Only in It for the News: Satire Television Pilot Critiquing the Structure of Television News

Dakota Pruemer

Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: https://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses

Part of the Television Commons

Recommended Citation
https://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/4550

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.
Thesis Maintenance and Reproduction Certificate

FOR:  Graduate Candidates Completing Theses in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree
      Graduate Faculty Advisors Directing the Theses

RE:  Preservation, Reproduction, and Distribution of Thesis Research

Preserving, reproducing, and distributing thesis research is an important part of Booth Library's responsibility to provide access to scholarship. In order to further this goal, Booth Library makes all graduate theses completed as part of a degree program at Eastern Illinois University available for personal study, research, and other not-for-profit educational purposes. Under 17 U.S.C. § 108, the library may reproduce and distribute a copy without infringing on copyright; however, professional courtesy dictates that permission be requested from the author before doing so.

Your signatures affirm the following:

- The graduate candidate is the author of this thesis.
- The graduate candidate retains the copyright and intellectual property rights associated with the original research, creative activity, and intellectual or artistic content of the thesis.
- The graduate candidate certifies her/his compliance with federal copyright law (Title 17 of the U. S. Code) and her/his right to authorize reproduction and distribution of all copyrighted materials included in this thesis.
- The graduate candidate in consultation with the faculty advisor grants Booth Library the nonexclusive, perpetual right to make copies of the thesis freely and publicly available without restriction, by means of any current or successive technology, including but not limited to photocopying, microfilm, digitization, or internet.
- The graduate candidate acknowledges that by depositing her/his thesis with Booth Library, her/his work is available for viewing by the public and may be borrowed through the library's circulation and interlibrary loan departments, or accessed electronically. The graduate candidate acknowledges this policy by indicating in the following manner:

  [ ] Yes, I wish to make accessible this thesis for viewing by the public
  [X] No, I wish to quarantine the thesis temporarily and have included the Thesis Withholding Request Form

- The graduate candidate waives the confidentiality provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U. S. C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) with respect to the contents of the thesis and with respect to information concerning authorship of the thesis, including name and status as a student at Eastern Illinois University. I have conferred with my graduate faculty advisor. My signature below indicates that I have read and agree with the above statements, and hereby give my permission to allow Booth Library to reproduce and distribute my thesis. My advisor's signature indicates concurrence.

Graduate Candidate Signature

Printed Name
Communication Studies
Graduate Degree Program

Please submit in duplicate.
Only in it for the News:

Satire Television Pilot Critiquing the Structure of Television News

(TITLE)

BY

Dakota Pruemer

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2018

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

\[12/4/18\] DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL CHAIR OR CHAIR'S DESIGNEE \[12/5/18\]

\[12/4/18\] THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER \[12/4/18\] THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

\[12/4/18\] THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER
Only in it for the News: Satire Television Pilot Critiquing the Structure of Television News

Dakota Pruemer
Eastern Illinois University
Department of Communication Studies

2018
Abstract

Televisual satire news is currently a way for the creators of the programming to critique what is being said in broadcast news media. I think that satire should go a step further and also critique how broadcast news media works. In order to do this, I created a television pilot that breaks the paradigm in which television news operates. Only in it for the News is a creative thesis that incorporates communication and media theory with production techniques to create a television pilot that critiques television news and provides an alternative approach to how television satire is typically presented. The project critiques the 24-hour news metacycle by tracing back why it exists and why it is problematic by looking at television as flow and remediation theory. The research consisted of mapping formats and tropes of the television news genre. The television pilot is informed by this research, as well as theory on narrative like syntagmatic and paradigmatic elements, the process of narrative equilibrium and disequilibrium, characters, mise en scene, and production elements, creating an entertaining and academically rich project. By researching these theories and applying them to my production skills, I was able to create a television pilot that critiques the television news structure, while providing a new look at the genre of television satire. This pilot is important because it shows the overarching causes of the problems within the system of television news that cannot be critiqued by television satire as it exists currently.

Keywords: satire, television, narrative, metacycle
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Eastern Illinois University and the EIU Master of Arts in Communication Studies for the opportunity to complete a creative master’s thesis. I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Scott Walus for the many drafts of scripts, edits, and theses he helped me with, informing my project as I went. This project truly could not have happened without him. I would like to thank Dr. Carrie Wilson-Brown for being on my creative thesis committee, and her feedback on my prospectus which made my thesis stronger by forcing me to question the message behind the project. I would like to thank Dr. Chigozirim Sodeke for being on my creative thesis committee, and her feedback on my prospectus which made me better articulate what I created with my thesis. I would also like to thank all the cast and crew of the pilot especially Kennedi Carodine, Woody Newman, and Faith Ramsey for staring in it, and Elazia Key and Kamaria Wade for their continued help behind the scenes. I am extremely grateful for all the amazing people I worked with on this project which could not have been done without them.
# Table of Contents

Abstract.......................................................................................................................... 3
Acknowledgments............................................................................................................. 4
Objective Report: Where the Idea Came From................................................................. 7
Producer Statement: My Inspirations............................................................................... 9
Production Outline.......................................................................................................... 10
Pre-production: Mapping and Script Writing................................................................... 11
Production: Casting, Filming, and Props, Oh My!............................................................ 12
Post-production: Editing Video and Audio........................................................................ 14
Communication Overview: Theories on Narrative, Character, and More................. 16
Full Treatment.................................................................................................................. 23
Structure: Mapping the Television News Genre............................................................... 23
Narrative: Coherence and Equilibrium/Disequilibrium................................................. 26
Character: Parasocial Relationships and Ideologies....................................................... 28
*Mise en scène*: The Pretty Stuff.................................................................................... 30
Production Elements: Behind the Scenes...................................................................... 33
Implications....................................................................................................................... 37
Future Plans....................................................................................................................... 38
References......................................................................................................................... 40
Appendix 1: Treatment..................................................................................................... 42
Appendix 2: Character Sketches....................................................................................... 43
Appendix 3: Script.............................................................................................................. 45
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spencer Social</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Spencer Vision</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Name Slug</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Buzzing Quotes Slug</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>New News Bug</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Life Hacks Slate</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective Report

I always enjoyed television news satire like *The Daily Show* growing up because it made me question the world in ways television news never had. However, as this genre became more popular with spin-offs and complementary versions, I started to notice the same jokes about the same stories across them all. This is when I realized that televisual satire news had become another element within the larger cycle of television news, which counters what I believe satire should be. I became interested in this idea whenever I read an article about how when *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* first premiered, the show was simulcasted across many of Turner’s cable channels (Lynch, 2016). The show received the highest ratings on Adult Swim, and I became fascinated with why this was. By mapping the genre of televisual satire, I was able to see how pervasive the genre was, not just on the major networks and cable, but also on subscription and advertising supported services like Netflix, Hulu, and YouTube. Some examples of these shows include *Late Night with Seth Meyers* on NBC, *The Opposition* on Comedy Central, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* on HBO, *The Break with Michelle Wolf* on Netflix, *I Love You, America with Sarah Silverman* on Hulu, and *Your World Today* on YouTube. Even though I am a fan of most of these shows myself, I began to see how they all fall into the metacycle reporting on the same topics. If you give 100 chefs the same five ingredients, eventually you are going to start getting the same recipe. The topic while mapping this genre that kept being proven was how satirical television news was a part of the 24-hour news metacycle. I describe the 24-hour news metacycle as the news that is never-ending, so it eventually starts reporting on itself.

The goal of my creative thesis was to create a television pilot that gave an alternative look at how comedy satirical news could be presented. The alternative view
that the pilot represents is one that satirizes structure and not content. Televised comedic satirical news, such as *Saturday Night Live*, *The Daily Show*, *Full Frontal*, and late-night show monologues generally create their humor from the content of the television news. For example, CNN and Fox Business both reported on an interview from HBO with Donald Trump about ending birthright citizenship, and then all three of the major network late-night hosts, Jimmy Fallon, Stephen Colbert, and Jimmy Kimmel, commented on this same interview, two of the shows even using the same clip. This same exact process can be seen again with the topic of the migrant caravan on *The Daily Show*, *Full Frontal*, and *Saturday Night Live’s Weekend Update*. These are just two examples of many, of how satirical news shows and segments are providing commentary on the already reported current events instead of critiquing the structure.

Satirical news shows have the appearance of being the last stop for a specific event, but they are also a part of the 24-hour news metacycle which reports on itself. As Jones (2012) pointed out about *The Colbert Report*, “...Colbert nevertheless underplays one crucial matter: that the characters he mocks derive from and exist within cable news channels” (p. 146). This means that these satire news shows comment on what is said by the news cycle, while they neglect to comment on the system which creates it; a system to which they also belong to. An example of this is when John Stewart was the host of *The Daily Show* and would have Bill O’Reilly on his program and vice versa, however, these guest appearances would not stop here as other television news outlets like CNN would comment on the two host’s debates.

In order to critique the television news system without being a part of it, I created a fictional world about fictional news that instead mocked the way non-fiction news is constructed. This breaks the system of the paradigm satire news television is stuck in. I
did this with my pilot through narrative and character, rather than reporting on current events, because then the show could be evergreen. This means that the show and the points that it makes will not become outdated any time soon. Another important aspect of the pilot being synthesized from fictional narrative and characters, is that it can remain politically neutral, not isolating groups of the audience. Finally, narrative and character are important because they keep the show moving and engaging, while *mise en scene* and production elements provide the familiarity and clarity to the show. The viewers can relate to characters of a fiction show because of the ideologies the characters represent. The viewers continue to care about these characters by the decisions they make in relation to the narrative.

**Producer Statement**

I have been creating video content over the past 10 years and have been inspired and informed by many sources. I have always appreciated the work done on the programming block Adult Swim because of the *avant-garde* comedic voice and experimental visual style found on shows like *Tim and Eric Awesome Show: Great Job!* and *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* have. These television shows, and others like them, have taught me to think outside the box, and that I am not alone in a creative sense. As much as I enjoy these shows for their random and absurd qualities, such as, fast pace editing and storylines paired with purposeful lo-fi production, I have also gained appreciation for well-written narrative and characters. The type of narratives I am drawn to have continued coherence even when the events happening in the show are absolutely absurd. There are few things more satisfying as a video producer than the creation of a well-rounded narrative and character that represent how I feel about a topic.
Making a television show has been a lifelong dream of mine and having the ability to do so in an academic setting has pushed me to make it the best that it can be. Graduate school has taught me how to map a specific topic like genre, narrative, or character, and use this research to find existing communication and media theories that can then bolster my productions. As a video producer I prefer to make evergreen content that will not become irrelevant with age, contrasting many comedy satire news shows. In order to achieve this, I created a show which mixes theory and production to inform an original narrative and characters that reveal an alternative view of televisual satire news.

**Production Outline**

The final product of my creative thesis is a 15-minute comedic satirical news television pilot called *Only in it for the News*. The show is about a local news station that is bought by a large corporation called Spencer Industries. The show that the viewer sees is called *New News*, which is the news show hosted by Dawn Wotcher with correspondents Sam Middle and Jeffery Newman. *New News* integrates analytics from viewers’ media habits and Spencer Industries-owned social media sites to provide a user-generated experience. This experience includes the host and correspondents reporting on the news that matters locally, as well as a targeted advertising system which relates to the topics covered. The rapid changes of interest in users leads to absurd topics and production errors being a staple of the show.

The pilot takes communication and media theory with production techniques and combines them into a fluid narrative-based project. These theories and production techniques were backed by the extensive mapping I did on the genre of television satire news. The mapping consisted of watching television news, both satire and not, in order to fully understand the genre, like *Anderson Cooper 360°*, *Your World*, *WEIU News Watch*, etc.
The Daily Show, Last Week Tonight, and Full Frontal. A television producer's research comes from absorbing information through experiencing every detail that appears on the frame. These details include narrative, character, music, sound effects, voice, graphics, text, costumes, lighting, edits, set design, acting, credits, advertising, network bumpers, and much more. By taking in all this information I started to see the larger trends in the genre of satire news that informed my theoretical research, which I will be discussing all throughout this section. Mapping this genre was important in discovering the theories I would use, but also informing every strategy and tactic in pre-production, production, and post-production of the pilot.

Pre-production

The first step of this project was to write the script which went through six drafts after months of outlines, character sketches, and story arcs. The outlines included ideas of major themes that the show represented like how the technology on the show worked and how this would effect the characters and story. The ideas from these outlines drew from the real world by my observations on how social media interacts with television news. The outlines were also used to summarize how key events and themes would play out over the course of the first season of roughly six episodes. While I did not continue further with these outlines of the rest of the first season, they helped bolster my pilot script by forcing me to write with them in mind. In order to fully understand how a television pilot worked, I needed to map out other successful fiction narrative pilots like The Venture Bros. and Rick and Morty, and actuality-based narrative like The Eric Andre Show and Nathan for You. In doing this I was able to see the importance of a well-constructed narrative and fleshed out characters that set up a world, while also being an engaging and entertaining episode on its own.
The character sketches that I created allowed me to create these developed characters by figuring out what their motivations were, what I liked and disliked about them, and what idea they embodied. For example, in my pilot the character Sam Middle is driven by her professionalism and faith in journalistic integrity, what I like about her is her work ethic while I dislike her ability to hold grudges and seek revenge. The story arcs were drawn out to see not only the overall narrative of the episode, but how each character's arc starts and ends. For example, the main character Dawn Wotcher, can be seen throughout the pilot interacting with all the other character's arcs. This is the case when she physically enters one of Sam Middle’s segments to be interviewed, and how she becomes the villain of a superhero that Jeffery Newman interviews.

Also, in pre-production, many narrative and character ideas were scrapped in order to create the best episode I could. For example, the character of Mr. Spencer, who is the CEO of Spencer Industries, was originally supposed to be a main character but in the end was only mentioned in the pilot. While he is still a character who would appear in later episodes, it was not important to introduce him in the pilot in order to set up the world. All this mapping, research, and creation of outlines, character sketches, and story arcs allowed me to create a strong script that carried through in production and post-production.

Production

After the script was completed, I needed to cast the actors and find the settings, props, and costumes. The actors came from several places like the Facebook page Champaign Casting Call, the Charleston Community Theatre, and friends of mine who had experience with acting on camera. While some of the characters were written as a specific gender or age, I did not let this influence who I casted for what role, and
ultimately changed the characters multiple times accordingly. For example, the main character Dawn Wotcher was originally written as a male with the name Don, until Kennedi Carodine auditioned for the role and was perfect for the part. After all the 15 plus character roles were filled the dates and times for filming were scheduled. Filming the pilot took place over the course of a month at multiple locations in Charleston, Champaign, and Shelbyville. I also needed to gather all the props and equipment used, as well as, the crew who would help with the production. The extensive list of props included costumes, set design, food, and everything else seen in frame. In order to make sure I had all the props ready on the day of each filming, I combed through the script multiple times to make a comprehensive list of the items needed. The different positions in the crew were boom pole operator, assistant director, line supervisor, and grip, and the cast and crew were fed with pizza and other food. I needed these crew members because while I was behind the camera directing the actors, it was helpful to have people on set to hit record on the audio recorder, and to assist with moving equipment. Along with giving the actors and crew members notes on filming days, I met with each person individually to go over what they were doing and how to do it. For actors this included acting ques and dialogue practice, and for crew this was to get them familiar with the equipment.

The filming process took a lot of energy and planning because of the work to fake the broadcast news look. By faking this look I mean typically a broadcast news production has multiple cameras and a live switcher, as well as a full crew, while I was working with one camera and one to two crew members at a time. To create the look of a multiple camera shoot, I would film all the scenes from one angle then move the camera and have the actors look over at the new angle to give the appearance the switches were live. This effect can mostly be seen during the in-studio shoots with Dawn Wotcher and
Sam Middle’s segments. The continuity between these different takes had to be exact, in order to give the appearance that they were not separate takes. During the filming I would need to look through the script to make sure I did not forget to film anything, as well as, watch the footage back later, in case I needed to refilm anything. These concepts of how to fake a broadcast news look were informed by my mapping of the genre before starting production, as well as, during production. By watching actual news programs, I was able to see what was needed in order to replicate this look, even with no budget. If I ever had a question of how to film a scene to make it look like a news piece, I would observe these programs. The researching of these different shows from this genre were just as influential in pre-production and production as they were in post-production.

**Post-production**

The post-production process was made up of editing the footage into the cohesive product that is the pilot. Post-production took over a month and went through several drafts each one including greater detail than the one before to bring my vision to life. Part of this process included sequencing the already filmed footage, while a whole other part involved creating visuals, and pick up shots I had missed, like refilming my character choking during Experts-on-Demand to make it more exaggerated. This was a challenge because I had to go back and make the lighting and setting look the exact same. An example of these created visuals are all the slates and text that appear in between segments to help transition the show. These were created using Photoshop and informed by watching actual news segments to see how they fill their frame. An example of my pilot being inspired by real television news is how the Experts-on-Demand segments are visualized. In the first draft of my project I had the interviews split screen where each person took up half the frame. However, I changed this when I noticed that when CNN
would have interviews in this style, they would scale down the frames and bevel the edges to make them stand out from a background image. In my case I used the stock footage of the numbers crossing the screen which was used in the show’s opening and appears in the letters of the New News bumpers. The countless visual effects added to the production, including adjustment layers, green screens, and animation will be broken down further in the full treatment.

Another aspect to post-production was the addition and editing of the audio used like music, sound effects, and actor’s voices. The music selection was chosen from Free Music Archive, which is a website where users upload original music tracks under the creative common licensing. The individual songs were chosen because of their relation to the segment, for instance during the segment “Life Hacks” which is light hearted, an acoustic track played while the following segment “Hard Facts” which is an intense journalistic piece uses an eerie ambient track with heavy drums. These audio choices help to add to the visuals in the frame to create the different meaning each segment represents.

Sound effects and natural sound were added to create life to the already existing audio. The natural sound, which is just a constant room tone, was created in Adobe Audition and was used whenever there were cuts in the audio tracks due to dubbing in lines. By adding in this natural sound there is not random breaks of different sounding audio, but a consistent stream of ambience that goes unnoticed. The dubbing in of lines was used when two actors could not be filmed at the same time, or if the actor was unclear, like when the characters wear the Heimlich Hero masks. For example, in the scene where Jeffery Newman interviews the solid food protester, he is wearing the Heimlich Hero mask. Since his lines were muffled due to this, I had him come in and record his lines while watching the footage so his dubbed lines match with the visuals.
However, since these lines were recorded inside while the protester’s lines were filmed outside, I had to add an ambient track of noises from outside. As with the visual effects, the audio editing will be broken down further in the full treatment.

**Communication Overview**

I used many communication and media theories in order to inform my project, not just from a production standpoint, but an ideological one as well. I will introduce the key concepts now with working definitions and then unpack them further in their own sections. I began with this project by breaking down the 24-hour news cycle into the metacycle, which is the concept that all the television news programs pull from the same sources and begin to report on themselves. The concept of the metacycle is informed heavily by the idea of television as flow, which is the understanding that viewing television is a passive process of never-ending narrative. My critique of the television news metacycle led to the discovery of the relation it has to remediation theory because of how it explains the difficulties of moving a text from its original medium.

To inform my production, I conducted a deep study of narrative over the course of this project, which led to the usage of syntagmatic and paradigmatic elements. These two elements can be broken down as syntagmatic relating to choices of sequencing, while paradigmatic relates to choices within, such as *mise en scène*. An example of a syntagmatic element is what order the scenes of the text are put into, while paradigmatic would be the choice between the character wearing a blue or purple shirt. The other narrative concept used heavily was the balance of equilibrium and disequilibrium. This is essentially the idea that when a character is in a good position they are in equilibrium and is offset by disequilibrium only to come back and forth between the two multiple times. An example of equilibrium and disequilibrium is the relationship between the Road
Runner and Wile E. Coyote. Wile E. Coyote will be in disequilibrium because he is hungry, but then the Road Runner will come by sparking an idea of how to catch him which is Wile E.'s equilibrium. Then the trap Wile E. placed will eventually fail so he goes back to being in disequilibrium. The research of narrative led into the study of character which was explained by the theory of parasocial relationships viewers have with characters. Parasocial relationships are the one-sided relationships that viewers create with a character as an attempt to replicate human relations (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

A historical breakdown of television genre and the pendulum of satirical news shows through mapping the genre informed the direction I wanted my project to take. This mapping allowed for the *mise en scene* elements to develop the pilot to fit in as a television satire news show.

The first communication phenomena that helped inform my creative thesis is the 24-hour news cycle, which helped to create the metacycle, or the news that reports on itself. An example of this is how politicians now will use social media to make a statement, then a news organization like CNN, Fox News, or MSNBC, will cover what this politician posted. This will be followed by viewers of the program responding on social media, which is then sometimes picked up by the program and shown on the screen. One example of metacycle is when Donald Trump tweeted "covfefe," which was talked about on CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, and others and ended up in segments on satire shows like *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* and *The Late Show*. This cycle continued as the phrase became a popular meme online, some of these meme formats even appearing on these satire shows. Eventually Trump commented on the news' reaction and the cycle started all over again.
A theory that opened my eyes to the process of the metacycle was how Raymond Williams (1974) describes the medium of television as flow. When discussing about how television is different from other mediums, Williams stated, "...the real programme that is offered is a sequence or set of alternative sequences of these and other similar events, which are then available in a single dimension and in a single operation" (p. 231). This is what Williams and other television scholars (Butler, 2007, p. 12) define as flow. Flow means that viewing television is not just consuming one discrete media product, but rather a collage of never-ending narratives. Flow lends itself to the 24-hour news cycle, because it creates an open-ended book where a chapter may end, but the story continues. An example of flow in the 24-hour news cycle is when a host or correspondent will give a preview of an upcoming story just before going to commercial, however, the flow does not end at the commercial break. There are still narratives within the advertisements and network promotions which keep the viewer engaged until the program returns to the story previewed earlier. My pilot takes the concept of flow a step further by creating fake advertisements that relate to the narrative. For example, whenever the host of New News interviews an expert who warns viewers to stop eating solid food, she previews the next segment which is about how to adjust to a world without solid food. In between these two segments an advertisement plays for a blender made by the corporation who owns New News.

Another theory which helped to back my claim of the negative side of the metacycle is remediation theory. When describing the theory in the context of television and web content Pierce (2011) said, "Messages cannot live in isolation from the medium in which they are broadcast" (p. 316). This idea goes all the way back to Marshall McLuhan's (1964) theories on mediums and their distinctions from one another.
However, Pierce updates this concept and shows that texts can change mediums, but the text themselves must also change. The most recent and recurring example of remediation theory in news today is how Donald Trump’s posts that he releases on Twitter are captured as screen shots and displayed on programs. According to remediation theory, taking a text away from its intended medium not only changes the text, but creates a new message. In this example, if Trump’s Tweets are shown on television news, they have the meaning of the Tweet, the meaning of text on television, and the meaning of social media on television. I satirize this idea constantly throughout my pilot by taking “screen grabs” of viewers’ social media pages and then showing them on New News. This can be seen in the show’s opening when Dawn Wotcher reads posts, in between segments when the slate appears showing what “The Hive” is talking about, and various websites like Spencer Vision which is a video streaming sight. Remediation theory relates to the metacycle and flow because it is a form of news reporting on itself and the continuation of programing. These three concepts are examples of media attempting to capture the chaos of the world, while narrative is the attempt to organize this information in a digestible way.

As with any medium, television is dependent on compelling narrative to keep viewers interested in the programming. Due to television’s flow, the narrative of the main text the viewer is engaged in is not the only story being observed. When writing about how crucial narrative is to television Allen (1992) says, “narratives are not only the dominant type of text on television, but narrative structure is, to a large extent, the portal or grid through which even nonnarrative television must pass” (p. 69). What this means is that even in programming that appears to be transparent, like news, there is a heavy reliance on storytelling to construct the text in an entertaining and marketable way.
What the narrative of a news piece does is attempt to construct the chaos of reality. When talking about the construction of mediated news Hall et. al. (1978) stated, “This involves the presentation of the item to its assumed audience, in terms which, as far as the presenters of the item can judge, will make it comprehensible to that audience” (p. 646). So essentially all television, and therefore televised news, is presented through a lens guided by narrative. An example of chaos being narrativized in the real world is in June of 2018 when immigrants were being detained in restyled Wal-Mart Super Centers. One news piece conducted by MSNBC covered the act by comparing it to a prison, while Fox News said that the photos of the events in the press were from 2014, blaming former President Obama. This just shows how one event that happens in the world can be understood in two completely different ways by using narrative. One example of this narrative style in my pilot is the reaction to the person choking in the background of an interview. The story could have been responded to the event by saying that it was the person’s fault, but instead the narrative that comes out of it is that solid food is bad.

In order to make a cohesive narrative, I relied on theories and ideas that have been written about by many scholars. One of these topics is the idea of combining syntagmatic and paradigmatic elements to construct a story. Syntagmatic elements relate to the order a sequence occurs, while paradigmatic elements are the characters and settings in that narrative. According to Fiske (1987), “Narrative structure demonstrates that people and places are not anarchic and random, but sensible, and then combines the paradigmatic sense of places and people with the syntagmatic sense of events and time into a grand signifying patter” (p. 129). This means that while events and decisions in a narrative can seem random, they need to all come together in the end to complete the narrative. The balance of paradigmatic and syntagmatic texts can be seen throughout my pilot through
the insane decisions the characters in the world make, that end up being connected. Just one example of this is when Dawn Wotcher is besmirched by Sam Middle when a video of her choking someone is released. However, this ends up in her favor as she is casted as The Choker in the Heimlich Hero film because of this clip. At the end when Dawn is choking on a smoothie and wins the challenge set up by Spencer Industries, the giant check says “The Choker,” because by this point, she is the choker for two reasons.

Making sure the narrative thread makes sense is important, but there must also be beats of conflict and resolution to keep the story engaging. For this to happen the narrative must go through points of equilibrium, where the character is stable, and disequilibrium, where the character is trying to get back to balance. Sarah Kozlof (1997) notes that Tzvetan Todorov defines these beats of conflict and resolution as, “a move from equilibrium through disequilibrium to a new equilibrium” (p. 69). An engaging story then, will stay at equilibrium or disequilibrium just long enough before it grows stale, to then switch to the other. For example, during the pilot Sam Middle goes through many stages of equilibrium and disequilibrium. She starts off unsatisfied because Dawn is the host, however, she comes out on top when she shows Dawn choking someone. This balance does not last as this benefits Dawn by getting her cast as the villain in a film, but then Sam becomes balanced again when the trailer for the film receives widespread criticism. Even though it is heavily criticized, the trailer becomes viral and allows the studio to green light the sequel, ultimately leaving Sam in disequilibrium.

Characters matter because they embody an ideology that creates the linkage from the audience of a text to the narrative. Just as texts cannot be separated from their mediums, characters cannot be separated from their texts. Butler (2007), when talking about a character from the show ER states, “…when we pick up a copy of TV Guide
because we respond to a picture of Dr. Greene, we are carrying his significance beyond the story lines of *ER*” (p. 51). This shows that even when we see a character in another medium, like a magazine, the linkage to the ideology the character represents is still there. This is important because of the parasocial relationships that viewers of a text make with the characters. A parasocial relationship is the one-sided relationship a viewer has with a character supplementing human connection. As Vande Berg et. al. (2004) write about these relationships, “Scholars call this aspect of television its *parasocial function* because although watching our favorite character or cast of characters every week isn’t really social interaction, for many people, weekly appointments with favorite shows and characters serve as partial functional replacement for social relationships (Horton & Wohl, 1956)” (p. 5). The parasocial function of television characters creates the one-sided relationships that viewers have with the characters of a text. The character Sam Middle embodies the ideology of how hard work should be rewarded, creating a parasocial relationship with others who feel that way. The parasocial relationship with Sam could be sympathy for the character, because Dawn is the host even though Sam worked hard to be it.

The different genres of television are important to study when creating a television show because they reveal the unwritten expectations an audience has for the given show. According to Barton (2013), when discussing the genre of reality television, “These early shows, although not what most media scholars would consider reality TV in today’s sense, certainly served as the foundation on which contemporary talent-based reality programming was built” (p. 217). Genre influences all the decisions of a production beginning in pre-production. During pre-production genre informs the types of characters, the settings, and way the narrative is presented. Moving to production,
genre is the code that determines acting style, shot type, and lighting, while in post-production, genre informs editing pace, visual effects, and more.

Televiusal news satire not only exists in its own genre, but in the genre of television news. On the topic of television news satire Baym & Jones (2012) state, "...the focus shifts from the form of news to its content, from the ways in which news speaks, to that which it speaks of. News parody offers critical examination of both the information provided by the real news and the agendas that lie behind or beneath it" (p. 5). From this understanding then, television news satire should be able to critique not only the content of news, but the structure of how it works. The invisibility of the television news genre is then made up of the narratives of the stories and ideologies the hosts represent. This relates to my creative thesis because of the overarching idea of critiquing the structure of television news.

**Full Treatment**

In the treatment I will break down the structure of the genre of televiusal satire and how it informed my pilot. This is broken down in to the segmentation and advertising strategies of the future of television. Next, I dissect the narrative of the pilot, explaining how it all connects through the narrative theories I researched. In the character section I discuss the ideologies the characters embody, and how this is represented in the pilot. The *mise en scene* elements, which is everything appearing on screen, are explained in relation to how they represent. a local news station on a low budget. Finally, production elements, or everything happening beyond the live frame, are broken down to how I made the pilot resemble a news broadcast.

**Structure**
*Only in it for the News* is a comedic satirical look at television news and an alternative view to how satire news shows are typically presented. Over the course of 15 minutes the host, Dawn Wotcher, and correspondents, Sam Middle and Jeffery Newman, report on the local news by using Spencer Industries’ technology to track what viewers are interested in. The information compiled by viewer analytics are also used to create customized advertisements for the viewer based on the narrative of the episode. The genre of *Only in it for the News* is comedic satire news that focuses on the structure of television news, not the content. For this idea to make sense in a fictional show, the world created needed to have a set of logic applied to it. In this case, a local news station “WDKP” is bought by a large corporation called Spencer Industries. Spencer Industries takes over this show by collecting data from viewers and users of their social media platforms, to see what the people are talking about, and advertise to them their products based on this information. While this might seem like a dystopian sci-fi story, there is evidence to show that this aggressive marketing is not far off. According to Yiting Deng & Mela (2018) on the process of targeted advertising with digital television:

> The digital targeting of advertising on television is transformative in two regards. First, digital TV affords household-level measures of TV viewing, making it possible to better forecast household advertising exposure. Second, STBs [STBs are Set-Top Boxes which refer to any digital form of television box like Roku, Amazon Fire, and Apple TV] enable targeting at the household-show level, enhancing targeting precision. (p. 99)

This is important because television was traditionally seen as one-way communication, meaning the viewer did not effect the television. However, now media companies can track viewers viewing history, and even browsing history, in order to target their
advertisements towards them. There are plenty of ways in which this type of advertising is already taking place on platforms like YouTube, Hulu, and Roku. During the pilot I acknowledge this concept whenever the news reports on choking, and the viewers are talking about it, an advertisement for a blender appears, or when users start wetting their pants an advertisement for adult diapers plays.

Once the logic had been put into place on why the show exists, then I had to create how the show exists through segmentation. For example, satire news shows like The Daily Show are known for their correspondents having their own segments like Stephen Colbert, Samantha Bee, and John Oliver who would go on to be returning characters also hosting their own shows. The different segments on the show keep the episodes pace fast and give it a live feeling that could not have been created otherwise. The segmentation can be seen throughout the entire episode starting with the host, Dawn Wotcher. Dawn introduces the show by reading posts from viewers which leads to the segment “What the Buzz.” She also appears in the other segments of the show like “Experts-on-Demand,” “Choke Watch,” and “Star Talk with Sam Middle.” Each one of the correspondent Sam Middle’s appearances are in a segment including, “Life Hacks,” “Hard Facts,” “Star Talk,” and “On the Poll” all ending with the title “with Sam Middle.” Jeffery Newman has the least defined segments, because he is out interviewing the guests. However, his first segment starts out with “What the Buzz,” and there is a “Buzzing Quotes” slug that appears during his interviews. The logic behind having so many segments during the show was to parody how television news has become more about entertainment and keeping the audience’s attention (Reitzes & White, 1982). The concept of transitioning seamlessly from segments to commercials to bumpers to trailers is an example of how I incorporated flow within my pilot.
Another example of bringing this genre to life is having multiple interviews with guests and “experts” on the show. Interviewing is commonly seen in broadcast and satirical news because it allows one person to represent a whole group of people. The comedy aspect of this comes from the ability of seemingly anyone to be an expert. The only real “expert” shown is Lyndel Heimlich, who has outrageous views like never eating solid food. Other interviews include a Domme and a guy in his garage when using the search word choking, and an angry web show host and high schooler debating on Choke Watch. In order for the structure of the pilot to make sense the paradigmatic and syntagmatic elements had to be mapped out. The paradigmatic elements included the locations, like the news studio or on location, while the syntagmatic elements were how the segments were placed, like the show starting a closing with Dawn Wotcher.

**Narrative**

The narrative coherence of this show is important to the overall project, because while a topic or decision might be absurd, there is a clear through line which leads from event to event (Clair et. al. 2014). The main through line for this episode is the fear of choking, and how Spencer Industries can use New News to exploit this and sell their products. This narrative begins when Dawn Wotcher is reading online posts by the viewers and reads on about a local bake sale. This leads Jeffery Newman to conduct an interview with the event leader of the bake sale. However, a person is choking in the background during the middle of the interview but is saved by someone performing the Heimlich maneuver on them. While the show moves on from the interview, the clip of the person being saved becomes viral.

In order to figure out more on the topic of choking, Dawn uses the application Experts-on-Demand, also made by Spencer Industries. This is where she talks to Lyndel
Heimlich, an expert on choking, and he convinces all the viewers to stop eating solid foods. The subsequent commercial is a targeted advertisement for a blender, due to the new fear of choking of the viewers. Spencer Industries makes the blender and endorses a challenge which dares customers to choke on a smoothie from their blender. The following segment, “Life Hacks,” doubles down on the fear of choking, and persuades viewers which food to keep and which to dispose. The last segment ending on a positive note quickly turns dark as Sam Middle shows a clip from a commercial that Dawn acted in where she chokes someone. To balance out the fear the producers cut to an interview of Jeffery, now in pirate gear from joining the musical, with the Heimlich hero. This interview shows that the Heimlich Hero is capitalizing on his viral success by selling merchandise and potentially movie rights.

Next, we cut to the segment “Star Talk” where Sam Middle announces the rumors of a Heimlich Hero movie to be true, and that Dawn, having been seen earlier as a choker, is casted as the eponymous villain of the film. Going back to the studio, Dawn reveals how contestants of the challenge made by Spencer Industries are wetting their pants. The second targeted commercial is in response to the challenge by selling adult diapers, again made by Spencer Industries. After an interview with two more “experts” from Experts-on-Demand, there is an interview with Jeffery who is now wearing the pirate costume and Heimlich Hero mask. The interview is about how politicians are deciding on whether to ban solid foods from the county. We come back to Dawn who explains how the cheap masks sold by the Heimlich Hero are ironically causing people to choke. It is announced though that Spencer Industries bought the merchandising rights for the Heimlich Hero, and they show a trailer for the film. Sam then announces that the
vote to ban solid food was not passed, and that the Heimlich Hero film has been greenlit for a sequel.

Dawn thinks that she closes the show by sending it to Jeffery, while she enjoys a smoothie. We cut to Jeffery who is passed out on the ground due to suffocating on his Heimlich Hero mask. The producers cut back to Dawn still drinking her smoothie while a strange man appears and punches her in the face. The man is a Heimlich Hero super fan, as he takes off his mask, and says he did this to stop The Choker. However, this still ends in Dawn’s favor because as she is punched in the face she starts to choke on the smoothie, making her the winner of the challenge made by Spencer Industries. The equilibrium and disequilibrium of the main characters is what keeps the narrative of the pilot engaging. From Dawn’s perspective she goes through many moments of disequilibrium, like being put on the spot by Sam or choking on a smoothie, but always comes out on top by getting cast in a movie and winning the chug and choke challenge.

**Character**

The main character of the show is Dawn Wotcher, the host of *New News*. Dawn embodies the ideology of the golden child. She is a confident and charismatic person who always seems to come out on top. Her demeanor and constant smile leave the viewer entertained and engaged. Her vocal inflection is that of a typical news anchor, where every syllable is pronounced and some even over pronounced (Greene, 1963). She is dressed in a blazer and button up shirt with dress pants, to show her professionalism. During interviews she lets the guest talk but is not afraid to correct or stop them if they are wrong. Dawn’s backstory is that this is her first job out of college, and she was primarily picked due to having a semi-large following online. Dawn’s lack of experience angers Sam Middle though, because she wanted to be the host. Sam makes repeated
attempts to make Dawn look bad, but she always ends up looking better than before, like becoming a movie star and winning the Spencer Industries challenge. We get to see Dawn’s first professional gig as an actress in a cheesy low-budget self-defense video. In this video, even though she is playing the attacker, she is dressed in sporty clothes, showing her desire to be fashionable. During her interviews with Sam Middle, we see Sam’s annoyances while Dawn seems content and that she is not going to let the small things get her down.

The in-studio correspondent of New News is Sam Middle. Sam embodies the ideology of the American dream, that if you work hard you will succeed, when this does not work out for her, she takes matters into her own hands. She strives to be a professional journalist even though she is bitter at Dawn because she got to be the host of New News. Sam’s professionalism does not go unnoticed though, as all her segments are short and powerful. Sam alternates costumes, from having a pink blazer and black undershirt for the entertainment segments like “Life Hacks,” and “Star Talk,” to wearing a navy-blue blazer with a white undershirt in her segments “Hard Facts” and “On the Poll.” These costume changes represent the difference in mood between the entertainment-based segments and the journalistic ones. This also shows Sam’s professionalism and attention to detail as she wants her message to get across. Sam also presents her lines in the traditional news dialect where every syllable is pronounced and some even over pronounced. Her back story is that she has been in journalism for a few years and has worked hard to get where she is. When she heard that “WDKP” was going to be changing and needed a new host, she was sure she would be it. Obviously, this was not the case though, and even though she is smart and works hard, her weakness of holding onto grudges will hold her back.
Jeffery Newman is the out of studio correspondent who interviews the various guests of the show. Jeffery embodies the ideology that saying yes will always result in good fortune. He is young, energetic, and excited to learn anything he can about the world around him. Jeffery wears blue dress clothes without a tie or belt, which shows his immaturity, but also his persistence as it will not stop him. He attempts the news anchor dialect but falls short due to his lack of experience. His interviews are more entertaining than informative, as he quickly becomes a fan of whoever he is talking to. After he talks to the event leader of the bake sale, he joins the musical, which is seen in the next interview by him wearing a pirate costume. After this interview with the Heimlich Hero though, he has the Heimlich Hero mask on as well, having trouble balancing his new responsibilities. His interview about the solid food ban ends with him joining the protest, and his final interview is cut short due to him suffocating on the Heimlich Hero mask.

The other two character that recur on the show are the studio actors. They embody the ideology of having trust in corporations. They appear during the shows intro, two commercials, and “Life Hacks with Sam Middle.” They are always cheerful and willing to sell any performance that comes their way. They work in the back area of the studio where the director is handed a script that is analytically perfect, and the actors have minutes to finish the commercial or segment. The parasocial relationships that viewers can create with these characters is what will make the show be able to have many episodes. For example, viewers might be interested in the back and forth of Sam and Dawn just as they are with any rivalry like Tom and Jerry.

_Mise en scene_

_New News_ takes place in a small television market, so even though they are sponsored by a large company, every bit of _mise en scene_ and production technique had
to reflect that. This includes settings, audio and video quality, commercials, slates and every detail in between. One of the most important aspects of this pilot was filming at locations that gave the appearance of not only a news program, but an entire world in which the characters live (Fiske, 1987). Jeffery Newman’s interviews were all filmed at different locations on Eastern Illinois University campus and downtown Charleston. The first, taking place in an open field was ideal, because I not only had to think of the foreground action with Jeffery and the event leader, but also what was happening in the background with the Heimlich Hero. This location was also ideal because it allowed me to film the second interview with the Heimlich Hero where the choking took place. The next interview, about the protest, needed to be filmed downtown, so it gave the appearance of an actual protest location. Also, filming in front of the gazebo gives it a small-town charm. The final location filmed with Jeffery was inside of Doudna, again because of the large depth from foreground to background, but also because there is a box office there. Since the scene was taking place when Heimlich Hero movie tickets were being sold, I needed extras in the background excitedly waiting in line.

Sam Middle’s scenes were all filmed in a controlled studio to give the look of professionalism she strives for, but on the show’s average budget. The segments are all generally flat lit, to properly expose the actors without shadows. However, in the segment “Hard Facts,” the lighting is harsh and has a warm instead of cool tone, to create dark shadows and add to the segment’s intensity. There are also props in the background during some of Sam’s scenes which include a fake plant and American flag, to create differences between the segments visually. In Sam’s scene where she interviews Dawn, we had the actor who played Dawn sit on the taller stool and moved it closer to the camera. We did this in order to have the actors appear on a closer height level, because in
real life they are completely different. I did not want Sam to be towering over Dawn, because that would give the appearance that she has more power, when in the show she does not (Panayiotou & Kafiris, 2011).

Dawn Wotcher’s scenes were filmed in WEIU studio on campus, because it has professional lighting already intended for television news. There were quite a few changes made to the set though, like moving the back drops because they had the WEIU News Watch logo on them. Once that was done the background seemed plain, so we moved curtains and lit them with spotlights. This added depth between the actor and the set, as well as, having a television in the background with a green screen. In post I was able to add in the effect on the screen which I changed from green and black to white and black. There was a reflection on the news desk of the green screen, which I also had to key out in editing, to give the appearance that the screen was live. Filming in the WEIU studio also allowed for the final scene to be filmed which required space because of the actors and action.

Other locations included the studio actors which were used as the commercials and opening sequence. These were filmed in front of a green screen in my apartment which also had to be flat lit in order to avoid shadows for keying the green screen. I filmed these scenes in a cramped area like my apartment, because it is similar to the conditions that were in my mind when writing the script. The actors had to change costumes between the different sequences as well. They wore traditional looking clothes without trademarks on them and had a pair of workout clothes for the Wet Wear commercial. The Experts-on-Demand sequences were filmed at the actor’s homes. This helped give the appearance that they were using a webcam and not in a studio. They still had to be lit properly though, because most were too dark for the camera. These scenes
also included props like the Domme’s BDSM equipment, Lyndel’s books and coffee mug, the engine expert’s tools, and the angry web show host’s sandwich. There were a lot of props used during this production, some being obvious like the pirate costume, Heimlich Hero masks, and fake large check, while others were hidden to add to the show’s reality. One of these less noticeable props were the microphones used by the host and correspondents. These microphones were not actually used to capture any of the audio heard, but in order to look more like a news broadcast.

Another “hidden” element of mise en scene used throughout this project is how the characters act. While the host and correspondent all have their quirks, they are still relatively normal compared to the characters around them. Starting with the studio actors, they both have a very robotic perfectness to how they present themselves. This is because they are trying to represent Spencer Industries and need to always seem happy and fulfilled. The event leader sings all her lines, at first just as an introduction, but then when Jeffery responds with excitement she continues. Lyndel appears as the stereotypical angry German with a thick accent and yelling every word. In the self-defense video the teacher acts super over the top and is dressed in karate gear to add to the video’s cheesiness. While the characters, Dawn and the victim, act over the top as well and deliver their lines as if they were not given any direction.

Production Elements

The entire project was filmed at 30 frames per second, because this is the standard for broadcast television (O’Donnell, 2012). The shots were all stabilized by a tripod, to give it a professional appearance. The only time the camera leaves the tripod is when the camera guy puts it on the ground and enters the frame. The audio was picked up by a Rode shotgun microphone, and then recorded with a Zoom audio recorder. The editing
was done in the Adobe Creative Suite including Premiere for all the video and effects, Photoshop for the slates, slugs, and text, After Effects to render the 3D bug, and Audition for audio. Since the equipment used to create this pilot are not what traditional news broadcasts would use, I had to cheat the broadcast look. Cheating the broadcast look included setting up multiple camera angles to appear that I was filming with multiple cameras. This can be seen in Dawn and Sam’s scenes when they look at the camera as if they were already looking at another one. Another aspect of faking the broadcast style was through audio. For example, I added the effect of multiband compressor, which is used in broadcast, on all the audio of the pilot. I also faked the audio of the hand microphone used by Jeffery Newman by lowering and raising the volume based on the proximity to an actor’s mouth.

Post production is where the pilot really came together because all the effects used helped to provide comedy, but also pacing. The effects used on the green screen for the commercials were done so in order to make them look as cheesy, local, and on the spot as possible. During the green screen sequences, I used stock footage and images and changed the actor’s opacities to make them look like they were part of the stock footage. This is the same for the noise and static used during the self-defense video and the poor production quality of the Heimlich Hero movie trailer. To achieve the lo-fi aesthetic of the self-defense video I added in a heavy synth song that captured 80s hip hop cheese, with transitional effects like the diamond and cross wipes. I also added a crop to make the aspect ratio 4:3 which looks retro instead of the rest of the pilot. The Heimlich Hero trailer was achieved by finding stock footage from online and animating the Heimlich Hero and Dawn in Photoshop. I set a time limit for making the trailer in order to make it look rushed and having a low production value. I wanted this look because in real time
the editors of the trailer would have only had a few minutes to create it as well. The Experts-on-Demand segments were split screen by scaling the frame down, and then adding a bevel to the clip. This is a common effect used on most news television programs. The expert's footage was exported from HD quality to 320p and then reimported, because it lowers the quality giving the appearance it was filmed on a webcam.
The social media slates were made in photoshop and each website is supposed to have its own aesthetic inspired by a popular website. Spencer Social (Fig. 1), which were the posts that show up in the beginning, is inspired by Twitter. The posts used a bee to symbolize an upvote, for buzzing story, and a newspaper to show a down vote, or old media. Since the posts only take up a portion of the frame, in Premiere I duplicated them layering the copies behind the original. The copies were also scaled larger and I added a gaussian blur and key frames to give the appearance that news is always moving. The screenshot from Spencer Vision (Fig. 2) was inspired by YouTube, and even has custom made advertisements on the side for Spencer Industries products. All the social media slates represent how I used remediation theory in this work by taking these texts out of their original mediums.

There are three different slugs that appear on the screen including the name slug (Fig. 3), the buzzing quotes slug (Fig. 4), and the New News bug (Fig. 5). The name slug was added to show character’s names, and sometimes fun facts about them. The buzzing quotes slug provided often ridiculous quotes from Jeffery’s interviews, but also questions for the viewers. The New News bug was created in After Effects, and has a plain logo to it, so it is not interrupting the action on screen. All three of these slugs help to fill the frame and give the illusion of business that television news always has.

The slates used to open and close Sam’s segments (Fig. 6) were created purposefully bad with clip art and using Comic Sans font. This was to keep the local news look that Sam was accustomed to before the show changed. The font choice which would make anyone with a design background cringe, has a local hand-drawn charm that was ideal for Sam Middle’s character.
Music and sound effects are layered throughout the project. Typically, music was used in places where the action was slow, like in Sam Middle's segments, because there was not much interaction with other actors. Music also worked as a transition effect, like the news and technological motifs used throughout to transition a segment to the next. Sound effects, like the anvil sound during choke watch, or adding in people talking on set, were added to give the audio experience a richer quality.

**Implications**

There is a paradigm of broadcast production that has been in place since the beginning of televised news. These codes dictate the way these productions are made and what audiences' expectations are for broadcast. Television satire news as it exists currently is bound to these same codes, and *Only in it for the News* is a proof of concept for how to destroy this paradigm. *Only in it for the News* takes a completely fictional approach to dismantling the structure of television news in an entertaining way without being heavy handed. During the time of making this project I have seen the metacycle of news continue and more satire news shows being created all adding to the shared idea of what television news is. This continuation of the metacycle has reminded me that *Only in it for the News* is important and original.

At a time when there are countless options to view the same style of satire, the genre needs to evolve, and this pilot is an example of one way it can do so. This thesis also matters outside of the genre, because it strings together communication and media theory, plus production skills to create an engaging narrative that will not become irrelevant like current events. The characters of the pilot are also likeable and relatable, making parasocial relationships with the viewers possible.
This thesis can be an example for how theories and media production can combine to create stronger research. This bridging of two practices which are typically seen as opposites can in fact live in the same space. *Only in it for the News* would only be half as good if it just included the theory, but the same could be said if it only included production elements. Moving forward I hope to see more media scholars attempt to producer, and more producers attempt to research theory. Overall, satire allows us to reify theory in a tangible and engaging form.

**Future Plans**

My future plans with this project are to try and sell this pilot to a network like Adult Swim. This is a humorous and fresh idea and I think it is a genre missing from their block of programming. To continue with the show, I would use satire to tackle large issues with media that typically go over looked. Each episode will focus on a separate issue while also having an engaging narrative and building upon the characters I set up in the pilot. I would continue with this show because media criticism is important to me, but I also enjoy making comedic videos. By combing the two of these processes I can reach a larger audience and inform them on issues while also being entertainment.

The story arcs of the characters over the course of the first season and series will go as follows. Mr. Spencer will slowly begin appearing more, as a B or C story arc, as he runs for local office, and uses *New News* as a platform for free advertising. Dawn Wotcher will continue being the host of *New News* but will eventually fall into the race for public office, ultimately beating Mr. Spencer. Sam Middle will complete her dream and become the host of *New News* once Dawn takes office. However, due to Dawn’s immense popularity among the viewers Sam is widely hated and constantly must report on what Dawn is doing. Jeffery Newman will continue being a correspondent but struggles to keep his work balanced as he becomes Dawn’s campaign manager. The two
studio actors will also appear more frequently in the B or C story arcs. One of the actors will become a fringe conspiracy theorist working with the host of *No More Cowards* and attempt to take over *New News*. The other actor will become depressed as he attempts his dreams of becoming a famous movie star. Spencer Industries will continue to grow as it takes on a role similar to Sinclair Broadcast Group and buys other local news stations converting them to their own *New News*. This can even create anthology type episodes of the series, because there can be whole episodes of a different *New News* market with different actors. The characters will develop as the show progresses as the actors get more comfortable within the roles, allowing them to extend beyond the script. The key demographic for this show is age 18-30 and fans of comedy.

I would also like to keep creating video content for a hobby but also as my career. This Master's program and creative thesis have shaped me in positive ways to take on these goals. I can now look at projects from an academic standpoint using theory to help bolster my production skills. I intend fully on using all the skills I have gained to better myself and the world around me.
References


Appendix 1: Treatment

New News is the pilot television episode that I am producing for my master’s creative thesis. The goal of this project is to critique televisual news by performing a hyperactive satirical version of itself. The premise of this show is that Spencer Industries, a tech conglomerate, buys a local news station and creates New News by using the analytics from their app, of the same name, to target what viewers are talking about; while also allowing a targeted advertising experience for marketers. This quickly gets out of hand however, when the host and correspondents try to keep up with the machine, there are bugs in the software, and incompetent usage by the viewers. The genre of New News is satire, but the entire script is fiction and takes place in a fictionalized world. The mise en scène of the show resembles that of local television, while also incorporating stock footage at times. The main characters are Dawn Wotcher, the host, and Jeffery Newman and Sam Middle, the correspondents. There is also an assortment of guests who appear on the show and help to drive the narrative, along with the viewers at home.
Appendix 2: Character Sketches

Dawn Wotcher – Dawn Wotcher is an all-around likeable person, and the kind of person who the world always seems to work out for. She was also chosen out of hundreds to be the host of New News due to the high analytic scores she received from the Spencer Industries’ face and voice scanner. Also, she has over 10,000 Twitter followers, meaning she is really cool. This is her first job out of college, so while she did go to school to be a host, she lacks experience. Dawn’s drive is to prove herself as a host and show that she is more than a pretty face, and voice, and also has 10,000 Twitter followers.

Jeffery Newman – Jeffery Newman is a follower in every sense, and therefore is constantly joining new organizations. He is friendly and well mannered, and you can always count on him to be there. However, his addiction to going along with everything can lead to problems when these responsibilities start to pile up. Jeffery is the correspondent of New News who handles all the segments that happen outside the studio. What drives Jefferey is others appreciation of him, which is why he is such a hard worker and willing to do anything. These traits make a recipe for disaster when his job is working for a news network.

Sam Middle – Sam Middle is a smart, driven, and multi-talented individual. This pays off during her many correspondent segments that happen inside the studio with topics ranging from life hacks and entertainment to politics and investigative journalism. She was the rightful heir of the local news station to become the new host. This all changed however, when Spencer Industries bought the station and hired Dawn Wotcher to become the host. Her main drive now is to get revenge on those who wronged her the only way she knows how, through credible journalism. However, she must go along with the flow
and still do a good job, so she does not get fired, otherwise, she will never become the host.
Appendix 3: Script

Show Opening

Fade in from black to the WDKP news logo. The image and audio quality are retro looking, like it was made in the late 70s to early 80s. There is text under the logo that fades in saying “Your Local News for over 50 Years.” Minor technical glitches start happening, and then the screen completely cuts out. There is now more modern text reading “Reboot.” This all happens within a few seconds. Futuristic stock footage begins to play, including clips of technology, robots, large populations, social media, etc... A narrator’s voice begins to speak over the footage. The voice is clearly robotic, but feminine and soothing.

Narrator

The viewer of today has the daunting task of processing endless information from thousands of news sources. Long gone are the days of a single trusted newspaper, radio broadcast, or television program that can summarize the events important to you. This is why Spencer Industries is launching New News. A mobile and televised multimedia platform developed by the viewer, for the viewer. By optimizing analytical technology, New News will report live on what you need to know and produce your advertising experience. New News: the future of news, today. From Spencer Industries.

Opens in the “New News” studio, where Dawn Watcher introduces the show. A musical theme is playing. The studio is a traditional looking news room, and Dawn is dressed in a suit. There is a logo in the bottom of the left-hand corner for “New News,” and a continues scroll of news on the bottom of the screen. In the bottom right-hand corner there is a thermometer labeled the “Buzz-ometer.” Depending on the popularity of the post, the “Buzz-ometer” will rank from hot to cold. The music begins to fade out as Dawn begins to speak.

Dawn

Hello and welcome to New News, the only local news channel run for and by its viewers. I am your host Dawn Watcher, and I look forward to covering the stories that matter to you.

The first post shows up, ranking cold on the “Buzz-ometer.” The appearance is similar to a Tweet but altered to fit the “New News” brand. Dawn reads the posts aloud as they appear.

Alright, our first post comes in today from @losin_lbs and says, “I’ve lost 50 pounds in 3 months #NewNews.” That’s great, congratulations! Let’s go ahead and move on to our next post.

New post appears, ranking medium on the “Buzz-ometer.” It is an image of a naked model censored for the camera. Dawn starts to talk, but the system catches it and switches to the next post. Post was from @livechatgirl113 with hashtags, #NewNewds and #Lonely.
Alright, looks like we’re still working out the kinks here. Our next post is from @newsfan29 which says, “I love new news, that is to say my user name is correct, I am a fan of news #newsfan #newnews.” Well thank you newsfan29, we like you too!

New post appears, ranking hot on the “Buzz-ometer.” There are bells and flashing lights that accompany it.

Sounds like we have our “What the Buzz!??” story of the day! @hearmypipes says, “Pls come out and support our bake sale, and help us raise money for the spring musical!!! #NewNews #LocalTheater #BakeSale.” Well this sounds like a really, sweet, time and our correspondent should be there any second. How’s it going there Jeffery?

“What the Buzz!??” package transition of Jeffery looking cheesy. Cut to black as you hear tires screech and doors opening and closing. The cameraman takes the lens off the camera to reveal him running with Jeffery trying to get to the interview. The cameraman gets set up and frames Jeffery and the event leader. This all happens within a few seconds.

Jeffery

(Slightly out of breath) Hi, I’m Jeffery Newman reporting live for New News, we are here today with... (holds microphone to event leader).

Event Leader

(Singing in musical style) Hello, I am the event leader of the bake sale.

Jeffery

(Gets a big smile on his face, and looks mesmerized by the singing) It is great to have you on the show today, what is the spring musical going to be about?

Event Leader

(Still singing) The musical takes place on a pirate ship, which is passing Egypt. The ship wrecks into a pyramid, and the pirates must fight off mummies.

As the interview continues, there is a person in the background who appears under distress, after a few seconds it is noticed that the person is choking on a treat from the bake sale. After a few more seconds of choking, another person from the bake sale shows up and gives the Heimlich maneuver saving their life. While all of this goes on in the background neither Jeffery or the event leader notice.

Jeffery

(Joins in singing in musical style) How will the money from the bake sale help the musical?

Event Leader

As an independent organization, the money raised will go to making costumes, set pieces, and advertising material.

The interview is cut short to cover breaking news back at the studio. The “Buzz-ometer” animation comes in and out spinning like an old super hero show.
We interrupt this interview to show you a new viral clip of a heroic pedestrian, being called The Heimlich Hero. Let's take a look.

Clip plays of essentially the same footage as the interview, but this time it is scaled up so that Jeffery and the event leader are cropped out.

What a hero they are indeed. This seems like a great time to get an expert's opinion on this clip, and what better way to do that then by using our new program experts-on-demand. (Pulls out phone) let's see... we just have to enter a key word, how about... choking.

The screen switches to a split screen of Dawn and the expert. The room is very dark, there is a Damme sitting staring at the camera choking a mannequin head. Dawn changes it immediately once he realizes what is happening. The next expert is a person in a well-lit space explaining how to choke a leaf blower, lawn mower, chainsaw, etc. Dawn changes it once again. New expert appears, text saying Lyndel Heimlich, author of “Never Choke Again!” appears below the expert. There is a delay between Dawn and the Lyndel

Hello, Lyndel Heimlich. That is quite the ironic name given the topic.

Lyndel

(Screaming in an angry German accent) Yes, hello, it is I Lyndel Heimlich, the offspring of Henry Heimlich, inventor of the Heimlich maneuver.

Dawn

Wow! What an amazing guest, thanks for joining us today Lyndel. What can you tell our audience about the clip they just watched?

Lyndel

As Lyndel talks about their father, black and white images of Henry Heimlich glide across the screen.

Well, it is true that the man in this clip saved the choking individual by using the Heimlich maneuver, invented by my father. However, as I have detailed in my new book, my father, while brilliant, was far too short sighted. You see, I've gone a step further in preemptive health measures to eliminate the most common choking hazard, solid food.

Dawn

What do you suggest our viewers at home do instead of eating solid foods?

Lyndel

I, Lyndel Heimlich, highly advise all of your viewers to stop dining on solid meals immediately!

“Buzz-ometer” starts to go off again, showing below it #ChokeWatch. Screen returns to single shot of Dawn.
Dawn

It looks like a new hashtag is rotating through our servers. We’re going to present to you a quick commercial, but when we come back, learn how you can adjust to life in a world without solid food.

Commerical for Spencer Industries’ Blender plays comprised of stock footage and the same narrator from the introduction of the show. The stock footage consists of blending food, people drinking smoothies, etc... One of the pieces of stock footage is slightly related, but random, due to the commercial being automated so quickly. The commercial starts with eerie drone music, but switches to a lighter cheerful song once talking about the blender.

Narrator

The hazards are real. Everyone is talking about the dangers. You. Could. Choke. Well thanks to Spencer Industries you will never have to worry about that again. Introducing the SI Blender 5v, the only blender on the market with a 100% guarantee on never choking. We’re so positive you won’t choke, were willing to give away $1,000 in Spencer Credit to anyone who can choke on a smoothie from our blender. All you have to do is make a smoothie using the SI Blender 5v and then upload the footage using the hashtag #ChugAndChokeChallenge.

Comes back from commercial with an intro package for Sam Middle. The package is quirky and fun and titled “Life Hacks with Sam Middle.” It is a traditional looking news studio, with Sam behind a table with food on it.

Sam

If you’re like me, you’re just now hearing about the dangers of compact cookery. New News is here to show you the alternatives to solid eating.

Cut to studio commercial actors. When mentioning each food item, cut to commercial actor eating the good foods with a smile on their face, and a scared look when eating the banana. The actor doesn’t take the peel off. and continues to choke before cutting back to Sam.

For example, you can already start to consume some of the solids already found in your home, like yogurt, salsa, and eggs. Just make sure you crack the shells first. You do need to be careful though, because food like bananas, which appear to be soft and squishy, can actually be the food that chokes you to death. Be sure to download our food scanner app to test food’s choking statistics.

Exit package for “Life Hacks with Sam Middle” plays. Cut to package with a darker, more serious tone titled “Hard Facts with Sam Middle.” The location is the same as before, however the set matches the tone of the introduction, including dark set lighting, harsher lighting on Sam, and no table or food. There are cuts to many angles as Sam looks dead serious into the camera delivering each line.

Have you already disposed of all the solid foods from your home? Don’t think you are in the clear just yet, as there is still another way to die from choking. This clip uploaded by an anonymous user found by our system’s hashtag search, shows our very
own Dawn Wotcher choking another human. Due to this video’s graphic content, I suggest you watch at your own risk.

Video plays from cheesy retro self-defense class, Dawn is shown in dark alley trying to choke a scared person.

**Self-Defense Teacher**

Has this ever happened to you?

**Dawn**

(Poorly acted) Come here. Let me choke you!

**Victim**

(Over the top) Ahhhh, don’t let this person choke me!

*Breaking news transition cuts clip short to show Dawn trying to choke a leaf blower he looks awkward at the camera realizing it is live starts to talk but is cut off. Cut to the field where “The Heimlich Hero” was born, as Jeffery, now dressed in a pirate costume from the musical, is interviewing them. “The Heimlich Hero” is dressed in a full superhero outfit.*

**Jeffery**

(Starts off by singing, pauses, and continues talking normally) Jeffery Newman reporting live for *New News*, it is an honor to meet you Mr./Mrs. Hero.

**The Heimlich Hero**

Ha ha, (Tousles Jeffery’s hair) please, call me The Heimlich Hero.

**Jeffery**

A reliable anonymous source has told us that you have signed a contract to play The Heimlich Hero in the upcoming film produced by Dead Horse Studios. Can you confirm this?

**HH**

Unfortunately, I can’t comment on those accusations currently, but what I can say is (to camera) come on down to the bake sale in the next 2 hours, and purchase an official Heimlich Hero mask from me.

**Jeffery**

(Very excited) Neat! Can I try one on?

**HH**

(Loud and boastful) Ha-ha-ha, sure, anyone can be a hero with one of my masks! (Whispers to Jeffery) for twenty dollars.

**Jeffery**
Deal! (Pulls money out of pocket, gets mask struggles with putting it on) Wow this this is tight, (to camera) back to the studio.

*Intro package begins for “Star Talk with Sam Middle.” This package is very sleek and fast paced, there are many flashes accompanied by camera flash sounds, similar to an entertainment news show. Set is the same location as before for Sam, but it is set up like a celebrity interview, her and the guest are sitting in director chairs across from each other, poster of the movie in the background, etc...*

Sam

(Seemingly irritated and annoyed, especially compared to how she acted in her first two pieces) The super hero on the top of everyone’s minds today is The Heimlich Hero. It has been officially announced that the humble beginnings as a viral video star will make an appearance on the silver screen. I’m sitting here today with one of the stars of the film, our very own Dawn Wotcher.

Dawn

(Cheerful, humbled) Thanks for having me today Sam, it is very strange to be on this side of the interview.

Sam

(Growing more annoyed) So... Dawn. How did you get the part of playing the villain in this film? Known as “The Choker.”

Dawn

*While Dawn talks, B-roll from the commercial played earlier plays again.*

It’s actually a funny story, remember your segment Hard Facts? The one when you highlighted the video I acted in from the past for a self-defense class? (acts out the scene and laughs charmingly) well the producer of the film happened to be watching our program, liked my acting, and well the rest is history.

Sam

(Smiling, and talking through her teeth) Well, what a great turn of events, just goes to show all publicity is good publicity. Dead Horse Studios announced on their website just minutes ago that the teaser trailer for the upcoming computer-animated film will be released later today.

Sam is cut off by the “Breaking News” transition. The camera cuts to the studio where Dawn is usually set up, however he is not there. Although you can hear running footsteps in the distance getting louder. After a few seconds of dead air, Dawn runs into frame.

Dawn

(Slightly out of breath) This just in, the new challenge created by Spencer Industries named the #ChugAndChokeChallenge dares customers to try and choke on a smoothie created by their new blender model. The reward? A $1,000 credit card that can be used on any Spencer Industries product.
Starts to play clip from webcam of person doing the #ChugAndChokeChallenge, including putting a funnel in their mouth, and downing smoothies.

The challenge consists of subjects putting a large funnel in their mouths, and then filling it with their smoothie of choice. While no one has choked yet, the challenge has led to mass wetting of pants as we can see in this viral clip.

Audio starts playing from the clip, person now has smoothie spilling everywhere. After a few seconds the person starts to pee themselves.

(Laughing) Now that is embarrassing. When we come back from commercial, more on Choke Watch, don't go anywhere.

Cut to studio commercial actor standing in front of clearly a green screen but supposed to be a kitchen.

**Studio Commercial Actor**

As health-conscious citizen I don't want to choke on food, but I also don't want to (looks around and holds up hand whispering) wet my pants. That why when I found about Wet Wear from Spencer Industries, I was ecstatic.

Cut to B-roll of actors doing activities like jogging, still clearly in front of green screen.

Wet Wear's comfort and concealability allows you to continue with your on-the-go life style. And thanks to new scented Wet Wear, you can smell fresh all day. Wet Wear by Spencer Industries: It's not a diaper.

Intro package plays here titled "Expert vs. Expert." Dawn is sandwiched between two experts through three separate split screens. On the left is online video blogger from the show "Too Many Cowards" he is strongly against the solid food ban, and believes it is a conspiracy. Think Alex Jones. On the right is a high schooler who wants to go to school to become a dietician.

**Dawn**

We are live with two experts about Choke Watch, thanks to the new "debate update" added to Experts-on-Demand. Debaters, when you're ready.

**Debater 1**

(Eating sandwich) This is so clearly a conspiracy comprised of fear tactics used during regimes such as Nazi Germany! The news media which is run by evil corporations, is just scaring you into buying their blenders and adult diapers!

**Dawn**

I'm going to have to cut in right there to correct you, as the commercial correctly stated, they aren't diapers. "Debater 2" what do you think about Choke Watch?

**Debater 2**
Well I seem to remember in my freshmen year of high school my health teacher talking about fasting from solid foods, because he had to get his colon checked out. So, I dunno, makes sense to me.

Debater 1

(Starts eating sandwich more intensely) This is ridiculous, I’ve been eating solid foods my whole life! (Starts choking after Dawn introduces the next segment)

Dawn

Thank you very much debaters, that’s all the time we have for this segment though. We join our correspondent Jeffery Newman live at a protest of solid foods.

Cut to new location down town where Jeffery is interviewing the solid food ban activist. Jeffery is still dressed in the pirate costume, but he is now also wearing a Heimlich Hero mask. There is audio of chanting happening from a distance.

Jeffery

That’s right Dawn, tensions are rising as people are choosing their side on the big debate of whether or not to eat solid foods. I’m here with Jordan Icore, straw specialist, and the leader of Smoothie Saviors, what would you tell the viewer at home, still trying to make up their mind on the issue.

Solid Food Ban Activist

I would tell them to look inside their hearts, and if they don’t want to ban solid foods for themselves, at least think of the children. Thousands die every year from choking on solid foods, it’s time that we as a people step up and ban this secret killer.

Jeffery

Now, there has been an announcement that local politicians will vote later, on whether to ban solid foods from our county. How could our viewers get involved if they so choose?

Solid Food Ban Activist

You can follow the hashtag #ChokeTheVote to keep up with all our activities.

Jeffery

(Slightly cutting her off) Or you can watch New News. Dawn, back to you.

Solid Food Ban Activist hands Jeffery a picket sign labeled “Say No to Solid.” Both march off frame chanting while the audio is cut. Cut back to studio with Dawn.

Dawn

Hundreds have been hospitalized due to suffocation. The culprit? Cheap manufacturing of masks, like those sold by The Heimlich Hero.

Picture of Mr. Spencer appears, with text box next to picture with quote in it.
No need to worry though, as Spencer Industries has already bought the rights to Heimlich Hero merchandising, and according to CEO Mr. Spencer himself, "...will step up production immediately." In other Heimlich Hero news we have a first look at the teaser trailer for the upcoming film featuring yours truly. Let's take a look.

Fade into black of poorly computer-generated animation. There are still all the logos of "New News" on the screen.

**Trailer Narrator**

In a world where innocent civilians choke... to death.

**Dawn “As The Choker”**

Hehehehe I'm gonna choke ya!

**Trailer Narrator**

One hero can stand up to the task

**HH**

(Standing on building) I am The Heimlich Hero!

**Trailer Narrator**

The Heimlich Hero Film, Coming soon.

Intro package plays with title "On the Poll with Sam Middle." The location is once again the same, but has been decorated with flags and other patriotic trinkets. The first shot is on Sam but changes to related B-roll like people lined up at the poll, and politicians talking.

**Sam**

The vote to ban solid food was not successful today as there were 53 votes against it, and only 4 in favor. Local politician Johnathan Williams said that this was due to most politicians living outside of our viewing radius and quote, "having no idea what the hell a solid food ban is." That's all for this segment of On the Poll.

Exit package of "On the Poll with Sam Middle" plays. Once finished the intro package for "Star Talk with Sam Middle" plays. It is the same package as before, and the set is dressed the same.

(Very happy and revenge filled) New entertainment news has just been announced. The Heimlich Hero film has been entirely written off by critics. Ranking a total of one tenth of a single star out of five online. (Sarcastic) Oh Dawn, we're all so sorry about this. (Starts to read ahead confused, becomes upset) However, it appears due to the trailer's quick viral success, Dead Horse Studios has already green lit the sequel titled The Heimlich Hero 2: Second Choke. (Swallows) Well Dawn... good for you.

Exit Package for "Star Talk with Sam Middle" plays. Cut back to studio with Dawn.

**Dawn**
(Doing his choking thing from before and laughing) Well it looks like that’s going
to do it for us today. We’re going to end today’s show at the local theater down town
where presale for Heimlich Hero tickets have gone live, and I’m going to enjoy this fresh
smoothie.

Cut to Jeffery passed out on ground with camera man trying to get mask off.
Jeffery is still dressed in pirate costume, and also holding the picket sign.

Camera Man

(Stressed) Dammit Jeffery, why couldn’t you wait for the Spencer Industries
model of the mask to be released.

Cut back to Dawn.

Dawn

Looks awkward at camera, still drinking smoothie. Heimlich Hero super fan runs
in studio wearing Heimlich Hero gear, and the new Heimlich Hero mask from Spencer
Industries. The super fan punches him in the face, causing him to start choking on the
smoothie.

Super Fan

(Picks up lapel mic) The Choker sucks! Heimlich Hero for life! Wooooo! (Runs
off camera).

While Dawn is still choking person from Spencer Industries comes in holding a
huge check for $1,000 dollars with balloons and people dancing.

Spencer Industries Check Person

Congratulations Dawn Wotcher on completing the #ChugAndChokeChallenge!
You have won $1,000 of Spencer Industries credit.

Camera zooms in on Dawn’s face, which is still choking but smiling now.

Credits