those in the bottom. Oliver says one of the reasons that people have not yet heard about this story is that companies take a hard line with complainers and in a clip one farmer explains how companies cut his pay and how he was given inferior chickens when he complained. Oliver explained rules protecting farmers did get written but that they are not being enforced because every year since the rules were written a rider has been inserted into the Agricultural Appropriations Act bill that explicitly forbids the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) from enforcing said rules. Oliver mentions that this has been championed by Representative Steve Womack. Oliver presents various reasons for why, it could be because Tyson's world headquarter is in his home state, or that he received money from Tyson Foods and the National Chicken Council or "maybe he is just sexually attracted to chickens and is jealous that farmers get to spend so much time with them" ('Chickens', 2015). There have been people who have tried to enforce existing rules that but without success. In light of the committee that votes on such rules meeting again

in a month from when the segment aired, Oliver decided to use the poultry companies weapons against them – talking over jangly guitar music to convince people everything he says is true. What he wanted people to know was that those in the committee (pictures of them appeared behind Oliver on a screen) who did not vote for these rules are chicken-fuckers and as Oliver puts it “chicken-fucker accusations does not come off Wikipedia pages easily, or if they do they tend to go right back up again” (‘Chickens’, 2015).

5.3.1 John Oliver takes on Big Chicken, by Hunter Schwartz published in The Washington Post on May 18, 2015

Schwartz’s article is produced in the section The Fix which is meant to make it easier for people to keep up with politics and it is a shorter news story. Unlike many other articles this one uses no quotes from the segment but merely describes what happened throughout the program, reiterating some of the things Oliver said but without showing the added humour.

John Oliver explored the business model and relationship between chicken companies and poultry farmers Sunday on ‘Last Week Tonight.’ (Schwartz, 2015)

The use of the word explore indicates that Oliver delved into the poultry business not sure what to find. It creates the image that Oliver investigated poultry companies and their relationships to the poultry farmers without an ulterior motive – like he took no particular side on the issue.

Lawmakers have looked into possible legislation which would benefit farmers, but they've faced resistance, which Oliver suggested came from chicken companies. (Schwartz, 2015)

By using the word suggested Schwartz implies that the idea that the resistance would be coming from the poultry companies is only Oliver’s opinion. In doing that the author takes step back, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with Oliver’s statement and thereby leaving the decision to the reader.

His fix? To edit the Wikipedia pages of members of Congress on the appropriations committee who vote against legislation with words that can't be reprinted here. (Schwartz, 2015)

By saying Oliver’s solution to the problem with poultry companies taking advantage of poultry farmers was to edit the Wikipedia pages of members of the committee makes it seem like that was the sole solution he brought forth. It also leaves the reader that was the culmination of segment. Whether or not that was Oliver’s main solution, it creates the image of a nonsensical fix to a serious problem which in turn makes the whole segment feel quite nonsensical when it handles a serious subject.

5.3.2 John Oliver wants you to expose chicken-f*king congressmen, by Ed Mazza published in The Huffington Post on May 18, 2015**

Mazza's article is published in the Entertainment section, more precisely in the Comedy section and it is, rather than a column, a direct review of the show. The headline of the article immediately draws the eye and differs from the rest of the article in one aspect. The headline leaves no guessing as to what the intent of Oliver was and even if Mazza uses quotation marks around chicken fuckers to imply it is not his phrase, it is not done in the headline.

On his HBO show 'Last Week Tonight' Oliver shined a spotlight on the plight of the American chicken farmer. (Mazza, 2015)

By not calling it a comedy show, Mazza leaves the reader to possibly think of the show as something else but as mentioned in other articles, this could also be because he expects the reader to already have knowledge about the show. In this sentence Mazza also leaves the reader with the feeling that Oliver was correct in the segment he did – he put the big poultry companies in the spotlight. Oliver took something that was in the dark and brought it to the light, to where everyone could take a look at it for what it really is. By then calling it a plight, Mazza again gives credit to what Oliver says as it makes it feel as if Mazza agrees they live in a difficult situation.

The segment explained how many of the farmers are poor because of “contract farming” practices in which they are responsible for all the expenses of running the farm, but the big poultry companies actually own the chickens — the one part of the business that makes money. (Mazza, 2015)

By using the word explained, Mazza creates the visual that Oliver simply showed what was really there. That is that what Oliver said was the truth and he just clarified what was going on.

Oliver blasted lawmakers on the committee by name with a list appearing on a screen behind him. (Mazza, 2015)

The word blasted, which in this instance refers to how Oliver severely criticised the lawmakers on the committee, brings to mind the effects of an explosion; an explosion will blast away anything in its way. As Mazza described how Oliver put up a list of names on a screen the image of him attacking them amplifies.

Discover who the “potential chicken fuckers” are — and get a full explanation of contract farming — in the clip above. (Mazza, 2015)

Here Mazza once more uses a version of the word explain. This time, by telling people to go see the clip for an explanation, Mazza indirectly suggest that people go see a comedy show as a source of

information. Even if that was not his intention it still leaves the reader with the feeling that if they want to know more, *Last Week Tonight* is the place to get that information.

5.3.3 John Oliver vs. Chicken, by Nathaniel Haas published in Politico on June 1, 2015

Haas's article is published in the Agriculture section where news, opinion and analyses concerning agricultural events are published. It is a feature story as it goes into detail, with colourful language, as to the effect of Oliver's segment with testimonials from many involved. The main focus of the article is the impact the segment has had – on various people and organisations.

Feathers flew when John Oliver took on the poultry industry — and the squawking may even end up echoing in the Capitol.
(Haas, 2015)

This sentence that begins the article plays heavily on chicken-related concepts. The phrase “feathers flew” indicates that Oliver's segment had a real impact and, as one might say, ruffled some poultry companies' feathers. This indication then amplified as Haas writes that the “squawking”, that is Oliver's segment itself as well as the reactions it brought forth, might even reach the Capitol. This means that not only did Oliver's segment have an impact but it might be a major one.

The comedic anchorman recently used his HBO show, “Last Week Tonight,” to attack the way giant poultry processors — like Tyson Foods, Perdue, Pilgrim's and Sanderson Farms — allegedly have treated their chicken growers, punishing them for speaking out against their conditions, and pressured Congress into defanging the Agriculture Department's protections.
(Haas, 2015)

Calling Oliver a comedic anchor-man makes it somewhat clear to the reader who Oliver is, although a person needn't be a comedian to be considered comedic. Using the word attack for Oliver's rant makes it seem aggressive; that he verbally assaulted the poultry companies. Haas also makes sure that what Oliver mentions in his segment, how big poultry companies treat the poultry farmers is what allegedly is happening, thereby leaving the reader to decide for themselves.

But some Democratic lawmakers hope that the publicity that Oliver's jabs generated will have an impact beyond the farm — for instance, by jarring loose a political stalemate over USDA grower protections that Congress continues to defund. (Haas, 2015)

Calling Oliver's criticism for jabs not only means he insulted the poultry companies but it also creates the image of throwing punches. Oliver not only insulted the poultry companies – he punched them hard and they are now left with bruises that will remind them for a long time to come. That some lawmakers

believe Oliver's segment created enough publicity to reach "beyond the farm" is saying that his impact might reach far and thereby generate some real change.

Pingree, an organic farmer, said she hopes that the attention Oliver generated means no one will introduce another GIPSA rider. But, if they do, she'll try to scrap it. Both lawmakers believe Oliver's show has given them a fighting chance of beating back the GIPSA rider. (Haas, 2015)

"Both lawmakers" refers to two Democratic Representatives, one of them being Chellie Pingree and the other Marcy Kaptur. By saying Oliver's segment gave lawmakers a fighting chance to defeat a GIPSA rider if another one would be introduced is essentially saying that a comedy show could have the power to make people think twice before making decisions regarding policies. Now, this could either be the wording of Haas or it is how the two lawmakers phrased it – either way Haas decided on the way to present it to the reader.

Regardless, at least one chicken farmer was pleased with the coverage Oliver's show has provided. 'If John was here today, I'd kiss him,' Weaver said. (Haas, 2015)

This is how the article is ended and thereby leaving the reader with the feeling that regardless of what might happen for the big companies or the politicians, the little guys that are getting hurt throughout all this are extremely grateful to Oliver and *Last Week Tonight* for talking about the issue.

There are several public actors from various organisations that gave comments about this particular segment and Haas added many of their voices in his article. Voices in favour of what Oliver had to say as well as voices disagreeing with the segment had a chance to be heard. One of those disagreeing with Oliver's rant, and that was mentioned several times, was The National Chicken Council. They issued a statement saying Oliver's segment was a "completely one-sided view of U.S. poultry production and ... not an accurate reflection of the overwhelming majority of the 25,000 farm families who partner with chicken companies" (Haas, 2015). The Council also pointed to a survey to back up their claim that Oliver was wrong about farmers' experience with the industry where 73 percent were satisfied with the business in general and 75 percent of farmers said they were specifically satisfied with the relationship they had with the poultry companies. For the sake of argument and to not just give half the picture, it should be mentioned that Haas points out that the Council failed to mention four important things about said survey. First, that the survey was 17 years old. Secondly, 60 percent of farmers did not think they got a fair return on their investments. Third, more than half thought the poultry companies would retaliate if they complained and fourth: "Poultry Growers Speak Out!" was the title of the survey.

There were as mentioned those who thought more favourably on Oliver's segment. Democratic Representative Chellie Pingree thought it would help get votes for regulation and another Democratic Representative Marcy Kaptur said: "We've never seen publicity like this in the 16 years I've been working on the issue" (Haas, 2015). She thought the segment could help make some real change for future policies. The CEO of the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, a group that represent about 5,000 U.S cattle ranchers, agreed with the two lawmakers, saying: "I think it is perhaps the single best opportunity the U.S. livestock and poultry sector has had in many, many years to show how the meat packers are exploiting U.S. farmers and ranchers, and how they are capturing from them the livestock and poultry supply chains through vertical integration" (Haas, 2015).

5.3.4 Summary

The segment 'Chickens' is portrayed more neutrally by two of the three articles but all articles – to some degree – portray the segment as exposing the chicken industry. The two articles from *The Washington Post* and *The Huffington Post* are the most similar as they are rather neutral about the segment. Both Schwarz and Mazza express that they somewhat agree with Oliver's reports on the chicken industry but as the articles are a shorter news story and a review there is mostly just a recap of the segment. The feature story by Haas is the only one fully validating Oliver's message in the segment as it portrays the show to have had a big enough impact on the chicken industry for them to post a counterstatement. Haas does not directly say he agrees with Oliver but he does portray the segment as affecting not only the chicken farmers that have been victimised by the poultry industry but also poultry industry advocates and opponents – organisations as well as politicians. Much like with the segment about charter schools, this article shows how public actors have adapted to satirical shows as well as regular news mediums. Haas have quotes from politicians not only saying that the the segment might affect future votes on the matter but also that the poultry industry's mistreatment of their chicken growers have never had this kind of publicity – publicity caused by a comedy show. Even if two of the three articles are quite neutral about the segment's message the fact that only one, the one from *The Huffington Post*, is posted in the entertainment section still speaks to the fact that the genres of satire and news keep overlapping although it is not as clear as in the two earlier segments.

5.4 ‘Journalism’ (2016) Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, Season 3, Episode 20, HBO, August 7

Oliver starts the main segment off with making a mention to the film *Spotlight* that won the Academy Award for best picture for its portrayal of the journalistic investigation into cases of systematic child abuse by Catholic priests. Regardless of newspapers getting recognised in this way it doesn't change the fact that they're in serious trouble. Oliver points out that even if people only get their news from Facebook or Twitter, this still affects everyone as they are mainly repackaging the work of print sources. He then goes on to show numerous clips from news television programs that does the same and finishes by adding that *Last Week Tonight* does the same and they're not even a news outlet. One of the biggest problems Oliver points to as the cause of the state of journalism is that print ads are less popular with advertisers than they used to be. He uses *The Oregonian* as an example since things used to be going really well for them but now it has to lay off numerous of their reporters as well as become a digital-first company. Oliver clarifies that there are some good web outlets but that there's not nearly enough of them to replace what is lost with the downsizing of print news. A clip with David Simon, former reporter from the *Baltimore Sun* and creator of the television show *The Wire*, has him saying this is a great time for corrupt politicians and Oliver agrees. Oliver likens it to a teacher leaving seven graders alone to supervise themselves – that will end badly no matter the outcome. Oliver points out that it is obviously a smart idea to expand online but in doing so there is a danger of gravitating towards whatever gets more clicks, which means it is vital that newspapers have leaders that understands that something being popular doesn't mean it is important. He then gives several examples of leaders that failed to do so, for example Sam Zell who owned newspapers such as the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune. He also mentions Jeff Bezos who bought The Washington Post in 2013 that since then has done some spectacular journalism. A big part of the blame, Oliver said, is on us and the fact that people aren't willing to pay for the work journalists produce and before ending the segment with a parody of the film *Spotlight* (instead called *Stoplight*) Oliver says: “Sooner or later we are either going to have to pay for journalism or we are all going to pay for it” (‘Journalism’, 2016).

5.4.1 How not to respond to John Oliver's ode to local newspapers, by Margaret Sullivan published in The Washington Post on August 8, 2016

Sullivan's article is published in the Style section, which is a part of the Arts and Entertainment category and is clearly a column as Sullivan takes Oliver's side and argues for it. The CEO of the Newspaper Association of America, David Chavern, was not impressed by Oliver's segment however.

In response to the segment, Chavern wrote a post on the NAA website where he disagreed with Oliver saying the comedian was stating things that were obvious as well as resorting to petty insults. Chavern wrote that Oliver’s “making fun of experiments and pining away for days when classified ads and near-monopolistic positions in local ad markets funded journalism is pointless and ultimately harmful,” (Sullivan, 2016) and “I would just ask Mr. Oliver to spend more time talking about what the future of news could be and less time poking fun at publishers who are trying to get there” (Sullivan, 2016).

John Oliver’s 19-minute riff about what’s become of local newspapers made me laugh. Parts of it also made me want to cry. But it did not make me want to complain — even for one second — about the comedian’s acerbic commentary on journalism in his ‘Last Week Tonight’ show Sunday on HBO. Because the whole Oliver piece was a pitch-perfect ode to how important newspapers are to their communities, and how troubling it is that they are fading. (Sullivan, 2016)

Sullivan is vocal about her praise for Oliver’s segment. She starts off by using the word riff to refer to Oliver’s rant giving the feeling he was only lightly scrutinising the subject. Sullivan then goes on calling his commentary harsh or sharp, which – compared to how others have referred to Oliver’s segments – is quite mild. Referring to Oliver as a comedian makes sure the reader knows what kind of show *Last Week Tonight* is. Sullivan goes as far with her praise as calling Oliver’s segment a “pitch-perfect ode”; like a musician hitting all the high notes in their hymn of praise.

Chavern wrote a post Monday on the NAA website, the headline of which accused Oliver of ‘petty insults and stating the obvious.’ (Sullivan, 2016)

By using the word accused when referring to what Chavern said about Oliver leaves the reader with the feeling that the author does not agree with Chavern. Especially considering the praise in the beginning of the article – this then makes it feel like Chavern might accuse Oliver but that does not make it true.

Actually, no. What Oliver did was precisely nail everything that’s been happening in the industry that Chavern represents: [...] (Sullivan, 2016)

Sullivan once more voices how Oliver’s segment impeccably exposed the issues in the media industry. By using the word nail it brings to mind not only how Oliver laid bare the problems facing newspaper but it also creates an image of hitting a nail with a hammer; to hit ones goal with striking accuracy.

Oliver — who is, after all, in the comedy business — did indeed make fun of Tronc, the renamed Tribune Co., whose incomprehensible corporate jargon thoroughly deserves the drubbing it’s been getting in recent months. And he took some well-deserved shots at media’s addiction to content that generates digital traffic, particularly ever-weirder stories about cats. (Sullivan, 2016)

Here Sullivan does take the time to once again remind people that Oliver is a comedian but she then goes on to agree with the jokes he made on behalf of the company Tronc as well as the media in general. By saying Tronc deserve the beating it was getting and Oliver's shots at the media were well-deserved leaves the reader feeling that is the general opinion; Oliver's opinion isn't a wrong one.

5.4.2 John Oliver has given us the best defense of newspapers ever, by Kathleen Parker published in The Washington Post on August 9, 2016

Parker's article was published in the Opinion section as she is an Opinion writer, which also makes it clear this article is a column.

Except that HBO's John Oliver beat me to it with the best defense of newspapers — ever. His recent 'Last Week Tonight with John Oliver' monologue about the suffering newspaper industry has gone viral in journalism circles but deserves a broader audience. (Parker, 2016)

Parker immediately takes a very strong role as someone in favour of Oliver's segment, calling his rant "the best defence of newspapers – ever". This is a statement that leaves the reader thinking Oliver must have made some really good points. Parker amplifies that statement by saying Oliver's segment deserves to be seen not only by those in journalism circles.

Leavening his important message with enough levity to keep the dopamine flowing, Oliver points out that most news outlets, faux, Fox and otherwise, essentially rely on newspapers for their material. This includes, he says, pulsing with self-awareness, Oliver himself. He's sort of part of the problem, in other words, but at least he knows it, which makes it okay, sort of. (Parker, 2016)

This is the first of three instances where Parker phrases her words so the reader understands she agrees with that Oliver is saying. She writes that Oliver points out, that is calls attention to the importance of newspapers. Parker takes the time to explain that even though Oliver and *Last Week Tonight* is part of the problem, he is "pulsing with self-awareness" – he knows full well that for his program to work he is reliant on newspapers. As Parker then says, that makes it sort of okay and thereby giving the reader the feeling that at least Oliver is trying.

My point — shared by Oliver — is that only newspapers are the brick and mortar of the Fourth Estate's edifice. (Parker, 2016)

Here is the second time Parker is clear – and this time even clearer than before – on the fact that she agrees with Oliver. Her opinion that newspapers are the glue holding the structure of the news media together is an opinion shared by Oliver as it is something they can very much agree on. This leaves the

reader with the notion that this opinion of a comedian is something that resonates for – and is agreed upon by – journalists.

As Oliver says, now is a very good time to be a corrupt politician. Between buyouts, layoffs and news-space reductions, there's hardly anyone paying attention. (Parker, 2016)

This third and last time, Parker once more reiterates what Oliver said in his segment and agrees with him. This then amplifies the notion that journalists find what a comedian is saying as being reasonable.

5.4.3 John Oliver's clickbait version of the "Spotlight" movie is depressing, by Callum Borchers published in The Washington Post on August 8, 2016

The article by Borchers is published in the section The Fix. The article is mainly a review of the episode of the show but Borchers also adds some of his own views. The majority of this article, as the headline implies, goes into the satirical trailer – a parody of the film *Spotlight* – that ended the segment. Borchers also adds a rather large part of Oliver's monologue, allowing the comedian to speak for himself before adding certain parts of the satirical trailer so the reader can get an understanding of what it was about.

John Oliver isn't shy about criticizing the media — his HBO program, 'Last Week Tonight,' is a fake news show, after all — but the comedian turned his fire on news consumers Sunday, chiding those who refuse to pay for quality journalism. (Borchers, 2016)

Borchers goes one step further than others writing about this segment and specifies that Oliver – who he also points out is a comedian – is the host for a fake news show. He then equates this with criticising the media. By using the phrase "turned his fire" Borchers creates an image of Oliver launching his latest assault of criticism; Oliver has directed his fire against his new target and it is about to go up in flames.

Many journalists would probably like to deliver the same message as Oliver. But since only 4 in 10 Americans trust the media, according to Gallup, they probably wouldn't listen. Maybe they'll take it from a comedian, instead. (Borchers, 2016)

In this excerpt Borchers validates Oliver's segment as giving a reasonable assessment of the issues facing the media today. By pointing out that many journalists probably would agree with Oliver about what he was saying Borchers gives Oliver's segment a certain power; it is not just a comedic take on journalism, it actually has some good points.

5.4.4 John Oliver is spot on about what's killing journalism, by Ahmad Khan published in The Huffington Post on August 8, 2016

Khan's article is published in the Contributor section where those who have applied to become contributors can publish their work and his article is a column.

Three years into his time behind the *Last Week Tonight* desk, John Oliver has evolved and put his own spin on the comedic journalism genre that he was founded by his former boss Jon Stewart. Oliver's brand of comedy and his show in particular has taken the rare step of looking to inform first, while looking to amuse and humor second. Though it's a relatively simple flip of the wildly popular format, given Oliver's natural intelligence, and global knowledge, the series, and John, have taken the cultural place left by Stewart's exit from *The Daily Show*. (Khan, 2016)

Even though Khan brands *Last Week Tonight* as comedic journalism, he leaves the reader feeling it is a version of journalism or something resembling journalism. By doing this he gives Oliver and the show more power as it helps validate it as something more than just comedy – which then brings more credibility to its segments. This is amplified as Khan not only states that Oliver's show differs from others, as its main goal is to inform rather than making people laugh, but also as he praises Oliver's intelligence and global knowledge. Khan continues on this track as he mentions Oliver taking Jon Stewart's "cultural place". As Jon Stewart is one of the most famous names in this particular kind of comedy shows – whether one calls it fake news, satirical comedy or something else – it is giving Oliver quite a title and it is strong praise of the show.

This article is instead about the wonderful little explanatory segment from last night's episode of *Last Week Tonight*. The topic of exploration was Journalism in its modern form. If you haven't yet seen it, give the above clip a chance before you delve into this article, which will basically just expand on what was said. (Khan, 2016)

By using the word explain, Khan takes the position that Oliver merely describes what is happening with today's media. This creates the image that Oliver clarifies as well as tells the truth. Khan also suggests that those who have not seen the segment should have a look as his article will expand on the subject – thereby using Oliver's segment as a base.

In essence, John Oliver makes three main points that are widely agreed upon as having directly killed informative journalism in the digital age. (Khan, 2016)

Either if this means that people agree with the points Oliver made or if he mentioned points that were already agreed upon, it still leaves the reader with the feeling that Oliver is saying things that resonate with people. It also states that Oliver provided information in the segment that is seen as accurate.

Maybe there are too many sources, maybe it's the lack of a simple payment structure, but as John shows, a great deal of our Internet news sites and cable television programs are not themselves partaking in any groundbreaking research, but instead are sourcing or repackaging of local news and newspaper stories. (Khan, 2016)

Khan once more strengthens the feeling that Oliver is simply explaining what issues there are with modern journalism. He is not arguing a point or implying something – he shows the truth.

5.4.5 Yes, the news can survive the newspaper, by Jim Rutenberg published in The New York Times on September 4, 2016

Rutenberg's article is published in the section Business Day which covers business and financial news and Rutenberg himself refers to the article as a column. This article tackles the general issues with today's media and is a longer more detailed piece. It has its starting point with the fact that the Newspaper Association of America is changing their name to the News Media Alliance – a clear indication of the future for newspapers.

The Facebook experience wasn't all that far off from the doomsday scenario John Oliver recently envisioned on his HBO show 'Last Week Tonight.' (Rutenberg, 2016)

Rutenberg's introduction of the show and Oliver does not name him a comedian or his show a comedy show. With an article like this that discusses a serious subject in detail it might leave readers unsure what kind of show Oliver is providing if they do not have previous knowledge of the show – something Rutenberg might be assuming. Also, referring to Oliver's segment as presenting a "doomsday scenario" and then saying something related to it wasn't that far off gives the reader the feeling that Oliver knows what he's talking about and gives credit to his show.

Mr. Oliver devoted his show that week to digital-age threats to local newspapers and the industry's sometimes ham-handed attempts to overcome them. (Rutenberg, 2016)

Using the word devoted to refer to Oliver's choice of subject to talk about is a rather neutral statement. It says Oliver dedicated his main segment to journalism but Rutenberg does leave whether or not it was accurate open to interpretation.

Mr. Chavern criticised Mr. Oliver on his group's website for being overly pessimistic, and in doing so hit an off note, as Margaret Sullivan wrote in The Washington Post. Mr. Chavern was somewhat sheepish about it when we spoke, saying, "I'm a passionate defender of publishers." But he acknowledged that his statement could have been more thoughtful and he appreciated that Mr. Oliver was presenting a defense of newspapers. (Rutenberg, 2016)

Rutenberg does mention Chavern's criticism of Oliver's segment but quickly dispels it. Rutenberg agrees with Margaret Sullivan (whose article was also used in this study) that Chavern was wrong in his criticism, going so far as calling him sheepish when being asked about it. Rutenberg conveys the feeling that he was not satisfied with the answer Chavern gave but does mention that Chavern recognised the worth of Oliver's defence of newspapers – creating an image of Oliver being in the right.

5.4.6 Summary

The articles about the segment 'Journalism' were all portraying the segment in a positive light – all agreeing with the comedian's message to some degree. Only the review is a bit more neutral while the columns are all portraying the segment as making valid and important points about today's journalism. That journalists are positive about someone pointing out the issues facing the media today is not something strange – it is a subject directly affecting them. However, one article points out Oliver's defence of newspapers is the best ever, two dispel criticism aimed at Oliver and strongly agree with his assessment and another goes as far as to call the segment comedic journalism. The distinction between what is news and what is entertainment is all but gone with these columns. Oliver is treated much like another journalist having an opinion about today's media. As the segment is about journalism, the fact that journalists write about it is an impact in itself but two articles also point out the segment's impact on David Chavern, the CEO of the Newspaper Association of America. This is a man working for an organisation that serves the newspaper industry but it is made clear in the articles that he is wrong and that the comedian is right. As with the segment about charter schools, a big organisation felt the need to issue a counterstatement to a comedy show – showing once more how public actors have to adapt to satirical news programs as well as the regular media.

6. Conclusion

The first research question to be answered in the study was to see how *Last Week Tonight* is portrayed in the media; if the program is portrayed as a credible source of information or as a comedy show simply using news for entertaining. The analyses of the articles concerning the four segments show that the program is in general not portrayed as just one or the other – as only a comedy news show or a credible news program – but rather as a hybrid of the two; a comedy show that produces valid points on the subjects it is reporting about. This indicates that the distinction between the genres news and satire is blurring and in turn makes it a lot harder to differentiate the two. As mentioned, it is not something new that genres influence and change each other (Schryer, 1994) and genres overlapping and evolving into

something new is not an issue in itself – it is to be expected. The problem arises when there is no longer an agreement on what a satirical show really is, especially as social agreements are part of the basis for what constitutes a genre. If the satirical news programs themselves say they're not there to inform but rather to entertain and then the media refers to the shows in another way it leaves the audience in a difficult situation. For the audience to be able to process what the comedy shows report they need to know in what context it is – are they just using news and current events to entertain and make people laugh or is it a new sort of journalism?

The second research question to be answered was how the various segment's impact was portrayed by the media. As one or more articles about each segment reported responses from various public actors they thereby portrayed the comedy show to have an impact on serious actors such as government agencies, politicians and organisations connected to subjects such as agriculture, journalism and education. Those connected to subjects reported on the show are not only portrayed as feeling the impact of the reports but in many instances they're also portrayed to be the ones being wrong – the comedian is the one portrayed as knowing what he's talking about. Strömbäck's (2008) third phase of mediatisation states that when a medium reaches a certain level of importance it forces social actors to adapt to it. Those companies, organisations and political actors that have responded to the program are thereby adapting their communication – they deem a segment from a comedy show important enough to make statements in regards to them. The media's general portrayal of the show and the way public actors have come to react to the show, shows that it might no longer matter how satirical news programs refers to themselves or what they say their purpose is; the media has decided satirical programs role as something different.

7. Discussion

In a study by Laren Feldman (2007) where she explored the way journalists are handling the challenges raised by the increasing popularity of comedy shows such as *The Daily Show*, as well as the general idea of comedy as news, she concludes that the distinction between news and entertainment is blurring – something that can be seen in this study as well. Regardless of the genres of the articles about the four segments, the way *Last Week Tonight* is generally portrayed as making a valid point about the subject of the segments. The authors are not necessarily vocally agreeing with Oliver but they are still in some way portraying it as an important subject to talk about. It is mainly in the reviews or shorter news stories where here any kind of agreement – or disagreement – cannot be seen. The fact that it's not only entertainment sections of the various newspapers that are writing about a comedy show but also sections

such as business, education, agriculture and politics adds to the idea that distinctions between genres are blurring.

The fact that the media is writing about *Last Week Tonight* and other satirical shows can also be explained by the theory of intermedia agenda setting. As the first reasons by Vliengenthart and Walgrave (2008) state, the media relies on other media to get their cues. As viewers continue to tune into satirical news program, and not only for the fun of it but also to be informed (Pew Research Center, 2014) it is understandable that other media want to take advantage of the popularity of satirical shows. This goes into one of the other reasons by Vliengenthart and Walgrave (2008) as imitating another medium is done if there is a competitive advantage to do so – which it is as the popularity of satirical shows continues. The last reason is directly connected to the distinctions between news and satire blurring as it states that one medium copying another validates the first medium's decision; it helps define what is considered news. Now, if the articles about the segments were only written for the entertainment sections this would not be the case, as *Last Week Tonight* is an entertainment show. But since many articles about the show concerns actual news and are written for other sections than entertainment, by simply using segments from *Last Week Tonight* they give the show the power of being newsworthy thus blurring the lines between what is news and what is satire. In doing so they also blur the line between what is comedy and what is journalism. The man himself, John Oliver, is clear that what he does on his show is comedy (Carr, 2014) but the way the media is treating the show, sometimes makes it hard to know for sure.

Another thing that is interesting is that after the segments aired public actors who were in some way affected thought it necessary to address the reporting made by a satirical news program. One might think this makes it something public actors can just write off as a joke made by a comedian but because of the way the media is treating these shows – and because of their overall popularity – that would not be the most beneficial action. Even if one thinks it is peculiar that big businesses or politicians would issue statements in response to a comedy show it is quite understandable. Just like the media has had to reconsider how to deal with satirical news and even change in response to them, companies, organisations and political actors have to do the same – as asserted by the theory of mediatisation. As *Last Week Tonight* is not part of the media as we know it, the four phases of mediatisation by Strömbäck (2008) can't be directly applied but one can still see patterns that the show is part of the mediatisation of the media. The part of the first phase that says the phase can be reached if the media is seen as the most important source of information for political – or in this case public – actors might not apply for *Last Week Tonight* but the part about the media's power to influence opinion and perceptions of audiences

certainly does. Studies about satirical shows like *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* show that they have shaped audiences perception on subjects such as climate change (Brewer & McKnight, 2015), politicians, the electoral system and the news media in general (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006). The second phase cannot be directly connected to satirical programs as it concerns the media's independence of public actors – satirical programs are made with the intention to ridicule public actors such as businesses, politicians or organisations that are deemed to deserve it for their behaviour. In short: they are already independent from such actors as they do not have the same dependent relationship the media have with public actors. The third phase is where satirical shows can be said to reside; to say that they have reached the fourth phase is not possible without further research. Strömbäck's (2008) third phase, however, says the media – *Last Week Tonight* in this case – has become so independent that political as well as social actors now have to adapt to it. This is evident as the articles in this study include comments, statements and even video contests made in response to the satirical news program. The public actors that are affected by the reporting from *Last Week Tonight* have to adapt and respond as they know satirical news programs can shape people's opinion and attitudes – the comedy show is treated very much like another news outlet.

The relationship between satire and news – and thereby the role satire plays in journalism today – is in a transformative state. This is not something out of the ordinary for the world as it is today. We have the President-elect of the Land of Liberty using social media as his way to keep the media updated and newspapers are struggling against social media where people can choose what news they want. The world of news is in disarray. *Last Week Tonight* is but one program in a satirical sea of many but it – as well as others like it – should get used to being laughed at and taken seriously in equal measures. The media is breaking down the façade of comedians playing reporters and the joke has been changed; the punchline of the joke is that there is no punchline and the joke is a lot more serious than one might think.

8. Further research

One aspect that would be interesting to look at is the impact the show has had on public actors. For example, by interviewing public actors that have made statement in response to the show the thought process behind addressing a satirical show like any other news outlet could be analysed and help make the reasons behind today's treatment of satirical shows clearer. Further research could also be made about the difference between how liberal and conservative news outlets portray *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. As the four new outlets used in this study can, to certain degrees, be considered liberal it

would be interesting to put that in contrast with more conservative news outlets such as *Fox News* or *The Drudge Report*.

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