



Lingering Traditional Gender Roles in Contemporary Popular Culture: A Multimodal Study of Manny Rodriguez's *The Fluffy Movie* (2014)

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ARTICLE HISTORY:

Received May 2022
Received in Revised form July 2022
Accepted July 2022
Available online August 2022

KEYWORDS:

Practical discourse
Gender roles
Multimodal analysis
Stand-up comedy
Popular culture

Abstract

This article aims to highlight the ongoing presence of gender-role clichés in popular entertainment by analyzing *The Fluffy Movie* (2014). This case study attempts to show how mediated forms of humor are important indicators of discourse and culture. To that end, the study focuses on three instances of Fluffy's supposedly personal accounts where he imitates the Mock Feminine to play the role of the female characters in his performance. The multimodal analysis of both the content and the mode of Iglesias' performance reveals how ideology is transferred to his audience. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the effects of pernicious content such as comedy on its audiences and to emphasize our failure to keep up with the theoretical advances of feminism in practice. The analyses show that Fluffy's performance, as an example of popular entertainment, depicts women in accordance with patriarchal gender roles that view women as unintelligent and ignorant, thus strengthening the sexist view of women in the minds of his audience.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.22034/ijsc.2022.544475.2488>

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1. Introduction

Culture, feminism, media, and humor are the four interconnected concepts tackled in this study. By analyzing the video recording of Fluffy's stand-up performance in Manny Rodriguez's *The Fluffy Movie* (2014) as a case in point, this paper argues that mediated forms of humor prove the existence of stereotypical representation of gender in our cultures. While discussing the discursive relation between humor and culture and their reciprocal impact, most researchers examine humor as a means of expressing criticism of social and cultural life (Jalilifar et al., 2021; Mintz, 1985; Mintz, 2008; Tavory, 2014). In the case of stand-up comedy, they argue that comedians present cultural beliefs, values, and taboos in their performance, often with themselves as negative exemplars, and then paradoxically uphold the negative themes they seem to be ridiculing (Mintz, 1985). In this way, stand-up comedians contribute to the resisting discourse against the dominant culture. However, the effect of humor on various social and cultural discourses may be much more subtle than this. Not only can the primary topics of stand-up performances affect culture, but all linguistic and non-linguistic details of performance can also transfer hidden ideologies to the audiences. Hence, this study aims to show how subtle linguistic and paralinguistic elements can become means of transferring ideology and reinforce the stereotypical discourse of gender roles.

Gabriel Iglesias, known as Fluffy on stage, is an American stand-up comedian with Mexican heritage. His 2014 performance, which was recorded and directed by Manny Rodriguez as *The Fluffy Movie*, is the subject of analysis in this article. Most of the available criticism on this work are non-academic online commentaries; for example, the Rotten Tomatoes website has fifteen reviews, eight of which support the style of Iglesias' performance ("Critic Reviews for The Fluffy Movie," n.d.). The remaining seven reviews criticize it mostly for its unaggressive material, which overall gives the movie a mixed review. In this paper, however, parts of Gabriel Iglesias' comedy are systematically examined from linguistic and paralinguistic perspectives. Most importantly, his performance is examined at the level of discourse in order to demonstrate how it reproduces homogenous and patriarchal

definitions of gender. This paper is specifically focused on stand-up comedy as one artifact of pop culture and also as a source of mediating ideology. It emphasizes the significance of paying attention to the most detailed factors of comedic performances besides the more common studies of their content. This choice has been made due to the fact that audiences of stand-up comedy are more vulnerable to the effects of such representation because such events create an informal and entertaining atmosphere encouraging people to lower their guards who are more readily exposed to the overt and covert ideological contents of such performances.

2. Theoretical Framework

This section outlines the overall theoretical frameworks which are used in the Discussion and Analysis section. They include Schwarz's (2010) list of humor techniques, voice Imitation, and Raskin's (1985) theories of humor.

2.1. (Para)linguistic Techniques of Humor

To detect Fluffy's techniques of creating humor in his comedic performance, Schwarz's (2010) list of humor techniques is used. Schwarz (2010) presents two types of humor techniques: linguistic and paralinguistic. He asserts that "comedy, in general, is a combination of material and performance in which each needs the other in order to be successful" (Schwarz, 2010, p. 89). Linguistic techniques help analyze the material of performance (i.e., what), whereas paralinguistic techniques put emphasis on the manner of performance (i.e., how). Linguistic techniques include ridicule, satire, wordplay, pun, ambiguity, allusion, hyperbole, repetition, etc. Iglesias often uses "the essential technique of stand-up comedy" (p. 293), which Schwarz (2010) concluded to be "ridicule". On the other hand, paralinguistic techniques include gestures, intonation, voice and accent, and disfluencies. Iglesias' considerable use of and talent in paralinguistic techniques is apparent in almost all parts of his performance. In the following sub-section, his use of voice imitation as a paralinguistic technique is further discussed in the context of code-switching.

2.1.1. Fluffy's Technique of Voice Imitation

One popular technique in joke telling is code-switching from one system of language to another, which has been studied in the context of both everyday life and stand-up comedy

(Chun, 2004; Furukawa, 2015; Labrador, 2004; Siegel, 1995; Woolard, 1987). The shift from one system to another can be motivated by, and not restricted to, racial differences in a community; for example, the shift from one accent to another (Chun, 2004) or even from one language to another in bilingual societies (Siegel, 1995). In such cases, the joke teller mockingly imitates either the language or the speaking style of a certain community in order to be funny. Though this technique is regarded as harmless joking, there seems to be a hierarchy of power between the main code and the one switched into, which then reinforces the oppressive discourse directed at the people belonging to the mocked group (Labrador, 2004). In other words, the act of using a certain group's language or accent as a source of laughter positions them as the less powerful while simultaneously giving power to the joke teller and his/her community. At times, the joke teller actually belongs to the community whose linguistic code he/she is mocking; for instance, Margaret Cho, an Asian American stand-up comedian, code-switches to Mock Asian accents as a resource of humor (Chun, 2004). This membership in the mocked community legitimizes her stereotypical mockery of Asian Americans (Chun, 2004). However, Chun (2004) argues that despite this legitimacy, Cho's performances partially fuel the racist perception of the Asian American community.

Known for his funny personal anecdotes, Fluffy often imitates the sound of objects or the speech style of characters in his stories. This technique is generally called voice imitation and is considered a necessity for stand-up comedians as it helps to elicit laughter and make the performance more dynamic (Schwarz, 2010). Yet, as discussed above, certain instances of voice imitation reinforce bias in society by creating a binary opposition between the performer and the mocked group. Fluffy frequently uses his Mexican heritage to code-switch from Mainstream American English to either a Spanish or Mock Mexican accent. Being a member of the Mexican American community justifies such instances of voice imitation as legitimate but nevertheless reproduces stereotypes of Mexican Americans (Chun, 2004). The range of Fluffy's voice imitations in *The Fluffy Movie* (2014) exceeds beyond Mock Mexican and includes the sound of doves flying, car brakes, Mock Indian, Mock

Feminine, etc. He shifts to an Indian accent when narrating stories from his trip to India and uses a stereotypical feminine style of speaking to present women in his anecdotes. Therefore, in these cases, his use of voice imitation is not legitimized as he does not belong to either community (Chun, 2004).

The focus of this study is on Fluffy's humorous imitation of the speaking style of women. The term "Mock Feminine" is introduced by the authors and refers to these instances when Fluffy decreases his tempo, increases the pitch level, and adopts a bubbly tone to indicate that the speaking character is a woman. By repeatedly using this technique, which provokes laughter, Fluffy conventionalizes the funniness of this stereotypical style of speech attributed to women (Siegel, 1995). The audience's laughter also proves that this notion, i.e., the funniness of the feminine style of talking, is shared by them as well. Of course, there is no general feminine style of speech, but humor often tends to generalize, exaggerate, and polarize. Evidently, in the binary opposition between the way men speak and the way women speak, it is the feminine style of speaking which is mocked. Consequently, people belonging to this mocked group will suffer from its stigmatizing effects (Labrador, 2004). Therefore, not only does such ridicule reinforce a biased and stereotypical discourse toward feminine features of speaking, but it is also proof that the patriarchal discourse is still functioning in society.

2.1.2. Raskin's Three Main Theories of Humor

Raskin (1985) introduces three main theories for understanding humor: incongruity, hostility, and release. The incongruity theory argues that laughter occurs as a result of a contradiction between the audience's expectation of how a joke will end and the comedian's surprising punch line (Raskin, 1985). In other words, the audience's mind is directed toward a certain conclusion for the ending of a joke; however, the comedian then presents his unexpected punch line so that the resultant incongruity would cause laughter. Furthermore, hostility theory (a.k.a. superiority theory) contends that laughter is a result of the audience's feelings of superiority over those who are the butt of the joke (Raskin, 1985). Finally, the release theory, whose main proponent is Sigmund Freud, argues that humans laugh at those taboo jokes which express ideas that are not normally talked

about in society, such as jokes with sexual references (Raskin, 1985). These three theories help to examine why the audience responds with laughter in the selected excerpts.

3. Methodology

3.1. Material

The Fluffy Movie (2014) is about one hundred and ten minutes long and contains Fluffy's references to a variety of topics. Since this research examines his performance from a feminist vantage point, only three related parts, in which he uses the Mock Feminine voice, are analyzed. It should be noted that not all instances of Fluffy's employment of Mock Feminine were significant enough to be included, and only the most noticeable examples are studied. The following subsections in Section 4 examine the three selected excerpts from three perspectives: an explanation of Fluffy's techniques for creating humor by referring to Schwarz (2010), an explanation of the audience's reaction by referring to Raskin (1985), and finally, the explanation of Fluffy's representation of gender roles.

3.2. Analysis Process

For each excerpt, the linguistic and paralinguistic descriptions are given in Tables. Then, the presentation of male and female gender roles is compared and discussed by using Millet's (2000) arguments on sexual politics and the notion of Mock Feminine. To complement this feminist criticism, the analysis of each excerpt is followed by the (para)linguistic examination of humor techniques and the audience's reception. Successful satire is evidenced by the delivery and reception of humor (Simpson, 2003). In other words, first, the humor must be successfully delivered to the audience by the comedian and then be successfully received by them, which is verified in their laughter. Accordingly, this study examines the delivery

of Fluffy's jokes based on Schwarz's (2010) list of (para)linguistic techniques of humor and its reception by referring to Raskin's (1985) three main theories of humor. Consequently, the analysis adds to the literature on Fluffy's stand-up performance by showing what kind of humor techniques he uses and why his audience responds to it. It needs to be mentioned that the multimodal nature of the performance is considered in the following discussions as well.

4. Results

4.1. Occupation of Women vs. Men

Throughout his show, Fluffy makes use of fictional or real characters who play roles as occupants of certain jobs in his stories. In fact, by imitating their voice, intonation, and body language, he is successful in making his audience laugh. However, a closer look at these characters will reveal Iglesias' stereotypical categorization of them and the sexist ideology underlying some of his humor. In his performance, examples of female characters include the receptionist, the nurse, and the flight attendant. On the other hand, male characters include the two doctors, the bartender, and the drivers both in India and United States. Among the female characters imitated by Fluffy, the receptionist is the most stereotypical job assigned to women; therefore, this subsection particularly focuses on the representation of this occupation by him.

Excerpt 1 below happens during the first part of Iglesias' performance when he is telling the story of visiting the Center for the Morbidly Obese (min. 16). Here, he mentions the presence of the receptionist at the center, and recreates the conversation between them while assuming the Mock Feminine voice for the receptionist's parts. Table 1 below illustrates the paralinguistic and linguistic descriptions of this scene and the audience's reaction to Iglesias' performance:

Table 1
Conversation between Fluffy and the Receptionist

Shot no.	Paralinguistic Description	Linguistic Description	Sound of Audience
1	[Long shot camera angle] Iglesias turns towards the audience and stretches his hand.	[Iglesias] I go over to the receptionist, and I ask,	

2.1	[Medium shot camera angle] He pretends to be holding a card. While assuming an unsure facial expression, he shakes his hand four times.	[Iglesias] "Um, right spot?"	
2.2	He looks to his left and stretches his hand.	[Iglesias] and she was cool. She was like,	
3.	[Long shot camera angle] He puts his hand on his chest while using Mock Feminine.	[receptionist] "Yes, sir, you're in the right location."	((laughter))
4.	[Medium shot camera angle] He frowns.	[Iglesias] "Can I ask you something?"	
5.	[Long shot camera angle] He puts his hand out and smiles while using Mock Feminine.	[receptionist] "Absolutely."	
6.1	[Medium shot camera angle] He turns to his back, pointing with his thumb to the imaginary door of the center.	[Iglesias] "why does it say,	
6.2	He turns toward the audience, still pointing with his thumb to his back.	[Iglesias] "Center for the Morbidly Obese on the door?"	
7.	[Long shot camera angle] He puts his hand on his chest while using Mock Feminine.	[receptionist] "The doctors prefer it that way."	
8.1	[Medium shot camera angle] He pretends to be holding a card. Assumes a slightly angry facial expression and tone.	[Iglesias] "Why don't you have that on the card?"	
8.2	He widens his eyes. He assumes the Mock Feminine with an emphatic tone.	[receptionist] "Cause then you won't come in."	((laughter))
8.3	By widening his eyes and rounding his lips, he makes the 'understood' facial expression.		((laughter))
9.1	[Long shot camera angle] He just stands comfortably, and assumes a feminine voice.	[receptionist] "First time?"	
9.2	He turns his head to his side, and looks down while widening his eyes.	[Iglesias] "Yeah, first time."	

4.1.1. Analysis of Gender Roles in Excerpt 1

The proponents of the Second Wave feminism criticized and challenged the way patriarchy defined women by differentiating sex and gender. Kate Millett, in her *Sexual Politics* (2000), argues that patriarchal gender roles are socially constructed through sexual politics and are not based on biological differences. Millett (2000) then explains how patriarchy functions to implement gender roles within both individuals and society. She asserts that "sexual politics [of patriarchy] obtains consent through the "socialization" of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role, and status" (Millett, 2000, p. 26). Temperament refers to certain personality traits which are assigned to each sex (Millett, 2000). For example, the male is associated with "aggression, intelligence, force, and efficacy", whereas the female is associated with

"passivity, ignorance, docility, 'virtue', and ineffectuality" (Millett, 2000, p. 26). Moreover, sex roles assign different activities to each sex, which are mainly divided between domestic service and social achievement. That is, the female role is supposed to be caring for the household, whereas the male role is to follow human ambition and achievement (Millett, 2000). Sexual politics assures that these values are constantly reinforced in order to maintain patriarchy.

Within the framework of the patriarchal mindset, men and women occupy different social roles or jobs. As men are supposed to be possessing active and intelligent personality traits (Millett, 2000), they are given almost all important social roles such as politicians, law-makers, technicians, experts, etc. By the same token, women are only given a handful of social roles as they are thought to be the passive and docile

gender (Millett, 2000) whose main role in life is caring for others. Stereotypically, these social roles include teaching and nursing, which require caring personalities as part of their qualifications. In this strictly patriarchal system, receptionists are also mostly women; however, in this case, there is another factor involved. Seen as potential attracting forces, women, especially those considered to be attractive, are more desired by employers. Fluffy's performance, which is analyzed in this subsection, is an example of how media and humor still present patriarchal content to their audiences. Fluffy's use of male and female characters seems to show his unconscious patriarchal attitude towards the role women play in society, which can best be seen if we compare them to the roles men have in his performance. As mentioned above, Iglesias' stories present characters with different occupations. Among them include the female nurse, receptionist, flight attendant, and male doctors, drivers, and bartenders. Such categorization perpetuates the biased division of social roles based on gender and assists the sexual politics of patriarchy.

4.1.2. (Para)linguistic Analysis of Technique and Reaction in Excerpt 1

In the above excerpt, the audience's first reaction happens in shot 3, marking the success of Fluffy's performance. Here, Fluffy makes use of the paralinguistic technique of *voice imitation* in the form of caricature (Schwarz, 2010), or Mock Feminine, in order to create humor. As Rotten Tomatoes website reviewer Louis Black (2014) notices, Fluffy has "an ability to perfectly imitate all kinds of everyday sounds" (para. 2), pinpointing his skilled use of this paralinguistic technique. Rutter (1997) suggests that "the [imitated] voice is used by the comedian to create a character which they play for the entirety of a narrative sequence" (p. 234). This is also true about Fluffy's use of the Mock Feminine, which he uses throughout narrating this anecdote. It is important to emphasize that the comic quality of Fluffy's imitation of this voice is due to its stereotypical, exaggerated, and caricatured nature (Schwarz, 2010). Moreover, the reaction of the audience can be explained by referring to the superiority theory. According to this theory, people laugh either at the inferiority of others in comparison to themselves or at their inferior situation of

themselves in the past in comparison to the present. In shot 3, Fluffy uses Mock Feminine to represent the character of the receptionist. It can be argued that this choice is rather sarcastic toward a certain manner of speaking, which has traditionally been associated with (sassy) women (recently, it has been associated with the gay community as well). Hence, it is an indicator of superiority over the 'standard' manner of speaking. Fluffy's decision to assign this voice imitation to the female character is questionable since women do not generally speak this way. This unique way of speaking is relatively looked down upon, and the audience's reaction to it shows that it can even be thought humorous.

The second time Fluffy is able to receive his audience's reaction is in shots 8.2 and 8.3; however, the reaction is not to these two shots alone but to the entirety of his story so far. Here, he uses the technique of *ridicule* in order to create the intended comic effect. He is actually ridiculing the fact that obese people, including himself, want to avoid being named 'morbidly obese'. More specifically, he is using the technique of *self-ridicule* since he is the butt of the humor (Wilson, 1979). In shot 8.2, besides using the paralinguistic technique of Mock Feminine, he is also using the technique of *taunting*, which refers to reminding people of annoying facts (Berger, 1993), since the receptionist reminds him that not having the name 'Center for the Morbidly Obese' on the card is because patients would not visit it otherwise. In shot 8.3, he applies the technique of *mocking*, which refers to imitating the appearance or action of others (Berger, 1993) by means of remaking his rather foolish facial reaction to the receptionist's answer by widening his eyes and rounding his lips. In this excerpt, the reaction of the audience can be explained according to the superiority theory as well. This means that their laughter is the result of feeling superior to the ridiculed person or group. In shot 8.2, the audience laughs at Fluffy because of his unfortunate position as an obese person who is thought to dislike being named 'Morbidly Obese' by the staff in the center. In other words, much like a reaction to slapstick comedy, Fluffy's audience laughs at him because they feel superior for not being the one to deal with being labeled 'Morbidly Obese'. Also, as explained above, laughter is also a result of feeling superior to the receptionist's

speaking style. Finally, in shot 8.3, the audience laughs because they feel superior to Fluffy, whose reaction to the receptionist's answer is rather foolish.

4.2. Reactions to Fluffy's Attempt for Losing Weight

Fluffy informs his audience that his doctor had warned him about his diabetes and overweight and told him that he would not have another two years if he did not lose weight. Hence, his doctor recommended consulting with a gastric bypass surgeon. However, he explains that visiting the gastric bypass surgeon has not been useful because gastric bypass surgery does not work on people who travel a lot, and Fluffy is "on the road 46 weeks out of the year" (min.

23). Therefore, he decides to lose weight by dieting, doing yoga, and weight lifting.

Fluffy then begins to report the reactions of people at his shows commenting on his weight loss. In doing so, he twice imitates the Mock Feminine voice and once speaks in his normal voice hence reporting the comments of two women and one man. By analyzing the scene where Fluffy uses the Mock Feminine to report one of the comments on his weight loss (min. 26) and comparing it to the reported comment of the man, it is argued that Iglesias' presentation reinforces the stereotypical representation of gender explained by Millett (2000). Table 2 below illustrates the paralinguistic and linguistic descriptions of this scene and the audience's reaction to Iglesias' performance:

Table 2

Reaction of a Woman to Fluffy's Weight Loss

Shot No.	Paralinguistic Description	Linguistic Description	Sound of Audience
1.1	[Long shot camera angle] While using the Mock Feminine voice, he shakes his right hand indicating 'a little'.	[woman] "We're noticing there's a little difference."	
1.2	Still using the Mock Feminine voice, bends slightly to his right, his hand still shaking to indicate 'a little'.	[woman] "You're a little less fluffy."	
2.	[Camera angle changes] Using the Mock Feminine voice, he walks to his left, moving his hand for emphasis.	[woman] "What's gonna happen if you keep losing weight?"	
3.1	[Medium shot camera angle] Still using the Mock Feminine voice, he puts his hand out for emphasis.	[woman] "What are we gonna call you?"	
3.2	Using the Mock Feminine voice, he bends slightly forward for emphasis and looks away to his left.	[woman] "What are we gonna call you?"	
3.3	Looks toward the camera, widens his eyes, and looks to his right.	[Iglesias] "I lift weights. Call me "Buffy." I don't care."	((laughter))

4.2.1. Analysis of Gender Roles in Excerpt 2

In this scene, Fluffy makes use of the Mock Feminine voice and recreates his confrontation with a woman who is only concerned about his stage name once he loses more weight (hence not fitting his current stage name 'Fluffy'), even though he is going to die in two years if he does not do so. This comment draws a picture of the woman as uncaring and ignorant, who cannot think too deeply about such issues. However, this scathing picture can be better apprehended if we compare it to another reaction from a male fan, which Iglesias talks about (min.33). What has concerned this male fan about Fluffy losing

weight is "what is Gabriel gonna talk about if he continues to lose weight?" (min.33). Iglesias replies to the criticism of this fan by ensuring his audience that he will always have random stories for them because he has a lot of crazy friends, visits a lot of crazy places, and drinks a lot. This criticism by the male fan shows that he has analyzed Fluffy's shows and concluded that stories about his overweight constitute a large part of Fluffy's performances. Therefore, he has come to realize that losing weight might affect Fluffy's career, which depends on his overweight.

Even though the male fan's comment does not consider the fact that not losing weight can cost

Fluffy his life, it is still more thoughtful than the female fan's comment. As discussed before, the use of Mock Feminine stigmatizes women for having an inferior speech style. Here, not only is the paralinguistic performance problematic, but the linguistic content is also a reinforcement of Millett's (2000) categorization of male and female temperament in patriarchy. The same distinction, in fact, that views women as inconsiderate and tactless and men as more reflective and logical. Thus, it can be argued that the way Iglesias employs a feminine or masculine voice to represent different concerns and reactions regarding his weight loss demonstrates a rather sexist and stereotypical image of women and men.

4.2.2. (Para)linguistic Analysis of Technique and Reaction in Excerpt 2

What elicits laughter in the audience in shot 3.3 is the use of two humor techniques: *wordplay*, and *ridicule*. Wordplay is a common technique in creating humor and "can be performed in various forms, including punning, sarcasm, mocking, or banter" (Schwarz, 2010, p. 123). Among them, punning is the most common example of wordplay and refers to the witty exploitation of the various meanings of one word or similar-sounding words. In this scene, Iglesias is playing with the names Fluffy and Buffy, which rhyme with each other and yet have opposite meanings. Fluffy is Iglesias' stage name referring to his overweight; however, Buffy is a character from the supernatural series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) who is famous for her mystical powers, physical strength, and in-shape body. Here, Iglesias creates humor by means of the technique of wordplay performed in the form of sarcasm (Schwarz, 2010). In fact, by choosing the name 'Buffy' and saying that he does not care, he sarcastically answers the unimportant question of this woman who does not know what to call Fluffy once he loses weight.

Regarding *ridicule*, Iglesias performs this shot in a scornful tone; therefore, he succeeds in ridiculing this woman in the form of *deriding*, which refers to attacking someone with a scornful tone (Berger, 1993). Also, it is an example of *private ridicule* because the butt of the derision, the woman commenting on Fluffy's weight loss, is absent (Wilson, 1979). This ridicule is another reason for the audience's laughter created in shot 3.3. Overall,

he is implying that if the stage name is of such importance, the woman can call him 'Buffy' because he is now lifting weights, much like the character of Buffy in the series. However, this answer is sarcastic because not everybody who lifts weights, especially Fluffy, who is still overweight, qualifies to be named after the handsome character of Buffy and also because he mentions that he does not care what they call him anyway.

The way *wordplay* creates humor can be explained by referring to the incongruity theory. Regarding this theory, Wilson (1979) writes that "the general proposition is that the components of a joke, or humorous incident, are in mutual clash, conflict or contradiction" (p. 9). Therefore, the contradiction or incongruity between the words used in the technique of wordplay causes a humorous effect. Here, the contradiction between Fluffy and Buffy is what creates humor. Also, the way *ridicule* creates humor can be explained by referring to the superiority theory. It can be argued that the audience feels superior to this woman, whose concern with Fluffy's stage name is ridiculed by Fluffy himself. In fact, they feel certain that they would not have asked the same question and would not have been as unsympathetic toward Iglesias' health problem. As Suls (1977) observes, humor is created because "we laugh at other people's infirmities" (p. 41). In other words, the woman's rather ignorant comment can be seen as her infirmity; therefore, the audience responds to Fluffy's answer to her comment with laughter.

4.3. Reactions to Fluffy's Trip to India

As mentioned earlier, Fluffy reassures his audience that he will never run out of stories because he visits many crazy places being accompanied by his crazy friends. One of these crazy places, which he reports to have visited recently, is India. He recounts that prior to flying there, he had posted about his shows in India on Facebook and Twitter. Then, he narrates two comments sent to him about his trip using once a normal (hence masculine) voice and once the Mock Feminine, and responds to their worries. Here, the focus is on the comment sent to him by a woman about his trip to India (min. 35). Table 3 below illustrates the paralinguistic and linguistic descriptions of this scene and the audience's reaction to Iglesias' performance:

Table 3*A Woman's Comment on Fluffy's Trip to India*

Shot No.	Paralinguistic Description	Linguistic Description	Sound of Audience
1.	[Medium shot camera angle] He uses the Mock Feminine and puts his hand out, similar to the way showy women do	[woman] "Gabriel, be careful.	
2.	[Long shot camera angle] same as shot 1	[woman] "India is a Third World country,	
3.1	[Medium shot camera angle] same as shot 1	[woman] "Don't drink the water in India.	
3.2	He assumes the Mock Feminine and puts his hand on his stomach	[woman] "It contains parasites that'll make you really sick.	
3.3	Assuming the Mock Feminine moves his hand in a circular way indicating the street	[woman] "Don't eat the food from the street people, especially the street meat.	
4.	[Full shot camera angle] Assumes the Mock Feminine, and moves his hand forward and backward	[woman] "It contains parasites that'll make you really sick.	
5.1	[Long shot camera angle] same as shot 1	[woman] "And most importantly, there's a lot of crime over there.	
5.2	While assuming the Mock Feminine, he moves his hand downwards, indicating the sun is going down	[woman] "Don't stay out late. When the sun goes down,	
6.1	[Medium shot camera angle] Staring at the camera, widens his eyes, and imitates a low, whispery sound and warning tone	[woman] "You go down."	((laughter))
6.2	Looking down frowns in a state of wonder and doubt	[Iglesias] I'm like, "Is it that bad?"	
6.3	Looks back at the camera and widens his eyes while imitating a whispery and scary sound	[woman] "Parasites."	((laughter))

4.3.1. Analysis of Gender Roles in Excerpt 3

The above comment, which was performed using the Mock Feminine style, portrays a rather racist view of India as an unsanitary place with its food and water striking people down. According to this fan, the rate of crime in India at night is so high that she had thought it would be necessary to warn Fluffy to stay inside; otherwise, there would be disastrous consequences, even death. It can be argued that the woman's reaction to Fluffy's trip to India shows her prejudiced view of this country. She begins her evaluation of India by emphasizing that it is a Third World country, which marks her unfounded opinions about this country. Her following remarks continue to show her cliché views regarding India as a land of crime and disease. She seems to have been influenced by a certain presentation of India through media.

Therefore, this scene draws an image of this woman as unthoughtful and biased, who is perhaps easily manipulated by media or other institutions.

This unfavorable presentation can be better evaluated if we compare this comment with the one Fluffy reports in a normal (hence masculine) voice. This other reaction to his trip to India (min. 34) is in the form of a series of questions regarding Indians' ability to understand American humor ("Are they gonna understand you in India? Will they understand English okay? Will they be able to follow along with your stories?" (min. 34)). Unlike the female fan's certain comments about India, these objections are presented in the interrogative form hence reducing the biased aspect of their proposition because the commentator is not sure about the content of his suggestion. More importantly,

they show the commentator's thoughtfulness about the situation. This man knows the fact that linguistic and cultural contexts are essential for understanding humor and that Indian culture is evidently different from American culture; therefore, he expresses his concern about the reception of Fluffy's performance by an Indian audience. All these prove him to be perceptive and intelligent. This is why Fluffy's choice of the manner of delivering each of these comments reinforces the essentialist, stereotypical and patriarchal image of men and women.

4.3.2. (Para)linguistic Analysis of Technique and Reaction in Excerpt 3

Iglesias is successful in eliciting laughter in his audience in shot 6.1 because he uses the technique of *hyperbole*. Hyperbole is a "common feature in stand-up comedy" (Schwarz, 2010, p. 133) and refers to the technique of exaggerating the situation or person being ridiculed. This technique creates laughter in a stand-up comedy setting because it distorts reality in an exaggerated way, either by overstating or downplaying the situation. As explained earlier, the woman's comments about India as a country with unsanitary food and water and a highly dangerous environment show her gullible and racist attitude. This exaggerated view of India's safety situation is the reason for the audience's reaction in the form of laughter in shot 6.1. Also, the paralinguistic aspect of the performance and Fluffy's skill in performing the sentence "you go down" in a low whispery voice and warning tone reinforce the exaggerated effect and help create laughter in the audience. In other words, both the linguistic (content of the sentence) and paralinguistic (manner of delivery) elements work together to create a humorous effect.

The second time Iglesias is able to make his audience react happens in shot 6.3. Here, he uses the technique of repetition. As the name suggests, repetition in telling jokes is the technique of repeating any unit of language in order to "dramatize situations and to make people laugh" (Schwarz, 2010, p. 138). Schwarz (2010) states that "repetition can help to strengthen the rhythmic pattern of a joke telling session" (p. 138) and further explains that one of the functions of repetition is "to poke fun at unusual characteristics and ... to emphasize the lack of logic in a joke" (p. 139).

As presented in Table 3, the word 'parasites' is already repeated twice in shots 3.2 and 4 before being mentioned for the third time in shot 6.3. The repetition of this word dramatizes the situation being narrated about the unsanitary condition of India (Schwarz, 2010), and that is why the audience responds with laughter. Furthermore, two more factors reinforce the humorous effect created in shot 6.3. First, Fluffy's skillful delivery of 'parasite' in a whispery and emphatic voice (paralinguistic element) helps strengthen the comic outcome. Second, the fact that the woman answers the question with only one word doubly dramatizes the existence of parasites in India.

In this scene, the audience's reaction to Fluffy's successful delivery can be explained by both the incongruity theory and the superiority theory. The technique of hyperbole in joke telling is linked to the incongruity theory. As Schwarz (2010) argues, "hyperbole ... contains some sort of incongruity in that it expresses a discrepancy between the exaggerated statement and the reality it claims to describe" (p. 134). In this scene, the discrepancy is between the reality in India and the exaggerated description of India as an unsanitary place with high crime rates. Therefore, this incongruity creates a humorous effect and explains the audience's reaction. Furthermore, it can be argued that the audience feels morally superior to the female fan whose comments betray her racist mindset of India. Her series of warnings about traveling to India climaxes with "when the sun goes down, you go down," which is meant to notify Fluffy of the dangers of staying out late in this "Third World country". However, these comments are racist, exaggerated, and ill-advised, and that is why the audience feels superior to this female fan and laughs at Iglesias' imitation of her comment in shot 6.1. The audience's response in shot 6.3 is also the result of feeling superior to this fan. Actually, the audience feels superior to someone who insists firmly on the existence of parasites in Indian street food and water only because it is a Third World country.

5. Discussion

By examining gender representation in three excerpts from Fluffy's stand-up performance, this paper argued that contemporary pop culture still struggles with the essentialist presentations of gender discussed in the Second Wave

feminism. Through an interdisciplinary approach, the analyses of excerpts investigated Fluffy's techniques for creating humor, the reason for audience's reaction to his jokes, and his representation of gender. Such comprehensive and detailed criticism of stand-comedy is less seen, and scholars have rather focused on linguistic patterns (Putri, 2016; Rullyanti, 2019). Though these approaches contribute to the role of language in humor, they do not examine the complex network of factors that run the stand-up comedy machine. This paper instead tries to zoom in on short excerpts to demonstrate how the most subtle nuances of linguistic and paralinguistic use are interconnected with the presentation and reception of ideology.

The results showed that the examined excerpts contain strong elements of sexism by depicting a stereotypical image of women based on the traditional gender roles in the discourse of patriarchy. Accordingly, women were presented as unthoughtful, uncaring, and ignorant, occupying stereotypical jobs such as receptionist or nurse. On the other hand, men were presented as capable, reflective, knowledgeable, and logical, occupying stereotypical jobs such as drivers and doctors. Since gender roles are socially constructed (Millet, 2000), such presentations of gender will help the social construction and circulation of patriarchal gender roles and contribute to the discourse of gender as perpetuated by patriarchy. In a study on gendered stereotypes of Muslims, Rahiaoui (2022) also contends that media establishes bias in popular culture through misrepresenting and generalizing Arabs. Such studies confirm that stereotyping, through language, sound, or image, can be a dangerous presentational tool for trapping certain groups in a misrepresented bubble that puts them in a disadvantageous position to others. Werner (2018, p. 5) makes a distinction between popular culture as "the culture of the people", and pop culture, which refers to the "entertainment culture". Accordingly, in a stand-up comedy setting, the comedian's performance can be categorized as an artifact of pop culture, whereas the audience can be regarded as sharing the popular culture in society. The relationship between language use in pop artifacts and cultural practices is a mutually determining one (Werner, 2018).

Despite all the ups and downs in the promotion of feminist causes in the last few decades, the sexist perception of gender in the discourse of patriarchy still makes its presence felt, especially in the context of popular entertainment. Though essentialist theories of Second Wave Feminism have developed toward a more individual, context-based, and anti-essentialist examination of women's situation in the Third Wave (Mills, 2002), the stereotypical and generalized representations of gender in patriarchy, emphasized by the proponents of the Second Wave, can still be found in artifacts of pop culture today. In other words, while there has been noticeable progress in theoretical feminism, these advances, in theory, have not yet completely made their way into reality. The dichotomous understanding of gender, which may sound outdated, is still a part of our popular culture.

The Second Wave of feminism succeeded in securing important legal rights for women in Europe and United States. By highlighting the oppression of patriarchy against the female gender, Second Wave feminism presented a generalized and essentialist perception of women as homogenous. Second Wave feminists' definition of the category of 'woman' based on shared universal experiences revealed the existing sexism (Snyder, 2008) and made possible the sociopolitical changes in favor of women. However, Third Wave Feminism regarded such homogenous classifications as unrealistic and limited (Mills, 2002), and argued that "there is no one way to be a woman" (Snyder, 2008, p. 185). Hence, Third Wave Feminists moved away from discussions of stereotypes to context-sensitive evaluations of gender and gendered behavior at a local level by considering various other factors such as race, class, ethnicity, etc. (Mills, 2002). Despite the movement towards abandoning the focus on stereotypes, the dichotomous presentation of gender is still being used in pop culture. It seems that the practice of feminism, in reality, is evidently failing to keep up with its theory. Our societies still struggle with the stereotypical and essentialist attitude prevalent in the Second Wave, which is reinforced through media and pop culture.

Pop culture and mass media are important means of constructing and mediating knowledge and values (De Lauretis, 1987;

Oboko, 2020; Trotta, 2018); however, they are simultaneously a reflection of the same culture. Werner (2018, p. 5) makes a distinction between popular culture as “the culture of the people,” and pop culture, which refers to the “entertainment culture.” Accordingly, in a stand-up comedy setting, the comedian’s performance can be categorized as an artifact of pop culture, whereas the audience can be regarded as sharing the popular culture in society. The relationship between language use in pop artifacts and cultural practices is a mutually determining one (Werner, 2018). Though there are various means for studying the cultural status quo in a society and evaluating its feminist progress, stand-up comedy seems to be especially revealing because the comedian acts primarily as a social and cultural commentator (Mintz, 1985; Tavory, 2014). Since gender occupies an important place in humor (Shifman & Lemish, 2011), its representation in this genre also contributes to society’s perception of gender because, as mentioned above, humor itself affects discourse and culture.

One other noticeable observation was the fact that the audience easily accepted Fluffy’s use of Mock Feminine and laughed at his sexist jokes. This means that the universal and essentialist perceptions of gender have survived in popular culture. Though it might be surprising to see that women in the audience also laughed at Fluffy’s sexist jokes, women are raised to identify with such insulting comedy (Merill, 1988). Also, as discussed before, any objection might lead to being accused of lacking a sense of humor (Mills, 2002). Even if such artifacts of pop culture represent traditional or essentialist perceptions of gender, it should also be the consumers’ concern to be alert and critical of what they are presented with. The battle between patriarchy and feminism is still an ongoing challenge; therefore, it is important to pay attention to these subtle presentations of traditional gender roles in media, especially the genre of comedy.

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