

APPLICATION OF THE BELMONT PRINCIPLES  
Samantha Williams; Summer 231, Section 2 Tuesdays 6:30-8:00PM

Case study: John Oliver and Native Advertising:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E\\_F5GxCwizc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_F5GxCwizc)

Native advertising is advertising with the deliberate intent to shift the behavior and attitude of advertised products/companies by using the credibility and storytelling components of journalism. This lacks transparency and has no editorial oversight by the news organization (Last Week Tonight [HBO], 2014). As a result, native advertising, also called sponsored/branded content, fails to meet the three basic ethical principles of the Belmont Report: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission, 1979).

**Respect for Persons:** Consumers are not given a choice to participate in being shown native advertising within their news feed as publishers try to strike the balance between a free (First Amendment Right) and independent press and profit. According to a study conducted by IAB and Edelman Berland, 41% could not identify native advertising from general news content (Getting Sponsored Content Right: The Consumer View, 2014). Those with a limited capacity or lacking attention span could mistake this sponsored content for journalistic news.

**Beneficence:** While well-placed sponsored content may make for a more informed consumer about the product/company advertised, the advertiser is free to write their narrative in the voice of a reputable publisher without the need for editorial oversight or fact-checking standards because it is a paid advertisement, not news. The risk of having a misinformed reader should be too great for the publisher.

**Justice:** There is an undue burden on the part of the reader/consumer to differentiate native advertising from editorial news. While publishers do label sponsored content it is minimal by design. In its conclusion, the study suggested that publishers only partner with advertisers that are “relevant/trusted,” (Getting Sponsored Content Right: The Consumer View, 2014) leaving the consumers dependent on the publisher to choose journalistic ethics over profit. Based on this model, credibility is traded as currency between publishers and marketers looking to boost their engagement at the expense of the reader/consumer. Additionally, it is unclear on how the data collected on the success of the native advertisement will be used in the future and for what purposes.

Last Week Tonight [HBO]. (2014, August 4). *Native Advertising: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO)* [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E\\_F5GxCwizc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_F5GxCwizc)

National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (1979). *The Belmont report: Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/read-the-belmont-report/index.html>

IAB & Edelman Berland. (2014). *Getting in-feed sponsored content right: The consumer view*. [https://www.iab.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/IAB\\_Edelman\\_Berland\\_Study.pdf](https://www.iab.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/IAB_Edelman_Berland_Study.pdf)