Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to research Jimmy Fallon's audience's relationship with democracy through the jokes he makes during a political crisis. Looking at previous research such as Christie Davies *Jokes and Targets*, suggests that more jokes being made about politics illustrate dissatisfaction with the political system. Also, that the jokes themselves can lead to an understanding of how people relate to their political system.

This thesis will go through different available theories, such as superiority, incongruity and release, on why people laugh. Not only that, the thesis will also go through semantic script theory of humor in order to be able to constitute what is and is not a joke. This same theory will also give the tools necessary to go into more depth with each individual joke. To assess what those jokes actually mean, Framing Theory as specified by George Lakoff.

Through that, I will be able to better assess the meaning of the jokes being made and what they mean, which will be used to answer the problem formulation.

This entire process will show that the jokes do not show an overtly negative view on democratic institutions on a whole. That said, there are jokes that criticize some aspects of democracy that perhaps need improvement. Also, it also suggests that Trump has become or is becoming an example of what a president should not be.

Contents

Introduction

I would argue that the world is going through a period of uncertainty. Throughout the United States and Europe, right wing populism has been on the rise. The UKIP ran on a Britain first message and campaigned to leave the European Union (successfully) and is currently campaigning on "cutting immigration" and "protecting British culture"[1]. In France, Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Front, managed to get to the second round of the French presidential elections[2]. In fact, the same party, which "at its highest levels, is awash with Hitler admirers and Holocaust-denying far-right nationalists" managed to gain 30% of the vote[3]. In the United States, "America First" was part of Donald Trump's inaugural address, which was a culmination of "unsubtle identity politics [and] economic populism".[4][5]

Focusing on the political events of the United States and the United Kingdom. The outcomes of these political events, both the American presidency and the EU referendum, were a result of each of the countries own political traditions[6][7]. Both of these political events have happened according to their own political traditions. The United Kingdom had a yes or no referendum in which 51.9% leave vote was enough for the UK to legitimately leave the European Union[8]. On the other side of the Atlantic, Donald Trump won enough electoral college votes to become president but Hillary Clinton won the popular vote[9].

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[1] "About UKIP". 2017. UKIP. http://www.ukip.org/.
[2] Don't Write Off Marine Le Pen Just Yet, But Her Chances Are Far Slimmer Than Were Donald Trump's". 2017. Newsweek. http://www.newsweek.com/french-election-polls-le-pen-589119.
[3] "The New National Front Is The Same As The Old National Front". 2017. Foreign Policy. http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/11/the-holocaust-denying-vichy-celebrating-heart-of-the-national-front/
[4] Barbaro, Matt. 2017. "Donald Trump Is Elected President In Stunning Repudiation Of The Establishment". Nytimes.Com. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/09/us/politics/hillary-clinton-donald-trump-president.html?_r=0.
[5] "Donald Trump: 'America First, America First' - BBC News". 2017. BBC News. http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-us-canada-38698654/donald-trump-america-first-america-first.
[6] "Referendums Held In The UK". 2017. UK Parliament. http://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/elections/referendums-held-in-the-uk/.
[7] "Presidential Election Process | Usagov". 2017. Usa.Gov. https://www.usa.gov/election.
[8] "EU Referendum Results - BBC News". 2017. BBC News. http://www.bbc.com/news/politics/eu_referendum/results.
[9] "Hillary Clinton Wins The Popular Vote But Loses The Election, For The Second Time". 2017. Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/11/09/for-the-second-time-hillary-clinton-wins-more-votes-but-loses-an-election/.

The results of both of these elections have been protested by the citizens of their respective countries. In the United Kingdom, a movement of four million people have attempted to challenge the results of the Brexit referendum through a petition to hold a second referendum[10]. Even the former prime-minister has encouraged people to "rise up" against the results of a democratically held referendum[11].

Fairclough, in *Discourse Analysis*, states that human-beings negotiate the meaning of ideas, beliefs and attitudes through texts, which include written, verbal as well as non-verbal communication[12]. There have been a variety of protests against Trump such as the travel ban, the women's march, day without immigrants and the march for science[13][14][15][16]. However, there have also been protests "across the country" claiming that Donald Trump is "not their president", which contrary to the other protests, due to the texts they create, may be inadvertently challenging democratic ideals instead of Donald Trump himself[17].

Yes, Donald Trump did not win the popular vote. However, as the Brexit vote, his victory was achieved through the political system that was set in place. The protesters introduce, I would argue, a text in which Trump, even though he was legitimately elected to the presidency, is not the president. President Trump is the outcome of a democratic process, he *is* the president. By saying that he is not the president, one is questioning the legitimacy of someone that has achieved that power legitimately. I argue that by stating that Donald Trump is not the president, one may delegitimize the democratic process that put him there.

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[10]"Petition: EU Referendum Rules Triggering A 2Nd EU Referendum". 2017. Petitions - UK Government And Parliament. https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/131215.

[11] "Tony Blair Urges Britons To 'Rise Up' Against Brexit". 2017. Aljazeera.Com. http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/tony-blair-urges-britons-rise-brexit-170217170609453.html.

[12] Fairclough, Norman. Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research. Psychology Press, 2003. 8

[13] "The Protests Against Trump's Travel Ban Could Change How America Designs Airports". 2017. Nordic.Businessinsider.Com. http://nordic.businessinsider.com/trump-travel-ban-airport-protests-design-2017-3?r=US&IR=T.

[14] "Millions Protest Against Trump At Women's Marches". 2017. ABC News. http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-22/donald-trump-protest-marches-to-take-place-by-women-worldwide/8200784.

[15] Lam, Bourree. 2017. "The Fallout From 'A Day Without Immigrants'". The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/02/day-without-immigrants-2/517380/

[16] "March For Science". 2017. Satellites.Marchforscience.Com. https://satellites.marchforscience.com/.

[17] Levenson, Eric. 2017. "'Not My President's Day' Protesters Rally To Oppose Trump". CNN. http://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/20/us/not-my-presidents-day-protests/.

As shown above, there has been plenty of resistance to president Trump through protests. How then, has this resistance been shown within other specific social groups? Can one find similar patterns of anti-trump rhetoric that also perhaps subtly undermines democratic ideals? What sort of jokes are late nights hosts making? The goal of this project is to see how the audience of Jimmy Fallon relates to democracy.

Jokes come from what a comedian believes "people are thinking about" or are aware of around the time [18]. By looking at the jokes that Jimmy Fallon is making, one can gain an understanding of what his audience is thinking as well as their opinion on things.

Why Jimmy Fallon and not Stephen Colbert? Stephen Colbert is the host of The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, a job he inherited from David Letterman in 2015[19]. The show is political and has a "hard focus on politics and news", some of which is presented as a monologue at the start of the show[20].

That said, an interesting recent development is that Stephen has been beating his contemporary Jimmy Fallon in ratings for seven weeks (as of writing)[21]. Colbert's success has been so great that Fallon "the king of late night" has been (according to inside sources) forced to "get more political" with his content[22]. The show and Fallon himself will be covered more extensively later in the *Context of a Joke* segment of this paper. The important thing to note is that Colbert's show is very political, which is illustrated by the live shows following political events, such as election night, the GOP and Democratic convention as well as the president's address to congress[23].

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[18] Cohen, Ted. Jokes: Philosophical thoughts on joking matters. University of Chicago Press, 1999. 38
[19] "Stephen Colbert Replacing David Letterman". 2017. PEOPLE.Com. http://people.com/tv/stephen-colbert-replacing-david-letterman/.
[20] Daniel Holloway. 2017. "'Late Show With Stephen Colbert' In Ratings Rebound Thanks To Political Climate". Variety. http://variety.com/2017/tv/news/stephen-colbert-late-show-ratings-2-1201992946/.
[21] "TV Ratings: Stephen Colbert's Winning Streak Hits 7 Weeks". 2017. The Hollywood Reporter. http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/tv-ratings-stephen-colberts-winning-streak-hits-7-weeks-987663.
[22] "Jimmy Fallon To Deliver 'More Political' 'Tonight Show' To Win Back Ratings Crown From Colbert". 2017. The Daily Beast. http://www.thedailybeast.com/jimmy-fallon-to-deliver-more-political-tonight-show-to-win-back-ratings-crown-from-colbert.
[23] Daniel Holloway. 2017. "'Late Show With Stephen Colbert' In Ratings Rebound Thanks To Political Climate". Variety. http://variety.com/2017/tv/news/stephen-colbert-late-show-ratings-2-1201992946/.

Jimmy Fallon is on the other side of the spectrum in terms political focus. The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon has been described a "populist"[24]. He attempts to have fun with his guests by playing different forms of games that "simple and silly"[25]. The approach he takes is "apolitical" and tries to appeal to as broad an audience as possible[26]. His apolitical approach garnered criticism due to the way he handled the Trump interview where he ruffled Trump's hair[27]. Following that interview, he was charged by several news outlets with normalizing an extreme candidate[28].

The show has seen a decline in viewers, going from 3 million viewers to 2,7 million through January to May[29]. Even though inside sources have said that he is changing some of the content of his show, he has stated that it will not change in spite of the politically charged environment that has seemed to reward Colbert[30]. In his own words "people that voted for Trump watch my show as well[31]."

The focus of this project will be on Jimmy Fallon. Stephen Colbert is already very political and it would be harder to gage a change in political humor since his already deep engagement with politics. Jimmy Fallon, on the other hand, attempts to be apolitical. I would argue that any changes from apolitical humor to political humor will be much more apparent in his monologues in comparison to Colbert's. As you will see in the political joke segment of this paper, an increase in political jokes suggests a dissatisfaction with a system of government.

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[24] "Jimmy Fallon Earned The Late Night Crown. Now Can Somebody Try To Take It From Him?". 2017. Pastemagazine.Com. https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2016/02/jimmy-fallon-is-the-king-of-late-night-and-thats-g.html.

[25] "Jimmy Fallon Earned The Late Night Crown. Now Can Somebody Try To Take It From Him?". 2017. Pastemagazine.Com. https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2016/02/jimmy-fallon-is-the-king-of-late-night-and-thats-g.html.

[26] Itzkoff, Dave. 2017. "Jimmy Fallon Was On Top Of The World. Then Came Trump.". Nytimes.Com. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/17/arts/television/jimmy-fallon-tonight-show-interview-trump.html.

[27] Itzkoff, Dave. 2017. "Jimmy Fallon Was On Top Of The World. Then Came Trump.". Nytimes.Com. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/17/arts/television/jimmy-fallon-tonight-show-interview-trump.html.

[28] Ibid

[29] Ibid

[30] Ibid

[31] Ibid

What's so Funny about Democracy?

There are competing claims about comedians i.e. joke tellers, and the amount of influence they have over their viewers. An example of this would be in 2012 Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart worked together to inform their viewers of 501(c)(4), or, "super PACS"[32]. Super PACS or, "political action committees", are organizations that are allowed to gather unlimited funds to "overtly advocate for or against political candidates" as long as they do not coordinate with the candidate[33].

Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart used their show I to "[address] a consequential but complex new campaign finance regulation structure"[34]. This was done through a super PAC named *Americans for a better Tomorrow, Tomorrow.*[35] Through his super PAC jokes, he illustrated the lack of oversight and regulations that existed as well as the ease in which that money could go towards personal use[36].

When participants of a study were shown two clips explaining super PACS, one of which was Stephen Colbert's, viewers that were shown Colbert's were more knowledgeable about and more supportive of campaign finance reform[37]. It is important to note that the paper *Stephen Colbert's Civics Lesson* described this support towards campaign reform as "somewhat weakly", which is not enough to put to bed questions about jokes ability to influence political attitudes.[38]

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[32] Hardy, Bruce W., Jeffrey A. Gottfried, Kenneth M. Winneg, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. "Stephen Colbert's civics lesson: how Colbert Super PAC taught viewers about campaign finance." Mass Communication and Society 17, no. 3 (2014): 329-353. 330

[33] Gulati, Girish J. "Super PACs and financing the 2012 presidential election." Society 49, no. 5 (2012): 409-417.

[34] Hardy, Bruce W., Jeffrey A. Gottfried, Kenneth M. Winneg, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. "Stephen Colbert's civics lesson: how Colbert Super PAC taught viewers about campaign finance." Mass Communication and Society 17, no. 3 (2014): 329-353. 333

[35] Ibid 336

[36] Ibid 336

[37] Ibid 337

[38] Ibid 349

Kim Jung is Un-amused

The effectiveness of jokes as a tool to change minds does not seem to be shared by authoritarian regimes. A recent and noticeable example of this is Bassem Youssef i.e. the Egyptian Jon Stewart, who was censored and then fled from Egypt[39]. An older example is the Soviet Union, where jokes making fun of the government were outlawed, which in turned spawned a joke about comedians being outlawed[40]. There echoes of this form of Soviet behavior when Putin was elected in 2000 and shut down a sketch show that made fun of him[41].

Authoritarian governments may try to stomp out jokes critical of the state. However, it does not always seem to work. Even in places like North Korea, a "tightly closed and controlled" state, jokes critical of the government have emerged and have been played on the radio[42].

Even though one may credit Bassem Youssef with helping topple Morsi's government, which had a viewership of 30 million Egyptians[43]. When he was making fun of a president that was unpopular, people encouraged and saluted his comedy[44]. However, once Sisi (the military) came to power (who were very popular), he was told to stop making jokes about him and instead make fun of Islamic people as he usually did[45]. Bassem Youssef lamented the fact that the people watching the show seemed to treat it "as simple comic relief" instead of something that could really change hearts and minds[46].

This anecdotal evidence is supported by research done by Amy B. Becker that found that humor does not in fact change minds, but is instead likely of re-enforcing already held beliefs[47]. Her

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[39] "'Egyptian Jon Stewart' Bassem Youssef Will Now Satirize U.S. Democracy". 2017. NPR.Org. http://www.npr.org/2016/02/03/465398726/egyptian-jon-stewart-bassem-youssef-will-now-satirize-u-s-democracy.

[40] Davies, Christie. Jokes and targets. Indiana University Press, 2011.

[41] Treisman, Deborah, Teju Cole, Doreen Félix, Richard Brody, Anthony Lane, Rachel Aviv, and David Sedaris et al. 2017. "How Jokes Won The Election". The New Yorker. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/23/how-jokes-won-the-election.

[42] "Political Humor From North Korea". 2017. Radio Free Asia. http://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/koreanjokes-09102008183510.html.

[43] "Tribeca: "Egyptian Jon Stewart" Bassem Youssef Talks 'Tickling Giants' Doc About Rise And Fall Of Satirical Show". 2017. The Hollywood Reporter. http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/egyptian-jon-stewart-bassem-youssef-884125.

[44] Youssef, Bassem. 2017. Revolution For Dummies. 1st ed. Harper Collins.180

[45]Ibid 180

[46] Ibid 208

[47] Becker, A. B. "Humiliate my enemies or mock my friends." Applying disposition theory (2014).

study showed that fake humorous articles were found to be funnier, or "worked best" as long as the article mocked someone with different political beliefs than the one reading it[48].

Modern Day Jokes

However, there is also contemporary popular belief that suggests that jokes may be able to influence people's opinion and also spur them to action. John Oliver, an "activist" comedian that has several times attempted to cause change and influence people into doing different things[49]. He attempted to get people to start calling the president Donald *Drumpf*, which is his original name, instead of Donald Trump[50]. He ran a story about the FCC and net neutrality, twice, and encouraged his viewers to write comments on the website to protest a change in net neutrality laws. The first time around, the website received so many complains that it crashed[51]. The second time, the FCC website crashed once more and John Oliver was credited with encouraging 1.6 million comments to be posted on the FCC's website[52].

There are also jokes that come from the bottom up and have been credited with helping Donald Trump win the election. After the inauguration of Donald Trump, on January 23rd, the New Yorker wrote an article that claims that jokes won the election[53]. The jokes that Trump told were a vehicle in order to make "unspeakable" things more digestible[54]. According to the article, jokes or "dank memes" were an "accelerant" for lies to spread further than they would have otherwise[55]. People tweeted anti-Semitic imagery and other hateful jokes only to have the "joke

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[48] Becker, A. B. "Humiliate my enemies or mock my friends

[49] Garber, Megan. 2017. "John Oliver Pushes Comedy Further Toward Activism". The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/11/john-oliver-activist-comedian/507599/.

[50] McFarland, K.M., Angela Watercutter, and Chris Kohler. 2017. "A New Chrome Extension Makes Donald 'Drumpf' Again". WIRED. https://www.wired.com/2016/02/new-chrome-extension-makes-donald-drumpf/.

[51] "How The 'John Oliver Effect' Is Having A Real-Life Impact". 2017. Time.Com. http://time.com/3674807/john-oliver-net-neutrality-civil-forfeiture-miss-america/.

[52] Ted Johnson. 2017. "John Oliver Skewers Critics In Latest Plea For Net Neutrality". Variety. http://variety.com/2017/biz/news/john-oliver-fcc-net-neutrality-comments-1202427547/.

[53] Treisman, Deborah, Teju Cole, Doreen Félix, Richard Brody, Anthony Lane, Rachel Aviv, and David Sedaris et al. 2017. "How Jokes Won The Election". The New Yorker. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/23/how-jokes-won-the-election.

[54] Ibid

[55] Treisman, Deborah, Teju Cole, Doreen Félix, Richard Brody, Anthony Lane, Rachel Aviv, and David Sedaris et al. 2017. "How Jokes Won The Election". The New Yorker. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/23/how-jokes-won-the-election.

protect the non-joke" i.e. if one protests, the response of the "joker" would be "it was only a joke. Man!"[56]. This view that "dank memes" i.e. jokes, help Trump's campaign (and ultimately victory) was shared in other newspapers such as the Chicago Tribune, The Guardian, the Economist and the New York Times[57][58][59][60].

But why Jokes?

Jokes, according to Ted Cohen, are conditional[61]. For a joke to work, there are certain conditions that must be fulfilled. In his book, *Philosophical Thoughts on Joking Matters*, Ted Cohen states that for a joke to work, there must be intimacy i.e. a form of community[62]. A community where the people involved in it have a shared "beliefs, dispositions, prejudices, preferences" i.e. world view[63]. Another important part of this intimacy is that the community shares a feeling or "a shared response to something"[64].

Jokes come from what a comedian believes "people are thinking about" or are aware of[65]. When a comedian tells a joke, he does so with an implicit expectation of the listener knowing or "feeling" what he is talking about at some level[66]. The listener's background knowledge contributes to what makes the joke work[67]. If the listener did not share an "awareness" with the

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[56] How Jokes Won The Election". The New Yorker

[57] " The Economist, economist.com "How Donald Trump Ushered Hateful Fringe Movements to the Mainstream" http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21707201-how-donald-trump-ushered-hateful-fringe-movement-mainstream-pepe-and.

[58] "'We Actually Elected A Meme As President': How 4Chan Celebrated Trump's Victory". 2017. Chicagotribune.Com. http://www.chicagotribune.com/bluesky/technology/ct-meme-president-4chan-trump-wp-bsi-20161112-story.html.

[59] Haddow, Douglas. 2017. "Meme Warfare: How The Power Of Mass Replication Has Poisoned The US Election". The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/04/political-memes-2016-election-hillary-clinton-donald-trump.

[60] Hess, Amanda. 2017. "Memes, Myself And I: The Internet Lets Us All Run The Campaign". Nytimes.Com. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/06/arts/memes-myself-and-i-the-internet-lets-us-all-run-the-campaign.html.

[61] Cohen, Ted. Jokes: Philosophical thoughts on joking matters. University of Chicago Press, 1999. 13

[62] Ibid 34

[63] Ibid 34

[64] Ibid 31

[65] Ibid 38

[66] Ibid 38

[67] Ibid 39

joke-teller, the joke would not work due to a lack of context[68]. If they do share that "awareness", a community is formed or re-enforced around the amusement that the joke brings[69].

By researching the jokes that a community makes, or the leader of a community makes, one can gain an understanding of what it is that said community values or discourages. The book *Seriously Funny: Mexican Political Jokes as Social Resistance*, explored how Mexican jokes illustrated a distrust Mexicans have of politicians and their system[70]. *Jokes and their Targets*, found out how people under Soviet Rule related to the Soviet Union and the issues that plagued it such as famine and corruption[71].

In the past, trickster gods (some of which could be understood as jokes made flesh), were notorious jokesters that broke social convention[72]. By giving an example of what broke social convention, these trickster gods provided examples of what could and couldn't be done in that society[73]. In other words, by analyzing trickster gods and the jokes that they make, the researchers gained an understanding of the taboos and social convention of a society.

Lastly, the Soviet Union has shown that when a country has systemic problems, the jokes told within the society change[74]. Suddenly, jokes began to be more political and old jokes were taken, repurposed and made political as well as there being an overall increase in political jokes[75].

I Don't get It – What is and isn't a Joke?

A challenge for this thesis was define what a joke was. The problem that can arise is the different tastes people may have in relation to humor. What one person may find funny, another may not even crack a smile. To tackle that problem, this paper has decided to delve into different humor theories that attempt to explain why people laugh. Those theories are incongruity, release and

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[68] Cohen, Ted. Jokes: Philosophical thoughts 39
[69] Ibid 40
[70] Schmidt, Samuel. Seriously Funny: Mexican Political Jokes as Social Resistance. University of Arizona Press, 2014. 234
[71] Davies, Christie. Jokes and targets. 215
[72] Carr, Jimmy, and Lucy Greeves. Only Joking: What's So Funny about Making People Laugh?. Penguin, 2006..37-55
[73] Ibid 37-55
[74] Davies, Christie. Jokes and targets 238
[75] Ibid 238

superiority, which will be covered later in the joke segment of this paper. Secondly, the paper delves into the semantic mechanisms that turn normal communication into joke communication. Since the approach of this thesis will be qualitative, as well as case based. The jokes will be chosen from monologues following Trump's firing of Comey, which is an event that may encourage political jokes.

The Set Up and Punch Line

With this several pages long discussion on humor, politics and jokes themselves: what is the project formulation of this project?

There are conflicting reports on the effectiveness of jokes as a persuasive tool. The Colbert Report study on super PACs only showed a "somewhat weakly" change in the political perceptions of the viewer.

Donald Trump's election to the presidency was seen (by news media) to be a result of the jokes he, as well as his followers, propagated across the internet. However, according to Beth Innocenti and Elizabeth Miller, "the persuasive force of political humor is diminished if social actors can dodge accountability", which most users on twitter (and the internet) are able to do[76]. This then brings into question the supposed Trump victory that was brought about with meme support.

Continuing with these examples, John Oliver was credited with possibly encouraging 1,6 million people to write comments against a change in net neutrality rules. That said, his video on net neutrality has at time of writing 5 million views[77]. There is no way to assess if the 1.6 million jump in FCC complaints are solely due to John Oliver or if he managed to influence his viewers into action.

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[76] Innocenti, Beth, and Elizabeth Miller. "The Persuasive Force of Political Humor." Journal of Communication 66, no. 3 (2016): 366-385.
[77] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92vuuZt7wak

This paper has shown studies that illustrated people only enjoy jokes that support their own political beliefs. Research in to Mexican as well as Soviet jokes has shown that the political jokes did not inspire any meaningful change[78][79].

So, through these deliberations, this paper will treat jokes as non-influential pieces of text that reflect the joke teller and his perception of society.

By researching Jimmy Fallon's jokes, one may gain a sense of how Fallon's audience perceives democracy viewers perceive it. It is the goal of this thesis to assess how his viewers relationship with democracy has changed, or, simply put:

"What is Fallon's audience's relationship with democracy during a time of political crisis?"

The political crisis chosen for this is the firing of James Comey. The reason for that will be covered in the "Comey's Firing" segment of the project. But, shortly, the reason I have chosen this crisis is because there are many things in this crisis that one could use to criticize and undermine democracy.

The Set Up (Methodology)

Social Research Approach

My entire approach to social research was based on *Bryman's Social Research Methods*. Bryman has established an extensive catalogue of the different approaches which all are explained in an easy to read and concise way. Looking at the theories within the context of what I have learned at the University, I conclude that Bryman is a good source to use when doing social research.

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[78] Schmidt, Samuel. Seriously Funny: Mexican Political Jokes as Social Resistance. University of Arizona Press, 2014.
[79] Davies, Christie. Jokes and targets. Indiana University Press, 2011.

Methodology

In order to make valid observations about reality, one must argue and account for what tools were used to create such an observation. What will follow now is a description of the approaches this thesis will take in regard to ontology, research design as well as epistemology.

Research paradigm

The following will be an examination of the research paradigm that will be used in this project. The approach and methods will be a mixture of positivism and constructivism.

Ontology

When one speaks of ontology, one touches upon "what it means for something to exist"[80]. With that question, there have been many attempts to "assert the existence or nonexistence of physical entities, of numbers, sets,"[81]. Among these, the two most prominent ones are objectivism and constructionism, which are at each sides of the scale. Objectivism holds that reality can be objectively observed and described without meaning being lost i.e. the world and the meaning it holds is "independent of social actors[82][83]. On the other end of the spectrum there is constructionism.

Constructionism contradicts realism and states that human beings are the ones that create meaning and that reality is therefore socially constructed[84]. How things, objects and ideas are described affect how said things, objects and ideas are perceived[85]. Human knowledge, according to this theory, is a "product of social communities"[86]. Since social communities are

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[80]Jacquette, Dale. Ontology. Vol. 7. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2002. 1
[81]Jacquette, Dale. Ontology. Vol. 7. 1
[82] Bryman, Alan. Social research methods. Oxford university press, 2015. 29
[83] Bryman, Alan. Social research 33
[84] McGee, R. J. and Richard L. Warms. "Social Constructionism." In Theory in Social and Cultural Anthropology: An Encyclopedia, edited by R. J. McGee and Richard L. Warms, 786-788. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2013. doi: 10.4135/9781452276311.n257.
[85] Ibid
[86] ibid

constantly in flux and evolving, the observations derived from this approach are a "specific" interpretation of reality instead of a "definitive" one[87].

This paper is looking at a social community, with Fallon as the center, construct the idea of democracy the host's monologue jokes. That is why this paper shall use the constructionist approach to research how they relate to democracy. The constructivist approach fits right in with the problem formulation established in the introduction section.

Epistemology

Epistemology deals with how a research project will approach reality and what will constitute "acceptable knowledge"[88]. From there, there are three approaches a person may take i.e. positivism, realism and interpretivism[89].

Positivism and realism hold that social sciences should take a natural science approach when gathering data and researching the world[90]. That is to say, value free, objective and there be a clear distinction between "scientific statements and normative statements"[91].

Interpretivism holds that social reality is different from the reality natural sciences research and therefore needs a special approach and set of rules in order to understand it[92]. The approach is to create an "empathic understanding of human action", through a fleshing out of why people act the way they do[93]. This approach gave rise to a theory named symbolic interaction, in which social actors are understood to continuously interpret the environment they are in[94].

This interpretivist symbolic interaction approach also means that there will be three levels of interpretation. First, the interpretation of the event itself by the subjects being researched[95].

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[87] Bryman, Alan. Social research 33
[88] Ibid 33
[89] Ibid 28-30
[90] Ibid 28
[91] Ibid 28
[92] Ibid 28
[93] Bryman, Alan. Social research 31
[94] Bryman, Alan. Social research 31
[95] Ibid 29

Secondly, there will be an interpretation made by the researcher[96]. The third layer of interpretation will be the interpretation created through the theories collected[97].

The epistemological approach taken in this project will be interpretivism. This is a suitable approach because many of the theories chosen here supplement the interpretivist epistemological approach. The theories of humor are theories on why people laugh. I need to interpret in which of the three theories applies to each individual joke. In order to do that, I need to empathetically understand why they are laughing at certain jokes. That is why I will add a segment that explains the current political events that were surrounding the jokes at the time.

Each theory, which will be covered more extensively in the joke section later, explains why jokes are told in different ways. Release would suggest that the joke teller is felling some sort of pressure, superiority suggests that the joke teller feels superior, and incongruity can be understood as a joke for the sake of joking. Each theory can be used to explain certain feelings that may have been behind a joke.

Secondly, the semantic approach to jokes are also supported by the interpretivist approach. According to this approach, I need to interpret the different scripts that are found within different texts and see if they contradict one another. It is my judgment and interpretation as a researcher that defines if a script contradicts one another, which is what makes interpretivism an apt epistemological approach to take. If I do interpret these scripts to be contradictory, the text is officially recognized as a joke. I would also argue that the fact that a person laughs at a statement is also indicative (but not conclusively) of a joke being present.

Following that, the jokes will go through another interpretivist process where I differentiate between non-political and political jokes. The empathetic understanding established through describing current political events will also be used here to understand the jokes and their significance i.e. if they are political or non-political.

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[96] Bryman, Alan. Social research 29
[97] Ibid 29

Due to this being a case approach, the three different monologues will be assessed if there are political jokes present. The amount of political jokes will also be compared to the amount of non-political jokes there are. Following that, the political jokes themselves will be analyzed to see what it is that those political jokes are saying about the current state of democracy. For example, are the jokes making fun of political institutions or just the people in power? I would argue that jokes about institutions are much more indicative of dissatisfaction with the system than jokes about political actors. I would say that one can criticize Donald Trump as a person but still be fine with the democratic ideals that put him there. On the other hand, as will be illustrated in the history of jokes section of the paper, jokes can work as social markers on what society can and cannot do. The jokes made about political actors may create or reinforce social markers for what political actors can and cannot do.

Research Design Overview

In regard to ontological approaches, as mentioned before, this paper will take a purely constructivist approach to research. Therefore, the interpretations derived from the analysis here will, as mentioned before, be a specific interpretation of reality i.e. my interpretation of reality (albeit done with the guidance of several theories). Even though this approach may be heavily interpretivist, I still need to ensure that the research I conduct has "measurement validity, internal validity, external validity, ecological validity, reliability and replicability"[98].

There were several research designs considered for this project. Cross-sectional research design revolves around analyzing more than one case in order detect "patterns of association"[99]. That said, it also states that this approach traditionally researches two cases which was not chosen because of this project's case study approach[100]. Also, a cross-sectional approach holds that the two cases being researched together must be similar to one another in order to make a valid

[98] Bryman, Alan. Social research 69
[99] Ibid 58
[100] Ibid 59

case study[101]. This approach was considered, however, due to Stephen Colbert's and Jimmy Fallon's show being so different, I decided against it and go with a case-study/observational study approach with a focus on Jimmy Fallon.

Research Design Criteria

In order for measurement validity, as a criterion, to be fulfilled, one must argue for why said measurements "reflect the concept that it is supposed to be denoting"[102]. Internal validity is achieved when one can argue for the causal relationship between the variables one is researching[103].

External validity is an assessment on how much of the outcomes of this research, if any, are applicable to other cases or generalized.[104] Finally, ecological validity concerns itself with the context in which the data is collected. For example, were a scientist to collect information on how people live their day to day lives, by having his subjects answer questions in a "special room" the ecological validity of the research into question[105]. The ecological validity of the research is dependent on how effective the researcher is able to capture "conditions, opinions, values, attitudes, and knowledge base" within its natural habitat[106].

Through a review of all these research designs, two have arisen that provided two approaches towards researching the topic i.e. a case study approach with some elements of structured observation in order to achieve supplementary data.

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[101] Bryman, Alan. Social research 59
[102] Ibid 47
[103] Ibid 71
[104] Ibid 47
[105] Ibid 48
[106] Ibid 48

Case Study

The primary research design used in this project will be case study. When engaging in case study design, the focus is on creating a "detailed and intensive analysis of a single case"[107]. Data on this single case can be gathered through both qualitative and quantitative means[108].

Examples of subject or "cases" researched this way would be a single community, a single school and even a single family[109]. Regarding this paper, it will be a single community i.e. Jimmy Fallon's audience, that will be the subject of research.

The problem that arises from case study research revolves around "external validity and generalizability"[110]. The case study approach cannot be applied to other cases; a case study is a representation of a specific case and cannot be generalized[111]. That said, there are different types of case studies, one of which is the exemplifying case. An exemplifying case, as the name suggests, is an example of a "broader category in which it is a member"[112].

Therefore, a con of the case study is that the findings cannot be generalized and that the evidence presented is "limited" to the case itself[113]. The pro of a case study is that it provides a "intensive analysis" of a single case[114]. Another strength is that case studies provide a "test" as well generation ground for theories[115]. The theory being tested here, as will be covered further in the political joke section, being that social attitudes can be gaged through jokes being made.

Structured Observation

I considered making structured observation a bigger part of this project early on due to the fact that structured observation does not require surveys and/or questionnaire[116]. A benefit of that is

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[107] Bryman, Alan. Social research 66
[108] Ibid 68
[109] Ibid 66
[110] Ibid 69
[111] Ibid 70
[112] Ibid 70
[113] Ibid 71
[114] Ibid 71
[115] Ibid 71
[116] Bryman, Alan. Social research 70

that it avoids the problems of survey takers not answering questions correctly or truthfully[117]. By taking a structured observation approach, the subjects would not be aware that they are being researched (through "simple observation"), which would free them from the interferences of the researcher researching them[118].

When engaging in structured observation, the researcher establishes "explicitly formulated rules" in which to follow when observing behavior[119]. The rules of "what they should look for and how they should record behavior" is applied to every single research subject for a set amount of time[120]. A term that is used to cover all of these rules and time frame is an "observation schedule"[121].

This brings me to the first reason why I decided to use partial elements of structured observation instead of all of it. First, I did not have the prerequisite space or time to the monologues through different time intervals to do this approach justice.

The other reason is that the other two other observational approaches (short and long-time intervals) do not fit into the research design already established as well as the type of data being gathered. I will be observing a piece of "timeless" text i.e. a monologue recording. Observing the monologues at a 5 or 20 minute "interval" does not make sense [122].

A problem with this approach is that I might have risked "imposing a potentially irrelevant framework to the setting being observed"[123]. A way to fight this, according to Bryman is to engage in unstructured observation[124]. I understand that to mean that a problem that might arise is that researcher might chose a setting that confirms the problem formulation instead of being an accurate representation. This again, would not fit in this thesis because I am focusing on a single case.

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[117] Bryman, Alan. Social research 271
[118] Ibid 271
[119] Ibid 272
[120] Ibid 272
[121] Ibid 272
[122] Ibid 276
[123] Ibid 283
[124] Ibid 284

Another flaw is that usually is associated with structured observation is the fact that one (usually) cannot assess the intention of the actions being observed[125]. The only assumption I can make on the intention of Jimmy is that he wants to make people laugh and that in order to do that, a comedian must make jokes about what at he or she thinks people are thinking about[126].

However, even though I spent so long listing the inadequacies of this approach. There is one aspect of it that make it worthy of inclusion i.e. indicators.

Indicators

The indicator aspect of structured observation will be used in order to create a frame in which I can divide political and non-political jokes. By having that, I can see how many political jokes are being made while also arguing for why certain jokes are political and why others are not. Through that, I'll have concrete numbers on how political Fallon's show has become (since he stated himself that his approach was to be apolitical).

Indicators are used when one needs to measure something that is not directly quantifiable[127]. Unlike dates, ages and the sort, which can be quantifiable measurements in terms of measurements. Indicators "stand for" the concept that has been defined[128]. The concept that is being researched in this project is how Fallon's viewers relate to democracy. A direct indicator of how that concept would be types of jokes and how many times they were being told[129]. Indicators can be gathered in a variety of ways. However, for this project, it will be gathered through "the recording of individuals' behavior" i.e. the jokes Jimmy Fallon makes on his show[130].

The jokes will be divided further into three different categories. The categories are non-political, political actor joke and political institution joke. The way that the categories have been named are self-explanatory. Non-political jokes will be jokes that have no political content whatsoever.

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[125] Bryman, Alan. Social research 284
[126] Cohen, Ted. Jokes: Philosophical thoughts on joking matters 38
[127] Bryman, Alan. Social research 164
[128] Ibid 164
[129] Ibid 164
[130] Ibid 165

For a joke to be considered a political-actor joke, it must include a reference to any political actor such as Donald Trump, Sean Spicer, Barack Obama and so forth. The same applies to political institution jokes, any jokes that reference any institution such as the White House, Congress or the Press, will be considered a political institution joke.

As will be covered in the political joke section of this paper, the amount of political jokes in circulation is connected to people's satisfaction with their system of government[131]. Therefore, if the amount of political jokes increases, that could be understood as the Late-Night shows audience becoming dissatisfied with democracy. Since Fallon claims to be apolitical, any political joke made by him would then be understood as a "raise" in political humor.[132]

Although, *Jokes and Their Targets*, does not specify or differentiate between the different forms of jokes, I will[133]. The political jokes specified within *Jokes and Targets* are made at the expense of a totalitarian regime, which punishes dissent.[134] I would argue that it is perhaps understandable that within such a rigid system, any joke making fun of the government, political system or actors becoming popularized would be understood as dissatisfaction with its system.

I have noticed that American democracy has a tradition of political humor through Colbert Report, the Daily Show and, less recently, George Carlin. I wouldn't say that Stephen Colbert or Jon Stewart are anti-democratic (Carlin is perhaps debatable) even though they make political jokes. Therefore, I made this approach more nuanced. Political institution jokes will be understood as actual dissatisfaction with democracy and its institutions, if the content of the joke exhibits that dissatisfaction. Political actor jokes will be understood as the audience being dissatisfied with the actors inhabiting the institutions and not democracy itself. A general increase in political jokes not being critical of the system will simply interpreted as a reflection of the audience's increased interest in politics.

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[131] Davies, Christie. Jokes and targets 238
[132] Itzkoff, Dave. 2017. "Jimmy Fallon Was On Top Of The World. Then Came Trump.". Nytimes.Com. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/17/arts/television/jimmy-fallon-tonight-show-interview-trump.html.
[133] Davies, Christie. Jokes and targets
[134] Ibid

Lastly, all the jokes of the three monologues chosen will be split up into these categories of political actor, political institution and non-political.

Conclusion of the Two Research Designs

In conclusion, the two design approaches that will be used for this thesis are some elements of structured observations as well as a heavy use of case study. The case study elements will be a reassertion that the research here is not applicable to other cases. The project will have a very narrow focus i.e. Fallon's Late-Night Audience. The approach here also allows for qualitative and quantitative approaches, which allows for interpretation of jokes at the individual as well as case level. That means that the qualitative aspect of case studies allows for the use of content analysis.

The structured observation elements are the elements that allow the establishment of concrete rules on how certain behavior should be understood[135]. More specifically, the indicator element native to a structured observational approach will be used[136].

The Context of the Joke

As mentioned before one needs to understand the context in which jokes are told. To that extent, this part of the paper will flesh out what the Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon is as well as the current political climate at the time of the jokes.

The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon

According to Bryman, when engaging in content analysis, one must look at the "author" of the content that is being presented[137]. Here, the goal is to "reveal some of the mechanics involved in the production of information"[138].

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[135] Bryman, Alan, Social research 272
[136] Ibid 272
[137] Ibid 293
[138] Ibid 293

Jimmy Fallon took over the Tonight Show from Jay Leno in 2014[139]. Since his takeover of the show until February 2016, the Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon has been seen as a critical success[140]. His ratings started out strong and ended up dwarfing his competitors at the time within both 18-49 adults and total viewers, with an average audience of 3.6 million viewers[141].

Jimmy Fallon's show revolves around doing sketch comedy, impressions and musical numbers, such as lip-sync battle and musical impressions[142]. Another characteristic of Jimmy Fallon, which he himself admits, is that he is a "light weight" in that he does not engage in serious topics[143]. He himself has stated that he does not care about political affiliations and that he tries "to make them look good no matter what"[144]. He engages in a "let's just have fun demeanor" and dominated in the ratings until a couple of months ago[145].

Following the Trump presidency, Fallon has experienced a loss of viewership that averaged 500 thousand a show[146]. During that same time his competitor, Stephen Colbert, with his very political Late Show, gained 850 thousand viewers on average[147].

Jimmy Fallon himself said in a New York times interview that he would not change his comedy and become political[148]. One may take him on his word, however, on the 6th of April, Jay Leno

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[139] Jay Leno Retires From Tonight Show, Jimmy Fallon To Take Over". 2017. PEOPLE.Com. http://people.com/tv/jay-leno-retires-from-tonight-show-jimmy-fallon-to-take-over/.
[140] Kissell, Rick. 2017. "Ratings: Jimmy Fallon Caps Dominant Second Year On NBC'S 'Tonight Show'". Variety. http://variety.com/2016/tv/news/ratings-jimmy-fallon-two-years-nbc-tonight-show-host-1201702314/.
[141] Ibid
[142]"Bill Carter: How Jimmy Fallon Crushed Stephen Colbert (And Everyone Else In Late Night)". 2017. The Hollywood Reporter. http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/bill-carter-how-jimmy-fallon-848851.
[143] Ibid
[144] "Billboard Cover: Jimmy Fallon On His A-List Guests And Runaway 'Tonight Show' Success: 'The Show Is Basically Everything I Like'". 2017. Billboard. http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/magazine-feature/6699719/jimmy-fallon-tonight-show-success-guests-stephen-colbert.
[145] Itzkoff, Dave. 2017. "Jimmy Fallon Was On Top Of The World.
[146]"Jimmy Fallon Never Recovered From His Disastrous Trump Interview". 2017. Huffpost. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/stephen-colbert-jimmy-fallon_us_58aeec66e4b057efdce97532.
[147] Ibid
[148] Itzkoff, Dave. 2017. "Jimmy Fallon Was On Top Of The World.

came on the show and delivered anti-Trump jokes. One of which called Trump "thin-skinned ... pussy" for not attending the Whitehouse correspondents' dinner[149] .

Lastly, one thing that gives credence to the approach specified in this project is what the comedian himself says about his own joke writing[150]. He spoke, during the Trump campaign, that he has changed the jokes about Trump because "they [the audience] didn't laugh at him like that anymore"[151]. Jimmy, by his own admission, observes that within his own audience, due to political changes, the jokes "shift"[152]. Essentially, the mechanics of the Tonight show revolve around tailoring jokes towards his audience, which he himself has confirmed. One may seem like an admission of political content. I would argue that during the primaries i.e. the time of Fallon making these jokes, Trump was not seen as a serious presidential contender. Arguably, he realized that his Trump jokes were beginning to be political and then "shifted" to less political content.

The Case

The following will be a look at the "case" that have been chosen for analysis. I would argue that the Comey scandal could be perceived as either as the failures of democratic institutions or as failures by people in positions of power[153]. The case will revolve around one single (still evolving) news story, which is Donald Trump firing Comey[154].

First, the reason that I am choosing specific monologues, is because I do not have enough resources or time to go through every Jimmy Fallon monologue of the Trump presidency. The Tonight Show is a daily show about contemporary subjects. In any given month, there is likely to

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[149] Khatchatourian, Maane. 2017. "Jay Leno Returns To 'Tonight Show,' Takes On Trump And Clintons In Monologue". Variety. http://variety.com/2017/tv/news/jay-leno-tonight-show-monologue-trump-jimmy-fallon-1202026178/.

[150] Billboard Cover: Jimmy Fallon On His A-List Guests And Runaway

[151] Ibid

[152] Ibid

[153] Bryman, Alan. Social research 293

[154] Graham, David. 2017. "'Let It Go': Did Trump Interfere In The FBI's Michael Flynn Investigation?". The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/05/trump-comey-memo/526938/.

be around 18-20 shows. Trump was in office since January. If I were to analyze all of the shows, I would have to go through and analyze upwards of 80 monologues.

That is why, I will focus on a singular case and scandal i.e. the Comey firing. This methodological approach will a "detailed and intensive analysis of a single case"[155].

When a president abuses his powers, the other government institutions (as well as the press) are expected to hold the president accountable through a system of "checks and balances"[156] . There have been people talking about impeaching the president since firing Comey could be seen as "obstruction of justice"[157]. This is a good opportunity to look at what type of jokes Jimmy Fallon makes as well as if they are political or not (since he claims to be apolitical).

The Tonight show, as mentioned before, attempts to tailor his jokes to his audience. Through all of the monologues chosen, Fallon begins his show with a variation of "what have been people talking about?"[158]. So, I would argue that The Tonight show would more likely to cover stories quickly after they have come to light, which ensures that the jokes Fallon makes jokes about topics which are fresh on his viewer's minds.

Comey's firing

Trump fired Comey on the 9th of May, Tuesday[159]. The explanation given for Comey's firing is that Trump did not believe (on the recommendation of the deputy attorney general Rod Rosenstein) Comey handled the Hillary investigation properly[160]. Trump also stated, in his letter firing Comey, that he (Trump) appreciated that Comey told him three times that he was not

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[155] Bryman, Alan. Social research 66
[156] Watts, Duncan. Dictionary of American government and politics. Edinburgh University Press, 2010. 43
[157] "Donald Trump Is Destroying His Own Presidency". 2017. Vox. https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/5/22/15655272/donald-trump-presidency-scandals-comey-fbi.
[158] Index A
[159] Apuzzo, Michael. 2017. "F.B.I. Director James Comey Is Fired By Trump". Nytimes.Com. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/09/us/politics/james-comey-fired-fbi.html.
[160] Ibid

under investigation[161]. Comey himself found out about the fact that he was fired through the television as he was attempting to recruit new FBI agents in Los Angeles[162].

There were several mainstream papers that questioned Trump's move. The New York times stated that the firing "[raised] much deeper questions about the independence of the F.B.I. and the future of its investigations under Mr. Trump"[163]. CNN's legal analyst, Jeffrey Toobin, claimed that the Comey firing was a "grotesque abuse of power" and that Trump's actions mimicked authoritarian regimes'[164]. Chris Mathews said that Trump's act had a "whiff of fascism"[165]. Vox, wrote an article that compared what Trump did to the Watergate and alluded to the fact that Trump should be impeached[166].

Regarding politicians, when Comey was fired, both Democrats and Republicans stated that Comey's firing "called the FBI's independence into question"[167]. However, according to the Guardian, (written on the 9th of May) "most republicans backed the president"[168].

The New York times collected responses to Comey's firing from several lawmakers. It was shown that "virtually every democrat" stated that they wanted a special prosecutor or an independent investigation on the firing[169]. Representative Steve Cohen stated that "our democracy is in danger"[170]. Republicans were more supportive of the president. One republican called for a

[161] Ibid
[162] Moraes, Lisa. 2017. "Donald Trump Fires FBI Director James Comey – Update". Deadline. http://deadline.com/2017/05/donald-trump-fires-fbi-director-james-comey-1202088061/.
[163] Gilpin, Caroline. 2017. "Questions For: 'F.B.I. Director James Comey Is Fired By Trump'". Nytimes.Com. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/10/learning/questions-for-fbi-director-james-comey-is-fired-by-trump.html.
[164] "Jeffrey Toobin Unloads On 'Grotesque' Comey Firing". 2017. Huffpost. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/jeffrey-toobin-trump-comey-firing_us_591314e6e4b050bdca61296d.
[165] Moraes, Lisa. 2017. "Donald Trump Fires FBI Director James Comey – Update". Deadline. http://deadline.com/2017/05/donald-trump-fires-fbi-director-james-comey-1202088061/.
[166] "Trump'S Dubious, Disturbing Firing Of FBI Director James Comey, Explained". 2017. Vox. https://www.vox.com/2017/5/9/15601432/trump-fires-james-comey-explained.
[167] Ibid
[168] Gayle, Damien. 2017. "Why Did Trump Fire FBI Director James Comey?". The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/may/10/trump-fires-fbi-director-james-comey-key-questions-answered.
[169] Audrey Carlsen, Ford Fessenden and Adam Pearce. 2017. "How Every Lawmaker Has Reacted To Comey'S Firing So Far". Nytimes.Com. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/10/us/politics/congress-statements-comey.htm.l
[170] Ibid

special prosecutor, while six called for a special investigation[171]. Following that, forty-two republicans had questions or concerns[172]. Contrasting that, 98 republicans expressed neutrality or support for the president[173].

On May 11th Trump then contradicted his earlier reason for firing Comey on NBC news[174]. Trump changed the story and stated that Comey was fired because he was a grandstanding "showboat".[175] He also claimed that he had been planning to do so for a while and would have done so regardless of recommendation[176]. This contradiction was picked up upon and reported by USA today, Politico, CNN, the Washington Examiner and NBC itself[177178179180181].

Further responding to news organizations picking up on the contradictions of his presidency, on May 12th, president Trump "threatened" that he should stop having Whitehouse briefings[182].

[171] Carlsen, Fessenden and Pearce. 2017. "How Every Lawmaker reacted"
[172] Ibid
[173] Ibid
[174] Partial Transcript: NBC News Interview With Donald Trump". 2017. CNN.
http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/11/politics/transcript-donald-trump-nbc-news/index.html
[175] "EXCLUSIVE: President Trump Reveals He Asked Comey Whether He Was Under Investigation". 2017. NBC News. http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/trump-reveals-he-asked-comey-whether-he-was-under-investigation-n757821.
[176] Partial Transcript: NBC News Interview With Donald Trump". 2017. CNN.
http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/11/politics/transcript-donald-trump-nbc-news/index.html.
[177]Schreckinger, Ben. 2017. "In Interview, Trump Contradicts Pence On Comey". POLITICO.
http://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/11/james-comey-fired-trump-contradict-pence-238274.
[178] "Onpolitics Today: Trump Contradicted Himself On The Comey Firing". 2017. USA TODAY.
https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2017/05/11/onpolitics-today-trump-contradicted-himself-comey-firing/101573856/.
[179] Kevin Liptak, CNN White House Producer. 2017. "Trump Contradicts Spokeswoman On Effect Of Comey Firing".
CNN. http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/11/politics/comey-fbi-investigation-russia-sarah-huckabee-sanders/index.html.
[180] Examiner, Washington. 2017. "Comey's Firing: A Proper Exercise Of Authority Or An Abuse Of Power?".
Washington Examiner. http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/comeys-firing-a-proper-exercise-of-authority-or-an-abuse-of-power/article/2622739.
[181] Pramuk, Jacob. 2017. "NBC Exclusive — Trump: I Was Going To Fire Comey 'Regardless,' He Was A 'Showboat'".
CNBC. http://www.cnbc.com/2017/05/11/trump-i-was-going-to-fire-comey-regardless-of-recommendation-that-was-given-to-me.html.
[182] "Trump Threatens To Cancel White House Briefings Because It Is 'Not Possible' For His Staff To Speak With 'Perfect Accuracy'". 2017. Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/05/12/trump-threatens-to-cancel-white-house-briefings-because-it-is-not-possible-to-always-tell-the-truth/.

The reason for this threat being that, according to him, it is impossible "for his staff to speak with perfect accuracy to the American people"[183].

Chosen Shows

The shows chosen for analysis, as mentioned above, are the ones that co-inside with the news stories above. That means that the monologues chosen for analysis are the ones aired on the Tonight Show following a news story. All of the monologues that were chosen can be found in the appendix and also on YouTube as separate clips. The following will be the names of the different clips as well as the date in which the monologue was aired along with a brief description of the context surrounding the monologue itself.

Date of Monologue (2017)	Name of Monologue (YouTube)	Context
May 10th	Donald Trump Fires FBI Director, Nevada Legalizes Weed – Monologue	One day after Comey's firing
May 11th	Trump Deals with Comey Fallout, Blue Cross' Doctor Lyft Rides – Monologue	One day after Trump contradicts himself on the Comey firing.
May 12th	Trump Threatens to End Press Briefings, Scorpions on United Airlines – Monologue	One day after Trump says that he is considering ending press briefings.

Again, the monologues in question can be found transcribed within the appendix and on YouTube. That said, a lot is lost in text as pitch and intonation i.e. the phonological aspects of a joke can convey meaning that are not clearly translated within the text[184]. So, in order to also

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[183] Ibid
[184] Attardo, Salvatore, Manuela Maria Wagner, and Eduardo Urios-Aparisi, eds. Prosody and Humor. Vol. 55. John Benjamins Publishing, 2013. 3

gain a phonological understanding of the jokes made, I would suggest watching the monologues in their YouTube clip form.

Literature Review

I have not been able to find a specific source that goes into depth with what a literature review is. In response to that, I have used an actual literature review as a guide for what constitutes a literature review. Towards that effect, my understanding of a literature review is when a researcher goes through (or "reviews") the available literature on the topic he or she is researching[185].

Context of Joke

I was not able to find any academic journals about Fallon, I was forced to make due with news-paper articles. I read several different articles about Fallon from several different sources such as Deadline, People magazine, Variety, Billboard, The New York Times and The Hollywood reporter. These articles were used to gain an understanding of how people as well as Fallon himself sees his show.

In regard to the Trump scandal itself, this thesis has made use of several news-paper sources to create a context for the jokes being told. The problem of fake news creating a misleading picture of the world was of concern to me. Towards that extent, I have chosen main stream media outlets that I find reputable. I define "reputable" as being a journalistic institution that has a history of reporting things as accurately as possible.

I concede that no journalistic institution can accurately reflect reality one hundred percent and that the newspapers have certain ideological bends. However, when first watching through the Fallon monologues, I instinctively noticed an anti-trump mentality through the baby jokes that were made. I concluded that the people watching the show probably shared that anti-Trump mentality and would probably have a news diet consisting of newspapers that were also "anti-

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[185] Palan, Kay M. "Gender identity in consumer behavior research: A literature review and research agenda." Academy of Marketing Science Review 2001 (2001):

Trump", or, more charitably put, held the president accountable for his actions. Using that logic, I focused on the news sources specified above.

Previous Political Joke Research

There have been several studies, some of which are included in this thesis, that have researched public sentiment through jokes. Seriously Funny: Mexican political jokes as social resistance through political jokes, observed that a string of Mexican presidents (Zedillo, Fox and Calderon) "[seemed] to satisfy Mexican society's demands less and less"[186]. *Jokes and targets*, state the political jokes foresaw the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union[187]. In *Why all dictators have Moustaches*, jokes from Belarus "[reflected] on power relations, not only between politicians and people, but between different ranks in the army"[188]. In *Studies in Political Humor*, Romanian jokes were understood as a "mode for expressing their passive resistance and, to some extent, acts of tacit rebellion", which can be used to illustrate the dissatisfaction that some Romanians had during the Soviet occupation[189].

As one can see, there have been studies done in the past that used humor in order to see what was going on within a society. That said, I have not found any studies about Fallon specifically. Therefore, this paper is on the forefront of Jimmy Fallon research. That said, there was *Strange Bedfellows* that dealt with late night comedy shows and politics[190]. It provided an overall perspective on how late-night comedians responded to the 2001 9/11 attacks, which was by not making jokes about the president political or otherwise[191]. Jay Leno attempted to make a joke about President Bush but was chastised by his audience (they didn't laugh)[192]. That would

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[186] Schmidt, Samuel, and Adam Schmidt. 2014. Seriously Funny 176
[187] Davies, Christie. Jokes and targets 16
[188] Astapova, Anastasiya. 2015. "Why All Dictators Have Moustaches: Political Jokes In Contemporary Belarus". HUMOR 28 (1). doi:10.1515/humor-2014-0142.
[189] Studies in Political Humour, edited by Villy Tsakona, and Diana Elena Popa, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aalborguniv-ebooks/detail.action?docID=795369.
[190]Peterson, Russell Leslie. 2008. Strange Bedfellows: How Late-Night Comedy Turns Democracy Into A Joke. Rutgers University Press.
[191]Ibid
[192] Ibid

support the argument that the public felt that president was beyond reproach following the 9/11 attacks.

Theories

The different theories of humor were mainly derived from *Only Joking*, a book jointly written by Jimmy Carr (a comedian) and Lucy Greeves (an academic)[193]. The book did not provide any new insights in theories of humor that were not already apparent in *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*, which had an extensive review of the different literature on humor as well as the different theories of humor that existed[194]. Both books, both of which engaged in extensive research, would confirm the validity of the theories of humor I have chosen for this project. That said, I did find some more contemporary additions to humor theory that were not included within both books. Said addition came from within the 2013 book *Developments in Linguistic Humor theory*, written by Marta Dynel, which I did not include in this project.

Although interesting, the additions to the theory would not have added to the project in significant ways. For example, Dynel divides incongruity even further. In her book, she introduces the idea of global, additive and intermediate incongruity[195]. Global incongruities are incongruities that are immediately apparent, additive incongruities are those that must be "analyzed", and finally, intermediate incongruities are incongruities that are opposite but the change isn't big enough to immediately register as incongruities[196].

My understanding of this theory is that it was built in order to understand on what allows a joke to achieve a better "humorous" effect. Adding a "good joke" or "bad joke" dimension to the project would not add any new insights on how the audience feels about certain topics. Or, if it does, I am unsure on how to implement it in any meaningful way. This brings me to Semantic Joke Theory.

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[193] Carr, Jimmy, and Lucy Greeves. Only Joking: What's So Funny about Making People Laugh?. Penguin, 2006..
[194] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 1-45
[195] Dynel, Marta. 2013. Developments In Linguistic Humour Theory. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 1-19
[196] Ibid

The semantic joke theory used in this project was solely based on *Semantic Mechanisms*. I would argue that the "survey of humor research" presented in the first part of the book (1-45) was so extensive, thorough and well thought out that it illustrates the validity of this research[197]. Not only that, this research has been described as "seminal" by Dynel in *Developments in Linguistic Humor theory*[198].

Critical Discourse Theory Review

Critical Discourse Analysis, as the name suggests, looks at discourse through a critical lens[199]. It holds that power is negotiated through the discourse that is established, history (context), and that discourse can't help but push ideology (hegemony)[200]. This CDA approach fits in very well with the constructivist and interpretivist approach specified earlier, due to it being "interpretative and explanatory"[201]. Lastly, CDA holds that language both "reflects and (re)produces social relations"[202]. That means that every "instance of language" either transforms or produces society and culture[203].

The reason I have chosen Critical Discourse Analysis theories as specified by Goffman and Fairclough is because they look at text critically. These texts illustrate the power that words have and how they can influence and reinforce what people think. By having this approach, I do not minimize the idea that what Fallon is doing is "just a joke". No, instead, these theories give proper weight to these words, as well as the argument for why what I am doing is important.

Other CDA approaches were not considered because critical discourse analysis as specified by Fairclough fit perfectly within my project. Towards that extent, I spent my time going further into

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[197] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 1-45
[198] Dynel, Marta. 2013. Developments In Linguistic Humour Theory 1-19
[199] Simpson, Paul, and Andrea Mayr. Language and power: A resource book for students. Routledge, 2013.50
[200] Ibid 50
[201] Language and power pa Simpson, Paul, and Andrea Mayr. Language and power: A resource book for students. Routledge, 2013. 50
[202] Ibid 50
[203] Ibid 50

reviewing literature on joke theory. That said, I have included a second layer of Critical Discourse Analysis in the form of Framing theory.

The reason I have chosen Framing theory is because it builds on the Fairclough idea of the power of words while also fitting perfectly into semantic script theory aspect of joke theory. Framing theory has in common with script theory the notion that a word can evoke more meaning than it is apparent at first glance. Why include two similar theories? Well, script theory will be used to analyze the jokes themselves and if they are jokes or not. Framing theory will be used be used to analyze the content of the jokes and the meaning derived from them.

The advantage of using a CDA approach is that it can take "unspoken and unacknowledged" truths and make them manifest[204]. The disadvantage of CDA is that "everything is open for interpretation and negotiation"[205]. With the literature review now concluded, I will now go into the analysis tools that will be utilized for this project.

Analysis Tools

This segment of the project will introduce semantic script theory which will help me to depth with the mechanics of jokes. These concepts such as triggers, switch triggers and scripts will allow me to understand what is a joke, what isn't a joke, and the vocabulary to analyze the jokes as jokes. These tools will not be used to engage in critical discourse analysis. These tools will solely be used to gain a deeper understanding of the jokes Fallon tells.

The analysis tools will also include theories such as the different theories of humor. That said, the theories will be used within an analytical context. The theories will allow me to gage what type of humor that the joke is making use of and by understanding that, I can then see what sort of deeper meaning exists behind the joke. This deeper meaning will be covered more extensively in the conclusion of the humor theory section.

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[204] Mogashoa, Tebogo. "Understanding critical discourse analysis in qualitative research." International Journal of Humanities Social Science and Education 1, no. 7 (2014): 104-113.
[205] Ibid

Introduction to Jokes

A joke is a complex cultural expression that people tell when they want people to laugh[206]. It is due to this complexity that the following segment will split up into different segments. First, the paper will deal with the history of jokes and their historical significance within certain societies. Following that, the paper will delve into the different theories of why people laugh at a joke. Once that has been covered, the paper will go into the semantic mechanics of a joke i.e. how a joke is built up and what exactly constitutes a joke. Lastly, this segment will then contextualize jokes within a political context and explore political jokes and their influence or lack thereof. Also, the contextualizing segment will also serve as an exploration of the different

The History of Jokes

Jimmy Carr (a comedian) and Lucy Greeves (an academic) claim that since the beginning of "human thought and culture", comedians, and by extension humor, have existed[207]. Within ancient religions, there exist trickster gods that frequently used jokes, lending credence to the notion that jokes have been with humanity since its earliest stages[208].

Throughout history, there have been many ancient and diverse religions that had a variation of the trickster god[209]. These trickster gods used jokes to "[subvert] the status quo for their own amusement"[210]. Often, like jokes themselves, these gods would "embody contradiction"[211]. An example of this is the shape-shifting African trickster god Elgba[212]. Elgba was both young and old, big and small, and shift and turn into both parts of any conceivable dichotomy[213].

There are historical trends when it comes to joke telling that can be seen mirrored in contemporary societies. For example, the Greek god Hermes (as well as Elgba) existed between

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[206] Carr, Jimmy, and Lucy Greeves. Only Joking 37-55
[207] Ibid 37-55
[208] Ibid 37-55
[209] Ibid 37-55
[210] Ibid 37-55
[211] Ibid 37-55
[212] Ibid 37-55
[213] Ibid 37-55

the borders of people's properties[214]. They lived within an area in which one did not know when one property started and another began, a reflection of the status quo they enjoyed subverting "for their own amusement"[215]. Later, these trickster gods that loved subverting the status quo evolved and became the "social markers" i.e. the borders of the society they lived in. They became the "guardians of the status quo" by becoming examples of what was allowed and not allowed[216].

Theories of Humor

There are several different theories on humor and on why people laugh. The following theories, superiority, incongruity and release, are those I have deemed most relevant to the analysis of political jokes. Even though each theory may claim universality, the position of this paper is that each of the theories chosen provide a different and complementary perspective on why people laugh[217]. That said, it would be a grave oversight not to mention the dangers of analyzing comedy. A danger that Max Esterman, author of the book *enjoyment of laughter*, put thusly:

"I must warn you, reader, that it is not the purpose of this book to make you laugh. As you know, nothing kills the laugh quicker than to explain a joke. I intend to explain all jokes, and the proper and logical outcome will be, not only that you will not laugh now, but that you will never laugh again. So prepare for the descending gloom."[218]

Now, with that in mind, the following will be an in depth look at the different theories of humor: superiority, incongruity, and release theory. The semantic mechanisms inherent in a joke will follow later. Before continuing, keep in mind that these theories are not mutually exclusive[219]. There are jokes that may fit within a single theory while other jokes may encompass all of them. The reason for including superiority, release and incongruity theory is because each theory holds that there is a different reason for why something is funny. This is important because each theory

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[214] Carr, Jimmy, and Lucy Greeves. Only Joking 37-55
[215] Ibid 37-55
[216] Ibid 37-55
[217] Ibid 95
[218] Ibid 79-100
[219] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms of Humor. Vol. 24. Springer Science & Business Media, 1984. 30

has the ability to change the meaning of a joke, which will be covered more extensively later at the conclusion.

Superiority Theory

The theory holds that "ridicule and feelings of relative superiority are essential components of humor"[220]. This means that every joke is seen as a game in which winners and losers are established[221]. People laugh at superiority jokes because "consider themselves free of whatever character flaw or mistake that the targets are accused of"[222]. Here is an example, a joke created by me, in which I attempt to be explicitly superior:

"If there are any Trump supporters in this room right now, congratulations on opening the door"

The listener and the joke teller are the "winners" of this joke because they have not made the "stupid" mistake of voting for Donald Trump. The "winners" are having a laugh at the expense of the "losers" that voted for Donald Trump. In other words, the act of laughter is seen as way to devalue the object of ridicule[223]. In fact, Raskin points towards the fact that jokes are more effective when a joke has a "positive reference group" held to high esteem while a "negative reference group" is disparaged[224].

The extension of this thought is that jokes serve as a form of correcting social norms and traits deemed undesirable.[225] This, fits well with the earlier established historical context in which trickster gods were used to show the social bounds of a society.

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[220] LINTOTT, S. (2016), Superiority in Humor Theory. The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 74: 347–358. doi:10.1111/jaac.12321

[221] Carr, Jimmy, and Lucy Greeves. Only Joking 79-100

[222] Raskin, V. (2014). Humor theories. In S. Attardo (Ed.), Encyclopedia of humor studies (Vol. 2, pp. 368-371). Thousand Oaks

[223] Morreall, John. Comic Relief, edited by John Morreall, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2009. ProQuest Ebook Central, . page 7

[224] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 33

[225] Morreall, John. Comic Relief 8

That said, there are problems with this theory. For example, it does not satisfactorily explain why people laugh at several different things such as puns, sense of accomplishment, innocent jokes, "[when] a person that makes a witty remark" and incongruity[226]. After all, laughter that arises with from those examples have no winners or losers, which brings us to incongruity theory.

Incongruity Theory

Incongruity is the humor that arises from subverting expectations or, in other words, being "incongruous"[227]. In order for a joke to work according to incongruity theory, it must find similarity in dissimilar things[228]. From there, according to Monro, there are three types of "humorous nonsense" within incongruity theory that provoke laughter[229]. First, it can be any departure from what may be possible.

"How do you make a dog drink? Put it in a blender"[230]

Here, the incongruity comes from the fact that drink turned from a verb into a noun. From the act of drinking to the dog itself being a drink. This joke is also an example that a joke can have both social as well as linguistic incongruity, they are not mutually exclusive.

Secondly, using "familiar" material and exaggerating it in order to obtain an "absurd conclusion"[231]. Lastly, this same exaggeration can be used (through satire and parody) in order to make a point[232]. An example of the last one would be Stephen Colbert. During the 2012 election, he created his Super PAC "Americans for a Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow" in order to point out the inherent absurdities of Super PACs[233].

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226 LINTOTT, S. (2016), Superiority in Humor Theory. The Journal of Aesthetics
227 Carr, Jimmy, and Lucy Greeves. Only Joking 85
228 Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 33
229 Ibid 33
230 Carr, Jimmy, and Lucy Greeves. Only Joking 86
231 Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 33
232 Ibid 33
233 Hardy, Bruce W., Jeffrey A. Gottfried, Kenneth M. Winneg, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. "Stephen Colbert's civics lesson:

Release Theory

Release theory holds that "laughter provides release for whatever anguish that ails you"[234].

Release theory states that a joke is way for a person to "release taboo thoughts and feelings"[235].

According to Freud, jokes are hostile and connects humor and jokes to "aggression and lust"[236].

The reason that jokes are told are in order to deal with sexual and hostile desires which "society

tells us to repress"[237]. An example of this would be this communist joke:

"What is the difference between socialism and capitalism? Under capitalism, man

exploits man, and under socialism, it is exactly the other way round."[238]

Here, the taboo thought being vented is the discontent people have towards the supposedly

superior communist system[239]. Now that this paper has covered why people may laugh at a joke,

this paper will now delve into the how. For that, it will go into depth with the semantic

mechanics of humor.

Conclusion on Theories of Humor

The reasoning for including these theories is that why a person laughs is important when assessing

what jokes mean. If one holds that all jokes are funny because of superiority theory, then there is

a risk that all jokes told about democracy are told so that the audience can feel superior to it. If I

were to do that, then all jokes about democracy would be interpreted as disparaging and that

would mean that the paper would have a forgone conclusion that Jimmy Fallon's audience has a

negative relationship with democracy.

By including the three theories of humor, it allows for three different interpretations for why

people are laughing. The superiority allows for jokes to be interpreted negatively i.e. there is a

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[234] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 33
[235] Carr, Jimmy, and Lucy Greeves. Only Joking 86
[236] Morreall, John. Comic Relief, edited by John Morreall, John Wiley & Sons
[237] Carr, Jimmy, and Lucy Greeves. Only Joking 86
[238] Davies, Christie. Jokes and targets 238
[239] Ibid 238

power dynamic where the listeners are superior to either a crumbling democratic system, that there is a superior system to democracy or that they are superior to certain democratic actors.

Incongruity allows jokes to be understood as jokes. I would argue that since this theory holds that humor is derived from incongruity, there is no deeper meaning to a joke understood through this context. A joke is simply funny because it is incongruous i.e. surprising. If these are the jokes that are made about democracy, then the audience has perhaps not changed their opinion on democracy but instead are simply more interested in it.

Lastly, there is release theory. Release theory, I would argue, shows discontent but not to the extent that superiority theory does. If there are more jokes that fit into the release theory of humor, that would suggest that there is something in the democratic system that the audience members need release from.

That said, this is only one part of the equation. If a joke that is non-political falls within these three different theories, there is not much more information to gain from it other than the joke is "non-political". On the other hand, if the joke is political (actor or institution), the theory of humor that the joke taps into illustrates what emotions the audience may have towards democracy.

The Semantic Mechanics of Humor

The following will be an in-depth look at what constitutes a joke. What one person finds funny another one may not. To strengthen the argument of this thesis, the following will be a description of the semantic mechanisms that go into a joke. It is through this in depth look at the mechanics of jokes that will grant me the vocabulary and tools necessary to engage in in-depth analysis of jokes.

The Five Factors

There are five factors to consider when analyzing a joke, which will be covered more extensively in the following segment[240]. First, the person switches from bona-fide to non-bona-fide modes of

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[240] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 100-104

communication[241]. Secondly, the text or content of the joke itself[242]. Thirdly, what scripts are apparent in the text, their compatibility, and how they overlap with one another[243]. Fourthly, the opposition between the two scripts. Lastly, the trigger (obvious or implied) that is used and how it makes the opposition of the scripts concrete and observable[244].

Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor

The semantic mechanics explored here will be used to define what exactly differentiates a joke from a regular sentence. That will provide an operational joke foundation from which this paper can apply the theories of humor (incongruity and the sort) exemplified previously. The script-based semantic theory of humor is a complex theory with many different dimensions. Therefore, the theory will be split up into its different components.

The Four Maxims

There are four maxims i.e. rules in regard to regular or standard communication: quantity, quality, relation and manner[245]. By following these four rules one engages in standard communication[246]. The *quantity* of information is important i.e. do not provide superfluous information and "exactly as much information as required"[247]. The *quality* of one's statement is understood as only saying "what you believe to be true"[248]. What a person is saying must "be relevant" to either to the topic at hand or must be related to the person one is speaking to[249]. The *manner* in which one communicates, according to the fourth maxim, needs to be "succinct"[250].

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[241] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 100-104
[242] Ibid 100-104
[243] Ibid 100-104
[244] Ibid 100-104
[245] Ibid 100-104
[246] Ibid 100-104
[247] Ibid 100-104
[248] Ibid 100-104
[249] Ibid 100-104
[250] Ibid 100-104

Bona-fide and Non-bona-fide Communication

Bona-fide communication is "regular" and non-humorous communication[251]. When one communicates "regularly" one engages with the four maxims specified above[252]. However, one can break those maxims in order to make a humorous observation or a joke[253]. That would mean giving too much information, saying blatant lies, saying unrelated things, and dragging on with too much information[254]. All of these breaks in bona-fide communication can be seen as indicators of non-bona-fide (humorous) communication[255].

Elaborating on the paragraph, there are cultural contexts that facilitate or re-enforce this transition from bona-fide to non-bona-fide mode of communication[256]. For example, there is an expectation that comes when going to a comedy show: that the comedian will be engaging in non-bona-fide communication. So, the people going to Fallon's show go there with the expectation that jokes will be told. This same sort of expectation can be established through playfulness, mirth, or through games that encourage joke making[257].

Scripts

According to the script-based semantic theory of humor holds that a joke is considered a joke when two conditions are met. First, the text must be compatible, either partially or fully, with two different scripts[258]. Secondly, the two scripts compatible with the text must be opposites[259].

A script are the related thoughts, ideas and "frames" that words introduce to the reader[260]. In other words, a script is a "large chunk of semantic information" that surround or are invoked by

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[251] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 100-104
[252] Ibid 100-104
[253] Ibid 100-104
[254] Ibid 100-104
[255] Ibid 100-104
[256] Ibid 140
[257] Ibid 140
[258] Ibid 107
[259] Ibid 107
[260] Ibid 103

words[261]. For example, the word "lover" is a script that revolves romance, pain, and all semantic information and images that are tied to lover[262]. Doctor, on the other hand, is a script that evokes medicine, money, caring and all of images and semantic information that relates to doctor[263].

There can also be varying degrees of distance between the oppositions[264]. There can be a close relationship between them such as in the following joke:

"Who was that gentleman I saw you with last night?" That was no gentleman. That was a senator."[265]

Here, the opposition is the script of senator vs. the script of gentleman. The joke relies on the fact that senators are not in fact gentlemen even though they should be perceived as such i.e. there is a close relationship between senator and gentleman[266]. That said, the distance between the oppositions can also be very vast[267].

"Nurse: That's a pretty bad cold you have, sir. What are you taking for it? Patient: Make me an offer!"[268]

Here the distance is between sickness vs. business, which are very distant from one another[269]. The jokes that use oppositions that are very distant from one another usually derive their humor from "polysemy, homonyms or phonetic similarity"[270].

These oppositions can take many different forms such as real vs. unreal, exists vs. does not exist, true vs. false. The examples here are dichotomies that deal with the few binary categories that are "essential to human life"[271]. Not only that, jokes often deal with "judgement dichotomies"

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[261] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 104
[262] Ibid 126
[263] Ibid 126
[264] Ibid 107
[265] Ibid 25
[266] Ibid 114-115
[267] Ibid 107-114
[268] Ibid 25
[269] Ibid 106-107
[270] Ibid 114
[271] Ibid 107 - 114

such as good vs. bad, death vs. life (since death is seen as bad and life as good) as well obscene vs. non-obscene[272].

According to Raskin, a good rule of thumb is that if the first script is normal, the second script tends to be the opposite or abnormal[273]. So, the scripts found within the above-mentioned joke are medical sickness vs. business, therefore proving, semantically, that the above piece of text is a joke[274].

There is a part of this theory that illustrates why the interpretivist approach was suitable to this semantic theory of humor. For example, the distance between sickness and business. I could argue that due to the medicinal industry in the united states, that there isn't that much of a distance as stated by Raskin. The script distance, in other words, needs to be decided by me. The problem is that what I find to be opposite may not necessarily be the opposition that the audience perceived. Therefore, this reiterates the need to create an empathetic understanding of the people listening to the joke. I have attempted to by provide this empathetic understanding by surrounding the monologues and certain specific jokes with context provided by papers at the time.

Semantic Switch Triggers

Semantic switch triggers are words or pieces of texts that "triggers" a script[275]. When a trigger occurs, it changes the interpretation of a sentence[276]. A trigger that happens later in the sentence can and does change the interpretation of the first part of a sentence into a joke[277]. For example, the ensuing senator joke in which gentleman are first interpreted as to mean "man" and later it re-interpreted to mean "man of quality".

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[272] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 107 - 114
[273] Ibid 107- 114
[274] Ibid 106 - 107
[275] Ibid 114-115
[276] Ibid 114-115
[277] Ibid 114-115

"Who was that gentleman I saw you with last night?" That was no gentleman. That was a senator."[278]

The presence of certain words makes different interpretations more plausible, which in turn allows for an easier way to change scripts. In other words, triggers are what makes a different interpretation: "less-abnormal, less non-actual and less impossible"[279].

Auxiliary Triggers

There are also auxiliary triggers which are used to re-enforce certain script that were already established earlier in the sentence[280]. For example, the following doctor joke, the doctor script is re-enforced by whisper and bronchial.

""Is the doctor at home?" the patient asked in his bronchial whisper. "No," the doctor's young and pretty wife whispered in reply. "Come right in""[281]

Triggers can also manifest through different forms of ambiguity such as figurative, syntactic, idiomatic, situational and quasi-ambiguity[282]. Figurative ambiguity is when a word, with a context shift, can change from one meaning to another[283]. An example of this would be "toil" in the following sentence:

"The Archdeacon has got back from London, and confides to his friend the doctor, "Like Saint Peter, I toiled all night. Let us hope that like Saint Peter I caught nothing""[284].

The meaning of "toil" changes from meaning "working hard" to "having a lot of sex". It is important to note that figurative ambiguity can have many similarities with regular ambiguity[285].

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[278] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 25
[279] Ibid 114-115
[280] Ibid 114
[281] Ibid 118-121
[282] Ibid 114-116
[283] Ibid 115
[284] Ibid 25
[285] Ibid 115

Idiomatic Ambiguity

Idiomatic ambiguity is when the understanding of an idiom is changed[286]. For example:

"Why is a drawn tooth like a thing forgot= Because it is out of one's head"[287]

The standard understanding of this idiom is that it is better to have it out of one's mind. However, due to the surrounding auxiliary triggers, the understanding changes from mind to head.

Syntactic Ambiguity

Syntactic ambiguity is when the structure of a sentence lends itself to several understandings[288]. For example:

"Should you stir your coffee with your right hand or your left hand? Neither, you should use a spoon."[289]

The ambiguity here is that the word "hand" can both be understood as a way of handling an object, or as the object itself. Syntactic ambiguity comes from the ambiguous construction of an entire sentence[290].

Situation Ambiguity

Situational ambiguity is ambiguity that is evoked due to the situation the protagonist of the joke is in[291]. For example:

"My wife can't play violin because of the kids – children are a comfort, aren't they?"[292]

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[286] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 115-116
[287] Ibid 26
[288] Ibid 115-116
[289] Ibid 26
[290] Ibid 116
[291] Ibid 116
[292] Ibid 55

The word "comfort" that introduces the script of the wife being bad at playing the violin. Before then, the first sentence makes no mention of the supposed skill level of the protagonist of the joke.

Quasi Ambiguity

Quasi ambiguity is when a joke only works because of phonetic ambiguity[293]. That is, the word is used in a way similar to pun[294]s. This ambiguity is better suited for verbal humor due to the way that it "garble or emphasize" words in order to introduce different scripts[295]. Lastly, there are contradiction triggers as well as dichotomizing triggers.

Contradiction and Dichotomizing Triggers

Contradiction triggers are triggers that contradict what has been established earlier in the sentence[296]. It could be, for example, a prisoner being led to his execution saying: "the weekend is beginning nicely"[297]. The weekend isn't beginning nicely, the prisoner is walking towards his death. The dichotomizing trigger is slightly different to the contradiction trigger[298]. Here, the joke is built up of antonyms in which a dichotomy is created[299]. For example:

"By the time the wise man is old enough to marry, the fool has enough children to support him."[300]

The dichotomy here is that there are wise men and there are fools. That dichotomy is then reversed in which the fool is actually the wise man while the wise man is actually the fool.

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[293] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 116
[294] Ibid 116
[295] Ibid 116
[296] Ibid 116-117
[297] Ibid 25
[298] Ibid 116-117
[299] Ibid 116-117
[300] Ibid 29

The Five Factors

To reiterate the beginning of this segment. The theory specified above can be specified in five factors that need to be considered when analyzing a joke.[301]. The first factor to be considered is what communicative mode it is in. Towards that, one must argue for and assess if the person telling the joke is utilizing bona-fide to non-bona-fide modes of communication[302]. Secondly, the text or content of the joke itself[303]. Thirdly, what scripts are apparent in the text, their compatibility, and how they overlap with one another[304]. Fourthly, the opposition between the two scripts[305]. Lastly, the trigger (obvious or implied) that is used and how it makes the opposition of the scripts concrete and observable[306].

Complex Jokes

The above-mentioned jokes constitute simple jokes i.e. jokes that do not require too much insider information in order to understand them[307]. However, every group has certain scripts that are more easily accessible to them. Complex jokes are jokes that have implication and presuppositions which are only understandable if the listener has the required background knowledge[308].

The native speaker's scripts that are most easily accessible to him are linguistic scripts, followed by general knowledge scripts, and then restricted knowledge scripts, finally ending at individual scripts[309]. Linguistic scripts are the most accessible to native speakers due to the native speaker's ability to intuit wordplay and other linguistic minutia[310]. General knowledge scripts would be scripts that a native speaker knows due to prolonged exposure to a certain culture[311]. For example, general knowledge within the United States would revolve around George Washington,

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[301] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 140
[302] Ibid 140
[303] Ibid 140
[304] Ibid 140
[305] Ibid 140
[306] Ibid 140
[307] Ibid 134-135
[308] Ibid 135
[309] Ibid 134-135
[310] Ibid 134-136
[311] Ibid 134-136

Abraham Lincoln and other facts that would be known to a wider American audience[312].

Restricted knowledge scripts are scripts that are much less accessible and require knowledge of a specific field[313]. An example of that would be the following joke:

Critical Discourse Analysis can trace back its academic roots to a mom saying "if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all"[314]

The joke, according to me, isn't very funny. However, it will have to do in order to illustrate my point. In order to understand this joke, a person needs to understand what Critical Discourse Analysis is and have an understanding of the social and political activism inherently tied to CDA theory[315]. Lastly, individual scripts would be scripts that are relevant to the individuals, these are the scripts that would be called upon when making inside jokes and the sort[316].

Sophisticated jokes often take the form of parody[317]. That is because parody often only works when it alludes to what it is parodying[318]. For example, Jonathan Swift's a modest proposal does not outright state that it is a parody[319]. Instead, I would argue that it expects that the people reading it will understand that it is satirizing a certain way of thinking. The problem, as well as sophistication comes from the fact that not everyone will[320]. A person will not understand the humor if the person itself does not have an understanding of the script it is parodying[321].

Conclusion

These three theories of humor, ambiguity, superiority and release, were chosen because no singular theory of humor can be universal. However, when combined, these theories provide a solid foundation to work from when analyzing why a joke is funny and what a joke might mean

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[312]Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 134-136
[313] Ibid 138
[314] Source: Me
[315] Simpson, Paul, and Andrea Mayr. Language and power. 52
[316] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 135
[317] Ibid 138
[318] Ibid 138-139
[319] Swift, Jonathan. "A Modest Proposal." (2004).
[320] Raskin, V. Semantic Mechanisms 137-139
[321] Ibid 136-138

should it fit into one of those theories. For example, through these humor frames, this paper will be able to more accurately access if a joke is just being funny, venting frustrations about democracy, expressing that there are "superior" alternatives to democracy, or perhaps, all of the above. Again, no theory is mutually exclusive, they may overlap.

The latter part of this segment dealt with the semantic mechanics of humor. The theory gave me the tools necessary to explain what a joke is and isn't as well as the vocabulary necessary to go into depth with different aspects of jokes. This theory also illustrates the need for a solid understanding of the context surrounding a joke, since certain scripts are more accessible to certain segments of the population, which is why context was provided for the monologues.

Political Jokes

This section of the paper will deal with political jokes and views on their impact as well as their significance. As I mentioned in the introduction of this paper, there are varying perspectives on political jokes and their effects. The following will be an exploration of political jokes within other contexts in order to illustrate how jokes were used in the past to gage public sentiment. It is important to note thought that these examples are much broader (at a national level), while my case study is indeed very specific.

Soviet Jokes

According to the book *jokes and* targets, the jokes told in Soviet Societies do not circulate within other societies[322]. After the fall of the Soviet Union, new anti-Soviet jokes stopped being created and most of the jokes already created were not found circulating within other authoritarian countries[323]. The jokes created in the Soviet Union propagated and thrived there because the

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[322] Davies, Christie. Jokes and. 16
[323] Ibid 16

jokes had a "special relevance to the peoples of the countries in which did not exist elsewhere"[324]

The jokes being told within the Soviet Union not only made fun of those in power but the entire communist system[325]. I would argue that making fun of a person within a system is different than making fun of the entire system itself. By making fun of actors, there is a possibility that one may still support the system. When a joke makes fun of the entire system itself, depending on the type of joke, it may illustrate a deep dissatisfaction with the system. A dissatisfaction that was on full display within some of the jokes present within the Soviet Union[326].

In fact, this growing dissatisfaction had the effect of previously non-political jokes becoming political and used to criticized the government.[327] These jokes revolving around "[ethnicities, regions, drunks and prisons]" suddenly took political dimensions[328]. The following is an example of said joke:

"A new assistant was being taken on at a sobering up station in Russia. "What do you do with the drunks?" he asked. "If they smell of vodka, we send them back to their factory. If they smell of samogen (moonshine), we send them back to their village." "But what do I do if I get someone who smells of cognac?" "In that case he's a senior party official, so you clean the vomit off his suit and send him home."[329]

This transition from regular jokes to political ones can be observed in Estonia after the Soviet Union invaded it[330]. According to Davies, contrary to democratic society, the jokes being told and created within the Soviet Union were not simply entertainment but important to those that told and heard them[331].

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[324] Davies, Christie. Jokes and targets. 16
[325] Ibid 16
[326] Ibid 16
[327] Ibid 215
[328] Ibid 215
[329] Ibid 215
[330] Ibid 217
[331] Ibid 9

This importance came from the fact that the jokes being told were used convey information and "realities" that were suppressed by the Soviet Union[332]. Through these Soviet jokes, Davies claims, is an accurate way of assessing the current state of a society as well as how it will develop in the future[333].

For example, during the high terror where people were dying of starvation, jokes about collectivization sprang up and propagated[334]. The jokes created inside the Soviet Union "explored all the weaknesses of the system in a way that often showed great insight and even erudition"[335]. The jokes containing this "erudition" came from the educated class and then spread to the masses for "consumption"[336].

To conclude, the book jokes and targets does not claim that jokes brought down the Soviet Union[337]. However, it does suggest that, with a certain amount of context, jokes can uncover some truths and insights of a society and how it relates to the system of government they are currently under.

I would also argue that the fact that jokes suddenly started taking a political dimension illustrates a rise in the amount of political jokes within a country. Within the context of the Soviet Union (regardless of institutional or political actor jokes), that may illustrate a growing dissatisfaction with communism, perhaps. I would also argue that this increase in political jokes also show a bigger interest in politics within the population.

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[332] Davies, Christie. Jokes and targets 219
[333] Ibid 219
[334] Ibid 219
[335] Ibid 225
[336] Ibid 225
[337] Ibid 248

Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse

Discourse is an element of social life that is closely connected to other elements[338]. When speaking of discourse, Fairclough speaks of two different forms of discourse. There is the discourse that revolves around a single text as well as "orders of discourse" or interdiscursivity i.e. the relationship between the text and other texts[339].

Fairclough states that texts bring about change in the social world. Texts are able to change and affect our "knowledge …, our beliefs, our attitudes, values and so forth"[340]. As prolonged exposure to advertisement may change your tastes, so can prolonged exposure to certain democratic messages affect or indicate one's relationship to democracy[341]. The way that democracy is defined and described can influence the "domain of statements" or "discourse" surrounding it[342].

There are three "analytically separable" aspects that endow a text with meaning[343]. This meaning arises from the context in which the text was produced, the text itself and who reads it[344].

Text

Texts represent the world at a (according to Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics) a physical, social and mental level[345]. Fairclough builds on this idea and introduces the notion of "three

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[338] Fairclough, Norman. Analysing Discourse 3
[339] Ibid 3
[340] Ibid 8
[341] Ibid 8
[342] Ibid 124
[343] Ibid 10
[344] Ibid 10
[345] Ibid 10

types of [text] meanings" i.e. action, representation and identification[346]. This is an attempt of Fairclough to introduce a "social perspective into the heart and fine details of the text"[347].

Representation deals with how the text represents reality. An example of this would be how the text itself is constructed i.e. "x is different than y"[348]. Action is as the name implies, an action. A sentence is an action and therefore also a social relationship[349]. There is somebody that needs to be on the receiving end of that action, which can be "informing, advising, promising" and also joking[350]. Lastly, identification is how the texts identifies certain topics. For example, depending on what word is used (good/quite good/bad) the subject or object is identified as the word that is used[351].

Framing Theory

When one frames an action or topic, one attempts to change the significance of said action[352]. I would argue that 2017 American election result is a concrete example of this trend. Donald Trump's victory, by his detractors, (such as the "not my president protesters) was framed as the result of an archaic system of governance and not as a legitimate reflection of the American people. Trump himself frames his electoral college victory by (untruthfully) stating that it is the "biggest electoral college victory since Regan", which is an attempt to endow his administration with legitimacy that his opponents are attempting to deny him[353].

When one frames a topic, one attempts to illuminate the listener to "truths" that were "unseen, unframed and unnamed"[354]. It is this framing that allows the topic to be discussed within a

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[346] Fairclough, Norman. Analysing Discourse 27
[347] Ibid 28
[348] Ibid 28
[349] Ibid 28
[350] Ibid 28
[351] Ibid 28
[352] Acevedo, Gabriel A.; Ordner, James & Thompson, Miriam. 2010. "Narrative inversion as a tactical framing device: The ideological origins of the Nation of Islam". Narrative Inquiry 20 (1): 124-152. John Benjamins Publishing Company. doi:10.1075/ni.20.1.07ace.device 124
[353] "Trump Falsely Claims He Got Biggest Electoral College Win Since Reagan". 2017. Thehill. http://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/donald-trump-falsely-claims-biggest-electoral-win-since-reagan.
[354] Lakoff, George. The political mind: A cognitive scientist's guide to your brain and its politics. Penguin, 2008 134

context that is beneficial to the framer. That said, there are also already existent frames, or "Social Frameworks" that one may use in order to frame a topic[355].

Goffman posits that a social framework is what a social group makes use of in order to contextualize an event that has happened[356]. Through their "primary frameworks" the social group frames itself, the world that surrounds it as well as its own social relations[357]. Primary frameworks are social frameworks that have already been established within the social group and are easily accessible to them[358]. It is important to note that the member of the social group is not consciously aware of this process. Lastly, when a social member is interpreting an event, his understanding of the event exists within several primary frameworks."[359]

Building on this framework theory, George Lakoff claims that these frames can be accessed through "words, language and ideas[360].

The reason for introducing framework theory into this project is that it illustrates that a words and jokes can be attached to different frames. When analyzing a joke for some deeper meaning, one can look at the frames that the joke touches upon, be it anti-democratic, neutral or pro-democratic.

The theory also states that a framer can use a frame to change the significance of an action[361]. Framework theory will not be used in this fashion. I have not found anything that concretely proves that jokes can change the minds of its listeners.

Social frameworks are what social groups make use of in order to understand the world. So, through the jokes, one could perhaps see what sorts of frameworks exist surrounding democracy or democracy itself is framed. By making a joke, the comedian may not influence his audience but instead illustrate a social framework that is audience has in relation to democracy.

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[355] Lakoff, George. The political mind 134
[356]Goffman, Erving & Berger, Bennett M. 1986. Frame analysis. 1st arg. Boston: Northeastern University Press. 22
[357]Goffman, et al, Frame Analysis 28
[358]Ibid 21
[359]Ibid 21
[360]Lakoff, George. The political mind 114
[361] Ibid 114

Analysis

Preamble

Before beginning, I will briefly go through the process of analysis that I will go through for this project as well as the pros and cons of this approach.

I will first analyze the jokes through the joke theory specified in the joke theory section of this paper. I will go through the five factors, which are: bona-fide vs. non-bona-fide communication, the text of the joke, scripts within the text and how those scripts appose each other.

Bona-fide communication will help establish if the following is a joke or not. This is important because if everything is simply taken at face value instead of a joke, Fallon goes from making comedic observations to simply making absurd statements or lies. The text of the joke is used in order to see what exactly is being said without the trappings of jokes. The scripts will be a deeper look at what meaning is being created within a larger context through the choice of words through the text.

Once the scripts have been found, I will then see how they oppose one another. As mentioned in the script section of this paper, when the first script is normal, the second script tends to be abnormal. By looking at what is portrayed as abnormal, one can get an idea of what (in the case of democracy) the audience itself sees as abnormal.

All of this will be done through an interpretive and constructivist lens. That means that I will interpret what the jokes mean and how the scripts opposite one another, based on the context and theories established earlier.

This will then be followed by a look at the "triggers" within the text. This will crystalize further what exactly the joke is about. This will then be concluded by a look at what humor theory that the joke fits within, which will also be decided by my interpretation.

This will then be repeated through five political jokes chosen by me. Those jokes were chosen because they are specifically political and have a greater chance of illustrating the relationship

between Fallon's audience and democracy, which I argue is important when discussing the audiences' relationship with democracy. This will be the qualitative aspect of the project.

Following that, the paper will go into the overall observations that can be observed from all the jokes that were told throughout the three monologues. All of the jokes (including the five fully analyzed political jokes) will be analyzed in the extent that was established in indicator phase i.e. split into political actor, political institution and non-political jokes. Added to that, the political jokes will also be split into the different humor theories (superiority, incongruity and release) with the aim of seeing how prevalent the different humor theories are within the political jokes being told. The same interpretive and constructivist lens apply to this segment of the paper. I am interpreting what jokes fit into what theory.

Then, the project will delve into framing theory and how Fallon's jokes frames democracy. I will be going through jokes about politics actors and institutions. Human beings make up politics. The representatives of democracy are a part of democracy, which means that they are a subject worthy of analysis. By analyzing political actors, I am by extension analyzing democracy (a part of it). This same concept can be applied to jokes about democratic institution, whose framing will also be analyzed.

Again, this analysis will be heavily based on my interpretation of certain texts. One could argue that that would make the results so bias as to make the entire endeavor pointless. My response to that is that all analysis has bias. The only difference here is that through this approach, I acknowledge my biases and notify the reader of said biases. There is no façade of objectivity. The only thing that I can do is go into extensive detail of my entire process. That way, the reader can assess for themselves if they agree or not with the conclusions of this project. This brings me to the analysis.

Analysis

Before beginning, there are certain analytical considerations that are applicable to all monologues that I will cover before delving into each monologue individually.

As mentioned in the theory section, one can establish an expectation of non-bona-fide communication through the different context i.e. the first factor when analyzing a joke. I would argue that The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon, a comedy show, establishes said non-bona-fide expectations. Those expectations then make it easier for the audience to understand that that Jimmy Fallon's monologues are jokes.

There are times in Jimmy Fallon's monologue where he enters into a sketch. I will not be covering these sketches because the focus of this project is on monologue jokes that are more akin to standup comedy than sketch comedy. In order to minimize irrelevant data and faulty analysis, they will not be included in the analysis part.

Secondly, the jokes that have been selected for fleshed out analysis have all been chosen because of their political dimension. Since there is a limit to space in this project, most of the jokes will be relegated to the appendix. The appendix jokes were also analyzed to the same extent as the jokes singled out in the thesis proper, albeit in a more concise form within the appendix itself. Also, in appendix D, a joke table can be found. The table details what checkboxes every individual joke ticks i.e. what humor theory it fits into or if it is a political (actor/institutional) or non-political joke.

Donald Trump Fires FBI Director, Nevada Legalizes Weed – Monologue (10th of May)

Joke 1

The context of the joke, as alluded to in the title, is the firing of James Comey by Trump on the 9th of May. Already in the title, one can observe that there will be political content. Donald Trump is the first thing mentioned. This is an early indication that Jimmy Fallon may not be as apolitical as he claims.

Jimmy Fallon begins with talking about the "crazy day in Washington" and his disbelief in what is going on to the point of not knowing "what to say anymore"[362]. He then goes into the first joke of his set:

"Yesterday, Donald Trump fired the director of the FBI, James Comey. The guy who has been in the news every day since the election."[363]

Which elicited laughter from the audience. However, that is not enough. As mentioned before, I must prove why the following is a joke and not simply absurd statements from Fallon.

BONA-FIDE VS. NON-BONA-FIDE

The first sentence "Yesterday, Donald Trump fired the director of the FBI, James Comedy" is informational and explains what has occurred in the past. There is nothing that would suggest that this piece of text would be a piece of non-bona-fide communication as it does not break any of the four maxims specified. Fallon does not provide too much information, lie, say unrelated things which alludes to the first script being normal.

However, the change into non-bona-fide communication can be observed in the later part of the text, in which Fallon mentions "The guy who has been in the news every day since the election." This information seems irrelevant to the previous established script. Trump has just fired the director of the FBI while the FBI was investigating the president's campaign. The fact that Comey is on the news a lot is an observation that does not add to the previous script, which therefore proves that it is superfluous information. This transitions the communication from bona-fide communication to non-bona-fide communication, therefore proving that this is in fact a joke.

THE TEXT OF THE JOKE

Since I have established that it is a joke. The joke will be interpreted by me in order to see what exactly is meant with this joke without the phrasing of a joke. The point of this segment is to clarify what exactly is being said. For example, what an "it" within a sentence is referring too. In

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[362] Appendix A
[363] Appendix A

essence, this process is done in order to disambiguate a piece of text that is deliberately ambiguous.

That said, sometimes there will be jokes that are more ambiguous which in turn will necessitate more in-depth analysis.

Within the above text, there are only certain meanings that make sense within this context. James Comey is not a movie director, nor a board member. The only understanding that makes sense within this context is that Comey is the director of the FBI. Likewise, Donald Trump likely did not "fire" Comey out of a cannon.

The only understanding that makes sense is that Donald Trump, the president of the United States, relieved James Comey of his position as the head of the FBI and that Comey has been on the news a lot lately.

THE SCRIPTS

Now, I will engage with the third factor that one must consider when analyzing a joke, the scripts that arise in the text.

The words "Donald Trump, Director, FBI" and "James Comey" are all words that evoke the script of "government", which is what is being affected by Trumps action i.e. firing James Comey. The sentence referring to both James Comey and Donald Trump points towards a complex script where a person needs certain information to understand the text fully. I would say that a supplement to this joke would be knowledge of the tumultuous first couple of months of the Trump presidency as well as the extensive coverage that Comey has received.

From the text, I have observed two scripts. The first main script is based on the auxiliary government scripts such as "Donald Trump, Comey, Director, FBI" that support a main script that is "Trump fires Comey".

The second main script is based on the fact that within "the guy who has been in the news every day since the election", the only overlapping script is government which is brought forth through "Comey".

The words "new, every day, since, the election" all scripts support the message of extensive media coverage. Of what? Within this context, "the guy" is a reference to James Comey. Therefore, I would argue that the script of the second sentence is "Comey's been on the news a lot".

THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN THE SCRIPTS

With the two main scripts being "Trump fires Comey" and "Comey's been on the news a lot", I have found an opposition. Keep in mind that oppositions need not be completely opposite. Here, the opposition is subtle but still there. I would argue that "Trump fires Comey" suggests that Comey will not appear in the news anymore because he is no longer in government. However, "Comey's been on the news a lot", is opposite the first script in that it undermines the expectation that Comey will now no longer be in the news. In fact, now that one is aware of it, Comey would probably be even more in the news than before.

THE TRIGGERS

I have found no obvious triggers in this joke. However, the implied trigger is contradiction trigger. This contradiction is only established once the full sentence has been understood. It is only with the last piece of text "the guy who has been on the news every day since the election" that it retroactively changes the meaning of the first part of the text, i.e. the meaning being that Comey wouldn't be in the news anymore. There is no single word that triggers this change in understanding. Therefore, the last part of the joke i.e. "the guy who has been on the news since the election" is an implied trigger.

THEORY OF HUMOR

I would argue that there are two humor theories on display here, release and incongruity. Release theory because the joke is prefaced with Fallon expressing disbelief over what is going on in Washington at the moment. These expressions of disbelief convince me that this joke was

made to relieve Fallon's and perhaps the audience's anguish towards what is currently happening.

The second theory of humor applicable to this is incongruity. The joke started with Trump firing Comey and then it took a turn in which Fallon commented on the fact that Comey was on the news a lot. It may have not been "every day" as Fallon mentioned it, but it does take "familiar" material and exaggerates it in order to make a point. The point being: Comey has been on the news too much.

Joke 2
The second joke follows on the Comey theme and begins to delve into how Comey found out that he was fired.

"Comey heard about it right before a recruitment event he was going to speak at."[364]

BONA-FIDE VS. NON-BONA-FIDE
From the beginning, the text engages in bona-fide communication. The first bit of information that is sufficient to convey the news. The only necessary information for that story is that Comey found out he was fired. Following that, all the information is superfluous, the fact that he was going to speak at the event, or when he was going to do it, does not change the story. Since there is no point to the extra information, the communication breaks one of the maxims and therefore constitutes this sentence as non-bona-fide communication i.e. a joke.

THE TEXT OF THE JOKE
There isn't much to unpack in regard to the joke itself. The "it" in the sentence is a reference to "him being fired". There are not many different meanings that can be created within this text that deviate much from the "obvious" understanding. Therefore, the meaning of the joke is: "FBI

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[364] Appendix A

director James Comey learns that he was fired right before a recruiting event he planned to speak at".

This joke is not complex because Fallon gives the necessary background knowledge as he tells the audience the joke. Now, I will break down the words into different scripts. But first, I am going to split up the above text into two distinct segments in accordance with where the text fits within the bona-fide communication spectrum. The first being "Comey heard about it" and the second being "right before the event he was going to speak at".

THE SCRIPTS

There are two main scripts. The first one covers the bona-fide communication segment of the sentence that deals with Comey finding out. The first segment has once again government scripts such as "Comey" and "it". The "it" is a government script because "it" is a reference to an event that has impacted the government i.e. Comey's firing. It is from this that I conclude that the first main script is: "FBI director discovers job loss".

The second script can be understood as "director going to do his job". The second segment revolves around the verb "speak" in which all of the other words and scripts contextualize. The auxiliary scripts are "at" which signify that the speaking would happen at the recruitment place. "Was" and "going" elaborate that the speaking would happen at later point in time. The "right before" contextualizes when Comey learned that he was fired.

THE OPPOSING SCRIPTS

As established earlier, the scripts here are "FBI director discovers job loss" and "director going to do his job". The opposition that can be found here is that the FBI director was about to do his job only to find out that he no longer had a job. At this current state, the opposition isn't too strong. One could find a context in which these two scripts were not opposites. However, this opposition will be solidified more thoroughly in the following trigger segment.

The joke itself also makes use of contradiction triggers. The contradiction trigger in the segment is "speak at", which is a semantic switch trigger. The "speak at" is a collection of words that represent Comey doing his job i.e. attempting to recruit more FBI agents. The contradiction arises from the fact that one cannot do a job that one no longer has. This trigger switch is also facilitated by the "it" auxiliary trigger that reminds the listener that Comey was fired.

This is supported when one compares the two scripts with one another. The first is "FBI director discovers job loss at government event" vs. "director going to do his job". These two are opposites (once again) because one cannot perform a job that one no longer has.

THEORY OF HUMOR

I would argue that within this joke, fits within the incongruity theory of humor. The incongruity arises from the fact that it is unlikely that this sort of scenario would happen. The FBI director found out he was fired by a sitting president at a recruitment event. This, is a departure from what may be possible, which I admit is a bit strange when one considers that it happened. That said, I would argue that before this presidency many things that turned out to be more possible than previously thought.

Joke 3

With a premise already established by the previous joke, Jimmy Fallon continues with this theme. Before beginning, it is important to note that when Jimmy Fallon states "he was like", it is indicative of him going into a character and speaking in the first person. This is illustrated later in the text, when he refers to the fact that he is recruiting when he (Jimmy Fallon) is not.

The follow up to the above joke is the statement:

"He was like: hey, well, I'm recruiting. Anybody want to be director?"[365]

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[365] Appendix A

BONA-FIDE VS. NON-BONA-FIDE

The text deals with bona-fide communication up until "director". Until then, one can understand that Fallon is playing the character of James Comey attempting to recruit people. Here, one could have said that this introduction would already constitute non-bona-fide communication.

However, I would argue that due to it being a comedy show, it does not break the maxim of "telling a blatant lie". After all, no one would honestly believe that Fallon is James Comey. It is this contextual expectation for a joke that keeps the first part of the text as bona-fide communication.

The point in which the communication transitions into non-bona-fide is when it becomes apparent the job being recruited for is the "director" job i.e. Comey's job. One could interpret it as a blatant lie, there is no possible way that the director for the FBI would say that. Since a maxim of communication was broken, this sentence is therefore a joke.

THE TEXT OF THE JOKE

There are certain meanings that can be understood from the text. One could understand that Comey attempted to recruit an actual well, filled with water. However, within this context, I would doubt that Comey was actually doing that. Over all, the first part of the sentence, save for the final word, can be understood as Comey asking if people are interested in a position. The last word is "director" which can be understood in several ways such as play or movie director. Due to Fallon speaking earlier about the FBI director, I would argue that "director" is a direct reference to the FBI director position.

To conclude, the joke can be understood thusly: The director of the FBI is attempting to recruit somebody for the position of director of the FBI.

THE SCRIPTS

I have observed two main scripts in the sentence. The first main script revolves around Comey expressing that he is recruiting i.e. "Hey, well, I'm recruiting". The "hey" and "well", and "I'm" are expressions that connote Comey is speaking in the first person. All of these words would fall

under what I would call the "first-person" script, as they all reinforce this notion of the first person. These "first-person" (also known as auxiliary) scripts are all there in order to re-emphasize that it is "Comey" that is speaking and that it he who is attempting to recruit new FBI agents.

There are other overlapping scripts apparent in these words. The "I" is a reference to Comey, which at the time was the FBI director. It is "recruiting" that introduces the "FBI recruiting" script to the first sentence, which reinforces that Comey is at the recruitment event, which was established earlier. This script overlaps with the previous "first-person" script due to it being Comey doing the recruitment. The end result of this script overlap is the main script, which revolves around Comey doing his job. Therefore, the main script here is: "FBI director has a job".

The second sentence is a question, in which the words "anybody", "want", "to" and "be" are all auxiliary scripts that support the "recruiting" script established in the earlier sentence.

Anybody" is a wide exclamation in which attempts to throw a wide a net as possible. "Want" is used to express desire for something, within this context would be a desire for a job. Lastly, "to be" refers to "being" i.e. existing as something. All of these scripts also reinforce the earlier script that the "FBI director has a job".

However, "director" does not reinforce the earlier main script. In fact, it does quite the opposite. It shows that the director does not in fact have a job. This singular word is then a main script onto itself i.e. "FBI director doesn't have a job".

OPPOSING SCRIPTS

The two scripts I found within this text are "FBI director has a job" and "FBI director doesn't have a job". The opposition here is that one states that the FBI director has a job through the fact that he is attempting to recruit people. The second script opposes the first script by illustrating that he, by virtue of trying to find a new FBI director, does not.

As touched upon briefly in the earlier segment, the trigger within this joke is "director". It is here that the meaning of the sentence changes and also turns it into a joke. The trigger here is, more specifically, a contradiction trigger. The word "director" actively contradicts what has been established in the sentence before it. By asking people if they want to be "director" Comey states that he does not have that job himself. The dichotomy here is that the first script establishes that he is doing his job, while the second script undermines that by showing that he doesn't have a job, a reverse of what was expected.

Here, I would say that this joke makes use of incongruity theory. It seems absurd and impossible that the director of the FBI would attempt to recruit a replacement for his job moments after he discovered he was fired. This incongruity is also enhanced by the casual way of speaking that Comey uses in his recruitment speech. The FBI director, would not casually say "hey, well, I'm recruiting", the "pitch" would likely have a more professional tone.

Trump Deals with Comey Fallout, Blue Cross' Doctor Lyft Rides – Monologue

Here, the monologue starts with Jimmy Fallon stating that the "big story" is the Comey firing that happened earlier. He also informs that Comey had six years left on his "term" at the Whitehouse. Having given the context necessary for the joke, Fallon then says, "that story, again". "That story again" is a way of taking what has just been said and repackaging it in a more humorous way, the result of which is the following:

Joke 21

"It is easier to get out of your FBI contract then it is your AT&T contract."[366]

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[366] Appendix B

BONA-FIDE VS. NON-BONA-FIDE

The text above makes use of bona-fide communication until the AT&T contract. There isn't anything in the first part of the sentence that suggests that too much information was given, that Fallon is lying or saying unrelated things. It is not unreasonable to think that there are things that are harder to get out of than an FBI contract.

However, that changes once it is apparent that it is harder to get out of an AT&T contract than an FBI contract. A person must be lying if they state that it is harder to get out of a phone communication contract than a government appointed position. The director of the FBI is appointed to his/her position by the president but needs to be confirmed by the senate and is a position that supposedly needs to last ten years in an effort to minimize presidential interference[367].

However, Fallon is a comedian and it is more likely that he is telling a joke than telling a lie. Therefore, I would argue that when the words "AT&T contract" are introduced, the text moves from bona-fide communication to non-bona-fide communication.

THE TEXT OF THE JOKE

There isn't a lot of ambiguity in the text above. The only thing that is worth mentioning is the two times the word "contract" is used. Here, the first "contract" is used to reference a government contract in relation to work. The second "contract" can be understood as a phone subscription. The above joke then, is understood as: "it is easier to lose your job at the FBI than it is to leave your AT&T phone subscription".

SCRIPTS

The first main script that I would like to elaborate on is "it is hard to get out of a government contract".

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[367] "FBI Director: Appointment And Tenure". 2014. Federation Of American Scientists. https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41850.pdf.

The "it is easier to get out of" shows that getting out of the government contract is easier than something else. However, I would argue that due to the United States being a country ruled by the rule of law, that a "government contract" is hard to get out of due to it being a written agreement between two parties. If "government contracts" were able to be broken easily, then contracts would mean nothing and chaos would reign. I do not believe I am being hyperbolic. If contracts were unenforceable, then business would cease to function effectively and laws would cease to be followed.

I would argue that a law is a contract between the American people and the government that represents them. The people agreed on who will represent them. Then, a collection of representatives create a law or "contract" that (ideally) set into place laws that are in the interest of their constituents. That connects government contracts to law, an institution that (supposedly) no one is above of. Therefore, I would argue that the "FBI contract" is seen as something hard to get out of even though there are things that are harder to get out of.

Then, "then it is your" is used to establish a comparison between two things. I would reiterate again that something exists that is harder to get out of than an FBI (government) contract does not prove that getting out of a government contract is easy. That said, once again, that there are simply things that are harder to get out of than a government contract.

The last main script "AT&T" contract completes the comparison established in the previous script. The comparison states that it is easier to get out of a government contract than get out of an AT&T communications contract. This then, is a new script being established. Since, getting out of a government contract is easier than breaking a communications contract, I would argue that the script that is created is that: "it is easy to get out of a government contract".

The FBI contract was the result of several branches of government working together and imposing a ten-year term on the position in order to make it independent of presidential pressure[368]. According to this statement, it is easier to get out of a AT&T contract, which is a telecoms company that sells mobile phone, television and internet services than getting out of a

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[368] "FBI Director: Appointment And Tenure".

contract created by a state (and law) in order to ensure independence from presidential interference[369]. I would argue that that proves the second main script (triggered by AT&T) is "it is easy to get out of a government contract".

THE OPPOSITION OF THE SCRIPTS

The two main scripts are "it is hard to get out of a government contract" and "it is easy to get out of a government contract". The first script establishes the expectation that breaking a government contract is hard. However, the second script states that it is easy to get out of the government contract compared to a AT&T contract, which is in opposition to what the first script established.

THE TRIGGERS

The trigger here is a dichotomizing trigger. Here, a dichotomy was created with "AT&T contract". The joke and dichotomy arises at how Fallon compares government law with an AT&T contract to find that government law is less stringent and easier to escape than a company contract.

THE THEORY OF HUMOR

The above joke fits into both the incongruity and release theory of humor. Incongruity because it seems impossible that it would be easier to be fired from the FBI than it is to leave a phone subscription. This development subverts the expectation that government contracts are strong.

It is this same expectation towards contracts that allows this joke to fit into release theory. Release theory states that jokes are allowed to vent "taboo thoughts and feelings". The taboo thought here, I would argue, is that government contracts are weak. By making this joke, Fallon (and his audience) is venting their frustration over the fact that it was so easy for the FBI director to get fired.

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[369] Company Profile". 2017. About.Att.Com. http://about.att.com/sites/company_profile.

Trump Threatens to End Press Briefings, Scorpions on United Airlines – Monologue

The episode fell on Mother's Day so Fallon started out by making some jokes about how Hooters is having a Mother's Day special as well as how much money people use on gifts. Those jokes are then followed up by Fallon the first Trump joke of the night.

Joke 35

"Today president Trump actually threatened to stop holding Whitehouse press briefings. The press said: "that's outrageous", while Sean Spicer said "let's hear him out""[370]

BONA-FIDE VS. NON-BONA-FIDE

Once again, like previously, the text starts out within bona-fide communication. The first sentence, revolves around presenting information while also expressing Jimmy Fallon's opinion on the subject. Here, Jimmy states that the president threatened to stop having press conferences, which has Fallon express "actually". The word "actually" is used to re-iterate that this he is not lying and that what he is describing "actually" happened and not part of a joke.

Fallon then elaborates on the different responses that this threat had garnered. The press' response was that this threat was "outrageous", which is reasonable when I consider that communicating with the press helps keep those in power in check. The text transitions from bona-fide to non-bona-fide communication when Sean Spicer shares his opinion on these developments.

It is here that shows that this is a complex joke. Sean Spicer in his tenure as White House press secretary has "suffered" both publicly and privately[371]. Vanity fair has described that Spicer, as press secretary, has been "subject to a rare and cruel, and occasionally darkly funny, form of public torture" such as having to defend Trump's inauguration crowd size[372].

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[370] Appendix C
[371] Nguyen, Tina. 2017. "The Agony Of Sean Spicer". The Hive. http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2017/02/sean-spicer-press-secretary-donald-trump.
[372] Ibid

Spicer saying: "let's hear him out" is a statement that shows an openness if not an outright desire for press briefings to end. Being a press secretary, it is unlikely that Sean Spicer would say such a statement out in the open. So, either Fallon is lying or the text has transitioned into a non-bona-fide mode of communication. Within the context of a *comedy* show, I feel same in assuming that it is non-bona-fide and the text is therefore a joke.

THE TEXT OF THE JOKE

There isn't that much ambiguity in the text in relation to words. The only words I could willfully interpret incorrectly is "holding" and "press". Trump isn't going to "hold" the press briefing on the palm of his hand and "the press" i.e. a coffee maker, does not find his threats to be "outrageous".

The text of the joke revolves around something that happened and how different actors responded to what has happened. The first sentence shows the disbelief that Fallon has over the fact that president Trump "actually" threatened to stop having White House press briefings. The two actors responding, the press and Sean Spicer show different reactions to the same news. The press states that it is "outrageous" i.e. not good that the president stop having press briefings. Sean Spicer, on the other hand shows an openness to having his "torture", as Vanity Fair puts it, stop.

THE SCRIPTS

The first main script found within this script is the "Government accountability is under attack". The statement "Trump actually threatened to stop holding White House press briefings" supports the main script above. The "White House" and "Trump" represent the executive branch of the American government. This represents the "government" part of the main script above. The accountability aspect of the main script mentioned above is found in "press briefings". A press briefing is where the White House allows reporters to ask questions and conveys information to the press. The attack part of the main script is supported by the word "threatened", which indicates hostile intent.

This main script is also supported in a segment of the following sentence with "The press said: "that's outrageous". "The press" is representative of an entire journalistic body that disseminates information to the masses. "The press" is being denied the opportunity to hold the Trump presidency accountable, which, again, supports the main script established earlier. Aware of this, according to Fallon's impersonation, "the press" claims the threat to be "outrageous". "Outrageous" shows disapproval of towards that actions of the president, which further supports the main script established earlier that "government accountability is under attack".

The second main script found within the text is "Sean Spicer isn't suffering". Here, Fallon makes an impression of Sean Spicer and tells "the press" to "hear him (Donald Trump) out". The "let's hear him out" supports the second main script. First, Sean Spicer's tenure as press secretary has been described as "torture". The word "hear" can be understood as, according to dictionary.com, as "to listen to with favor, assent, or compliance"[373].

By saying "let's hear him out", Spicer shows a willingness to consider stopping press briefings. Here, Spicer is not concerned with the fact that accountability is being attacked but on stopping his own suffering, which supports the above mentioned second script.

OPPOSING SCRIPTS

The scripts are "government accountability is under attack" and "Sean Spicer isn't suffering". The first script maintains that government accountability is under attack, which is shown through Trump threatening to close down press briefings. The second script opposes this established script by ignoring the implications that may occur if press freedoms are curtailed and instead focuses on the personal struggles of Sean Spicer.

TRIGGERS

Situational triggers arise from the situational ambiguity that the character of a joke finds himself in. The situational trigger is implied and can be found within the "let's hear him out" part of the joke. It is here that the focus of the joke shifts from the attack on accountability to the "torturous" situation that Sean Spicer finds himself in as the press secretary. The situational

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[373]"The Definition Of Hear". 2017. Dictionary.Com. http://www.dictionary.com/browse/hear.

aspect of the joke is strengthened by the fact that Spicer speaks in the first person, in which allows the crowd to imagine that Fallon is embodying the Sean Spicer the press secretary. There are also auxiliary triggers "Sean Spicer said" that also supports the "let's hear him out" situational trigger by outright stating that what is to follow is a quote from Sean Spicer himself. It is that that establishes   that who is speaking now is not Fallon but Sean Spicer reacting to a situation.

The theory of humor in display here is incongruity, once again. It is hard to imagine that the press secretary, Sean Spicer, would say "let's hear him out" in such a casual way. The way that Sean Spicer is portrayed perhaps reflects the frustrations that he has with the job. Therefore, the joke takes the "familiar" topic that is Spicer being frustrated by his job and exaggerates it to make a point that Sean Spicer does not want to do press briefings anymore.

Collective Joke Overview

Now, in order to have a greater view of the jokes and what they mean, the following will be a look at the jokes being made in the three monologues. The splits will be done in accordance with the way specified in the indicator section of the project. The jokes have been divided into a grid in which one if political actor, political institution, or non-political jokes are being made. This grid will also contain information on what theory it falls under. This grid can be found in appendix D.

You can see the jokes and how they have been analyzed in the appendix as well. All of the jokes will illustrate the different scripts in the following way. Since, in order to be a joke, the scripts must be oppositional: the first script of the joke will be put in *italics* while the second script will be <u>underlined</u>.

Underneath the jokes, the theory in which the joke falls under will be included as well as if it is a political-actor, political institution or a non-political joke.

JOKE DIVISION POLITICAL/APOLITICAL

Political Actor
45%

Non-political
53%

Political Institution
2%
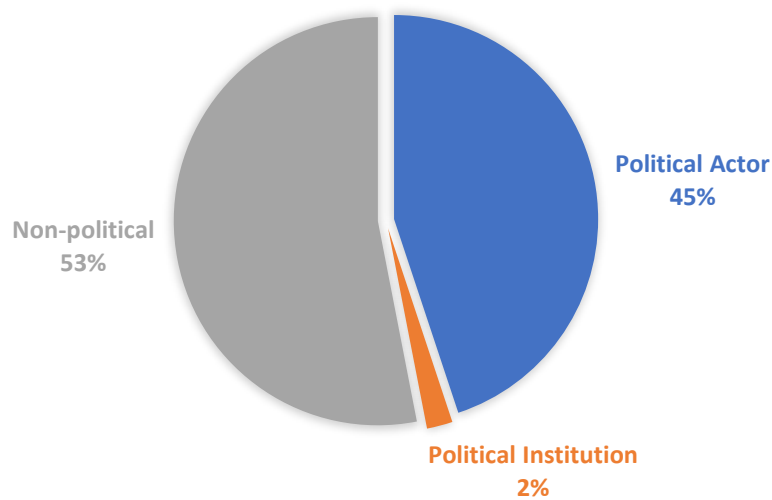
Political actor jokes

When looking at the appendix jokes (which includes the jokes that were individually analyzed) there are certain things that are worthy of mention. All the numbers cited here were quantified through the different indicators specified earlier i.e. political actor, political institution and non-political jokes. Not only that, I have registered with which humor theory/theories that each individual joke falls within. The result of this is a table in appendix D that has quantified data about if the joke is political or not, what type of political joke it is, and what within what humor theories these individual jokes wall within.

By counting the amount of political actor jokes, I concluded that there were twenty-two political actor jokes in total. Of these twenty-two, fourteen of these political actor jokes were interpreted to fit within superiority theory[374]. The amount of superiority jokes at the expense of political actors suggests that the audience feels a certain sense of superiority towards some political actors, such as Trump and Pence. Trump jokes that fit within superiority theory portray Trump as an idiot and baby, such as joke nr.8 in which "Melania" comments that it's difficult traveling with

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[374] Appendix A-C

the baby[375]. In regards to Pence, the jokes about him that fit within superiority theory revolve around criticizing his ability to name bunny rabbits and Fallon coming up with alternatives such as "Cinnabunny" and "Chance the Rabbit"[376].

Within the same twenty-two political actor jokes, two jokes (nr.1, 7) were found to fit within release theory[377]. The first one being about Comey being on the news, the second one is a joke where Hillary Clinton mocks Comey for "losing a job that was rightfully his"[378].

Lastly, there were three purely incongruous political actor jokes. These jokes are jokes nr.2 in which Comey attempted to do his job but got fired before he could do it[379]. Nr.3 where the FBI director attempts to hire a new FBI director[380]. Lastly, the joke in which Sean Spicer seems to be open to the idea of cancelling white house briefings in order to spare him from "torture"[381].

Political Institution

The only political institution joke found (which brings the total of political jokes to twenty-three) was joke nr.21 about how easy it is to fire an FBI director compared to how hard it is to get out of an AT&T contract[382].

Overall observations

This brings the total of political jokes (both institutional and actor) to twenty-three. On the other hand, Fallon made twenty-six non-political jokes throughout his three monologues[383].

As you can see in the above chart, the division shows that Fallon is not as apolitical as he suggests. It is also important to note that this chart does not include the different sketches Fallon

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[375] Appendix A-C
[376] Appendix A
[377] Appendix D
[378] Appendix A
[379] Appendix A
[380] Appendix A
[381] Appendix C
[382] Appendix A-B
[383] Appendix D

made. Were they to be included, the jokes made in the sketches would push political jokes past the 50% mark, since all of them had politics as a topic and were disparaging of Trump i.e. compared him to a baby[384]. What I take away from this is that there would seem that Fallon has noticed a heightened interest in politics from his audience. So, Fallon is tailoring his jokes towards that audience. If Fallon was truly apolitical, he would not make jokes about politics at all and simply continue to engage in pabulum.

Framing theory

The following is a segment that deals with how certain topics are framed. I did not include framing theory in the individual jokes analyzed earlier in this thesis. For the sake of readability, I have decided to look at how different subjects were framed throughout the jokes that were told instead of doing it piecemeal. I would also argue that by doing the analysis this way, I am able to receive and give an overall view of how certain subjects are framed.

As mentioned earlier in the paper, according to *Jokes and Targets*, if a population is unsatisfied with democracy, more political jokes spring up. I disagreed with this argument, I instead claimed that the amount of political jokes simply showed that people were more interested in politics than before. In order to prove that, I need to illustrate that political actors are not used to frame democracy in a negative light and that they are simply a result of increased interest in politics.

Also, the political actor jokes can also illustrate what sort of expectations are created or maintained about certain political positions (such as the position of president). These expectations can be positive or negative, but I would argue that the expectations are important to discuss when discussing the (Fallon's) audience's relationship with democracy.

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[384] Appendix A-C

Most of the political jokes made by Fallon revolved around Donald Trump[385]. The first thing I observe is that Donald Trump is often portrayed as an idiot, a baby, childish, paranoid, a terrible boss and lecherous[386]. For example, there is joke (nr.9) whose topic is Melania travelling with Trump on his foreign trips. The joke is that it is "hard to travel with the baby"[387]. The punchline literally frames Donald Trump as a baby, which evokes notions of crying and unreasonableness.

There is a reinforcing of this baby frame in a later monologue (joke 37) where Fallon states that there is a nanny cam on the oval office to keep tabs on the president[388]. In joke 38, that builds on the nanny cam joke. In joke 38, the staff looks on the president to check if he's sleeping only to find that he is tweeting, which prompts "someone to go in there"[389]. The joke here alludes that the reason that Trump childish is because his staff have to keep tabs on what he's tweeting, if he's sleeping or not, and the fact that they need to keep constant tabs on what he is doing.

Lastly, the childish frame was reinforced once again in jokes 39 and 40[390]. The 39th joke elaborates that Trump forces everybody to get one scoop of ice-cream while he gets two, arguably, a childish move[391]. To me, it evokes as something a nine-year-old would do at his birthday party in order to feel more important.

On the 40th joke, Trump explains that the reason he likes to have two scoops of ice-cream because when they put the scoops together "they look like boobs"[392]. Here, there are two things that illustrate the childishness of Trump. First, there is the word "boobs" itself. A more adult person would perhaps say "breasts" or, if they are more lecherous, "tities". Secondly, it is childish to play with one's food, doubly so when trying to make them into boobs. This joke also

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[385] Appendix A-C
[386] Appendix A-C
[387] Appendix A
[388] Appendix C
[389] Appendix C
[390] Appendix C
[391] Appendix C
[392] Appendix C

reinforces the frame that Trump is a lecherous person that obsesses about sex. A framing that arose during the campaign but came to a peak, I would argue, during the Hollywood bus tape in which he claimed he could just grab women as he pleased[393].

This framing of "idiot" continues in a joke that revolves around Russia "tricking" the White House and leaking pictures of a White House meeting between Trump and Russia's foreign minister[394]. A joke where Fallon (playing the Russian foreign minister) asks Trump to "make a silly" face as he holds up the nuclear codes for a picture, a trick that only simple-minded people would fall for.

The terrible boss framing can be seen in joke 35 where Trump threatened to stop White House briefings and Spicer (played by Fallon) acted as if that was a good idea[395]. The framing here is that the White House is a terrible place to work at because of Trump. In fact, it is such a terrible place to work that Spicer would rather undermine one of the main tenants of democracy than continue doing his job. This is in line with the several different articles that have detailed the low morale in the White House, Trump being an "impossible boss" and how Trump continuously "undercuts his staff"[396][397][398].

This frame of the "paranoid" and "terrible to work under" president is established and reinforced in joke 36 in which Spicer exclaims his worry that the president may be recording them and the "nanny" cam that Trump has in his office[399]. Here, the paranoid president frame as well as the "childish" frame are reinforced. When Spicer says in joke 37 that "he might be taping us", it establishes and reinforces a frame in which one can understand the president as a paranoid person that keeps tabs on his employees at all times[400].

[393] "Transcript: Donald Trump'S Taped Comments About Women". 2017. Nytimes.Com. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/08/us/donald-trump-tape-transcript.html.
[394] Appendix B
[395] Appendix C
[396] Ruth Sherlock. 2017. "White House Morale At 'All-Time Low' As Staff Feel 'Belittled And Undercut' By President Trump". The Telegraph. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/18/donald-trumps-white-house-suffering-low-morale-staff-feel-belittled/.
[397] Gabbatt, Adam. 2017. "How Trump Undercuts His Staff Again And Again". The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/may/16/donald-trump-press-staff-white-house-conflict-sean-spicer.
[398] Dickerson, John. 2017. "Donald Trump Is An Impossible Boss". The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/06/trump-staff/529647/.
[399] Appendix C
[400] Appendix C

There aren't many jokes that frame James Comey in any particular way. The only joke that makes reference to him as a person is in joke nr.1 where Fallon states that he has been on the news every day since the election[401]. Here, the framing is that the FBI being in the newspaper so often is an abnormal thing that is happening.

Mike Pence was also not on the receiving end of many jokes. The only jokes that were made of Mike Pence are one's about his bunny naming abilities[402]. In jokes ten to fifteen, the jokes revolve around Fallon being able to create better bunny names than Pence. Names such as "Cinnabunny, Hairy Styles, Chance the Rabbit" and others[403].

Democracy

There are three jokes that deal with democracy directly. Jokes nr.4 and nr.5 as well as joke nr.21[404]. The first two jokes are about how Trump "thought that it was a prank" when people told him that he was elected president of the United States, which is what made Donald Trump laugh. This joke is reinforced by the second joke (nr.5) that references Ashton Kutcher's show Punk'd. A show where Ashton Kutcher goes around pranking famous people[405].

Now, in this joke, Trump didn't believe that he won and believed it was a prank. A prank is when you trick someone in an "amusing, playful, or sometimes malicious" way[406]. I would argue that this joke makes use of the framing that the election result was a surprise and that no one saw it coming. The joke here is framed in a way in which the victory of Donald Trump was so surprising that not even Donald Trump, who himself was running for president, thought it would happen. That the idea that it was happening must have been a prank.

The fact that something unexpected happen does not connote anything positive or negative, it simply was unexpected. Although, one could argue that surprises in democracy are not

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[401] Appendix A
[402] Appendix A
[403] Appendix A
[404] Appendix A
[405] "Punk'd (TV Series 2003–2015)". 2017. Imdb. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0361227/.
[406] "The Definition Of Prank". 2017. Dictionary.Com. http://www.dictionary.com/browse/prank.

conductive to stability, which was illustrated in the UK elections where the Tory government lost its majority[407]. That surprise may have made Brexit negotiations much more complicated, and may also cause a new election to be called within a couple of months[408].

The last joke that deals with democracy as an institution is joke nr.21 that compares an FBI government contract to an AT&T phone contract.

I would argue that FBI contract makes use of an already established social framework. I established earlier that words have certain semantic information tied to them. As "lover" can have semantic information such as "pain" and "romance", so can the words "FBI contract".

The FBI is part of the government, which in turn makes an FBI contract a government contract. A government contract (and by extension an FBI contract) is something that evokes government and legally binding arrangements. A government contract, I would argue, is an agreement with the government and its people, which is why I argue that "FBI contract" can also be interpreted as "law". So, when Fallon states the word "FBI contract" not only is he referencing an employment contract but he is also tapping into the social framework semantic information that is "American law".

This "American law" framework is supported by the fact that, as mentioned earlier, the FBI director must be approved by different branches of government. The president nominates a FBI director which must then be confirmed by the senate through a vote. This process is a result of laws and the constitution being signed. Therefore, the FBI director's employment can be understood as an extension of the law and the government.

The American government has a series of checks and balances in place in order to stop power from concentrating into few hands. The FBI, following the election and in the beginning of the Trump presidency, were seen to be investigating the Trump campaign's connection with the

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[407] Castle, Steven. 2017. "Theresa May Loses Overall Majority In U.K. Parliament". Nytimes.Com. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/08/world/europe/theresa-may-britain-election-conservatives-parliament.html.
[408] "UK's Labour Leader Corbyn Sees Possible New Election This Year Or Next". 2017. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-election-corbyn-idUSKBN1920EB.

Russian government, which was confirmed by Comey on the 20th of March[409]. If the president did or did not collude with Russia is beside the point. I would argue though, that by virtue of being in the public spotlight during the investigation, the FBI became to be seen as a check on the Trump's possible corruption. They became an extension and representation of the checks and balances that are already inherent in the system.

So, when Fallon says, "FBI contract" he is in fact accessing the social framework that revolves around the government's ability to keep the executive branch in check, the laws that put Comey in a position of power, as well as an employment contract.

This means that when Fallon compares the FBI contract to an AT&T contract, there may be something more revealing going on. But, before that, I would like to reiterate what an AT&T contract may be referring to.

As mentioned before, AT&T is a telecommunications company that provides a variety of services revolving around communications. Looking at some customer reviews at www.customeraffairs.com, it would seem that AT&T is not a very popular brand with a 1 ½ star rating out of 5 (based on 4,325 reviews)[410]. There are stories about people having terrible experiences and not being able to leave their contract until it runs out, as specified in said contract, or paying 325 dollars in cancelation fees[411][412]. The main complaint would seem to be poor customer service, bad coverage and "lying about charges"[413].

The main take away from AT&T contracts is that there seems to be a general understanding of them being unpleasant and wanting to get out of them, as Fallon touches upon in his joke. Now, I can see a pattern emerging between both contracts.

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[409] Berman, Russell. 2017. "It's Official: The FBI Is Investigating Trump's Links To Russia". The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/03/its-official-the-fbi-is-investigating-trumps-links-to-russia/520134/.
[410] Wireless, AT&T. 2017. "Top 4,406 Complaints And Reviews About AT&T Wireless". Consumeraffairs. https://www.consumeraffairs.com/cell_phones/att_wireless.htm.
[411] Ibid
[412] Ibid
[413] Ibid

Both contracts are something that are unpleasant for the ones under that have signed up for them. In the logic of this joke, Trump signed up for (or continued Obama's) FBI contract when he won the presidency. The people with AT&T contracts signed up at some point in the past. That said, while the people under the AT&T contract may dislike the customer service and charges, they are not able to simply stop AT&T contract without having to pay a fee, which I would constitute as a hurdle to be overcome.

Trump on the other hand, has power to the extent that there are "no statutory conditions on the President's authority to remove the FBI Director", which means that Trump was within his right to fire Comey, the man investigating his campaign, without giving any reason[414]. Without any fees or consequences (on paper) Trump was able to fire Comey without any oversight for his decision (that oversight came later). One may think that the joke that Fallon's joke was hyperbolic. However, it is factually correct. Firing the FBI director is easier than cancelling a phone subscription i.e. Trump did not have to pay any fee (for now).

In conclusion, Fallon framed the two contracts mentioned in two different ways, both of which fit into already existing social frames. The first "contract" touched upon the social frame associated with law and government, a framework that draws upon ideas of strong government institutions such as laws and the checks and balances that hold power accountable. It then compares this framework with another social framework revolving around "AT&T contracts", a company whose contracts are seen with disdain but have personal stakes i.e. a personal fee must be paid in order to leave without having much effect on anybody else but the contract holder.

By making that joke, Fallon is satirically suggesting that it is laughable that firing the director of the FBI while he is investigating a sitting president's campaign is easier than getting out of an AT&T contract, painful as it may seem.

The fact that the crowd laughs and understands this satirical take on Comey's firing and presidential oversight, signifies that the crowd accepts the premise that he has presented. The

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[414] "FBI Director: Appointment And Tenure". 2014. Federation Of American Scientists. https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41850.pdf.

crowd believes that it is laughable and silly that a sitting president can engage in the act of firing the director of the FBI without any problems. I deliberately say "act" because it was revealed later that plenty of problems have arisen from the firing of James Comey. The first one being that Trump had possibly engaged in obstruction of justice, an impeachable offence[415].

Conclusion

Now, what conclusions can one make through the analysis presented in this project? The first conclusion I can make is that Fallon is not as apolitical as he may seem. As shown in the overall observations, close to half of the jokes told during the monologue were political in nature; a half that would have grown to more than half should I have chosen to include his sketches, which were mostly political.

In the Soviet Union, there were a rise in political jokes, which would suggest (according to Jokes and their Targets) that there was a growing dissatisfaction with their systems. I am not too comfortable using that logic and applying it to the United States. Of the political jokes being told, most of them simply made fun of political actors and not democracy as a whole.

However, the amount of political jokes being told do suggest that (compared to Fallon's claims of him being apolitical) Fallon's audience has developed a greater interest in politics. That is because, if Fallon was as apolitical as he claims, the fact that he makes political jokes proves that he believes his audience has an interest in politics.

Fallon making political jokes suggests that his audience has a heightened interest in politics during a time of heightened political tension. Since there is heightened interest in politics, what sort of political jokes did Fallon make during that time?

The political jokes that Fallon made during that time mostly revolved around one political actor, Trump. What I have observed is that Fallon's audience's relationship and opinion of Donald

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[415] Laura Jarrett and Ariane de Vogue, CNN. 2017. "What Is Obstruction Of Justice?". CNN. http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/16/politics/obstruction-of-justice-donald-trump/index.html.

Trump is overall negative. The Trump jokes paint the man as childish, stupid, baby-like, and lecherous. Suffice to say, the audience has a negative view of Trump as a president.

The audience has such a negative view on the president that I would argue that he is now becoming a modern-day trickster god for Fallon' audience. Now, I am in no way saying that Trump has any claim to divinity. However, I would argue that the amount of superiority jokes being told about the president, he is becoming/or has become a "guardian of the status quo". Inadvertently, by the sheer number of reproachable things he has done, he is showing and reinforcing what is and is not allowed to be done by the president and perhaps even men. As superiority theory states, these jokes are made to correct undesirable social norms and traits.

For example, going from the Trump jokes that deal in superiority. A president, and man, should not act like a baby, as referenced in the joke about Melania travelling with the president[416]. Another trait that is undesirable is gullibility, which was illustrated with the joke surrounding Trump's meeting with the Russians i.e. where he was told to hold up the nuclear codes and make a silly face[417]. Lastly, that a president doesn't tweet as much as he does, which was illustrated in joke nr.38 where the nanny cam discovered that he was tweeting[418]. If I continued analyzing jokes, I can imagine that this list of undesirable traits will only grow longer or more reinforced.

The most interesting is the one joke about government institution i.e. the joke in which Fallon compares a FBI contract with an AT&T contract. I would argue that by comparing those two contracts together and illustrating that it is easier to get rid of a person that is investigating you than cancelling your phone subscription, a position is being illustrated. That position is that it was too easy for Trump to fire the person investigating his campaign. That joke as well as its reception illustrate that Fallon's viewers agree with that sentiment and that they may be open towards creating legislation that makes it harder for the president to fire FBI directors.

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[416] Appendix A
[417] Appendix B
[418] Appendix C

I would like to finish this project by reaffirming the idea of using jokes to figure out more about public perception. I have looked through major newspaper outlets like Deadline, New York Times, and the Guardian (among others) and have not found an opinion article or comment that have reflected on presidential powers and if they should be curtailed. Most of them are focused on why Trump fired Comey and do not touch upon the ease in which Comey was fired. This joke would suggest that it may be worth the effort to analyze people's opinion on presidential powers and if they need to be curtailed. This project could serve as a jumping off point for more extensive research on people's opinion on how much power a president should have.

One may suggest that one joke isn't enough to draw any wide-ranging conclusions. However, I would argue that the fact that the joke was made, and the joke got a laugh. That shows that the audience accepted the premise of the joke and that it connected. That suggests that the audience acknowledges that perhaps it is a problem that Trump could fire Comey so easily. As mentioned before, for a joke to work, a community must be created. The community created here is a community that "feels" that the president, essentially, has too much power.

Coming to a close, Fallon's audience, due to Fallon making more political jokes, has perhaps become more politically minded than they were before. The audience has also shown that they do not have a positive view on president Trump and that he is becoming or is already an example of what a president should not be. Lastly, the jokes made suggest that there should be more checks on the president when it comes to hiring and firing FBI directors. Over all, I would say that through the analysis of several jokes, that there were no foundational criticisms to democracy inherent in the jokes that were told. The only thing that I found was a criticism of one part of democracy i.e. the ease of which an FBI director could be fired. I don't believe that criticizing democracy constitutes being anti-democratic.

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Appendix A

(1) Here what everybody's been talking about. It was another crazy day in washington. Can you believe what's going on? I don't even know what to say anymore. *Yesterday Donald Trump fired the director of the FBI, James Comey*. <u>The guy who has been in the news every day since the election</u>. (laughter)

Theory

- Incongruity/release

Joke type

- Political actor

(2) He fired him. Yeah. I guess *Comey heard about it right before a recruitment event* <u>he was going to speak at</u>. (laugh).

Theory

- incongruity

Joke type

- Political actor

(3) *He was like: hey, well I'm recruiting* <u>anybody want to be director?</u>(laughter) I-uh, just came up. The new-I just got the email. What?

Theory

- Incongruity

Joke type

- Political actor

(4)They're also saying that when he got the news, Comey thought it was a prank and started laughing. *But to be fair that's also how trump reacted* <u>when he won the election.</u> (laugh)

- Theory
  - Incongruity
  - Superiority

Joke type

- Political actor

(5) *He was like: that's very good*. <u>Where's Ashton Kutcher?</u>(laugh) I love the (unintelligible) I love that guy. (laugh).

- Theory
  - Incongruity
  - Superiority

Joke type

- Political actor

(6) Alright, let's put this in perspective. *People Trump has fired: the head of the FBI.* <u>People he hasn't fired: Bret Michaels winner of celebrity apprentice.</u> (laugh)

- Theory
  - Superiority
  - Incongruity

Joke type

- Political actor

(7) Of course it drew immediate reactions from other politicians. *When she heard Comey was fired Hillary called him and said:* "oh, did somebody take a job away that was rightfully yours?(laugh) Ah, too bad. Must feel really. So sorry"

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Release

Joke type

- Political actor

The following is a sketch and will not be included

Now, Comey was right in the middle of investigating Trump's ties to Russia when he was fired. And a lot of people are thinking that the president got rid of him to make the russia story go away. That might explain this new commercial I just saw.

"Footage of the Trump tower"

The Trump organization is proud to announce its newest product.

"Footage of makeup and makeup being applied"

Trump cover up! (laugh).

It's the best way to cover up things that you don't want anyone to see because they could damage your look and lead to your resignation (laugh).

Just look at this man's problem area (picture of Comey). Now look at him after some Trump cover up (Comey disappears). Wow! All gone! So when you need your problems to disappear. Try, Trump cover up. No one has to know. (laughs).

This is where the sketch ends and it returns to the monologues

(8)Yeah. Guys, I saw that Melania Trump will join Donald on his first trip overseas as president. *Melania says she's a bit nervous for the trip saying it's always hard traveling* with the baby. (laugh)

- Theory
    - Superiority
    - Incongruity

Joke type

- Political actor

(9)I saw this week. *Mike, this is one of the craziest story that. This really got to my head. Mike Pence and his wife Caren introduced their family* <u>rabbit to the public</u>. (laughs).

- Theory
    - Incongruity

Joke type

- Political actor
- Non-political

(10) *That part I don't mind. Did you hear the name of the rabbit is* <u>Marlon Bundo.</u> (laughs).

- Theory
    - Incongruity

Joke type

- Political actor
- Non-political

(11) *You get that at all? Do you get that? I don't get that. Marlon Bundo is the best name you can come up with? Marlon Bundo?* <u>That bothers me more than</u> (laughs).

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

Joke type

- Political actor
- Non-political

(12) *You couldn't think of another. How about uh, like. LIke,* <u>Cinnabunny</u> (laugh).

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

Joke type

- Political actor
- Non-political

(13) (from sidekick) Or <u>bunnie madoff</u> (laugh). That's pretty good.

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

Joke type

- Political actor
- Non-political

(14) Or chance the rabbit (laughs).

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

Joke type

- Political actor
- Non-political

(15) Hairy Styles. Any. Look, if you have a good rabbit name, tweet the vicepresident @vp and use the hashtag rabbit. He reads them all and let's find a better name for this bunny. Marlin Bundo? <u>Bunny in Cher</u>?

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

- Joke type
    - Political actor
    - Non political

(16) That's some tv news here. ABC wants Kelly Clarkson to be the judge in the upcoming season of American idol. *Because, what American idol winner doesn't dream of ending up back on* <u>American idol</u>? (laughs) What?

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

Joke type

- Non-political

(17) Guys, I just read that nevada just voted to start selling recreational marijuana this summer. *Of course, after weed is legal in las vegas,* things are going to be pretty different (laughter).

- Theory
    - Incongruity

Joke type

- Non-political

The show then goes into their second sketch of the night and will not be covered

I'll show you what I mean, before weed was legal the slogan was:

What happens in vegas stays in vegas.

After they legalize it the slogan will be:

Wait, what happens in vegas? (laughs)

Here is another one. Before weed you had a great time at circ de soleil. After weed you had a panic attack at cirque de soleil(laughs). Stop everything right now.

Before weed you wanted to get these chips (picture of casino chips). After weed you want to get these chips (picture of potato chips). (laughs)

And finally, before legal weed you had pen and teller. After legal weed you have ben and jerry. There you go. (laughs). Somethings gonna change a lot.

The sketch ends here

(18) I read about *a coffee shop in toronto that doesn't have any wifi to encourage customers to talk to each othe*r. Although, all the customers talk about now is that they should get wifi in this coffee shop. (laugh). You get any signal? I don't get.

- Theory

- Incongruity
- Superiority

Joke type

- Non-political

(19) This is pretty cool, *an 88 year old man from georgia just graduated from college. He called it the best four years of his life while his roommate said:* <u>"college was a little weird for me".</u> (laugh). Guy was 88 years old.

- Theory
  - Incongruity

Joke type

- Non-political

(20) Finally, here's a local story, *police is looking for a man who stole 5 thousand dollars worth of wigs from a home in brooklyn. They described the man as blond*, <u>or brunette, or redheaded, could be anything at this point.</u> (laughs)

- Theory
  - Incongruity

Joke type

- Non-political

Appendix B

(21) Here's what people are all talking about. Of course the big story is still Trump firing FBI director James Comey and turns out that Comey had 6 years left on his term. Yeah. That story, again, *it is easier to get out of your FBI contract* <u>then it is your AT&T</u> contract. (laugh) Much easier.

- Theory
  - Incongruity
  - Release

- Joke type
  - Political institution

(22) And in the middle of all this Trump met with Russian foreign minister yesterday. The Russian Foreign minister, yeah. And the White house said that russia tricked them by posting photos of the meeting. *They got suspicious when the photographer told Donald Trump*: "<u>okay, now do silly one where you hold up nuclear code</u>s".(laughs) Show me spring time, what?. (laugh)

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

- Joke type
    - Political actor

This is a sketch

Comey is just the latest senior official that Trump has fired. And get this, he just released a list of other people he wishes he could fire and his reasons why. Really? Yeah. For example, Trump wants to fire Steve Bannon. He said he found out that he's not actually the guy that makes the yoghurt, lame! Dannon, not Bannon. Next, Trump wants to fire Ryan Seacrest. He said "I'm creating tons of jobs, but he keeps taking them all". That's a lot of jobs. And finally, Trump wants to fire Kim Kardashian. He said: she stole my duck face look! (laugh) And they go well that's. You invented that? Show me spring time! (laugh)

End of the sketch

This made me laugh, this week Mike Pence was speaking at a Whitehouse event and there were a lot of kids there, they didn't seem too interested in what pence had to say. Take a look at this.

Not a standard joke so will not be included

Shows clip

Mike Pence: we have the great privilege of having a son and a daughter in law that are serving our country.

"Kid bumps on the table as Mike pence continues speaking"

Kid: Excuse me

(laughs)

Another kid comes up to the kid that's bumping on the table and says to the first kid.

Kid2: calm down please.

That's pretty much a cabinet meeting at the Whitehouse. (laugh) That's what happens.

End of sketch

Some TV news, the next season of scandal will be its last. Yeah, ABC is ending scandal. Fortunately, the Whitehouse picked it up for four more seasons. (laughs) so yeah, don't worry about it.

(23) You guys, mother's day is this weekend. *That's right. Happy mother's day to all the moms out there. I saw a stripclub in las vegas is offering a* <u>dinner specia</u>l (laughs).

- Theory
    - Incongruity

- Joke type
    - non-political

(24) *When asked what they do for father's day, strippers said:* <u>"what are fathers?"</u> (laughs)

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

- Joke type
    - non-political

(25) *Finally, blue cross is partnering with lyft* <u>to give people rides to the doctor</u> (laughs).

- Theory
    - Incongruity

- Joke type
    - non-political

(26) *Costs 600 dollars, the drivers are specially trained.* <u>And it's just an ambulance.</u> (laughs) they created…

- Theory
    - Incongruity

- Superiority

- Joke type
    - non-political

We have a great show for you tonight, give it up for the roots everybody!

Appendix C

(27) Guys, this sunday is mother's days you guys. *So happy mother's day to all the moms all there. And get this, I saw that hooters will be giving* <u>moms free entrees</u> (laughs).

- Theory
    - Incongruity

- Joke type
    - non-political

(28) *But before you take your mom to hooters on mother's day, make sure you have a good playlist for the* <u>long silent car ride home.</u> (laughs) that was weird.

- Theory

- Incongruity

- Joke type
    - non-political

(29) *I actually read that mother's day is the most popular day to go out to eat. Millions of moms taking twenty minutes to decide what to order,* then getting the weirdest thing on the menu. (laughs).

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Release

- Joke type
    - non-political

(30) *We're at a diner, why would you get the whole lobster?* I like lobster! (laugh) I don't know, I just felt like it (laughs).

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Release

- Joke type
    - non-political

(31) *Seriously, I went with my mom to some… some. We went to a place called* Johnny's burrito or something. (laughs)

- Theory
    - Incongruity

- Joke type
    - non-political

(32) *The name of the place is johnny's burritos and we were sitting there and go "what do you want?" and she goes* "I think lambchops look good" (laughs) What? What? They don't look good! We're at a burrito place!

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Release

- Joke type

- non-political

(33) *They're saying that the average person was expected to spend 186 dollars for mother's day, which I guess means that the average person gave their mom* <u>5 edible arrangements.</u> (laughs)

because that's what I'm giving my mom. I hope you like cantallops mom!

- Theory
    - Incongruity

- Joke type
    - non-political

(34) *This is pretty crazy, a mom in california just gave birth to 13 and a half pound baby boy. The nurse said "congratulations"* <u>and the baby said "thank you"</u>. Sings (heyo silver song)

- Theory
    - Incongruity

- Joke type
    - non-political

He sang base for the Oakridge boys.

(35) Here is the latest out of washington you guys. *Today president Trump actually threatened to stop holding Whitehouse press briefings. (boos from the audience) The press said "that's outrageous", while Sean Spicer said* "<u>let's hear him out</u>" (laughs) Hold on

- Theory
    - Incongruity

- Joke type
    - Political actor

(36) *Speaking of Sean Spicer, today he was asked whether Trump is taping conversations in the Whitehouse and he declined to comment. When asked why he said* "<u>because he might be taping us</u>".

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

- Joke type
    - Political actor

(37) There are rumors swirling that the conversations in the Whitehouse are being secretly recorded, but the *officials said that the only recording device in the oval office is the* nannycam that they use to keep an eye on Trump. (laughs).

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

- Joke type
    - Political actor

(38) *Is he sleeping? No, he's still moving. Oh!* He's tweeting! (laughs) somebody go in there. He's tweeting

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

- Joke type
    - Political actor

I read that a lot of people who work at the FBI are upset by the way James Comey was fired and that they might start leaking things about Trump and his team to try and get back at them. Well, they already leaked a few of them to us and we're going to share them with you right now. (cheers) Absolutely!

Sketch begins

For example, they said that Betsy DeVos starts each morning by saying: "Alexa, what's the weather" to a flower vase. (laughs) yeah, every morning.

They said Sean Spicer wakes up every day and pours a handle of Vodka into the coffee machine. (laughs) you can do that?

And finally said that Donald Trump is actually three kids and a tabby cat stack on top of each other wearing a trenchcoat.

And yesterday, Trump sat down for an interview with Lester Holt and at one point the president talked about all the world leaders he's gotten to speak with and he seemed really proud of himself, look.

I took all the time. I just spoke with the new head of South Korea who just got elected. I speak with the head of india. I speak with the head of China. I have to speak with Putin also, it's called Russia. (laughs)

(Imitating Trump) "it's called, Russia. I have to speak with the head of Narnia (laughs). I have to speak with Lord Voldemort (laughs). I have to speak with Queen Latifa." (laughs) "I have to speak witht Mayor McCheese! Everybody! Grimmace" (laughs)

Sketch ends

(39) This made me laugh here. I read that after meals at the Whitehouse, *Trump gets two scoops of ice cream while everyone else at the table* only gets one (laughs).

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

- Joke type
    - Political actor

(40) *When asked why he liked having two scoops, Trump said that next to each other they look like* boobs (laughs). That's weird, why would you?

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Superiority

- Joke type
    - Political actor

Video Clip

And on his weekly address, Trump spoke to the graduates out there and he was pretty emphatic, listen.

Recording of Trump saying the following in a very peculiar way.

To all of America's youth, we are here to help create the jobs and future you deserve. (laughs).

Were they putting the words into the prompter one at a time? (laughs) As he was saying it they were typing in words? I learned to read at Trump University (laughs). You deserve, and you don't (laughs)

End of bit surrounding video clip

(41) I read some more trouble for United airlines, you believe this? This is real. *I guess one of their flights was evacuated last night after a customer saw* a <u>scorpion crawl out of a passenger's sleeve</u> (laughs) a scorpion!

- Theory
    - Incongruity

- Joke type
    - non-political

(42) *When a scorpion saw it was a United fligh*t, <u>it crawled right back up</u> (laughs)

- Theory
    - Incongruity
    - Release

- Joke type
    - non-political

I'm not taking any chances. No I'm not taking any chances, are you kidding me man? Wow, man. We have a great show tonight! Give it up for the roots everybody!

Appendix D

Joke Nr.	Incongruity Theory	Superiority Theory	Release Theory	Political Actor	Political Institution	Non-political	Important notes
1	1		1	1			
2	1			1			
3	1			1			
4	1	1		1			
5	1	1		1			
6	1	1		1			

7	1			1	1		
8	1	1		1	1		
9	1				1		1	Bunny jokes
10	1	1			1		1	Bunny jokes
11	1	1			1		1	Bunny jokes
12	1	1			1		1	Bunny jokes
13	1	1			1		1	Bunny jokes
14	1	1			1		1	Bunny jokes
15	1	1			1		1	Bunny jokes
16	1	1					1	
17	1						1	
18	1						1	
19	1						1	
20	1						1	End of First Monologue
21	1		1			1		Start of second monologue (joke about FBI contract)
22	1	1		1			
23	1						1	
24	1	1					1	
25	1						1	
26	1	1					1	End of Second Monologue
27	1						1	start of 2nd
28	1						1	
29	1		1				1	
30	1		1				1	
31	1						1	
32	1		1				1	
33	1						1	
34	1						1	
35	1			1			
36	1	1		1			
37	1	1		1			
38	1	1		1			
39	1	1		1			
40	1	1		1			
41	1						1	
42	1		1				1	
Totals				22	1	26	

JOKE DIVISION POLITICAL/APOLITICAL

Political Actor
45%

Political Institution
2%

Non-political
53%