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"The Destruction of a Legacy": Agenda Setting and the Bill Cosby Sexual Assault Allegations

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"THE DESTRUCTION OF A LEGACY": AGENDA SETTING AND THE BILL COSBY

SEXUAL ASSAULT ALLEGATIONS

By

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Abstract

Media scandal has been a contributing factor to the American culture for centuries. However, ambiguity and pre-conceived notions arise when the media scandal is framed differently by various mediated outlets. This study investigates media scandal by examining the Bill Cosby sexual assault allegations and how the scandal is framed by the media. This study utilized agenda setting theory to explore the argument that the public will think of the Cosby scandal as highly important due to frequent exposure and how the media presents and frames the stories on this subject could ultimately impact public opinion on issues such as power, race and sexual assault. The purpose of this investigation is threefold: First, this study examines agenda setting theory and how it has been utilized as a framing tool; second, this investigation examines different types of scandals; and, third, this study focuses on the Cosby case as a celebrity scandal involving allegations of sexual assault. In order to examine if and how varied networks reported differently on the Cosby scandal, sixty articles from three, distinct networks (CNN, FOX News, E!) were analyzed and coded under seven different categories. Results demonstrate that a significant difference exists among the analyzed networks and media frame scandal coding foci most reported in the sample for this study. Although all networks address Cosby's *Rise and fall of an American hero*, the distributions of observed media frames/coded categories are significantly different than what is theoretically expected. Specifically, CNN highlighted victims'/survivors' powerful voice whereas E! and FOX News highlighted Cosby's support from the black community, celebrities and co-stars. Additional results, discussion and future directions follow.

Keywords: agenda setting theory, media, Bill Cosby, sexual assault

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Chapter 1: Introduction – Agenda Setting for Media Scandals

The American culture has had an obsession with media and scandal for centuries (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006). For varied reasons, individuals have a fascination with stories involving sex, power, wrongdoing and defamation. Consuming these types of media content, particularly a heavy amount of scandalous stories, undoubtedly makes an impact on the way individuals think, and, ultimately it affects their attitudes or opinions about the scandal and/or the individuals involved. In times of scandal, the public often resorts to media for a sense of direction, information, sense making and comfort (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2009). This reliance on the media for information regarding scandals can be problematic because media can create and reinforce both negative and positive outcomes and attitudes. While some media outlets report on important scandals with as much neutrality as possible, media networks have latitude in their content and reporting foci. This is potentially related to the networks' political party ties (Alterman, 2003). It could be argued that conservative individuals might turn to FOX News for information, liberal individuals turn to CNN or NPR and individuals of color might turn to channels such as BET or MTVLA (Latino America) or print publications such as *Ebony Jet* (Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley & Matsa, 2014; TV by the numbers, 2012). These media receive traffic from a variety of media consuming individuals. Nevertheless, each major outlet sets their agenda differently on important issues that benefit them and that the public seeks information on. For example, due to how the networks set their agendas and frame stories, journalists noted the 2016 Democratic National Convention was reported differently by CNN than by FOX News because of the opposing views each network has (Byers & Beavers, 2016). To illustrate, FOX News reported on the event without including major moments that attacked the Republican nominee for president, Donald Trump (Byers & Beavers, 2016). Thus, one might argue that FOX

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News was setting the agenda in favor of Trump. Whereas CNN highlighted Black Lives Matter survivors who spoke in the convention, FOX News did not air this to their audience (Byers & Beavers, 2016). Instead of maintaining neutrality, media outlets are faithful agents to the firm that owns them (Alterman, 2003).

Research demonstrates that although there is an apparent divide among media, they appear to have varied angles, approaches or biases that include consistent framing in favor of capitalism, patriarchy, heterosexism, individualism, consumerism, White privilege, and other miscellaneous factors that contribute in allocating power in society (Entman, 2007). Each of these factors can set the agenda for the media. The bias from each network makes media political actors and sets boundaries for public discourse (Entman, 2007). Individuals are extremely likely to consume media without quite realizing bias. Specifically, individuals wholeheartedly trust media to report news and often fail to evaluate what is reported with a critical eye (McCombs 2004; McCombs, 2009; Petty, Briñol & Priester, 2009). Short (2013) argued that, by 2015, Americans will have consumed an estimated 1.7 trillion hours of media. With such a heavy media exposure, it is inevitable that one will become acquainted with and affected by the world of media, particularly, for the purposes of this research project, media scandal (Lull & Hinerman, 1997). This constant media exposure deserves scholarly attention because it exemplifies the power media have to shape perceptions and inform the public. This demonstrates high heuristic value because of the impact different media scandals can have on public opinion.

McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda setting theory provides a useful lens to examine what the public thinks about based on media coverage and can provide a framework for examining media scandals. Agenda setting theory suggests that what the media features impacts the public in different ways (McCombs, 2009). Because the media are often the main source for

information on scandal, the theory describes the media as dominant and influential to the public (McCombs, 2009). That said, agenda setting theory highlights the responsibility journalists have to report on important issues and will serve as the theoretical framework of the current study on media scandal.

With agenda setting theory, it becomes apparent that each media outlet "sets the agenda" differently with the same issues. To "set the agenda" translates to focusing on a specific part of the story. For instance, a media outlet may decide to set the agenda by focusing on positive images of a person in order to influence the public to think of the person in a positive way. However, a potential division surfaces among media outlets that could affect varied attitudes among individuals regarding important topics such as politics, economics, and crime. Within the last five years, Bill Cosby's case, which happens to involve sexual assault subject matter, has been at the forefront of the news, and continues to attract and maintain media consumers. This research project is dedicated to examining the agenda set and the framing of Cosby in light of his sexual assault allegations. Depending on the media outlets, the media has set a variety of agendas on rape, Cosby's powerful role, and the survivors' experiences with Cosby because of the factors that were previously mentioned, such as White power and patriarchy. According to research, this particular story can possibly be told in different ways that might raise ambiguity and issues of truthfulness (Alterman, 2003).

A special interest to conduct further research on agenda setting, scandal and sexual assault was aroused by the current paucity of scholarly research that exists on the Cosby scandal. Nevertheless, individuals continue to make sense of what they see or read in the mainstream media regarding Cosby and the alleged sexual assault survivors. To that end, this study examines the Cosby sexual assault allegations and how Cosby is described through the media. The purpose

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of this investigation is threefold: First, this study examines agenda setting theory and how it has been utilized as a framing tool; second, this investigation examines different types of scandals; and, third, this study focuses particularly on the Cosby case as a celebrity scandal involving allegations of sexual assault. In order to achieve this, sixty webpage articles from three distinct networks were gathered and coded under different categories that highlight different issues from the Cosby case.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Through agenda setting theory, it becomes evident that content from media resonates with the audience in different ways. Thus, the following section provides further elaboration on the theoretical lens for this project and how it can be utilized to examine media stories. Although the current study examines the Cosby case, it is beneficial to thoroughly examine media scandal and previous stories that have been prominent in the media, such as the O.J. Simpson case and the Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinsky scandal. Because the Cosby case involves a sexual assault subject matter, previous literature on sexual assault is highlighted as well. Thus, this section has four goals. First, agenda setting theory is reviewed with key terms and previous studies that have utilized it as a lens. Second, the chapter defines media scandals and provides specific examples. Third, this section reviews previous literature on sexual assault and, lastly, this section provides specific details about the Cosby scandal.

Theoretical Perspective

Mass media influence public opinion. More particularly, a primary assumption of agenda setting theory is that the media doesn't tell us what to think but, rather, it tells us what to think *about* (Weaver, 2007). Agenda setting theory is comprised of two parts, first and second level agenda setting. The two separate levels do not tell the public what to think but offer the public something to consider as relevant through media coverage (Weaver, 2007). The first level examines the media's agenda while the second considers the public's agenda, or the influence that the content has on the public (Weaver, 2007). Created in 1972, McCombs and Shaw developed agenda setting theory in an effort to explain how people turn to media for cues on what they should believe or what they should focus attention on (McCombs, 2009). In order to comprehend agenda setting theory in its entirety, it is crucial to review framing and priming,

consider the media's power to influence individuals, examine the media's frequency on a particular story, describe the public's need for orientation and elaborate on first and second level agenda setting.

Framing vs. priming. It is important to consider agenda setting as uniquely distinct from *framing* and *priming* with the news media. Specifically, framing considers the manner in which the media reports a story (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Framing is based on the way the media characterizes a story with images, headlines and words and how these details can have a major influence on how the public understands the issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). A "frame" in framing includes the presentation of the story and implications that it might have (Scheufele, 1999). Researchers often refer to framing as "the construction of social reality," which means that the media has the power to create the news themselves (Scheufele, 1999, p. 104). Framing argues that the different ways a story is characterized through media influences the different ways that it is understood by audiences (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Priming, on the other hand, occurs when media coverage makes the public believe that they should use specific benchmarks for evaluating the performance of the subject in the news story (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Researchers note that priming is more common in political stories (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). For instance, if a news corporation is not supportive of a particular candidate, they will report on negative issues and aspects respective to the candidate. This action is what is known as priming.

For the purpose of this investigation, agenda setting serves as the theoretical framework and lens to examine the media's treatment of the Cosby scandal (Weaver, 2007). Although some scholars conceptualize priming and agenda setting as discrete, others view priming as a consequence of agenda setting, which ultimately places both of them under the same conceptual

umbrella (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Agenda setting does not focus on people's expressed opinions, but instead focuses on the media making certain issues more salient or relevant to the general public which then moves on to create public opinion (Weaver, 2007, p. 145). As noted by Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), "agenda setting refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues (e.g., relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences" (p. 11). The theory centrally focuses on the influence that media have to show certain issues that people begin to think of as important as well (McCombs, 2004). If the media reports on certain issues frequently, agenda setting theory argues that the public might not agree with the reporting but nonetheless will believe that the issue is of high relevance (McCombs, 2009).

Agenda setting theory views the media as persuasive and powerful because of the influence they have on people to believe certain things or to know about issues (McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2009). The media are powerful because they are the main source for information on issues of relevance. According to agenda setting theory, the media are also persuasive because they focus public attention on specific events, issues, and persons that ultimately determine the significance that people attach to public matters (McCombs, 2009; Shaw, 1979). The primary assumptions of agenda setting theory argue that the media have complete power to transfer notable issues to the public agenda yet individuals are free to choose what media they want to expose themselves to (McCombs, 2009). Agenda setting theory hypothesizes that the media set the agenda on issues that will benefit them to maintain readers or viewers (McCombs, 2009). The media will choose to set the agenda based on capitalism, patriarchy, heterosexism, individualism, consumerism and White privilege (Entman, 2007).

Agenda setting theory does not present the media as manipulative or immoral but instead as compelling and strategic with the different ways they emphasize the public's attention to very particular events, issues and people, thereby ultimately determining the significance that people attach to public matters (McCombs, 2009; Shaw, 1979). It is essential to consider how people perceive issues as important and relevant to their lives because of the frequency of the issues portrayed and highlighted (Wu & Coleman, 2009). In other words, the perceived importance of events is influenced by frequency of press coverage and thereby influences the public's focus by messaging what is supposedly salient, important, newsworthy and/or relevant (Wanta & Wu, 1992). An example of how powerful the media can be in highlighting issues as important was demonstrated when Erving "Magic" Johnson decided to go public with his HIV status. Research demonstrates that people were seeking more knowledge on HIV, AIDS, testing, and prevention when Johnson's story was reported in the media (Casey et al., 2003). Although McCombs and Shaw acknowledge the media as dominant and influential, agenda setting theory nevertheless also approaches individuals as dominant because consumers of the media make choices about what to read and tune in to (McCombs, 2009). To better disentangle the varied, yet related, concepts, the table below provides illustration.

Table 1: Agenda-setting and the mass media from McCombs (2004, p. 5).		
MEDIA AGENDA		**PUBLIC AGENDA**
Pattern of news coverage		Concerns of the public
MOST PROMINENT PUBLIC ISSUES	⇒	MOST IMPORTANT PUBLIC ISSUES
	Transfer of issue salience	

The media agenda sets the public agenda and has an impact on the public. This causes a transfer of issue salience from the media agenda to the public agenda.

McCombs and Shaw (2004) found agenda setting theory to be insightful because of citizens' perception of a second-hand reality--a reality structured by journalists and the media about reports and events. Initially, McCombs and Shaw were interested in agenda setting effects and political events. Since their initial investigation, many other scholars (Benton & Frazier, 1976; Brown, Duane & Fraser, 1997; McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 1997; Protess, Leff, Brooks & Gordon, 1985; Wanta & Wu, 1992; Weaver, 2007; Wu & Coleman, 2009) have tested the theory, particularly with political events, as well as non-political mediated news coverage. Because individuals might not directly experience the news themselves; they depend on media outlets to get their information, which is why further research on agenda setting holds high heuristic value. Specifically, McCombs and Shaw (1972) noted that candidates, over 40 years ago, were communicating with the people via the mass media rather than in person (McCombs, 2004). The media served and still serve as a window to the world, a tool and a platform, to name a few, for us.

Need for orientation. A large proponent to understanding agenda setting theory in its entirety corresponds to *why* individuals turn to media for information. Research demonstrates that humans are born with an innate instinct and desire to understand the surrounding environment (McCombs, 2004). When individuals are exposed to a new situation without prior knowledge or a concrete understanding, humans are uncomfortable and are compelled to mentally map the setting. Agenda setting theory posits that this is the reason why individuals rely on the media for clearer understanding on an issue in an effort to avoid the uneasy feeling of confusion (McCombs, 2004). In today's society particularly, the media give the public a feeling of orientation (McCombs, 2004). The need for orientation (NFO) is defined by two lower-order concepts: *relevance* and *uncertainty* (Chernov, Valenzuela & McCombs, 2011, p. 143). Relevance is the first condition for NFO. It is not uncommon for individuals to lack a perception of relevance about a particular topic relevant to public affairs because they might not perceive these topics to be relevant to them personally in any way. In situations where relevance to the individual personally is non-existent, the NFO is low. Uncertainty is the second and subsequent defining predicament of NFO (McCombs, 2004). If individuals already have knowledge on the issue at hand, it typically causes their uncertainty about the issue to be low. In cases in which individuals have low uncertainty, they do not completely ignore the media reporting on the specific issue but instead monitor it closely to detect any changes and stay updated (Chernov et al., 2011; Merritt & McCombs, 2003). Under the predicaments of high relevance and low uncertainty levels, the NFO and knowledge is balanced (McCombs, 2004). McCombs uses the race for the presidency as an example to illustrate the public's NFO. Citizens often feel helpless without having a clear understanding of each of the candidates. In stories holding national

interest, such as the presidency, the public relies heavily on the media because they are a primary source of information as individuals consider and weigh information about issues.

That said, McCombs (2004) notes that some individuals do not feel psychological dissonance in situations in which they are not knowledgeable. Specifically, these individuals do not feel this discomfort in the realm of public affairs because they do not consider the issues to be relevant to them personally (McCombs, 2004). Individuals may not feel a psychological need to grasp a better understanding of the internal politics of Armenia, as an example, while some do not even feel compelled to understand the public affairs occurring in their own country (McCombs, 1999).

To further explore this notion, McCombs (1999) conducted a study that investigated the reasons why the public may find an issue reported on the media as important and found that the characteristics that make the public think of a story as relevant included *self-interest*, *civic duty*, *emotional arousal*, *personal interest* and *peer-influence*. For example, if individuals have a personal interest to the subject matter, they will tune in to the story because it is very relevant to them. Individuals reported that if there is a specific problem facing the country, every citizen should feel obliged to make the story relevant (McCombs, 1999). For avocation reasons, people have passions or hobbies in which they turn to stories in the media that will keep them updated (McCombs, 1999). Another reason people think of media as relevant has to do with emotion, in which people feel strongly about the subject (McCombs, 1999). Stories that arouse strong feelings may include gun control or abortion, for instance. Lastly, there is peer influence that serves as a characteristic. This particular trait comes from other people influencing an individual to think of the subject as important. All five traits contribute in making other individuals feel the need to turn to media for orientation on an issue. To better disentangle agenda setting theory, the

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following section provides a detailed explanation of the first and second levels of agenda setting for media.

      First and second level agenda setting. When agenda setting theory was created, researchers began to expand on the theory and ultimately created two levels of agenda setting effects: *first* and *second-level* agenda setting. Wu and Coleman (2009) claim that the first level of agenda setting is dedicated to focusing on a specific amount of coverage on the issue reported (Wu & Coleman, 2009). Essentially, the media establishes the first level of agenda setting by determining exactly what they want the public to be aware of (Wu & Coleman, 2009). The second level of agenda setting shifts the attention from the media to the public. This level examines "the influence of attribute salience, or the properties, qualities, and characteristics that describe objects or people in the news and the tone of those attributes" (Wu & Coleman, 2009 p. 776). Instead of independently examining media content, the second level examines the public's knowledge and interpretation that they conclude based off the media content (Wu & Coleman, 2009).

      Without the first level of agenda setting, there would not be a clear understanding of what exactly the "important" issue being shown in the media is. This level corresponds to the "what" from the media reports which moves on to gain the public's attention and ultimately increases the public's knowledge (Wu & Coleman, 2009). The first level focuses on the amount of coverage for a particular issue that ultimately plays a role in deciding what the media wants the public to be aware of (Wu & Coleman, 2009). This level in the theory lays out a clear foundation for what the media wants the audience to think of as important (Wu & Coleman, 2009). In other words, this level provides the "about" that the audience moves on to "think about." After the first level of agenda setting is complete, the issue the media has chosen as important is exposed to the

public (Wu & Coleman, 2009). Often times, the media become excessive and show the issue numerous times through numerous outlets and frames (Wu & Coleman, 2009). For example, this can mean that NBC decides to report on an issue through television, their website, social media, and blogs. Thus, the first level of agenda setting consists of introducing and reinforcing, recreating, reifying the subject, subject matter and content. The public begins to see the story reported constantly and might begin to interpret the pervasive press coverage as reflective of the subject matter's relevance.

The second level of agenda setting gives more power to the public rather than the media. This level has received more attention from scholars than the first level and has been explored in numerous studies (e.g., McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). After the story is reported on various media outlets, the second level of agenda setting occurs. Specifically, while the first level focuses on the reporting of the issue itself, the second level focuses on how the public will translate what they see in the media in regard to that issue. Researchers note that the second level of agenda setting is divided into two dimensions: *substantive* and *affective* (Wu & Coleman, 2009). The substantive dimension is concerned with the public's personality, ideology, and their stance on issues (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997; Wu & Coleman, 2009). This dimension has to do with personal opinion from their knowledge and background on the issue. The affective dimension focuses on the emotional aspect of the issue that is reported (Wu & Coleman, 2009). This dimension argues that f individuals are emotionally attached to the issues they see in media, they will interpret them differently (Wu & Coleman, 2009). The emotions for the issue can be positive, negative and/or neutral in nature and offered as such to the person viewing the media content (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar & Rey, 1997). Regardless, both of the dimensions are dependent on the public's perceived salience of the issues.

In sum, the main argument that stems from agenda setting theory is that prominent elements in media will become prominent in the public mind (McCombs, 2004). The theory justifies the importance and relevance to turn to media for knowledge and the public's need for orientation. To understand this notion, first and second level agenda setting examines the ways that the public interprets information from media that come from frequent coverage. Each of these characteristics are important to consider because they take part in explaining agenda setting effects, processes and the theory.

Media and Scandal

Agenda setting takes place whenever a story in the media is reported on. However, because this research project is dedicated to agenda setting in a media *scandal,* it is imperative to review the current literature on the subject matter of scandal. Lull and Hinerman (1997), both scholars in communication studies specializing in media, define a media scandal as something that "occurs when private acts that disgrace or offend the idealized, dominant morality of a social community are made public and narrativized by the media, producing a range of effects from ideological and cultural retrenchment to disruption and change" (p. 3). Throughout the years, scandal and the media have become interdependent and have increased fascination among the public. As media corporations began to grow in the late 19th century, more competition expanded within the newspaper business which led to more innovation and creativity for media (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006). This innovation led to a more sensationalized version of news filled with inflamed headlines, gaudy pictures, and stories dedicated exclusively to sex and scandal (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006) That said, media coverage seemingly continues to grow in public interest as the controversy grows (Lull & Hinerman, 1997). Scandal has become a prominent fixture in a variety of mediated contexts, such as tabloid journalism, talk shows, reality shows and sports to

name a few. Examples of media scandals include the O.J. Simpson case, the Lewinsky and Clinton affair, as well as the JonBenet Ramsey kidnapping. These stories serve as scandal exemplars because of their frequent constant news coverage, shock factors and national interest. Such media fascinate and serve and/or are perceived as entertainment, yet can upset, unsettle and infuriate as well. In JonBenet's case, the media took a mysterious kidnapping and turned it into what may be perceived by some as entertainment—prominent on the cover of tabloid magazines and as the subject of concern in documentaries and news articles. Some media treated the case as an opportunity to attract viewers in the form of entertainment rather than treating the case as an investigation. America's mediated obsession with scandal began in print media, moved on to radio, television, and Internet, and has now expanded into social media sites like YouTube, Facebook, blogs, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006).

Because of the major attraction scandal can pose for the public, the media constantly depict scandal in an effort to attract a larger audience. The Watergate scandal, for instance, devoted daily coverage from the media which led to televised hearings on the scandal by the U.S. Senate (Bisbort, 2008). Another example can be seen in the audience for CNN's live coverage on the Kennedy rape trial. The audience increased up to 71% on opening day and 142% on the day Pamela Bowman, the rape survivor, testified (Bisbort, 2008). During the O.J. Simpson trial, cable television became the "new home for scandal," with CNN's ratings rising 600% in just a few months (Bisport, 2008, p. 142). The unsolved murder of JonBenet Ramsey also received extensive media coverage. Nine major television networks aired a total of 438 hours of programming on the JonBenet situation (Bisport, 2008). Notably, when the sign of a scandal makes an appearance, the media often exhausts every possibility and publicizes it until a new scandal presents. Although the media typically target public figures, such as celebrities, no one is

immune to scandal. Scandals involving celebrities, however, are guaranteed to spark an interest

from the public with strong media coverage (Bisport, 2008). The scandal that is shown in the

media is guaranteed to spark reaction, good or bad, from the audience, which is why further

research in the area is valuable and informative (Lull & Hinerman, 1997).

   Types of media scandals. Although "media scandals" do have a distinct definition, there

exist three different scandal "types" in the literature. Specifically, these scandal types consist of

institutional, *star* and *psychodrama* contexts (Lull & Hinerman, 1997). Institutional scandals

occur when the subjects of interest include government offices or corporate suites (Lull &

Hinerman, 1997). Other subjects in institutional scandals include people in politics, education,

business, military and religion with high platforms which can ultimately harm their reputation

(Lull & Hinerman, 1997). Institutional scandals are particularly delicate because they not only

affect the individual, but the institution the "offending" individual represents as well. Examples

of this type of scandal can be Watergate or the Whitewater controversy. Watergate involved the

government and Richard Nixon while Whitewater involved Bill and Hillary Clinton. Thus, these

scandals fall under the institutional category because the individuals were public figures that

represented all American citizens. Star scandals highlight celebrities with major name

recognition. This type of scandal occurs when a celebrity's private behavior enters the public eye

without their knowledge, consent or control (Lull & Hinerman, 1997). Star scandals often

illustrate a fictitious side in the media with a blurred view of reality (Lull & Hinerman, 1997). To

illustrate, examples of star scandals can be the Cosby sexual assault allegations, the Mick Jagger

love child scandal or Lance Armstrong's doping allegations. The last type of media scandal is

psychodrama, which illuminates moral violations by "ordinary people" (Lull & Hinerman,

1997). Psychodramas have the capacity to turn ordinary people into "stars" because of their

excessive image and reporting on the media due to the scandal. Examples of this scandal type include Ariel Castro with the Cleveland kidnappings, George Zimmerman with Trayvon Martin's death or JonBenet Ramsey's mysterious kidnapping. This scandal depicts a more realistic illustration of a drama because it includes believable and real-world characters (Lull & Hinerman, 1997).

Whereas each of the scandal types is distinct and separate from one another, they all have one thing in common: an ultimate "shock" value (Lull & Honerman, 1997). For instance, when individuals discovered their beloved President having an affair with a White House intern, the nation became stunned and developed a high need for orientation. Similarly, when O.J. Simpson, popular movie star and football hero, was accused of murdering his ex-wife and her friend, the nation became astonished with disbelief. As previously mentioned, scandals do not discriminate and can focus on anyone from someone as recognized as the CEO of a major company, to a major movie star to an unknown, non-public figure—the person next door. The media sets the agenda on a scandal followed by public interest, which fuels the scandal to continue growing (Bisbort, 2008; Lull & Hinerman, 1997). The purpose of this current investigation focuses on one scandal type in particular, the star scandal: specifically, the Bill Cosby sexual assault allegations' scandal. The following section further elucidates high profile star scandals and how they tie to agenda setting theory to better illustrate scandals of this nature and then addresses the ongoing Cosby scandal.

The O.J. Simpson scandal. The O.J. Simpson "Trial of the Century" is one of the many scandals that can be analyzed through an agenda setting perspective. This particular scandal is known as the infamous case in which American football star, O.J. Simpson, was accused of murdering his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ron Goldman in 1994. As

aforementioned, because this case involved Simpson, a major celebrity during the time, the scandal can be seen as a "star scandal." Simpson, at the time, was perceived as bigger than life, untouchable, as crossing racial lines and as achieving the American Dream. A celebrated football star, recipient of the coveted Heisman Trophy when he was a football star at USC, NFL star, recognized pitchman and figurehead for national companies such as Hertz, and film star, O.J. was everywhere (Hawkins, 2009; Silberstein, 2003). Known as the "Mayor of Brentwood," Simpson seemingly lived the American dream (Moller, 2016). Simpson was a boy from modest means who became an internationally recognized and beloved star, married to a white wife after he divorced his black wife, a father and celebrity who oozed charm and good looks for the cameras and public (Toobin, 2015). As noted in the Oscar winning 2016 ESPN documentary, *O.J.: Made in America*, Simpson was larger than life. Then, the unthinkable happened on June 12, 1994 when Nicole Brown Simpson, his ex-wife, and friend Ron Goldman, were brutally murdered outside of Nicole Brown Simpson's home on Bundy Drive in Brentwood, California (Toobin, 2015). O.J. was implicated in the brutal double murder, and on the evening of the LAPD's chase for Simpson, 93 million Americans intently watched the white Bronco, driven by Simpson's friend Al Cowlings, carrying Simpson with a gun to his head (Fiske, 1994). The public flocked to the interstate overpasses of the LA freeways to cheer for their beloved star. Undoubtedly, the case was covered extensively and was often times referred to as "the trial of the century" (Toobin, 2015, p. 9).

Using an agenda setting perspective to illustrate, the media chose to highlight Simpson in myriad manners to the public. Some media outlets framed him as innocent: a victim of a corrupt LAPD, a system that had disdain for blacks in LA, particularly blacks who had reached a certain level of success, such as O.J. Simpson, a black man with a white wife, interracial children and

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known as "The Mayor of Brentwood." LA was already under siege and racial polarity, in light of the Rodney King aftermath. Thus, some folks thought O.J. to be yet another casualty of a corrupt, racially rotten judicial system, inciting people to protest and believe that Simpson was wrongly accused (Silberstein, 2003). Many individuals maintained that O.J. was innocent and that the circumstance was very much a racial issue (Silberstein, 2003). That said, other media outlets, and their following public, framed Simpson as a guilty man. *Time Magazine,* for instance, set the agenda on Simpson as an unpleasant, troubled and evil man when darkening his headshot on the cover (Silberstein, 2003). *Sports Illustrated* also used hints that described Simpson as having more of a dark side and *Esquire* took a special interest in displaying hints of Simpson as coming from the "ghetto" (Silberstein, 2003). In sum, in terms of agenda setting, the media relied heavily on drawing attention to the fact that Simpson is a target because he is a black American man, living an American Dream, with a white wife/ex-wife who was a fallen star due to media and police prosecution. Contrarily, other media outlets portrayed him as guilty (Hawkins, 2009). Nonetheless, there were various different depictions of Simpson which caused controversy, ambiguity and also set a common concern for race rather than the actual murders (Silberstein, 2003). For a better understanding on agenda setting and the star scandal, it is beneficial to consider previous research that has been conducted on agenda setting and the Simpson case. This contention is unpacked below.

An often used method of analysis to examine the Simpson case is content analysis. Recently, an increasing number of scholars have incorporated survey responses that test agenda setting theory to a greater extent while also integrating content analysis. An example can be seen in Brown, Duane, and Fraser's (1997) study that examined the effects of agenda setting, Simpson's case, and public opinion. Researchers distinctly examined the Simpson case and how

gender, race, and Simpson's celebrity status influenced public opinion for his innocence or guilt. In other words, the researchers investigated the media's agenda on gender, race and celebrity as key words. Interviews with respondents revealed that the more that individuals exposed themselves to the media's agenda, the more concerned they became with the trial and began to feel a personal relationship to it. This particular response brought about a parasocial relationship with the audience, which means that the television viewers become committed to relationships with media stars in which "their own psychological states are activated" (Cohen, 2004, p. 188). Race was extremely relevant in the case as well, with most black respondents believing in Simpson's innocence as compared to individuals of other races (Brown et al., 1997). This delineation was mostly due to the likelihood that these individuals consumed media stories that highlighted race as the central issue and reported on Simpson being framed because of his race. Americans believed that the more media coverage was produced for the case, the more effectively Simpson's lawyers used it to their advantage and utilized it for more manipulating purposes rather than the truth (Brown et al., 1997).

Utilizing narrative theory, McKay and Smith (1995) conducted a content analysis on media coverage during the O.J. Simpson case. The media coverage that was considered content included prime time news, print media, current affairs programs from all TV channels in Brisbane that were aired a week after Simpson's arrest and a story from *Sixty Minutes.* McKay and Smith (1995) coded three agenda setting motives the media used to report on the story: *the Rise and fall of an American hero, An event produced by and typical of Hollywood and Los Angeles*, and *a Media feeding frenzy*. Stories placed under the category of the *Rise and fall of an American hero* showed Simpson with heroic deeds as a football player or as a movie star then the fall was depicted usually with a mugshot or the framing of him as a murderer. Stories that were

coded under *Hollywood/Los Angeles* revolved around the glamour of Simpson's extravagant

lifestyle in Hollywood as the "Mayor of Brentwood." Lastly, stories that were coded under the

Media feeding frenzy category were conclusive reports the media published in an effort to keep

the Simpson story alive. This particular analysis clarified the media coverage for the O.J. scandal

and how the media considered factors like race, wealth, fame, sex, and scandal rather than

reporting on the story itself (McKay & Smith, 1995).

     Maxwell, Huxford, Borum and Hornik (2000) also examined the Simpson case through a

content analysis of different media stories. The scholars were interested in examining how the

Simpson case influenced coverage on domestic violence. Instead of searching for the media's

agenda on race, this study used specific key words such as, "domestic or girlfriend or spouse or

wife" with a combination of "abuse or beat or dispute or kill or murder or stalk or violence"

(Maxwell et al., 2000, p. 261). Thus, the keywords that were carefully selected already began to

shape the frame in finding how the amount of domestic violence coverage changed over time.

The researchers found that the coverage increased after the June 1994 murders from the O.J.

Simpson case across all the media analyzed. Once the criminal trial was finalized, however,

media coverage for domestic violence decreased and was covered in the same way for *The*

Enquirer and *Philadelphia Daily News,* but not for *The New York Times*. The researchers make a

special note that this may be because *The New York Times* does not cover stories of local interest

but instead receives worldwide attention, which was very necessary for such a major case like

the Simpson case. Unlike the other two outlets, *The New York Times* continued publishing stories

about sexual assault that were consistently higher than in the pre-Simpson period. The main

difference, however, was that *The New York Times* focused on discussing the stories along with

legislative actions against domestic violence and also provided their audience with secondary

references. Findings demonstrate that there was an increase in media coverage during the Simpson trial, but it did not ultimately create social change for domestic violence after the trial was over from *The Enquirer* or *Philadelphia Daily News.*

The studies reviewed thus far exemplify how the media's agenda can impact what the public thinks or thinks about. Because of the various stories published on the Simpson case, more issues were highlighted (Brown et al., 1997; Maxwell et al., 2000; McKay & Smith, 1995; Silberstein, 2003). The media set the agenda to frame Simpson as guilty or innocent with special attention to the issue of domestic violence, race, gender, celebrity status, wealth and scandal. While the public was consumed with the constant showings of the case on the media, they began to develop their own opinion which coincided with the issues they viewed highlighted through media outlets.

The Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky scandal. Sometime after the Simpson case, the media set the agenda on different scandals, such as the Clinton and Lewinsky affair, which crossed the line of star and institutional scandal. On January 21, 1998, the media exploded and aired stories daily in regard to President Clinton and his relationship with a White House intern at the time named Monica Lewinsky (Kiousis, 2003). While Clinton did initially deny the affair, he later on admitted to having an improper sexual relationship with Lewinsky (Sonner & Wilcox, 1999). Clinton's definition of "sexual relations" seemingly meant "sexual intercourse," which, for him, meant that he was not untruthful given he did not engage in sexual intercourse with Lewinsky, but what would be, as aforementioned, an "improper sexual relationship." Essentially, critics believed that Clinton lied to a grand jury and tried to halt an investigation of the affair (Sonner & Wilcox, 1999). The Senate was debating whether Clinton should be removed from office, the Internet erupted with Clinton and Lewinsky jokes and the topic became fodder for a

media feeding frenzy (Sonner & Wilcox, 1999). Concurrently, Clinton was more popular than ever and had more favorability from the public than any other contemporary president (Sonner & Wilcox, 1999). At the time, Clinton was seen as a charming and intelligent man, a loving father, and a caring husband. Like Simpson, Clinton knew how to present himself in front of the public eye and had his wife, Hillary Clinton, by his side throughout his whole presidency, especially in the middle of the Lewisnky scandal (Sonner & Wilcox, 1999).

Because this story focused on the President of the United States at the time, a well-recognized public figure, it can be seen as both an institutional and star scandal. For the purposes of this paper, however, this will be referred to as a star scandal. The way the media set the agenda on this scandal was significantly different than with the Simpson trial because of the two different characters. Simpson held a celebrity status whereas Clinton was the President of the United States at the time. The audience and the media were attracted to the story because of Clinton's power status. It is also important to note that Clinton's scandal was not reported on as continually as was Simpson's. Thus, there was less media coverage to consider for scholars researching the scandal.

The developing story was interesting to the media, public and scholars not only because of the scandal and power aspect, but also because of the economy at the time. Clinton was the leader of the strongest economy the nation had witnessed in a very long time. For instance, Americans' salaries were rising and more opportunities for employment were rising (Sonner & Wilcox, 1999). Studies show that Clinton's high approval ratings are due to the media's agenda when publishing or airing the story (Sonner & Wilcox, 1999). Rather than showing Clinton as unfaithful, the media framed Clinton as a hero during a time that America was in need (Kiousis, 2003). The media showed external factors not associated with the Lewinsky scandal itself, such

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as positive economic factors and Clinton's general policy performance. In other words, the good economy largely protected Clinton from negative criticism from the public. An external factor to consider is that Clinton was not the first president to have a rumored mistress or that there were necessarily personal implications for the American public due to his personal decisions in light of the strong economy. That is, some might believe that what people do in their private life is completely separate from their professional life. Lastly, there is a mutual agreement between political observers that Clinton is charismatic and talented at communicating with the public that has made people say, "There's something about Bill" (Sonner & Wilcox, 1999, p. 556). Often times, Clinton was portrayed as someone who had a natural ability to connect with the public. For instance, Clinton appeared on Arsenio Hall's show sporting sunglasses and playing the saxophone (Moy, Xenos & Hess, 2006). With instances such as this, some may argue that Clinton was seen as a "cool guy" and just a normal American. Like any other human being, Clinton also made mistakes, which may also have contributed to positive feedback from his presidency. Not only did the media depict Clinton as a "cool guy," but also highlighted Americans in a happy state with slightly higher incomes, lower mortgage payments, retirement savings, and outstanding job security because of Clinton (Sonner & Wilcox, 1999).

Kiousis (2003) was interested in exploring news coverage of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal and its impact on public opinion. In order to do so, Kiousis (2003) examined the scandal coverage longitudinally with many different time lags and probed various dimensions of public opinion on job and perceived favorability. Results found that media coverage was associated with changes in Clinton's job approval and his favorability from the public. Findings also suggest that media coverage influenced positive perceived favorability of Clinton even though he was unfaithful. This finding proposes that the Lewinsky affair was not of equal importance to the

American public as was the economy at the time. Joslyn (2003) also took an interest with the association between the mass media and public opinion for Clinton by documenting a "third-person effect," the belief that people perceive the media influences others more so than it influences themselves (Joslyn, 2003, p. 829). The study revealed that the self was judged as less influenced when the media set the agenda for Clinton and Lewinsky on sexual and partisan cues (Joslyn, 2003). The researchers believe that "the effect is most likely to occur when the media stimulus in question gives rise to the perception that 'it is not smart to be influenced by that message" (Joslyn, 2003, p. 840). The respondents were more concerned with and found to be more influenced by the legal and ethical cues from the media (Joslyn, 2003). In other words, participants believed that the media focusing on more ethical issues rather than sexual with the Lewinsky scandal offered more judgments and influence from them personally. The people believed that the media's sexual agenda influenced other people greatly. Findings from previous studies suggest that the media during the time focused more on Clinton's role as president and less on his role with Lewinsky (Kiousis, 2003).

Although the Clinton and Lewisnky affair was a prominent story in the news, the scandal did not seem to make any appearances in the 2016 election involving his wife, Hillary Clinton, running as the democratic nominee for president. There was a strong possibility that Bill Clinton, a man who was perceived as unfaithful, could be the "First Man" of the White House. Yet, the media set the agenda on Mr. Clinton as the loving and supportive husband who stands beside his wife, even hitting the campaign trail in her absence to fulfill an appearance obligation in Las Vegas during the 2016 campaign as she was reportedly besieged by pneumonia (Botkin, 2016). Such reporting paints Mr. Clinton as a supportive husband coming to his wife's aid in a time of need. On the other hand, the media negatively focused on Trump's wife, Melania Trump, the

next possible First Lady for the Republican party nominee. *The New York Post,* along with other media outlets, released nude photos of Melania taken decades ago during her modeling career (Vincent, 2016). Thus, one could argue that the media has set the agenda on Mrs. Trump as a scandalous woman while Mr. Clinton is still seen as a loving husband. This is yet another example of agenda setting and the media's power to bring salience to the public agenda.

Adding on to the relevant literature, Yiouyas and Segvic (2003) examined the Clinton and Lewinsky scandal coverage with an agenda setting perspective that included the impact of framed messages on an audience. Like Kiousis (2003), Yiouyas and Segvic (2003) were interested in discovering how and why approval ratings remained at an all-time high in spite of the affair and the alleged deception or not being as forthcoming as possible about the situation. Based on their exposure to media, the public was concerned mostly with "the candidate's stand on the issues" (Yiouyas & Segvic, 2003, p. 557). A large amount of the respondents were concerned with Clinton's personal morals and ethics yet did not find the affair to be of utter importance. According to Yiouyas and Segvic (2003), this might possibly indicate that the public does not view adultery, specifically Clinton's affair, as immoral or something serious enough that should threaten his position in the White House. Although the researchers offer no explanation for this, it may be because of external factors such as previous Presidents' affairs or perhaps people view it as "normal" or "typical" behavior from a charismatic man? The public's agenda was more concerned with the campaign which demonstrates stories on Clinton containing a morality attribute needed to be directly linked to the election (Yiouyas & Segvic, 2003). This particular study explores the first and second level of agenda setting. Because the public was more concerned with the economy rather than the Lewinsky affair, the media set the agenda on positive changes Clinton was making, which, to review, is part of the first level of agenda

setting. Thus, the public did not think the issue was of relevance and left little interpretation for the second level of agenda setting. The audience interpreted the affair as a "norm" and a forgivable act because of the outstanding economy (Yiouyas & Segvic, 2003).

The studies reviewed thus far all highlight different agendas that the media took into consideration when reporting on the Clinton and Lewinsky affair. Whereas there is no clear consensus on the media and the public's agenda, it contributes to agenda setting and scandal with different points of view. It is valuable to consider the role of the people involved in the scandal and how that may impact the media's agenda. For example, perhaps the media framed Clinton differently than Simpson because of their different positions. Unlike Simpson, Clinton's role as President had the potential to impact the audience as a whole while Simpson's audience consisted of people who took the scandal to a more personal level with the issues of race and domestic violence. It is also important to recall that Simpson's case involved a brutal double murder while Clinton's scandal involved sexual behavior. As stated, it is also beneficial to the researchers to consider outside factors when analyzing a scandal. For Clinton, the outside factor was the good economy and the audiences' personal beliefs on adultery. For Simpson, an outside factor could have been his history with domestic abuse. The Cosby case, the focus of this investigation, addresses allegations involving issues of power, sexuality and abuse.

Sexual Assault

Because this research project is exclusively dedicated to an analysis of the media's agenda for star scandal, particularly Cosby's sexual assault allegations, it is important to review the literature for sexual assault. Research demonstrates that the media's agenda on rape could greatly affect the public's view of rape and attitudes or rape myth acceptance toward both rapists and rape victims (Heath, Gordon & LeBailly, 1981). According to agenda setting theory, the

media has the power to define and construct a second-hand reality for any type of story (McCombs, 2004). For the recent stories regarding rape, the media has created this reality for the public with no clear consensus or definition of sexual assault or the sexual assault victims. Heath et al. (1981) argue that the media do not include explicit details in regard to sexual assault which causes ambiguity for the public's opinion on sexual assault. Privacy issues become of concern with the media as well. For instance, often times, rape victims choose to remain anonymous or the media protects and respects the victim's identity. Thus, the readers are not fully informed on all details related to the sexual assault and are left to speculate what a typical rape case consists of (Heath et al., 1981).

Researchers have investigated how the media sets the agenda on scandals through agenda setting theory in trials such as O.J. Simpson and the coverage of the President Bill Clinton/ Monica Lewinsky scandal. In order to identify unclear and bias reporting for sexual assault, it is helpful for scholars to particularly examine sexual assault cases and the media with an agenda setting perspective. An agenda setting approach posits that what the news features will impact the public's opinion on sexual assault (McCombs, 2004). Identifying the varied perspectives of rape in the media are of great importance to society because of research indicating that many people have varied views on what rape means. Burt and Albin (1981), for instance, argue that rape is seen somewhere between two extremes. At the inclusive extreme, feminists believe that all coerced sex is rape (Burt & Albin, 1981). On the restrictive extreme, people believe that there is no such thing as rape (Burt & Albin, 1981). Today, the legal definition of rape is "penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person without consent of the victim" (The United States Department of Justice, 2012, para. 1).

Nonetheless, sexual assault has become a timely and prominent issue shown in the media with movements such as Lady GaGa and Joe Biden's "It's On Us" campaign against sexual assault, documentaries such as *The Hunting Ground*, and the Kesha and Dr. Luke case, in which the singer Kesha decided to drop all charges. Instances such as the ones aforementioned were reported on various and diverse media outlets from MTV to NBC (Garibaldi, 2016; Silva & Klein, 2016). When reporting on more serious issues, such as sexual assault, the subdivide, or bias, between media corporations becomes a concern because of the public opinion that it can affect. From an agenda setting perspective, if people rely on media outlets for information and said outlets de-emphasize sexual assault, those individuals could potentially develop doubtful or questioning views of sexual assault (McCombs, 2009). These views of rape are persistent with 84% of men who committed rape believing that what they did was "definitely not rape" (Warshaw, 1988, p. 90). Based on recent studies, 73% of rape survivors do not label their sexual assault experience as rape, which is referred to as "unacknowledged rape" (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004). Peterson and Muehlenhard (2004) believe that this misinterpretation of rape might be because individuals are influenced by rape myths that describe rape "narrowly or that blame the victim for rape" (p. 130). The same researchers argue that the rape scripts presented in media are to blame with most people adopting the misconceptions and scripts they see (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004). Research shows that when media shows rape specifically as a serious concern, the audience will also come to think of it as a serious issue (Wilson, Linz, Donnerstein & Stipp, 1992). When media sets the agenda on rape myths, on the other hand, the public will be influenced as well. This particular finding supports assumptions of agenda setting theory. Nonetheless, researchers believe that different media create an ambiguous view and misconception of rape (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004). Media outlets oftentimes report on the

same story, such as rape, with different images, headlines, and content which can create an uncertain perception of rape for public opinion. Specifically, how the media frame the story can affect the consumer's perception of the event, the individual(s) involved, etc. (Heath, Gordon & LeBailly, 1981; McCombs, 2009).

With an agenda setting perspective, the way and the frequency the media report on sexual assault could influence public opinion. Several experimental studies have demonstrated that sexually violent or demeaning films translate to an increased acceptance of rape myth, blaming of victims/survivors, and acceptance for aggression against women (e.g., Kaestle, Halpern & Brown, 2007). As with films, the way the news depicts rape victims/survivors and rape can possibly increase rape myth acceptance as well. For this reason, journalistic integrity is crucial now more than ever. Although there is an extensive amount of research on agenda setting and sexual assault as two separate fields of study, there is a lack of research that uses agenda setting as a lens for examining sexual assault in the media. Journalists and the public, however, are becoming more aware that often times, the media sets the agenda in a way that benefits them with increased attention from the readers and viewers. In order to maintain attention from the audience, media outlets rely on fresh-up-to-date news and repetitive stories to communicate with the public and to keep the network active (McCombs, 2009). These goals may cause the media to frame the sexual assault stories in certain ways that create ambiguity and controversy.

A recent story in the media involving sexual assault involved an initially non-public figure Brock Turner, a former swimmer at Stanford University. Turner sparked a media feeding frenzy when he faced charges for the sexual assault of an unconscious woman on the school's campus (Sanchez, 2016). Turner was convicted of three felonies which included assault with intent to rape of an intoxicated woman, sexually penetrating an intoxicated person with an

unfamiliar item, and sexually penetrating an unconscious person with an unfamiliar item (Hunt, 2016; Koren, 2016). Turner faced a maximum of 14 years in prison but received six months in county jail with three years of probation because the judge for the case stated that a harsher sentence could have an unbearable impact on a star swimmer well on his way to the Olympics (Hunt, 2016). Turner's case received extensive media coverage with several different agendas from the media. The case received more attention when the same judge ordered a harsher sentence to El Salvador immigrant Aaron Persky (Silverstein, 2016). Persky pleaded guilty to an offense that was very similar to Turner's and received three years in prison (Silverstein, 2016). Similarly, 18-year-old David Becker was sentenced to only two years of probation for raping two women in Massachusetts (Irby, 2016). The judge for the case stated that Becker should not have jail time so that he could graduate high school and move on to have a normal college experience (Irby, 2016).

Important agenda setting cues from the media are the images of Turner used to report the stories. Zeba Blay (2016), a journalist for the *Huffington Post*, noted that the media was setting the agenda for the story based on his White privilege. Instead of reporting on the story with a mugshot of Turner, the media often used Turner's picture for the swimming team at Stanford. This polished picture shows Turner with a wide smile, a suit, a tie and his hair combed to the side. Turner's mugshot is quite the opposite from the polished image the media often used. It shows a startled young man with a white hoodie and wide eyes. Turner's mugshot, however, was not shown in the media but instead showed his polished image. Blay (2016) compares the media's agenda of Turner to Trayvon Martin's, the young black man murdered in Ferguson in 2014. Martin was often shown wearing a hoodie with a serious face. This image often translated to that a troubled young man. Unlike Turner, Martin was shot and killed for no apparent reason

yet was shown in the media with flashing gold teeth or throwing the "West-Side" sign (Blay, 2016). According to agenda setting theory, including images such as these can influence the public to think differently for race and sexual assault. Specifically, white Turner had committed a crime, yet, black Martin, who seemingly had not, could be argued as being more vilified in the media due to media framing.

Headlines found in the media in regard to the Stanford case similarly showed the media's agenda of framing Turner as innocent and as a victim himself. *The Washington Post* referred to Turner as an all-American swimmer and wrote about his accomplishments as a student and a swimmer instead of reporting on the sexual assault charges (Miller, 2016). The media's agenda here was to frame Turner as a victim himself of a night of drinking (Miller, 2016). After the rape victim decided to speak out on the case, the *Washington Post* published the story with the headline of "A rape victim delivers 'powerful' message to a former Stanford swimmer." In the several articles *The Washington Post* published, reporters referred to Turner as a baby-faced Stanford freshman and especially highlighted his high level of intoxication along with his "promising future that remains uncertain" (Miller, 2016, para. 25). A similar situation occurred with Peyton Manning at the University of Tennessee when women accused him of creating a hostile sexual environment which resulted in a trial in Nashville (Associated Press, 2016). The judge, however, decided not to transfer the case because of its "utter lack of relevance" (Associated Press, 2016, para. 5). Similarly, Tom Brady's deflategate scandal surfaced when the Colts accused the Patriots of deflating their footballs to give Brady and the Patriots an unfair advantage (Neumeister & Golen, 2016). Each of the cases listed has a major trait in common that the public may find unfair: power. These individuals had power that may or may not have interfered with the outcome of their scandals. To illustrate, Gabby Douglas, American gymnast

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from the 2016 Olympics, was vilified in the media because she was perceived as being disrespectful to her country when she did not to put her hand over her heart during the national anthem and for not smiling enough or styling her hair in a certain way (Gray, 2016). Ryan Lochte, American swimmer from the 2016 Olympics, on the other hand, allegedly destroyed property and lied about having a gun to his head during a traumatic robbery. While Douglas was framed as a villain, Lochte was framed as a "kid who deserves a break" and had just made a poor decision to engage in boys-will-be-boys high jinx (Gray, 2016, para. 1). After lying in the 2016 Olympics robbery incident, some believe Lochte was rewarded for his shenanigans with the opportunity to star in *Dancing with the Stars* (Park & Gonzalez, 2016).

The Turner case has not been readily studied due to its recent happenings, but nonetheless has influenced public opinion through social media and other media outlets. Although Turner was found guilty, many media outlets, such as *The Washington Post*, often framed him as innocent and decided to focus on his accomplishments. Nonetheless, different media outlets, such as CNN, also utilize a more neutral agenda that highlights the actual case with headlines like, "Brock Turner judge: 'I take him at his word'" and "Outrage over 6-month sentence for Brock Turner in Stanford rape case" (e.g., Fantz, 2016; Tamura, 2016). As individuals continue to be exposed to different networks and stories covering the Turner case, their perceptions of sexual assault norms and rape myth acceptance may change.

The Bill Cosby Sexual Assault Allegations

Bill Cosby reached fame with his role as a standup comedian and then as Dr. Heathcliff Huxtable on award winning, *The Cosby Show*, from 1984-1992 (Whitaker, 2014). The hit television show broke barriers with the Huxtables, an upper class, black American family through a "lens of normalcy rather than the dysfunction and ridicule often associated with Black

sitcoms" (Means Coleman, 1998, p. 199). Rather than what some might argue as a stereotyped depiction of the black community, *The Cosby Show* provided a realistic look at an African American family with professional accomplishments and achievement of the American dream (Means Coleman, 1998). Cosby quickly became a hero for the black community with his television show and changed American television forever, specifically for the black community. Like O.J., Cosby gave black Americans hope for their American dream and became seemingly untouchable through his major name recognition, success, and contribution (Means Coleman, 1998).

Cosby's success from *The Cosby Show* increased with more television and film opportunities such as *Uptown Saturday Night, Let's Do It Again, A Piece of the Action* and contributed vocals to *Fat Albert* and *the Cosby Kids* (Bracks, 2011; Whitaker, 2014). With his fame came an expected power not only from his success as a comedian and an actor, but also from his educated background and positive influence on the black community. Not only was Cosby becoming an icon for the black community, but he was as well for the American people with over 60 honorary degrees from different colleges and universities (Grossman, 2015). Recently, however, in light of over 60 sexual assault allegations, some schools and companies have decided to rescind their association with Cosby.

While Cosby was on top of the world, rumors began to surface about Cosby and rape allegations with several aspiring actresses and models. More women began to speak out in regard to their encounter with Cosby and often shared the same narrative. Specifically, the women that have accused Cosby of sexual assault claim to have been drugged by the actor and remember a limited amount about the occurrence of the alleged sexual assault (Helsel, 2015). Each of the stories from the survivors share similarities—that they were offered coaching and assistance in

the entertainment industry from Cosby as a way to lure them into a room with him (Helsel, 2015). Recognized women (e.g., women with star power) who have spoken openly about their alleged sexual assault by Cosby include Heidi Thomas, Janice Dickinson, Beverly Johnson, Louisa Moritz, and Michelle Hurd among others (Helsel, 2015). The earliest allegation can be traced to 1965 with the most recent occurring in 2008 (Helsel, 2015). Later on, it was discovered that Cosby actually confessed in a court deposition that he indeed obtained Quaaludes to use with women he wanted to have sex with. This caused a media feeding frenzy with various different frames from the media that often pointed to guilty. Cosby's representatives, nonetheless, defend Cosby and say that using Quaaludes during the 70's for one's sex life was completely common and normal.

Although the allegations occurred over a span of fifty years, it is not until recently that the media has begun to extensively cover the ongoing story. The story has gained momentum because the women filing complaints against Cosby have continually increased to the point where it cannot be ignored. As the number of alleged survivors continue to increase as do the pressing of charges, the public and media have exploded with constant coverage, numerous questions, and an implementation of being "Cosbied" as a pop culture staple in slang language as well as presence movies such as *Neighbors 2* and in Kanye West's "Famous" music video (Porreca, 2016; Stutz, 2016). Bill Cosby was also featured in a South Park episode attempting to rape singer Taylor Swift for a Christmas episode in 2014 (Harnick, 2014).

More women have decided to pursue civil lawsuits against Cosby which has attracted attention from the media and the public; yet, Cosby has continued to deny all allegations (Ember & Bowley, 2015). Cosby's sexual assault allegations continue to change seemingly each day and is, by comparison, a very new star scandal as compared to Simpson and Clinton. When the story

broke in 2014, Cosby made a comment that the black media should stay neutral with his case (Howard, 2014). It is unclear why Cosby made this statement and/or what he meant. Perhaps Cosby made this assertion because of previous cases against powerful black men, such as Simpson. This comment from Cosby potentially illustrates the variation among media outlets with a serious issue like rape. Agenda setting theory provides a lens through which one may examine what the public thinks about based on the media that is featured and also examine the media content closely. Additionally, the theory enables researchers to examine the different ways that the media defines sexual assault, or assault by the black man, which may also influence public opinion.

Whether the media outlets decide to remain neutral or to frame people in certain ways, it is nonetheless beneficial to examine the case with an agenda setting perspective because of the influence that the issues related to it have on society. Important issues that correspond to the Cosby case include issues of power, race and sexual assault that can potentially impact public opinion, behavior and relationships with other individuals. Research on the scandal has the ability to bring awareness on the media's agenda setting and the different ways the media talks about Cosby's role in the middle of the sexual assault accusations. It is necessary to highlight the way the media sets the agenda on sexual assault and compare it with what sexual assault really is- nonconsensual sex. As agenda setting theory argues, people often turn to the media during times of confusion and ambiguity (McCombs, 2004). The media, however, does not always provide neutral, clear and correct agenda setting because of their political ties (Alterman, 2003). Further research on this case has the possibility to highlight the strong responsibility the media has to influence public opinion, particularly with the Cosby case. Although there are a few highly publicized sexual assault cases that have occurred throughout the past year (e.g., Brock

Turner, Dr. Luke), the Cosby case merits communication research attention because of the longevity and the high number of alleged victims.

This particular case is unique and important to expand research upon because Cosby, someone of high power, was allegedly able to keep his sexual assault allegations hidden for over 50 years with numerous women. The counter argument in this case would be that there was nothing to hide because the sexual assaults did not occur. If the allegations are indeed true, however, Cosby likely had power to keep negative stories about him under the radar. That said, the issue brings up power as a consideration and, like with Simpson, race might become an issue as the legal trial proceeds. From an agenda setting theory standpoint, how these factors were and are featured in the media can be addressed through a careful content analysis of how various media outlets tell the story of Cosby. This research project aims to discover the different ways the news informs the public which ultimately impacts reactions and different sets of beliefs. Given the paucity of the research on the Cosby scandal, the following research question is advanced:

RQ: What, if any, is the difference in how the Cosby scandal is framed by different media outlets?

Chapter 3: Method

Procedure

In order to accurately examine and determine the different agendas and attendant frames for the mediated articles regarding the Cosby case, a content analysis was conducted, enabling the coding of textual data into specific categories. In the social sciences, there exist three frequently considered approaches to content analysis: *conventional content analysis*, *summative content analysis*, and *directive content analysis* (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A conventional content analysis is typically employed when the researcher wants to describe a phenomenon and code it with new insights that emerge when the analysis begins (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This approach is appropriate when there is limited research or theory on the issue. A summative content analysis approach begins with the researcher identifying and counting certain words or phrases followed by interpreting the contextual use for each of the words as well as the word count (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Lastly, the directed content analysis approach is best used when an existing theory, prior research, and an existing coding scheme are available within the literature (Hseih & Shannon, 2005). The directed content analysis process begins with the researcher identifying key concepts as initial coding categories followed by a brief definition for each of the categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). For this particular study, because of the preexisting coding schemes in the literature, a directed content analysis was conducted.

The current directed content analysis was inspired by McKay and Smith's (1995) media content analysis of the O.J. trial. To review, McKay and Smith (1995) used content and semiotic analyses to study different popular media stories and ultimately examined the articles for common themes in which they were able to identify three common themes that are also very relevant to the Cosby scandal. Thus, the same themes were used in the current study as a priori

codes to guide the analysis. The three coding categories guiding the current analysis included: (1) *Cosby as the Rise and fall of an American hero,* (2) the *Cosby case an event produced by and typical of Hollywood and Los Angeles*, and (3) the *Cosby case as a Media feeding frenzy* (McKay & Smith, 1995, p. 57). Often times, a single phrase corresponded to more than just one coding category. The first coding category, *Cosby as the Rise and fall of an American hero*, captured a representation of stories that reflected or responded to the agenda portraying Cosby as a hero to the African American community but also told the story of his fall from grace, painted as an alleged sexual predator, mired in over 60 sexual assault allegations. This coding category highlighted negative occurrences and recurrences (i.e., the fall) reflecting Cosby's demise, as allegations kept (and keep) resurfacing. Concurrently, this category also highlights the hero that Cosby used to be to the American people (and still may be). To illustrate, analyzed media outlets often framed Cosby as the beloved and charming "American dad." Many outlets also referred to the educated Dr. Huxtable from *The Cosby Show* –a beacon of hope to the African American community, yet also dually highlighting the women who have spoken out about their alleged sexual assault encounter with him. Examples fitting to this category found during the coding of the data include, "I believe Mr. Cosby drugged me in order to sexually assault me that night," (Toomey, 2014, para. 8). The second coding category, the *Cosby case as an event produced by and typical of Hollywood and Los Angeles*, corresponded to stories that revolved around a "myth of place/space, anchoring various aspects of the story as typical products of Hollywood and Los Angeles" (McKay & Smith, 1995, p. 58). Phrases that aligned with the sentiment of this coding category address things associated with Cosby's elite status in Hollywood and his presence and command in television, film, commercials and the comedy circuit, to name a few. Many of the alleged victims also had elite status and/or were/are recognizable in Hollywood as actresses and

models, and were also included in this category. Examples in the data fitting to this category include "She was introduced to Cosby through her modeling agent" (Cady, 2015, para. 9) or, "With a successful career spanning six decades, Bill Cosby has influenced comics and actors in Hollywood for years" (Seemayer, 2014, para. 1). The next coding scheme, the *Cosby case as a Media feeding frenzy*, corresponds to stories that highlight the frantic media coverage of the scandal and the impact that the stories may hold for the upcoming trial commencing June 5, 2017. This category often reflected Cosby's lawyers and alleged victims and/or their representation reaching out to the press. Many of the mediated outlets depended on each other for information, which is also included in this coding category. A major part of the Cosby case came from media outlets feeding off each other with a "he said," "she said," or "such media outlet said" cadence. The story itself was placed out of proportion and kept alive because of the media feeding frenzy aspect to the case. Any mention of social media is reflected in this category. Examples that emerged from the sample in this coded category include, "Bill Cosby's social media team attempted to create a funny meme-generator and released it to the public" (Nessif, 2014, para. 1).

Because this study is exploratory in nature, the possibility exists that new themes and resultant codes emerge from the media content analyzed. Specifically, if a theme emerged that was not consistent with the pre-existing, guiding, a priori codes, a new code was created to reflect the theme (e.g., Emmers & Canary, 1996). Throughout the coding process, four new coding categories emerged and were included into the coding rubric. The first one that emerged was *Not acknowledged*. This category corresponds to phrases that wrote about Cosby denying all accusations, denying to comment on the matter, or highlighted Cosby or his representatives choosing not to acknowledge the ongoing situation. An example found within the data reflecting

this category include, "Cosby has repeatedly denied the allegations" (Leopold, 2014, para. 2).

The second category that emerged from the data was *Support for Cosby*. This coding category reflected stories that illustrated Cosby's supporters either at his shows, with his family, other celebrities, or, many times, included the media outlet itself. Examples of this category within the sample include, "Pray for Bill Cosby. Pray for the ones who are scandalizing him, more so" (Seemayer, 2014, para. 9) and, "'I say this because this is my opinion, and in America, still, I know it's a shock, but you are still innocent until proven guilty. He has not been proven a rapist'" (FOX News, 2015, para. 5). The third category that emerged from the coding is, *Power of Cosby*. This category highlighted Cosby's powerful role in the industry and how that power was used to his advantage to allegedly sexually assault various women. In the current study, power is very rarely implicitly mentioned and refers to phrases that highlighted Cosby's success, wealth and promises he would allegedly make to the alleged victims/survivors about the doors he could open and promised success in the entertainment industry in exchange for sex. In other words, power corresponds to highlighting Cosby's influence with the black community, the entertainment industry and major success. This particular category focused on how Cosby was/is in the powerfully privileged position as compared to the alleged victims/survivors and how the victims/survivors were chilled and intimidated to come forward because of Cosby's powerful role and status in the industry. Examples from this category found in the sample include, "He was a powerful man in an industry that I wanted to be a part of" (Botelho, 2014, para. 22) or, "I don't know anyone in white America or black America that was not a fan of Bill Cosby and 'The Cosby Show'" (Botelho, 2014, para. 10). The fourth and final coding category that emerged is *Power of victims/survivors*. This coding category highlights how alleged victims/survivors are fighting back against Cosby and the different manners in which they are choosing to tell their

story, either through lawsuits or speaking to media outlets. Articles taking a stand against sexual assault and giving the alleged victims/survivors a voice toward justice are coded under this category. Often times, stories in this category wrote about rape culture in America and the different ways that the Cosby story has the potential to prevent sexual assault cases likened to Cosby's. Coded examples in this category include, "What sparked this lawsuit is Bill Cosby through his representatives calling Janice Dickinson a liar, and Janice is refusing to be re-victimized" (Cady, 2015, para. 4) or, comments from former President Obama saying, "I think this country, any civilized country, should have no tolerance for rape" (FOX News, 2015, para. 2). To review, three a priori coding categories served in the coding in addition to the four coding categories that emerged from the coding process itself, bringing the total number of coding categories in this investigation to seven.

Sample

Webpages were used for accessibility purposes and also because, according to research, they are currently the primary outlet that people find information on particular issues of interest (Choi & Xiong, 2012). Webpages keep their stories updated throughout the day and incorporate new findings as the stories unfold (Choi & Xiong, 2012). Research demonstrates that since the 1990's, the Internet and people obtaining their news through that medium are exponentially growing (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009).

For the purposes of this study, much background research was initially conducted to select different media outlets with varied political stances. The author's goal was to review different media outlets that range from liberal, conservative, to a more entertainment and pop culture approach to the Cosby scandal. Gathering articles from different webpages with different political views enabled the researcher to answer the research question the most accurately.

Although the trial is set to commence on June 5, 2017, the researcher's goal was to gather news coverage from when the scandal first broke. Including varied political stances enabled the author to answer the guiding research question if a story can be framed in different ways and ultimately shape the agenda in different ways. According to previous studies, FOX News covers important stories, such as the Iraq War and the campaign for the U.S. presidency, in a way that is often supportive of conservative individuals' views while CNN tends to be more supportive of the Democratic party and liberal individuals (Aday, Livingston & Hebert, 2005; Feldman, Maiback, Roser-Renouf & Leiserowitz, 2011; Groeling & Baum, 2007). For this reason, and to reflect the political variance, stories were gathered from CNN and FOX News webpages as they related to the Cosby scandal. Initially, the author's goal was to include a different perspective from the entertainment industry by including and examining Black Entertainment Television's (BET) website as the third webpage in the sampling frame containing stories about the Cosby case. However, BET's site appeared to offer few stories regarding the Cosby case which led the author to include a different entertainment media outlet. After consultation with the UNLV Urban Affairs' Librarian for guidance, an agreement was reached to include E! Entertainment as the third and final source because it included a larger number of articles regarding the Cosby case from an entertainment/pop culture point of view. In sum, FOX News (foxnews.com), CNN (cnn.com), and E! (eonline.com) webpages were used as the three main media outlets in the sampling frame for the purposes of this investigation due to their potentially varied views resultant from story framing. Gathering information from media outlets such as ABC, CBS or NBC were not considered because of their stronger focus on television programming, such current primetime shows *The Bachelor, The Voice, The Big Bang Theory,* etc. Also of consideration was the fact that *The Cosby Show* aired on NBC and the possibility that the show

being nested at NBC might confound reporting of the scandal on the NBC site. The goal of the current study was to locate different agendas on a story from different media outlets and how stories are framed, communicating an agenda to the public.

Procedures

This study gathered articles from each webpage through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique (Baxter & Babbie, 2004). Purposive sampling was appropriate given the parameters of the current study because it allowed the author to select three variant networks relevant to the purpose of the study (i.e., conservative, liberal and entertainment) and examine different mediated frames. There exist two factors that served as decision rules for sample inclusion. First, the articles that were coded were to be strictly text. Any type of videos, such as interviews or broadcasters reporting on the trial, were not considered because nonverbal nuances might change the flavor or interpretation of the message metacommunicatively. Second, the articles that were chosen reflected the time frame between November 10, 2014-November 10, 2015. The reason these anchor point dates were designated to begin and end the sampling timeframe is because this time period was crucial for the Cosby case and reflected major momentum in the media, thereby best capturing the nature of the scandal. Much background research was conducted regarding the timeframe decision rule time. Specifically, according to ABC, the *LA Times*, and UNLV Urban Affairs' librarian, media insurgence gained the most momentum during this time when dozens of women came forward with claims that dated back fifty years. Accusers began to speak out after comedian Hannibal Buress made a joke about Cosby raping women (Kim, Littlefield & Olsen, 2016; Fisher, 2015). When victims/survivors heard or heard about the joke, they began to argue that the allegations are in fact true (Fisher, 2015). When the joke and accusations were made public, Cosby's PR team launched an online

meme generator to calm the accusers and silence the story (Fisher, 2015). However, media outlets and Twitter exploded with memes and references to Cosby as a sexual predator. Despite the fact that the case was barely beginning to unfold, the media began to report on the issue almost immediately during this time.

In order to identify the articles within the time frame for this investigation's sampling frame, the search bar on the top of each page was utilized. The search bar on foxnews.com only gave the author access to four articles and did not work well compared to CNN and FOX News. Thus, articles from FOX News were located with an advanced Google search. Because the stories the author was searching for in particular included sexual assault and Bill Cosby, the author initially tried using the keywords "Bill Cosby and rape" when searching CNN. Upon consultation with the UNLV Urban Affairs' Librarian, however, more specific search keywords such as "Bill Cosby and drug facilitated sexual assault" were implemented. This key word modification resulted in a wider range of articles in terms of the legal proceedings. However, the same keywords did not pull up as many articles with FOX News or E! Thus, the author, in consult with UNLV Urban Affairs' Librarian, decided to keep the keywords a bit simpler so that they could provide a wider variety of articles from each webpage. The keywords that were utilized for this analysis were "Bill Cosby and rape." To summarize, locating articles from CNN began with a visit to cnn.com, a click on the search bar, and typing in "Bill Cosby and rape." FOX News required a different approach with a visit to Google.com, typing in "Bill Cosby and rape site:foxnews.com" in the search bar, and also selecting the exact time span as part of the advanced search. Lastly, E! entailed the same process as CNN with a visit to eonline.com, a click on the search bar, and typing in "Bill Cosby and rape." To avoid researcher self-selection, every third article on each site that met the inclusion criteria for consideration was chosen from each of

the webpages for membership in the sample for the content analysis. Specifically, in order to gather an accurate, non-biased representation of stories from each media outlet, the author's intent was to gather every third article from each webpage until a collection of 20 articles from each webpage was satisfied, with a total of 60 articles total that were included in the sample for analysis. With the FOX News sample, the articles that fit the criteria eventually expired with the 19th article, leaving a one article deficit. As a result, the researcher returned to the beginning of the sample, and selected the third article that was not initially selected from the beginning of the collection for FOX News articles.

Data Analysis

After articles were gathered from the different webpages and the sample was sufficed, the coding process began. The researcher utilized the three categories that were previously mentioned (*Rise and Fall, Media feeding frenzy, Hollywood/Los Angeles*) as well as the new four categories (*Not acknowledged, Support for Cosby, Power of Cosby, Power of victims/survivors*) that emerged throughout the coding process. Each of the articles was printed and coded with the author's own handwriting, highlighting line by line. The first step in the coding process was to quickly browse through all of the articles as a whole. After that, the author took notes about first initial impressions. Once that was complete, the author carefully re-read the articles once again, one by one. This process enabled the author to familiarize herself with the content as a whole. Next, the author went through each article, line by line, and highlighted different findings the article contained. This process included labeling relevant words, phrases, sentences, or sections that corresponded to the the priori codes. For example, if certain phrases rang prominent in the articles because they corresponded to a specific category, such as mentioning major movie stars as alleged victims/survivors, it was circled and labeled as "Hollywood/LA." This process was

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repeated and revisited until the author felt certain and comfortable with each coding category and each coding decision. After the first round of coding, the author revisited the data to carefully re-analyze each article and recode the articles for a second round. After the second round, the author's decisions for coding slightly changed compared to the first round. This led the author to re-code each article once again for a third round. Compared to the first round, the author's coding for the third round demonstrated the evolution of the process and the author's familiarity and immersion into the data. The author reviewed the coding changes for the third round and re-read each category once again. This led the author to include the third round of coding as the final result of the coding process. Compared to the first round, the coding significantly changed with inclusion of new coding categories, more consistency within the categories and more coding for each phrase. During the first round, many phrases did not correspond to the initial three categories. Inclusion of the four new categories, however, resulted in more coding units as they corresponded to the new categories.

To launch the coding process, each article was examined to ascertain how the Cosby story was framed. Specifically, of interest was if Cosby was written about in a way that characterized him as guilty, innocent, or if the media outlet remained neutral. This initial presorting step was included in an effort to familiarize the author with the text and with each coding category, with the presort being signified with different colors. For instance, if Cosby was framed as guilty, the sentences that led to the author believe this were highlighted in purple; if the outlet described Cosby as innocent, the phrases that led the author to believe this were highlighted in red; and, lastly, if the media outlet remained neutral on Cosby, the phrases indicating so were highlighted in peach. This presorting process was particularly useful to springboard the coding process, aiding the author in her first immersive step into the data,

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enhancing the understanding of the text and the framing that was used. The aforementioned multi-step coding process then commenced from the presort, as material was coded and recoded and placed in one of the seven coded categories. After coding was completed for each article, the researcher counted each category and labeled the frequency for each category on the top of the article. When the coding was completed for each article and the frequency was reported for each one separately, the researcher went back and double checked the frequency for the articles to ensure consistency. The researcher transferred the frequency of coding category for each category by date into an Excel sheet, where the total for each category was added and double checked once again.

As aforementioned, additional themes emerged throughout the coding process from the data which resulted in four new coding categories that were created. These data were then transferred into an Excel document. After the data for RQ1 were coded and reviewed again to ensure confidence for their placement in their respective categories, an independent coder unaware of the nature of the study, coded a random 20% from each network using the coding rubric, thereby serving as a reliability check for the study. In order to ensure a random 20% was used for the reliability check, a random numbers table was utilized to pull the cases. This resulted in a total of 4 articles from each network. For CNN, this brought out the case numbers 8, 1, 16 and 7. Thus, articles #8, #1, #16 and #7 were selected and given to the independent coder. This process was the same for each category. For E!, the numbers 10, 15, 11 and 5 were selected. Lastly, for FOX News, the numbers 2, 1, 3 and 6 were randomly selected, respectively. The author trained the independent coder in the coding process with a coding rubric. After the first coding past, there existed were a few coding agreement discrepancies between the author and the independent coder which were discussed, clarified and recoded. After discussion, eight

discrepancies remained in need of discussion and clarification. The author and the independent coder discussed the discrepancies once more. After the second discussion, agreement across all categories was met with 100%, κ = 1.00 (Cohen's Kappa).

Lastly, to examine the association between media outlet and framing, a 3 (Fox News, CNN, E!) by 7 (Rise and fall; Hollywood and LA; Media feeding frenzy; Not acknowledged; Support for Cosby; Power of Cosby; Power of victims/survivors) chi square test of independence (X^2) was calculated to address RQ1. Executing a chi-square test of independence determined if the type of coding category from each article is associated with media source or if the entities are independent from one another. Frequency tables are reported to illustrate cell frequency shifts as one moves across the distributions of media sources and coding categories.

Chapter 4: Results and Interpretation

The research question asked, "What, if any, is the difference in how the Cosby scandal is framed by different media outlets?" Cumulatively, coding for this investigation yielded 2513 coding units: 711 total observed coding units for E!; 969 total observed coding units for CNN; and, 833 total observed coding units for Fox News, respectively. To answer the research question, and to examine whether the network is independent of media frame/scandal coding category, a 3 (E!, CNN, Fox News) X 7 (Rise and fall; Media feeding frenzy; Hollywood/LA; Not acknowledged; Support for Cosby; Power of Cosby; and Power of victims/survivors) chi-square test of independence was conducted and the result is significant, X^2 (12) = 109, p < .0001. Overall cell frequencies and attendant percentages are presented below in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequency Data Across Networks and Coding Categories

Network	Rise&fall	Media FF	Hollywood LA	Not acknowledged	Support Cosby	Power Cosby	Power victims/ survivors
E!	274 (39%)	214 (30%)	131 (18%)	38 (5%)	46 (6%)	6 (.8%)	2 (.2%)
CNN	417 (43%)	207 (21%)	146 (15%)	55 (6%)	46 (5%)	30 (3%)	68 (7%)
FOX News	423 (51%)	148 (18%)	128 (15%)	33 (4%)	52 (6%)	23 (3%)	26 (3%)

An examination of the cells indicates that an association beyond chance exists between network and media frame scandal coding foci most reported in the sample for this study. As indicated in Table 2, E!, CNN and FOX News all focused on *The Cosby case as the Rise and fall of an American hero*. However, FOX News is the network that focused most on this particular category. E!'s coverage of the Cosby scandal most frequently focused on *The Cosby case produced as a Media feeding frenzy*. CNN frequently covered the Cosby scandal with the *Media feeding frenzy* frame as well. The most apparent difference in CNN's reporting and framing in

terms of verifiable observations is that this outlet used the *Power of victims/survivors* more

frequently than E! and FOX News. There is also a notable difference in the *Power to Cosby*

category as well. Specifically, while E! rarely framed a story under this category, CNN and FOX

used this frame more frequently. Out of all the networks, E! focused the most on the category

The Cosby case as an event produced as an event produced by and typical of Hollywood and Los

Angeles. Lastly, CNN focused more frequently on the *Not acknowledged* category than did the

other two networks

       To aid in understanding the entire picture, it is likely best to examine the networks'

representations in percentages rather than numeric value. The network that highlighted the *Rise*

and fall category the most was FOX News with a total of 51% whereas the *Media feeding frenzy*

category was most apparent in the E! sample with a total of 30%. The *Hollywood/Los Angeles*

category was highlighted the most in the E! sample with 18% of articles coded in this category,

the *Not acknowledged* category was the most frequent in CNN with 6% and the *Support for*

Cosby category was the most frequent at 6% with both E! and FOX News. The *Power of Cosby*

was highlighted the most apparent in both CNN and FOX News at 3% and lastly, the *Power of*

victims/survivors was most frequent in the CNN sample with 7%.

Additional Analyses

       Given the outcome of the research question, of interest is if associations in the respective

scandal coding distributions exist beyond chance within each respective network's media

framing of the Cosby scandal. As a result, goodness-of-fit-chi-square tests were conducted

within each network. Each finding is significant. Specifically, for E!, X^2 (6)= 683.418, $p < .0001$;

CNN, X^2 (6) = 827.732, $p < .0001$; and Fox News, X^2 (6) = 1034.353, $p < .0001$, thereby

indicating that within each network, the distributions of observed media frames/coded categories are significantly different than what is theoretically expected.

CNN

CNN offers viewers 24-hour access to people, places and daily occurrences that are happening around the world. The network has 37 bureaus, 950 affiliates and over 4,000 well-known and respected journalists (Cable Network Profiles, n.d.). People that turn to CNN want hard facts, reporting, currency and interviews with officials that are a crucial part to the story (Pew Research Center, 2012). The audience for CNN is evenly divided between men and women and 29% of those individuals are college graduates (Pew Research Center, 2012). In terms of partisanship, 50% of CNN audience identifies as a Democrat, 31% identify as Independent and 16% identify as Republican (Pew Research Center, 2012). With these demographic and audience considerations in mind, the data gleaned from the CNN reporting of the Cosby scandal are discussed with exemplars provided.

Cosby as the Rise and fall of an American hero (*n* = 417, 43%). Of all categories considered and coded, CNN articles were overwhelmingly coded under the *Rise and fall* category as compared to the other six categories coded, with more than double the number of stories aligning with this category than the next most frequently reported category coding per CNN (i.e., Media feeding frenzy). While CNN did focus on both the *Rise and fall* of Cosby, the network set an agenda more closely focused on Cosby's *fall* from grace and current troubles. Examples from the CNN coded data illustrate these phenomena, using phrases such as, "Three more women came forward on September 30 to accuse Bill Cosby of sexually inappropriate behavior, creating yet another wave of allegations," (Grinberg, 2015, para. 1) and, "She accused Cosby of stealing her panties after drugging her and assaulting her in her car while she was

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unconscious" (Grinberg, 2015, para. 2). Although *the fall* was highlighted more frequently than the *rise of Cosby* in the CNN data, evidence of his rise and status as a star was also indicated in CNN stories; for example, "For the last few weeks, the beloved TV dad who used to sell us Jell-O pudding pops has been at the center of an ever-growing scandal" (Telusma, 2014, para. 10), highlighted Cosby's previous accomplishments but also set the agenda on the troubling circumstances that Cosby is currently in.

The Cosby case as a Media feeding frenzy (*n* = 207, 21%). A significant number of articles for CNN also chose to frame the Cosby story under the *Media feeding frenzy* category. This included CNN reaching out to other media networks for comment with phrases such as, "While on press tour in July, NBC's entertainment chairman Bob Greenblatt had to address issues surrounding Cosby" (Pallota & Shiels, 2014, para. 14). As reported by CNN, many of the alleged victims/survivors reached out to CNN specifically for exclusive interviews, thereby contributing to *the Media feeding frenzy* and this coding category. Of the three networks analyzed for this study, CNN appeared to be the "go to" network among the alleged victims/survivors in terms of their telling of their stories or granting interviews. Whereas CNN was the most frequently sought out network by survivors/victims, it was not the network exclusively sought by victims/survivors for the purpose of telling their story. As a result, CNN seemingly relied less on other networks for information on the case---less frenzy among—and more frenzy within, if you will, in terms of scandal content. Alleged victim/survivor Beverly Johnson reached out to CNN to tell her story, for example (Botelho, 2014; Leopold, 2014; Ellis, 2015). While other media outlets like FOX News also wrote about exclusive interviews with Johnson, she did not give them an exclusive or reach out to them personally as she did with CNN.

The Cosby case as an event produced and typical of Hollywood and Los Angeles (*n* = 146, 15%). CNN focused on the *Hollywood/LA* aspect to the Cosby case with mentioning of Cosby's career in the entertainment industry and the star status that many of his alleged victims/survivors had. CNN would often describe in detail the meetings of Cosby with the alleged victims/survivors as related to Cosby's status in Hollywood, part of the Hollywood/LA scene, part of the industry/Hollywood machine, etc. For example, CNN was the only network in the analysis describing Beverly Johnson's and Cosby's first meeting occurring because, according to Johnson, Johnson wanted to be a model-turned-actress. Not only did CNN describe scenarios such as this one, but the network also gave a brief context of the alleged victims/survivors and how they became influential to the Hollywood scene. CNN's stories coded to this category reflected Cosby and former model and actress Lisa Christe, former model Janice Dickinson, former Playboy playmate Chloe Goins and former actress Barbara Bowman. CNN also mentioned other famous names in Hollywood that have faced allegations akin to Cosby's, such as Woody Allen and allegations of his allegedly molesting his adopted daughter from his marriage with Mia Farrow. Stephen Collins, the former television star on *"7th Heaven,"* was also compared to the accusations surrounding Cosby given Collins' confessed to sexually molesting underage girls.

Not acknowledged (*n* = 55, 6%). Compared to the other networks, CNN's coded stories more often mentioned Cosby's denial of the allegations, his attorney's denial, Cosby's refusal to comment, and his silence in interviews when asked about the allegations at a 6% frequency rate. Thus, the *Not acknowledged* coding category emerged when reading the CNN sample and was the most frequently apparent in this network's reporting and framing of the story as compared to the other networks analyzed. Considering the aforementioned demographics of the other

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networks analyzed in this investigation, CNN reportedly draws the most college educated audience as compared to FOX News and E! which might be a reason for this category's somewhat stronger presence in CNN reporting (Pew Research Center, 2012). Specifically, CNN would often write about the legalities of the case and interpret Cosby's silence in different ways. Compared to the other two networks, CNN more often addressed the statute of limitations for rape cases, the different legal battles ahead for Cosby, and the shock and desperation felt by many due to Cosby's silence and hibernation. For example, many articles reported how anything that Cosby says can and will be used against him in court. Other CNN articles interpreted Cosby's silence as advice from his lawyers. This advice appeared to come particularly after Cosby's comment that black media should stay neutral to the Cosby case (Stelter & Conlon, 2014). A large part of this category appears to be associated with the defamation lawsuits Cosby is now facing. For example, after Cosby's denying Janice Dickinson's sexual assault allegation and calling her a liar, Dickinson announced that she was suing Cosby for defaming her name. After this occurrence, Cosby seemed to shift from denying the allegations to silence.

Support for Cosby (*n* = 46, 5%). The support for and approval of Cosby emerged when reading through the sample and coding phrases that expressed sympathy for Cosby's troubling situation with the sexual assault cases. Although CNN did not particularly set a strong agenda reflecting support and positive feelings toward Cosby, some of CNN's stories within the study's sample did nevertheless appear to offer some support for Cosby. Stories coded, however, did not reveal support for the star coming from CNN journalists, but, rather from celebrities and individuals that CNN chose to feature in their articles. Almost half of the codes for this category within the CNN data emerged from an article that featured Damon Wayans, an actor, writer and comedian in Hollywood, who chose to talk about the Cosby allegations in one of his stand-up

shows. It is noteworthy that most individuals that showed support for Cosby were black, which also brings the issue of race into play. As with O.J. Simpson, black people are highlighted in the media for supporting other black individuals. During the show, Wayans told the crowd that he thought the accusers were lying (Washington, 2015). This particular article offered phrases such as, "Wayans called the claims against Cosby a 'money hustle' (Washington, 2015, para. 3) and other comments suggesting that Wayans perhaps felt that some of the women found it hard to deal with rejection with comments like, "I don't believe that he was raping. I believe he was in relationships with all of them, and then he's like, 'You know what? It's 78. It don't work like that no more. I can't get it up for any of ya'll. Bye, b**ches,' and then they're like, 'Oh, really? Rape!'" (Washington, 2015, para. 2). The remaining coded *Support for Cosby* in this category for CNN set the agenda by reporting on Cosby's fans and standing ovations occurring at Cosby's stand up shows.

CNN was also the only network, of the three networks analyzed during this time frame, to dedicate an entire article exclusively on Camille Cosby, the wife of Bill Cosby, and how she has stood by his side during the onslaught of sexual allegations and his confessing to having affairs with women throughout their marriage. CNN wrote an article titled, "Camille Cosby, another victim of controversy?" which highlighted Camille's support through her husband's controversy and confession to previous affairs throughout her marriage (Telusma, 2014). CNN used this article to compare Camille Cosby to Hillary Clinton and her support of husband and former President Bill Clinton when the Lewinsky scandal surfaced.

Power of Cosby (*n* = 30, 3%). Out of all the networks analyzed, CNN, along with FOX News, focused more frequently on the powerful role Cosby had with his alleged victims/survivors as compared to E!. This coding category was completely highlighted in the

Beverly Johnson interview with CNN. Specifically, Johnson talked with CNN about how intimidated she felt with such a powerful person like Cosby because of his major star status. Johnson claimed that Cosby tried to sexually assault her but he did not succeed, explaining that she ran as soon as she realized what was about to happen. In the interview, Johnson reported cursing at Cosby in that moment and running away. Because of Cosby's star power, however, Johnson shared with CNN that whereas she should have felt relieved that she escaped, she instead felt terrified and embarrassed for cursing at such a powerful and respected person like Cosby. Johnson told CNN, "All I remember after I got into that taxi cab, and somehow telling (the driver) my address (was) saying. 'Did I just call Bill Cosby an MF? I was concerned about him, rather than me" (Botelho, 2014, para. 18).

The most coding for Cosby's powerful role was highlighted in a CNN article entitled, "Famed model hopes her Cosby allegation spurs other to come forward" (Botelho, 2014). This article reported on Cosby as a powerful man in the entertainment industry, an industry that Johnson wanted to be a part of. Due to the power differential and potential resultant chilling effects Johnson reported feeling compelled to do anything Cosby asked of her. Out of all the alleged victims/survivors, Johnson is one of the few black women that Cosby allegedly targeted. Coincidentally, Johnson is also the only alleged victim/survivor in the sample analyzed for this study who has told the media that she does not want to go after Cosby and wishes nothing but the best for him. Instead, Johnson wants to be an advocate for sexual assault victims/survivors and encourage other victims/survivors to come forward. It is possible that Johnson's position supports the promotion of African Americans in the industry and might shed light on why the early examination of stories on the Cosby case on BET's (Black Entertainment Television) website produced so few stories on the Cosby scandal. Although speculative, it is possible that

Johnson, like BET, is making an effort to stay loyal to the African American community. As noted in the results of this investigation, some stories and voices in Hollywood (e.g., Wayans) perceive Cosby as breaking ground for the black community—serving in an influential role and as an inspiration for a black man living the American dream. Sans Johnson, all of the other alleged victims/survivors reviewed and coded in this investigation appear to be clear in their intentions for Cosby: to bring him down.

Power of victims/survivors (n = 68, 7%). Whereas CNN set the agenda on Cosby's powerful role with his alleged victims/survivors, particularly with Beverly Johnson, the network did also focus on the powerful role the victims/survivors have and ultimately painted readers with the bigger picture of the Cosby case. CNN set the agenda on the victims/survivors refusing to be re-victimized and fighting back at Cosby through different means, such as talking to the media about it, releasing their own statements, and pursuing legal battles against Cosby. CNN wrote articles about alleged victims/survivors like Janice Dickinson speaking out about how powerless and helpless they felt at the time of their alleged incident with Cosby, but now feel empowerment and support from each other (i.e., other alleged victims/survivors). Phrases from alleged victims/survivors such as, "But I'm strong, and I'm gonna stand on my own two feet and I'm gonna tell my side of the story, and it's not gonna end here" (Hetter, 2014, para. 26) and, "What I want to see happen is that women come out and speak their truth" (Leopold, 2014, para. 19) and other comments of similar sentiment were reported in CNN articles.

CNN also highlighted alleged victims/survivors powerful stances on the matter by writing about the problem of sexual assault in America and what public and government officials should do to reduce the instances. For example, articles entitled, "Bill Cosby should apologize," (O'Mara, 2015), "Should Cosby lose Medal of Freedom? Here's another option" (Kohn, 2015)

and, "Revoke Bill Cosby's Medal of Freedom award, rape survivor group petitions" (Fantz, 2015) are among the articles that report beyond the Cosby scandal, focusing on sexual assault and the alleged victims/survivors who have found themselves in the same situation for decades. One of the articles reported on doing more than just taking away Cosby's medal of freedom, but made a call for action, printing phrases in the article such as, "How's about, for instance, passing a legislation to send military sexual assault cases to independent prosecutors instead of handling them within the military chain of command," (Kohn, 2015, para. 8) and, ending the article with, "Take it away, don't take it away, whatever. But let's really put our energy to passing laws that support other survivors of sexual assault—and help prevent future Bill Cosby's" (Kohn, 2015, para. 14). After Cosby admitted to giving Quaaludes to women he wanted to sleep with (Yan, McLaughlin & Ford, 2015), CNN wrote an article that mentioned former President Obama's take on the issue, including a statement from the President, "If you give a woman—or a man, for that matter – without his or her knowledge a drug, and then have sex with that person without consent, that's rape. And I think this country, any civilized country, should have no tolerance for rape" (Diamond, 2015, para. 16). The articles that highlighted the issue of sexual assault as a bigger issue from the Cosby scandal (Botelho, 2014; Hetter, 2014; Fantz, 2015; Kohn, 2015; Gringberg, 2015; O'Mara, 2015 Yan, 2015) report about Cosby in a negative way and framed him as a guilty man. These articles were exclusively dedicated to giving the alleged victims/survivors a voice and were more than often opinion pieces from journalists at CNN. In sum, results for this coding category indicate that CNN focused on the *Power of victims/survivors* more frequently than did FOX News or E!.

From an agenda setting perspective, CNN readers are learning about the Cosby case particularly through the negative occurrences that keep happening to Cosby. This was the main

takeaway the audience for CNN read about along with highlighting his influential role in Hollywood as well as in the contexts of the victims/survivors. The audience for this network is learning about the legalities of the case as well as explanations for Cosby's silence. Though the network did not show much *Support for Cosby,* it did highlight the powerful role he had during the time of the alleged accusations with his wealth, star power and influence to Americans as a black man living the American dream. Lastly, CNN chose to highlight the issue of sexual assault in the United States and gave power to the victims/survivors by letting them voice their story.

CNN did not give Cosby a voice per se, but instead, highlighted his silence throughout the case. In the beginning of the case, Cosby occasionally spoke out on the issue when he mentioned black media should be neutral and when he called alleged victims/survivors, such as Beverly Johnson and and Janice Dickinson, liars. When alleged victims/survivors began to publicize their lawsuit against Cosby for defamation, Cosby's silence became more apparent than ever and was a major headline throughout the media. CNN interpreted the silence and refusal to comment as a weapon Cosby's attorney's advised him to utilize. On the other hand, the alleged victims/survivors were given a platform by CNN. CNN audiences are learning more about the Cosby case through the victims/survivors' perspectives and from their points of view. Interviews with the alleged victims/survivors enable the audience to better learn of their detailed encounters with Cosby whereas Cosby and his representatives chose to show a different platform from the network that illustrated Cosby's silence rather than verbalizing his side of the story. This decision from Cosby and his representatives to show silence and denial was depicted in the media outlets that were analyzed. Another explanation could be that Cosby and his representatives chose not to exercise their voice throughout the scandal because of the defamation lawsuits that came about when Cosby spoke on the matter. Ultimately, CNN offered

a platform to Cosby and his representatives in which they spoke about their lack of desire to comment with explanations as to why this is from CNN. Again, Cosby's silence on the scandal was highlighted by the networks but was also a decision that Cosby and his legal representatives decided on. The voice that CNN gave to Cosby mostly came from the *Not acknowledged* category, where Cosby responded to the allegations with complete silence or by completing denying the allegations, calling the alleged victims/survivors liars. These findings correspond with CNN's agenda of liberal news geared towards an educated audience of both men and women. Because the audience for CNN is possibly not as interested in the entertainment slant of the story, CNN appears to be the network that relied less on the *Hollywood/Los Angeles* category. The audience for CNN also likely desires direct interviews with key individuals associated with the story, which was also representative in the CNN sample, including direct interviews with the alleged victims/survivors. The emergent message appears to be that CNN contends that rape culture in America needs to be revamped and changed in a way that gives victims/survivors a voice to be heard, giving them the benefit of the doubt. The network would report about the specific steps society and the government need to take in order to reduce sexual assault in the United States and also interpreted Cosby's silence throughout the allegations with legal jargon, both of which seemingly resonate with an educated audience.

FOX News

Research demonstrates that FOX News tends to report stories that are supportive of conservative and Republican interests (Feldman, Maiback, Roser-Renouf & Leiserowitz, 2011). Like CNN, FOX News also offers 24-hour coverage that is dedicated to reporting ranging from politics, family, economics and events that are shaping the globe. The audience for FOX News consists of roughly 48% men and 52% women, with 40% of the audience identifying as

Republican, 33% as Independent and 22% as Democrat (Pew Research Center, 2012). Twenty-four percent of the audience from this network is college educated (Pew Research Center, 2012). Previous research indicates that FOX News' audience, as compared to CNN, is more likely to follow entertainment-based news stories (Morris, 2005). As the results of this investigation demonstrate, although the networks have particular codings in common, FOX News nevertheless has different agendas set that are notable. To that end, the findings as they relate to FOX News are elucidated below.

Cosby as the Rise and fall of an American hero (*n* = 423, 51%). Although the resultant coding for each network in this analysis found, numerically, the most stories framed in the *Rise and fall* category, FOX News' reporting was most frequently situated in this category, with 50.78% (nearly 51%) of their stories speaking to the *Rise and fall* of Bill Cosby. In terms of story valence, as with CNN, FOX News focused on the rise, the fall, and, in some cases, focused on both the *rise and the fall* in a single phrase. For example, one article started with, "First Bill Cosby made us laugh. Now he's making us cringe" (Kurtz, 2014, para. 1). However, most noteworthy in this category, per FOX News, was the network's writing about Cosby's "fall" that came before the onslaught of sexual assault allegations. In an article entitled, "Why liberals are turning on Bill Cosby over rape allegations," the piece begins by acknowledging the allegations but then rewinds to 2004 when Cosby disrupted a Constitutional Hall gala with a speech about the black lower class. Specifically, Cosby gave a speech at the gala that ridiculed the black community, saying that black people don't parent properly. Additionally, he then talked about the way that black people converse with "ghetto talk and thuggery" (Kurtz, 2014, para. 8). Cosby's perceived bashing of his own community resulted in Cosby making enemies in his own

community. Many individuals, particularly in the black community, had perceived Cosby as a voice of empowerment and now felt betrayed by his words.

FOX News often wrote about Cosby as if his career had been destroyed due to the allegations and often framed him as a guilty man with little sympathy, especially in opinion pieces that were published. For example, in an article entitled, "Bill Cosby: In court of public opinion entertainer has lost, in court of law, he'd likely win," (Jarrett, 2014), FOX News predicted the outcome of the pending Cosby case, which is something that no other network did in this analysis. The article ended with "His stature, his reputation, his legacy… have all been diminished. Shame can be the worst punishment of all" (Jarrett, 2014, para. 24).

When focusing on the *Rise and fall*, FOX News wrote about Cosby in seemingly more exaggerated and scandalous ways as compared to the other analyzed networks, using quotes such as "Blessed with his semen, like holy water," (Meyer, 2015) and offered articles dedicated to writing about Cosby's possible fetish for sex with a person that is not conscious, known as somnophilia (FOX News, 2015). Another article was dedicated to uncovering Cosby's other sexual preferences and appetites and even included an interview with a psychiatrist weighing in on the case. These articles, in particular, set the agenda of Cosby being predatorial, battling demons and engaging in unspeakable, unlawful acts with unsuspecting or powerless women--- engaging in behaviors that resulted in being the recipient of sexual assault allegations from over 60 women. In this analysis, networks such as E! and CNN did not provide their audience with answers to the "Why" question while FOX News seemingly offered explanations based on the evidence that they do have. Ultimately, based on the data, FOX News framed stories in such a way that most vilified Cosby as compared to the other two analyzed networks, reflecting the presumed agenda of the network.

The Cosby case as a Media feeding frenzy (*n* = 148, 18%). FOX News focused on the

Media feeding frenzy category least often, compared to the other networks, and potentially for a

variety of reasons. Specifically, material for this category depended heavily on interviews within

the network and/or mentioning of other media outlets that have reported about the Cosby case,

etc. While FOX News did occasionally include other media outlets as a source, such as CNN, the

network did not turn to this material gathering or supporting option as frequently as did E! and

CNN. Rather, FOX News published opinion pieces that did not include other media networks

but, alternatively, the journalists' perspective. When FOX News did mention other media outlets,

however, those articles included specific mentioning of *Hollywood Elsewhere, Yahoo News and*

Entertainment Tonight, to name a few (Kurtz, 2014; Pappas, 2015; FOX News 2015). One piece

in particular focused on the *New York Magazine* cover story in which 35 victims/survivors were

photographed sitting next to each other, with one empty seat that represented those

victims/survivors who have not spoken out. Because FOX News did not directly interview

people, articles such as this were common under this category. To demonstrate, articles with

phrases such as, "But a source closely connected to ABC told FOX411 that Goldberg's new take

was the result of pressure from network honchos," (Johnson, 2015, para. 2) were typical of FOX

News. The alleged victims/survivors and Cosby's representatives, particularly, turned to CNN

and other networks for their voice to be heard by the public. FOX News did not do direct

interviews with victims/survivors, as did CNN. Rather, FOX News reprinted information from

other outlets or cited secondary sources when they wanted to inform readers with fresh and up-

to-date information. Instead of focusing on direct interviews with people associated with the

case, FOX News published many opinion pieces on the case written from the perspective of the

reporter. In these opinion pieces, no coding for *Media feeding frenzy* emerged; rather, material was drawn appropriate for the *Rise and fall* category.

The Cosby case as an event produced by and typical of Hollywood and Los Angeles (*n* = 128, 15%). This coding category emerged at the same frequency as with CNN. Celebrities like Whoopi Goldberg, Chelsea Handler, Cee Lo Green and Jerry Seinfeld were included in many articles with the agenda set on their star status, influence in the Hollywood scene and their input on the Cosby case. Like CNN, FOX News would also occasionally write about Cosby's career in the entertainment industry often refer to him as "America's dad," a comedian and an actor.

FOX News wrote about several events in an effort to seemingly tie them to and gain input about the Cosby case, such as their coverage of the New York City premiere of the movie *Top Five* in which FOX News attended to interview celebrities like Jerry Seinfeld, Chris Rock, Cedric "The Entertainer," and Ben Vereen. The coding for the *Hollywood/LA* category in this article was plentiful, with phrases such as "Jerry Seinfeld also walked the "Top Five" red carpet, and expressed his unhappiness regarding the entire situation" (Seemayer, 2014, para. 4) and, "In 2010, Seinfeld and Rock presented Cosby with the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor during a star-studded ceremony at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts" (Seemayer, 2014, para. 6).

Hannibal Burres, a well-known actor and comedian in Hollywood, was also mentioned within the FOX News reporting coded for this investigation. As aforementioned, Burres' joke about Cosby and the rape allegations is often perceived as the catalyst for the victim/survivor outburst against Cosby because of his joke about Cosby as a rapist during a stand-up routine in Philadelphia. Because Burress is a celebrity, his mentioning and statements were coded in this

category with phrases that highlight Burres' star status such as, "The renewed attention to a dark chapter for Cosby began last month when a comedian, Hannibal Buress, assailed him during a stand-up performance" (FOX News, 2014, para. 4).

Not acknowledged (*n* = 33, 4%). Emergent material in this category was not as numerically apparent in the FOX News sample as with CNN and E!. The percentage, however, was only a 2% difference between FOX and CNN, which reported the most frequent phrases in this category. When phrases were coded in this category, they corresponded with the same criteria: Cosby and his representatives denying the accusations. Phrases such as, "Cosby's attorneys, who insist their client is innocent, have suggested the stories were contrived in order to gain attention or financial gain" (Jarrett, 2014, para. 10) and, "they dismissed most of the other as "decade-old, discredited allegations" (FOX News, 2014, para. 5) were found within the sample. The reason the *Not acknowledged* category was not as apparent within the FOX News sample could be because CNN focused on the legalities of the case with legal jargon, constant updates on the lawsuits, etc. FOX News, however, typically briefly mentioned Cosby and/or his team's nonaddress of the issue in a few articles and often with a single statement.

Support for Cosby (*n* = 52, 6%). Among the networks, FOX News and E! demonstrated equal *Support for Cosby* in the sample. Several articles for FOX News showed sympathy for Cosby and gave him the benefit of the doubt. FOX News also set the agenda to this end, framing stories focused on individuals such as fans, family members and celebrities that were supporting Cosby. Cee Lo Green was one of the celebrities highlighted in FOX News that showed concern and sympathy for Cosby with statements like, "Those who are assuming Cosby is guilty aren't being fair" (FOX News, 2014, para. 2). Green possibly exhibited sympathy or perhaps empathy for Cosby because he, too, found himself in the middle of a sexual assault accusation when a

woman claimed he drugged her drink with Ecstasy. FOX News also set the agenda on Whoopi Goldberg and her supportive comments towards Cosby on *The View* with statements such as. "He has not been proven a rapist" (Johnson, 2015, para. 6). Jill Scott, a well-known black singer, also showed her support toward Cosby via Twitter. FOX News was the only network that highlighted this with the statement from Scott, "I'm respecting a man who has done more for the image of Brown people that almost anyone EVER. From 'Fat Albert' to the Huxtables" (Willis, 2014, para. 7). A final example for support towards Cosby through FOX News became apparent with a statement from Chris Rock saying, "I don't know what to say. What do you say? I hope it's not true. That's all you can say. I really do. I grew up on Cosby. I love Cosby, and I just hope it's not true" (FOX News, 2014, para. 7). A common theme with the support category for Cosby was that most people showing concern, support, sympathy and/or empathy for Cosby were from the black community. Similar to Jill Scott, community members remember Cosby as someone that positively influenced the black community and find it difficult to consider Cosby as someone capable of raping over 60 women.

FOX News also offered opinion pieces that wrote about Cosby and somnophilia, commonly known as Sleeping Beauty Syndrome. Such story framing, such as that of FOX News, was coded under this category for several reasons. For example, this frame could be interpreted as a suggestion to the FOX News audience to support Cosby and give him the benefit of the doubt. Ultimately, the different phrases in these opinion pieces can potentially make the audience realize that they should not quickly jump on Cosby for bad decisions but, instead, they might want to consider that his alleged behavior is reflective of a congenital or acquired disorder rather than Cosby taking advantage of his star status. Although FOX News does not specifically write

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that Cosby was born with or acquired the disorder, the network describes the fetish versus the

disorder in the article and how this could be a potential mental health problem for individuals.

Akin to the other networks, FOX News also set the agenda on Cosby's packed audiences

and standing ovations despite the allegations. Specifically, FOX News interviewed a few

attendees for Cosby's show, setting an agenda on more *Support for Cosby* with statements like,

"I believe that if you're not convicted of a crime, then why should you be judged? All it takes is

for one person to say something, then you have all these other people wanting to get their 15

minutes of fame" (FOX News, 2015, para. 9) and, FOX News reporting with phrases such as,

"Cosby was welcomed to the stage during his first show with a standing ovation and lots of 'We

love you Bill!'" (FOX News, 2014, para. 7). FOX News was the only news network in this

analysis that provided stories involving interviews Cosby's supportive fans and set the agenda

with loyal fans still attending his shows.

Power of Cosby (*n* = 23, 3%). Cosby's alleged abuse of power with his alleged

victims/survivors was coded fairly less in FOX News' data than with that of CNN, but noticeably

more so than that of E! When FOX News referred to the alleged victims/survivors as helpless

individuals that were victimized, the phrase was coded in this category. When Janice Dickinson

reached out to *Entertainment Tonight* for an interview, not only was that coded under the *Media*

feeding frenzy category, but also for the *Power of Cosby* category. Even though E! and CNN

both reported on this interview, they did not include the same quotes for Dickinson or highlight

the story in the same fashion. Dickinson was quoted saying, "I trusted Bill Cosby. Because of his

demeanor and the promise of a career, I trusted him" (FOX News, 2014, para. 2). FOX News

also wrote that Dickinson said, "I had revulsion towards Cosby, and Cosby was a very powerful

man and probably still is. I trusted this man, and I stuffed it. I compartmentalized it because I was embarrassed" (FOX News, 2014, para. 5).

As the results demonstrate, each media network set the agenda on the Cosby story in different ways. To "set the agenda" translates to highlighting only certain issues to the public (McCombs, 2004). Media outlets are very careful to select the particular issues they want to make relevant and take their audience demographics into consideration when doing so (McCombs, 2004). Once the story is framed in a way that sets the agenda on the issues media outlets have selected, the audience then interprets the agenda as highly important while not necessarily getting the whole story with different perspectives. To illustrate, CNN and E! set the agenda on Dickinson going after Cosby with a defamatory lawsuit and anger while FOX News highlighted the power Cosby had over Dickinson. Cosby's power had a lot to do with his connections and making or destroying his alleged victims/survivors careers, which is what FOX News highlighted with articles that set the agenda on Dickinson and her story. A lot of Cosby's power also came from his wealth, which was highlighted by FOX News, reporting journalists' stories about how Cosby allegedly would leave money for his victims/survivors once he was finished assaulting them. While Cosby's money to his victims was a common narrative from the women, the possibility of prostitution never emerged within the sample.

Lastly, Cosby's powerful role was also highlighted when alleged victims/survivors would say why they chose not to come forward with their story. Judy Thompson, mother of one of the alleged victims/survivors, said that it was difficult to convince anyone, even therapists, what Cosby had done to their daughter because of the powerful role and image Cosby depicted in and to America. Barbara Bowman, a former model, also said, "I could have walked down any street

of Manhattan at any time and said, 'I'm being raped and drugged by Bill Cosby,' but who the hell would have believed me? Nobody. Nobody" (Cady, 2015, para. 6).

Power of victims/survivors (n = 26, 3%). As with the *Power of Cosby* category, the *Power for the victims/survivors* category was also reported in FOX News more frequently than by E!, but much less frequently than CNN. Whereas CNN set the agenda on issues of sexual assault in America and victims/survivors letting their voice be heard though lawsuits, FOX News showed *Power of victims/survivors* through their unity, support for one another and encouragement from other victims/survivors to come forward against Cosby. For instance, *The New Yorker* magazine cover described the exclusive as a circumstance in which the victims/survivors "have united together to tell their stories" (Cady, 2015, para. 1). FOX News also quoted Dickinson and her refusal to be re-victimized with a quote encouraging others to come forward that read, "I want to protect all those women that haven't come forward and show them the love and support worldwide that what happened to me will not happen to another woman" (FOX News, 2015, para. 8). FOX News also quoted Donna Motsinger, another alleged victim/survivor, in a very similar way with, "I want to tell people so [the victims] can't be bullied, so they can't be discredited" (FOX News, 2014, para. 3).

Due to the agenda(s) set and the stories' framing, FOX News readers are getting a slightly different understanding of the Cosby case compared to CNN audiences. Specifically, through Fox News' reporting, the *Rise and fall of Cosby as an American hero* was highlighted more so by describing his influential role that broke racial barriers across the nation as compared to CNN. Within this context, the audience is also learning more about the support that Cosby is getting from family members, celebrities and from the network itself. As a result of the multifaceted support, the media consumer might be influenced to give Cosby the benefit of the

doubt with the situation. Not only did FOX News demonstrate support from the black community and the black entertainment community, but the network also provided opinion pieces that were published exploring Cosby's options with explanations to his actions through fetishes and disorders. FOX News readers could potentially completely disregard and/or place a more limited weight on the opposing side of the story through the victims/survivors' perspectives because the Fox News readers were rarely exposed to their side and voice, at least in the sample data for this project.

E!

E! Entertainment Television is widely known for being the nation's source of information for celebrities, entertainment and all-things Hollywood. This network is the only source in television offering dedicated, exclusive 24-hour coverage on entertainment-genre material, ranging from daily news updates, celebrity interviews, original shows and movies, specials and a daily segment entitled E! News, which focuses on up-to-date happenings in Hollywood. That said, the audience for this network is generally interested in current, up-to-date information on scandalous stories that entertain and captivate stories including their favorite celebrities. Research demonstrates that the audience for this network consists of 50% men and 50% women who are upscale, professional and college educated (Cable Network Profiles, n. d.). Audiences for E! keep increasing with each year, making it a main news source for Americans to get their Hollywood fix (Schneider, 2015). Out of all networks analyzed, E! is the standout network in terms of niche uniqueness because it is exclusively dedicated to stories involving Hollywood, whereas CNN and FOX News include political, economic and social occurrences happening all over the world. With an entertainment agenda in mind, E! site publishes stories that correspond to their audiences' interests which, for the Cosby case, resulted in "entertaining" and shocking

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coverage about Cosby that maintained the liberal tone it E! is commonly known for. E! published articles for people on-the-go with simple language, and an easy read format. This reporting format is noteworthy given the presumed educated audience. Perhaps E! presents articles in this easy-to-read format because their audience is busy and on-the-go, leaving little time to read long stories. Another explanation could be that, given the younger audience, individuals want news in a quick and to the point format. Because E!'s audience is particularly young, they can be interpreted as the "tweet generation," the generation of 18-24 year-olds where they rely on Twitter on a daily basis (JVG, 2012). Thus, this could translate to networks such as E! connecting with their audience in a preferred format, such as with one that is abbreviated and easy-to-read. Because E! kept articles at a shorter length, the coded units associated with network were not as numerous as those of CNN and FOX News.

Cosby as the Rise and fall of an American hero (n = 274, 39%). Out of all the coding categories, the *Rise and fall* category was the most frequent in the E! sample. Similar to the previously reviewed networks, E! also set the agenda on Cosby's controversial sexual assault allegations and acknowledging how unbelievable it is that Dr. Huxtable, America's dad, is being accused of these heinous acts. Journalists who wrote the articles often set the agenda on the *Rise and fall*, but also included many quotes from other individuals who were in disbelief about the situation. For example, quotes such as, "It's very hard I think for any of us to discuss Bill Cosby in this context because he is the beloved father image… that we as a society hold in some way and even for, you now, anyone who has been the victim/survivor of sexual abuse to believe that somebody that you love or know could do that is a very difficult thing. So even to talk about it is hard" (Toomey, 2014, para. 5). In order to highlight the scandal aspect to the case, quotes such as this, spotlighting the disbelief of the situation were quite common.

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When writing about the sexual assault occurrences, E! did not refrain from highlighting explicit details with what Cosby made the victims/survivors do. In one article, E! wrote, "Cosby exposed himself, put his hands behind her head and forced her mouth over his penis" (Finn, 2014, para. 2). Another article highlighted Chelan Lasha's story, a woman who was an aspiring model during her encounter with Cosby. E! also wrote about specific details with her own words saying, "he began pinching my left nipple and humping my leg while he was grunting. I couldn't open my eyes, I couldn't open my mouth or say anything… Then I blacked out" (Toomey, 2014, para. 13). Another example of the specific details of the encounter that highlight the fall of Cosby is, "He then proceeded to sexually molest her by attempting to put his hands down her pants, and then taking her hand in his hand and performing a sex act on himself without her consent" (Harrison & Machado, 2014, para. 10). Notably, the specific details of these occurrences would often appear in many articles which served to view Cosby in a negative manner. These distinct scenarios that go into very specific and graphic details were not nearly as common for CNN or FOX News. Given E!'s entertainment news network reputation, an agenda set on salacious stories might be offered to bring out the "entertainment" aspect of the story.

The Cosby case as a Media feeding frenzy (*n* = 214, 30%). A significant amount of coding corresponded to the *Media feeding frenzy* category with statements involving the media and interviews from other media outlets, and unlike FOX News and CNN, E! depended heavily on social media sites like Twitter which, given E!'s audience demographic, was not unexpected. Many articles mentioned specific tweets and how the public was responding to the Cosby allegations. For example, an article was published on Nov. 10, 2014, which was the day the meme generator was created. E! responded with an exclusive article showing the public's response through different tweets with the hashtag #CosbyMeme (Nessif, 2014). Specifically,

over 17 tweets were coded in this article under the *Media feeding frenzy* category. E! was also

the only network in this investigation to mention Cosby's scandal as a staple in pop culture with

a skit on *South Park* in which Cosby rapes Taylor Swift. E! also wrote about the women on *The*

View debating on the issue and arguing against Whoopi Goldberg's support to Cosby, which

allegedly caused some tension between the female hosts and ultimately caused issues between

Goldberg and television executives.

Because E! did not interview many of the alleged victims/survivors or directly interview

Cosby or his representatives, the network often included other media outlets as sources for

information on the Cosby case. Specific mentions of NPR, the *New York Times*, the *Associated*

Press and *Entertainment Tonight*, to name a few, were cited many times. This was interesting in

the sample given media outlets such as NPR and the *New York Times* are geared more toward

hard news and a highly educated audience (Pew Research Center, 2012). Including networks

such as these strengthened E!'s coverage credibility with facts and current happenings

surrounding the Cosby story. Phrases such as, "After the show played a clip of Cosby during an

Associated Press interview, in which…." (Toomey, 2014, para. 3) and, "Then Janice Dickinson

said in an interview that aired Tuesday on Entertainment Tonight that…" (Finn, 2014, para. 7)

were coded under the *Media feeding frenzy* category because the network depended on other

networks for the exclusive.

The Cosby case as an event produced by and typical of Hollywood and Los Angeles

(***n* = 131, 18%).** The E! story sample also depended heavily on the Hollywood aspect that there

is to the Cosby scandal, particularly by setting the agenda on other celebrities and their input on

the case as well as brining up Cosby's career in Hollywood and the alleged victims'/survivors'

role in Hollywood during the time of the alleged harassment. Celebrities such as Whoopi

Goldberg, Donald Trump, Jill Scott and Phylicia Rashad were highlighted throughout the

articles, including their input on the scandal. Each time E! would mention celebrities such as

these, their credibility and role in Hollywood was briefly mentioned. To illustrate, Donald Trump

was highlighted as a celebrity with, "None too surprisingly, the *Celebrity Apprentice* host, thinks

that…" (Finn, 2014, para. 1).

Because many of the alleged victims/survivors were pursuing careers in Hollywood, their

industry roles ranging from models to actresses were also highlighted as influential to the

Hollywood and Los Angeles scene. Specifically, E! highlighted the alleged victims/survivors as

models and actresses. Cosby's influential role in Hollywood was also the most apparent with the

E! sample. Like CNN, E! also depended heavily on highlighting the context of each alleged

victim/survivor and of Cosby's career as well. For instance, when writing about actress Louisa

Moritz, E! set the agenda on her career when describing her encounter with Cosby during her

appearance on *The Tonight Show*, "In 1971, at the time of her *Tonight Show* appearance, Moritz

was on the TV comedy *Love, American Style*. She amassed dozens of TV credits throughout the

1970s and 1980s on shows such as *The Rockford Files, Chico and the Man, One Day at a Time*

and *The Incredible Hunk"* (Finn, 2014, para. 8). When writing about Cosby, E! would

continually describe him as a comedian and an actor. While other networks also described Cosby

in a similar fashion, E! was by far the network that made this mention the most frequently, as

coded in the analysis. One of the most common ways E! would describe Cosby was as a "77-

year-old TV star" (Toomey, 2014, para. 2).

Not acknowledged (*n* = 38, 5%). E! set the agenda on Cosby's silence and denial

throughout many articles. When doing so, the network did not elaborate on more than one

sentence. To illustrate, a common example was, "Cosby's attorney Marty Singer quickly shut

down the report slamming the claims made by multiple women as 'ridiculous'" (Toomey, 2014, para. 9) and, "There will be no further statement from Mr. Cosby or any of his representatives" (Heller, 2014, para. 4). The most notable difference between E! and CNN for this category was that most of the *Not acknowledged* coding category for E! came from statements that were released from Cosby's representatives rather than written from the reporters, which was evident in the CNN sample. The legalities of the case were not highlighted within the E! sample. Thus, the explanation for Cosby's silence was not an issue E! appeared to attempt to tackle.

Support for Cosby (*n* = 46, 6%). Out of all the networks, the E! sample set the agenda on *Support for Cosby* the most frequently. This included highlighting celebrities such as Whoopi Goldberg and their supportive statements on Cosby. Goldberg was quoted in E! saying, "No, it is not. Because until you know if it's true, until you know that it's true, it's an allegation… It seems now you're guilty no matter what, even if you're innocent, you're guilty because once somebody accuses you of this that's what you are" (Toomey, 2014, para. 13). When Goldberg said this comment on *The View,* her co-hosts did not agree or express support for Cosby's situation. Phylicia Rashad, his former on screen wife on *The Cosby Show*, also publicly defended Cosby and described him as one of her great friends that is kind and generous. Malcolm-Jamal Warner, also a star on *The Cosby Show*, issued a supportive and sympathetic statement on the matter with, "The Bill Cosby I know has been great to me and great for a lot of people. What he's done for comedy and television has been legendary and history-making. What he's done for the black community and education has been invaluable. That's the Bill Cosby I know" (Malec, 2015, para. 4). Again, this pattern of support was highlighted and was most common with people from the black community as well as folks with direct experience working with Cosby.

Aligned with CNN, E! would show support for Cosby with direct quotes rather than the reporter writing the story. When E! would highlight Cosby's supportive fans through such a difficult time, the focus typically came from Cosby's representatives with quotes such as, "He would like to thank his fans for the outpouring of support and assure them that, at age 77, he is doing his best work" (Harnick, 2014, para. 4). When describing Cosby's stand-up shows, the story would often consist of a visual with lines such as, "The crowd cheered loudly when he first entered the stage just after 7:30 p.m. and laughed throughout his entire show. At the end of the nearly two-hour set, the audience rose and gave him a standing ovation" (Nessif, 2015, para. 8).

Power of Cosby (*n* = 6, .8%). This particular category was barely highlighted within the E! sample. Reasons for this could be the more casual tone that E! had when reporting on the case (i.e., Talk about bad timing! (Nessif, 2014, para. 1). Setting the agenda on Cosby's powerful role is a serious issue that E! seemingly avoided. This could also be because E! often wrote about Cosby in a positive light with his influential role in Hollywood, the support from his fans, celebrities, coworkers as well as his family, thereby setting an agenda implying that E! did not believe Cosby misused power which results in this sparsely represented category for the network. However, the few statements that did highlight this category included mentioning of Cosby's wealth. Often times, Cosby would allegedly pay off his victims/survivors after sexually molesting them with amounts as large as $1500 and using words such as "victimized" when describing the encounters Cosby had with the victims/survivors. E! also wrote about the connections Cosby had with would make them famous. An example can be seen with, "The then-aspiring model claims that Cosby promised to introduce her someone from the Ford Modeling Agency, so she went back to his hotel suite after he performed a stand-up show" (Toomey, 2014, para. 11). There were no other specific examples of this category within the sample.

Power of victims/survivors (*n* = 2, .2%). The powerful role the alleged

victims/survivors played was only highlighted a total of two times. Again, this can be because of

the humorous and casual tone E! seemingly used to report about the scandal. The few phrases

that were highlighted included people being sympathetic toward the alleged victims/survivors

and commending them for their bravery. The other phrase set the agenda of supporting

victims/survivors, reporting on Janice Dickinson and her determination to stand up against rape

in America and Cosby as well with the starting sentence in an article, "Janice Dickinson is

'seeking justice' and suing Bill Cosby for defamation and emotional distress" (Harrison &

Rosenbaum, 2015, para. 1).

Findings from this content analysis suggest that it is fair to assume that the audience from

E! is not necessarily learning about specific legalities of the Cosby case from the reporting in this

investigation's sample. Rather, the agenda set by E! focuses on Cosby as a fallen superstar who

has received support from the black community ranging from celebrities, co-stars and family. As

with FOX News, this type of agenda and story framing could impact readers to also support

Cosby and disregard the victims'/survivors' stance on the case. E! frames the Cosby scandal not

as a legal case with a potential criminal, but instead, as a Hollywood scandal and an

entertainment story that relied on other media networks to keep the story alive. Important issues,

such as Cosby's misuse of power and the alleged victims/survivors stand against sexual assault

were not apparent with the E! sample. Again, this finding could be because the network does not

believe Cosby misused his star power and/or it could be because the network wanted to resonate

with their audience. E!'s audience turns to the network for captivating and scandalous stories that

involve celebrities. This corresponds to the agenda set with the network. Ultimately, the audience

that turns to E! for information on the Cosby scandal will interpret the story as a star scandal

involving a fallen star which has caused a *Media feeding frenzy* in Hollywood with an

outpouring of support from the black community.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was threefold in nature. Specifically, this study aimed to investigate whether different media outlets with conservative, liberal and entertainment news foci set the agenda differently on the Cosby scandal as they relate to the sexual assault allegations. The results demonstrate a difference among the media outlets and coding categories beyond chance. Additional analyses within each, respective network also illuminate that there exists a significant difference between the observed, varied framing of the scandal and what might be theoretically expected in terms of coverage. The findings of this investigation not only contribute to agenda setting, media framing and media priming, but also contribute awareness and better understanding of important issues like sexual assault and defamatory stories represented in the webpages rather than newspaper articles.

It is noteworthy that all networks paid special attention to the *Rise and fall* category the most frequently, often reminding their audience that someone as accomplished, recognized and respected such as Cosby has reached a low point in his life as an alleged sexual predator. CNN overwhelmingly had the most coding for the *Rise and fall* when the story first began to make momentum in the media. Half of the articles sampled from CNN were published during the peak of coverage November and December of 2014. The rest of the sample for CNN was scattered throughout the following year. The sample for E! also consisted of coverage during the same time whereas FOX News published throughout the year, not particularly aimed in November-December 2014.

E! had the fewest coding units with 711. Because E! is an entertainment network, this was surprising given Cosby is an entertainer and well-known in Hollywood. Given the case involved many legal proceedings, trials and lawsuits, E! kept the articles a bit simpler without

highlighting such issues, which could be a reason for the fewer coding units. The Cosby case quickly escalated to a hard news story about potential criminality involving the entertainer, which is not an agenda that E! typically reports on. On the contrary, research notes that CNN viewers want hard news stories, which could be an explanation for the most coding units emerging for the network (Pew Research Center, 2012).

With CNN and FOX News, there is a significant drop with the *Media feeding frenzy* category whereas E! remains consistent with the *Rise and fall* to the *Media feeding frenzy*. Specifically, CNN goes from 43% to 21%, FOX News goes from 51% to 18% and E! goes from 39% to 30%. These reflective reporting frequencies could be due to an agenda on Cosby's rise and fall being set as a major priority for CNN and FOX News. This agenda may be of particular importance to FOX News given this network often highlighted the story as scandalous, shocking and shameful. CNN surfaces as the network with the most frequently reported *Not acknowledged* category with 6% of the articles, whereas FOX News and E! were lesser in reporting at 4% and 5%, respectively. Highlighting Cosby's silence as a weapon against accusations often emerged within the text when CNN described Cosby's current situation. Again, research suggests that the audience for CNN expects hard news coverage to a greater degree than audiences from FOX News and E! (Pew Research Center, 2012). Coding for E! suggested less highlighting of *Cosby's power* whereas FOX News and CNN are similar in their reporting frequencies for this category. Finally, CNN reported stories on the victims/survivors power more frequently as compared to E! and FOX News, as the latter two networks' coverage was minimal in this coding category. Thus, this translates to E! covering the victims/survivors voice and power more often than covering Cosby's voice and persona.

Within the literature, the utilization of agenda setting as a tool for examining defamatory and scandalous stories in the press, specifically, appears to be a road less travelled. Particularly, a paucity of previous research focuses on more contemporary media representations involving sexual assault subject matter. Within the last year, nonetheless, many media outlets (*Elle Magazine, USA Today COLLEGE, CBC News*) have taken an interest in the Brock Turner case and have published opinion pieces highlighting the various ways media chose to highlight the Stanford swimmer. Recent cases such as Turner's have not been prominent in scholarly research. Instead, much of the existing research within these parameters consists of older cases or political studies with an agenda setting perspective. An overwhelming amount of research (e.g., Green-Pedersen & Wilkerson, 2006; McCombs & Shaw 1972; McCombs et al., 1998; Morris, 2007) was dedicated to examining the relationship between the media and influence on public opinion in relation to political candidates. The current study, however, sheds light on a timely and ongoing scandal regarding a non-political, public and entertainment figure.

When agenda setting theory was created, McCombs and Shaw were interested in the relation between political events and media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). That said, agenda setting scholars incorporate prominent stories from the media into their studies. Because of the major momentum that took place in the media with the Simpson trial, scholars took a special interest in this trial with an agenda setting perspective (e.g. Lowry, Nio & Leitner, 2003; Brown, Duane & Fraser, 1997). However, scandals such as this one are from the 1990's and the literature does not highlight newer and on-going scandals. The current study examines media coverage on the Cosby scandal when the story is beginning to unfold. Scandals such as Simpson's and the Clinton/Lewinsky scandal, however, examine media coverage from beginning to end. Content

analyses for the starting of a media story can contribute to media studies and how the media shapes a story as it begins to unfold.

The literature on agenda setting and political public opinion largely consists of examinations of newspapers, political television and radio. However, little to no research appears to be dedicated to an investigation of webpages related to the said subject matter. As Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2009) noted, online news has become a distinctive part of social, economic and cultural life in American society. A recent study revealed that young adults ages 18-29 prefer to get their news through the Internet with websites and apps from a selected news outlet (Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel & Shearer, 2016). Only 27% of those individuals prefer to get their news from television (Mitchell et al., 2016). Research suggests that reporting on the same issues are framed differently across television, newspapers and online webpages (Eveland, Sea & Marton, 2009). The current study can contribute to future media studies comparing media coverage differences among television, newspapers, online webpages and in social media. This preferred source of news for the current generation calls for the recognition of online sources in the literature, which the current study aimed to analyze.

The findings of this investigation provide an important contribution to the different agendas the media uses to tell a story. In this case, considered are stories involving issues of power, race and sexual assault. It was learned that CNN frames stories using direct interviews, hard facts, and advocacy for justice through power for victims/survivors, FOX News frames stories using opinion pieces on issues related to sexual assault and race and relies heavily on other media outlets, whereas E! relies on the Hollywood/Los Angeles aspect of glamour and scandal to tell a story. Scholars note that media outlets often report based on their political views which can cause or relate to confusion and biases among consumers (Alterman, 2003). The

current study supports previous research on the way media frames issues that ultimately correspond to their audience. Mediated sources and outlets might take a particular stand on an issue not only because of the firm that owns them, but also to attract the same loyal readers and/or viewers (Alterman, 2003). As demonstrated with the Cosby story, a mediated outlet's decisions in agenda setting and framing of a story illustrate how one story can and is told in different ways. While CNN, FOX News and E! reported on many of the same occurrences, such as the *Rise and fall of Cosby as an American hero,* there were nevertheless nuances that reflected the different agendas aligning with the respective news outlet's political views and ultimately resonating with their audience. It becomes important to consider how this differential coverage might shape the audience's view toward the ongoing scandal and social issues involved which contribute to their view of the world.

With the Cosby case, thousands of online articles are available in real time to the public, providing constant and up-to-date news about the scandal. Often times, the media outlets that were analyzed for the current study had several stories in a given day. With an agenda setting perspective, being exposed to constant updates on the Cosby allegations would mean that the public begins to think of this case as important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Not only is the public learning about the issue, but depending on the media outlet of their choice, they are learning about the Cosby case in different ways. If a media outlet reports on the Cosby case significantly more than the others, that particular audience will likely place more importance to the issue (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) (e.g., "if the news keeps reporting on Cosby, it must be important"). FOX News, CNN and E! all presumably determined important and different issues that they believed their audiences should be aware of. Each media outlet "set the agenda" on different scenarios which may result in a one-sided view of the story if individuals only depend on one

media outlet. In other words, the possibility exists that the audience is not getting "the big picture." With the different angles that FOX News, CNN and E! decided to focus on, it is important to examine the findings of this study through the lenses of the respective networks and how the data inform us about agenda setting theory.

Summary of Findings

As the research demonstrates, most individuals choose to expose themselves to a television network that mirrors their political views and, ultimately, that contributes to shaping their attitudes towards the issues that are highlighted in the news story (Pew Research Center, 2012; de Zengotita, 2006). Recently, for example, Apple provided iPhone users with "News Stand," an application that comes in each iPhone with the iOS 9 software update. iPhone users utilize this app to select their preferred news outlets and receive constant updates throughout the day. Mediated creations such as these might suggest that liberal individuals, for example, are only getting constant updates on a liberal perspective and a liberal point of view, should that be their choice. Individuals are potentially being exposed to certain parts of a story, framed and primed in certain ways. As the current study's findings illustrate, when individuals only expose themselves to one particular news outlet, they are certain agendas, with gaps in between. That said, when looking for information on the Cosby story, it is more than likely that liberal individuals turned to CNN, conservatives turned to FOX News and when looking for an easy to read, liberal and entertainment orientation, individuals turned to E!. As the analysis of the data within this sample for this investigation demonstrate, individuals are likely receiving different information, different frames and different issues highlighted at varying levels of frequency more so than the others (McCombs, 2004). This variation potentially contributes to alternative approaches in coverage of stories involving sex, power, race and prestige. As agenda setting

theory argues, elements prominent in the various news networks are the elements that became frequent in the public mind (McCombs, 2004).

CNN, for instance, reported on the powerful role victims/survivors have with the Cosby case and also wrote about taking a stand against rape significantly more than the other networks did. Thus, with an agenda setting perspective, the CNN audience will begin to view the issue of sexual assault as a social issue that needs re-adjusting. CNN would often write about the "outdated laws" on sexual assault cases and the the statute of limitations. Often times, the network would provide suggestions speaking to how rape incidences can be reduced in America. This type of coverage provides readers with knowledge and an understanding of the importance of the issue. This issue (i.e., reduction of sexual assault) was not highlighted as much with E!, suggesting that E! consumers will not be as likely to perceive the issue as important and/or relevant. While FOX News did highlight this issue more than E!, it was not nearly as frequent as CNN. Agenda setting theory argues that frequency is a large part of making issues important and salient to the public. Thus, the audience for FOX News and E! might not have issues of sexual assault in America or power to victims/survivors in the Cosby case on their mind as prominently, perhaps, as would the CNN audience.

The most notable difference reflected herein is that the audience from CNN could view the issue of sexual assault as important, FOX News and E! audiences might believe that giving Cosby support and the benefit of the doubt is necessary, while E! audiences will less likely interpret the case as a social or legal issue, but instead as an entertainment story involving a humorous superstar that has attracted other celebrities and happenings in the Hollywood/LA scene. The problem is that three different audiences could very likely interpret certain elements, such as scandal and Hollywood, as more important than other elements, such as power and

sexual assault. This variation in coverage can contribute to a division among media consuming individuals, thereby also contributing to pre-conceived notions, acceptance of myths, formulation or reinforcement of stereotypes and the shaping of attitudes. This difference among coding categories could influence the E! audience to interpret the *Media feeding frenzy* and "scandal" aspect to be essential when looking at the Cosby case. If a network does not highlight issues other networks focus on, these issues might not be as evident to the audience. The results show that all three networks focus on one story, but tell it in different ways.

Agenda setting theory argues that media will not tell viewers what to think, but will instead influence what they think is important by focusing on specific issues (McCombs, 2004). That is, agenda setting theory does not tell folks what to think but, rather, what to think about (Weaver, 2007). And, indeed, consumers of these variant media might be thinking about the Cosby scandal in variant manners. Individuals begin to view different things as more important than other things by limiting themselves to one network that mirrors their political view, otherwise known as selective exposure (Stroud, 2007). This means that people might begin to have a one-sided view or more narrow view of not only the Cosby sexual assault allegations, but of the world as well as contributing factors that are highlighted in reporting. As a result, consumers might develop some biases and, often times, are limited to knowing the full story, which reduces the chance to make educated decisions and take a stand on a side of the issue (Stroud, 2007). Media studies examining selective exposure demonstrate that whatever media audiences expose themselves to will provide either negative or positive attitudes toward the subject that come from the biases portrayed (Stroud, 2007). For this reason, researchers argue that exposing oneself to various different frames, or news outlets, not only creates an open mind, but also contributes in a better understanding of the story along with the social implications

within the story (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). For a better understanding of the Cosby case, or issues related to power, race and sexual assault, it is argued that readers should not turn to one news outlet, but instead look at various different points of view in order to develop an educated and informed awareness of the circumstances. This recommendation comes from scholars examining media framing, concluding that, "Exposing yourself to very different ways of seeing the world helps to make your own culture more transparent. We learn comparisons and come to recognize the assumption and unreflective acceptance of our own way of doing things" (Hertog & McLeod, 2001, p. 151).

Limitations

Although the current content analysis offers beneficial contributions to the field and to consumers of media, there are still a few noteworthy limitations. This study took a special interest in the Cosby case because of its timeliness, relevancy and the gap in the literature. However, this is an ongoing case in which the final verdict will not be known for months or years to come. Specifically, the trial is set to commence on June 5, 2017. Thus, the current study leaves readers without a conclusion to the scandal. Additionally, this study only examined the beginning of the Cosby scandal when it began to make momentum in the media. Many things have occurred since the last article from the sample in November of 2015 pertaining to the Cosby case that were not included, such as his claim that he is a now legally blind and Cosby's attempt to move the trial's location and most recently, a Pennsylvania judge's decision that only one other sexual assault accuser can testify for the June trial, which prevents prosecutors from calling other accusers to testify (Jarrett, 2017; Weaver, 2017). Perhaps Cosby finds himself feeling helpless and is looking for alternatives to free his name, which would have been another interesting category for the current study. These aforementioned considerations were reported in

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different media but were not inclusive to the current sample. Nevertheless, these outside considerations could have possibly contributed to the coding categories and sample, but fell outside of the scope of the sampling frame dates of November 10, 2014-November 10, 2015.

Another limitation of the current study can be found in the *Cosby as the Rise and fall of an American hero* category. While this category responded to Cosby framed as both a hero and a villain, the two were not distinct from each other. Thus, it is not known if networks focused on the "rise" or the "fall" more so than the other to a statistically significant degree. Instead, this category corresponded to either/or and sometimes both.

It is also important to consider agenda setting theory's need for orientation (NFO), the innate desire individuals have to understand their surrounding environment (McCombs, 2004). McCombs (2004) acknowledges that sometimes, individuals do not have a personal connection to the story or find it relevant, which causes the NFO to be low. This low level of NFO stems from individuals not feeling any type of psychological discomfort when they don't know details about the realm of public affairs but are instead completely content with not having knowledge in the media story (McCombs, 2004). That said, some individuals may not find the Cosby scandal or the surrounding issues of high relevance to them personally, which causes them to completely disconnect themselves from media coverage of the Cosby scandal and not be impacted by it in anyway. To that end, the gender and race of the reporters of the stories reviewed in this analysis were not examined nor might they have been necessarily known. That said, a potential NFO might have existed on the part of the reporter that this investigator was not aware of.

Lastly, adding different networks into the sample with a mix of both conservative and liberal views would have contributed to the study as well with a different perspective on a

network that works to appeal to both audiences, such as *The Economist*. This addition could have potentially made a contribution to the coding categories and implications for network agendas as well.

Future Directions

Future research regarding the Cosby case can contribute to further understanding of media storytelling, framing, priming, agenda setting and society as a whole. Because the *Rise and fall* category in the current study corresponded to both the rise and fall of Cosby, a future study can re-evaluate the category as two distinct categories. That is, Cosby's rise as a superstar and a hero for the black community could be one category whereas his fall from grace in the midst of 60 sexual assault allegations and negative occurrences since then can coded as a different category.

Agenda setting theory argues that individuals will see topics that are prominent in news media as highly important. However, addressing this issue from a multi-method approach can contribute to better understanding the predictive and explanatory functions of agenda setting theory. Although the Cosby scandal and pending trial (and potential appeals) likely have a long road ahead, re-visiting the scandal and the final results can also contribute to the current study as the story unfolds. A comparison in the coverage in the very beginning of the case with the very end may serve as a follow-up study as well. The question exists, however, as to whether a story ever really "ends"—it might be hard to discern as long as life is being breathed into a story, stories are resurrected, revisited, etc. in the media.

When selecting the sample for each network, much video reporting existed that included text, but an analysis of the video component was not included in the current investigation. An examination of videos in future research can enable the analysis nonverbal cues, tone of voice

and how it may or may not ultimately differ from the textual data. Many images were also included with the textual data but were not considered in the current study. Some of the media outlets chose to use Dr. Huxtable pictures- images of Cosby smiling, with a white turtleneck sweater and surrounded by smiling faces. Alternatively, other news outlets incorporated newer pictures into the story of a distressed Cosby walking into court proceedings with an angered, troubled look on his face and without his iconic Dr. Huxtable sweater. And, in a more blended fashion, some news outlets incorporated a mixture of both images, which could be interpreted as a before and after piece highlighting *Cosby as the Rise and fall of an American hero*. Analyzing the photographs that each media outlet chose to incorporate can also contribute to their stance on the Cosby case and the way they ultimately chose to frame him.

For a future study regarding scandal, race and the media, a comparison of media coverage for the current scandal and the Simpson scandal can contribute to the field as well. When reading the sample, many occurrences from the Cosby scandal mirrored O.J.'s scandal. For instance, O.J. always considered himself an icon, an alphamale, and didn't necessarily choose to identify with the black community. Instead, Simpson surrounded himself with white friends, colleagues and even left his black wife to marry a white woman. During his court trials, however, O.J. was suddenly a black man trying to win over a black jury. With Cosby, he, too, ridiculed the black community during a speech, commenting on the community's lack of education, bad parenting skills and use of "ghetto" language. According to mediated reports, it appears that all of Cosby's alleged victims, except Beverly Johnson, are white women. When the Cosby scandal made an appearance in the media, however, Cosby made comments that the black media should remain neutral about him (Howard, 2014). As the trial commences, it will be of interest to see how the jury selection unfolds, whether a "downtown jury" (as reported with the Simpson trial) is sought

by the Defense in the Cosby case, if the emphasis is on how Cosby is a black man who has done well and is being unfairly taken down by white women (recall that the only black woman making allegations has made it clear in reports that she wishes no harm on Cosby), etc. ensues as the case and process plays out. Of interest will be if history potentially repeats itself with two very similar trials. Occurrences such as these deserve more scholarly attention.

Although the issue of race was not part of the coding categories for the current study, it was nonetheless apparent and significant within the sample and the case. Although BET's sample size was not enough for the current study, incorporating a news outlet that makes race a primary concern would have brought about an intriguing and different point of view when comparing with the other media networks. This could have potentially created a coding category related to race as well.

Conclusion

As previous scholars note, when the public knows of a scandal, they immediately develop a need to know specific details which causes them to turn to the media for more knowledge, or as McCombs and Shaw call it, a *need for orientation* (Lull & Hinerman, 1997). This dependence humans have on the media deserves recognition, as it can mold many generations to come. Whether it's in the form of film, news, television, social media, podcast or radio, media use is here to stay and only keeps attracting more and more consumers. To put it into perspective, the average American is exposed to media at least four hours per day which is equivalent to nine years in his or her lifetime (Berger, 2008). Undoubtedly, this study acknowledges media as powerful, impactful and influential in our ever-changing society. Individuals turn to media when they want orientation on important issues and, often without hesitation, consume the information

often in a peripheral manner rather than with a critical eye (McCombs 2004; McCombs, 2009; Petty, Briñol & Priester, 2009).

However, as McCombs (2004) notes, it is important to remember that we, as media consumers, are equally as responsible in selecting what media we consume. As the current study suggests, it is crucial to get the complete story in order to make an informed decision, which suggests that individuals turn to various news outlets when their NFO is high. Nonetheless, agenda setting theory does not describe media as manipulative, but instead as strategic in the way it chooses to make certain issues salient to the public (McCombs, 2004). Many times, it is through the media that individuals turn to for guidance, which leads them to conclusions that could ultimately impact their attitudes or relationships with other individuals. Being that media is so impactful to society, further research on the matter is crucial and has the potential to demonstrate how authoritative it actually is. To illustrate, Malcolm X said, "The media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses" (King, 2010, p. 199).

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<div align="center">**Curriculum Vitae**</div>

<div align="center">Larissa Terán</div>

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Education

M.A., Communication Studies, May 2017, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV

> Thesis advisor: Dr. Tara M. Emmers-Sommer

> Committee members: Dr. Tara McManus, Dr. Jennifer Guthrie, Dr. David Dickens

> Title: "The destruction of a legacy:" Agenda setting and the Bill Cosby sexual assault allegations

B.A., Journalism, May 2015, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ

> Cum laude

> Minor: Spanish

Awards and Honors

- Dean's list at the University of Arizona
- Induction into the National Honor Society (Fall 2014)
- Induction into Lamba Pi Eta Communication Studies Honor Society (Fall 2016)
- Coach for 2nd place winner out of 1,000 undergraduate students in the annual speech contest at UNLV (Fall 2015)
- Coach for 1st place winner out of 1,000 undergraduate students in the annual speech contest at UNLV (Fall 2016)
- Judge for COM101 speech contest (Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016)

Publications

Terán, L. & Emmers-Sommer, T. M. (in review). "The destruction of a legacy:"
    Agenda setting and the Bill Cosby sexual assault allegations. Target journal:
    Communication Studies

Conferences

Terán, L. & Emmers-Sommer, T. M. (in review). "The destruction of a legacy:" Agenda setting
    and the Bill Cosby sexual assault allegations. *Submitted to the National Communication*

Association Conference in Dallas, TX, 2017

Terán, L. & Guthrie, J. (in review). "Alcohol and testosterone are a dangerous mix": Rape myth acceptance in commenters' responses to Emily Doe's letter to Brock Turner. A *To be submitted to the National Communication Association Conference in Dallas, TX, 2017.*

Teaching Experience

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Graduate Teaching Assistant
Fall 2015-May 2017
- Experience with teaching the basic course of public speaking for undergraduate students
- Experience teaching small lab classroom environment and large lecture setting
- Responsible for three breakout groups each semester, with 78 undergraduate students total
- Responsible for holding weekly office hours, developing lectures, in class activities, rubrics, grading of speeches, and classroom management
- Experience with integrating material both in-person and online through WebCampus
- Responsible for creating a comfortable environment for public speaking and three speeches throughout the semester
- Special emphasis placed on facilitating the public speaking process with in-class activities and case studies

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Part-time Instructor of Record
Summer 2016
- Independently taught Public Speaking to 25 undergraduate students
- Responsible for all curriculum development, syllabus, classroom management,
- Independently responsible for grading oral speeches, written assignments, in-class participation, and developing final and midterm exams
- Experience with teaching the basic course
- Special attention was placed on students with high communication apprehension and facilitating public speaking skills
- Responsible for maintaining and developing online content through WebCampus

Guest Lectures

Terán, L. (2015, April). Media monitoring, closeness, and the family. Research presented during Dr. Menegatos' Family Communication and Marriage undergraduate course at

UNLV.

Terán, L. (2016, December). Power struggles and expression in media rape cases. Research presented during Dr. Guthrie's Communication and Conflict Management undergraduate course at UNLV.

Professional Experience

Reporting Intern for Douglas Dispatch
Douglas, Arizona
June 2013-July 2013
- Responsible for producing weekly stories for the newspaper
- Published a total of six stories with major deadlines
- Responsible for assistance on the advertising pages, conducting and setting up interviews, fact checking and shadowing

Public Relations Intern for McFadden/Gavender Advertising
Tucson, Arizona
May 2014-August 2014
- Responsible for reaching out to media outlets to set up publications for clients
- Responsible for keeping in touch with clients
- Publicized a number of clients with creative pitching techniques to media
- Responsible for publicizing clients in television, telecasts, social media and blogs

Social Media Marketing Intern for Chapman Automotive
Tucson, Arizona
May 2014-September 2014
- Responsible for posting weekly social media posts, producing blog content and videos
- Assisted in organizing charity events, commercials and vehicle unveilings for brands such as Audi, Porsche, Acura, Volkswagen, Honda and Mercedes
- Communicated with Chapman customers and consumers for customer service concerns through all Internet sources

College Academy for Parents Student Coordinator
Department of Early Academic Outreach at the University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona
January 2015-May 2015
- Student coordinator for the program College Academy for Parents (CAP) which is a branch at the University of Arizona's department for Early Academic Outreach

- Responsible for reaching out to parents and students K-12 to participate in the CAP Program, which works to inspire and inform on higher education for minority students
- Responsible for ten student employees for CAP
- Responsible for setting up weekly meetings with student employees and producing content for weekly meeting with CAP participants
- Responsible for planning family and student field trips to the University of Arizona

Entertainment Reporter
The Tombstone Epitaph
Tucson, Arizona
January 2015-May 2015
- Responsible for producing original stories in the Tombstone area concerning entertainment
- Responsible for translating a select number of stories from English to Spanish
- Publication of different stories every month

Community Service Experience

- Market on the Run
  Tucson, Arizona
- Arcoiris Youth Group
  Agua Prieta, Sonora