“Speaking of sexual harassers who should resign tomorrow…Donald Trump”: A feminist rhetorical analysis of Stephen Colbert’s *Late Show* monologues

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by

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Abstract

As host of *The Colbert Report* on *Comedy Central*, Stephen Colbert was an influential presence in the arena of late-night political comedy, playing a parody of a conservative pundit, the character of “Stephen Colbert.” Now, as host of CBS’s *Late Show*, Colbert continues to be an influential presence, but he is no longer playing that character. Colbert delivers his opinions and commentary to his audience unfiltered. Women’s issues are often overlooked in scholarship of late-night comedy, due to the male-centered orientation of the format. In the current political climate, sexual harassment and assault have taken center-stage in worldwide discourse. Public figures such as Harvey Weinstein, Bill O’Reilly, and Matt Lauer have faced consequences for allegations of sexual harassment and assault. Using a feminist rhetorical analysis, this paper analyzes Stephen Colbert’s late-night comedy monologues on the allegations of sexual harassment and assault against Donald Trump. It argues that Stephen Colbert acts as an advocate for women’s rights in relation to sexual harassment and assault.
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Table 1: Frequency of *Rhetorical Strategies Used in Colbert Monologues*
Introduction

Late-night comedy has always played off the news, incorporating major events and politicians into jokes (Rutenberg, 2017). Perhaps one explanation for why Donald Trump is the subject of almost every late-night comedy monologue today is because almost all of the news is about Donald Trump (Rutenberg, 2017). However, there has never been an example of this kind of sustained attack on a politician in late-night comedy (Rutenberg, 2017). Politicians have always been a good source of jokes, but the commentary remained light-hearted and did not usually cross the partisan divide. Now, the political divide in the country is much wider, and the late-night comedy shows have embraced political discourse. Produced in liberal areas like New York City and Hollywood, late-night comedy shows have leaned into the resistance to President Trump (Rutenberg, 2017). There is audience demand for this kind of commentary, as evidenced by Stephen Colbert of *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*, overtaking Jimmy Fallon of *The Tonight Show With Jimmy Fallon* in the late-night comedy ratings (Koblin, 2017).

Fallon has remained largely a-political while Colbert has fully integrated the left-leaning political comedy that he practiced on his *Comedy Central* show, *The Colbert Report* (Rutenberg, 2017).

After Donald Trump insulted John Dickerson, host of CBS’s “Face the Nation” during an interview (Reilly, 2017), *The Late Show* host Stephen Colbert responded with a string of anti-Trump insults in his May 1, 2017 monologue. Colbert’s monologue was so provocative that it was the subject of news broadcasts and articles from *Fox News* (Fox News, 2017) *The Washington Post* (Phillips and Yahr, 2017) *Huffington Post* (Mazza, 2017), and *Vanity Fair* (Bradley, 2017). A #FireColbert started trending on Twitter.
(Podnar, 2017) and the monologue even provoked a response from Donald Trump himself. In an interview with *Time* Magazine, Donald Trump responded to Colbert’s insults, calling him a “no talent guy” whose language is “filthy” (Miller and Scherer, 2017).

In his May 11, 2017 monologue Colbert reveled in Trump’s response saying, “Don’t you know I’ve been trying for a year to get you to say my name? And you were very restrained, admirably restrained, but now you did it, I won” (*The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*, 2017). The video of Colbert’s May 1 monologue has almost 10 million views on YouTube, and his response to Donald Trump calling him “a no talent guy” has almost 9 million.

This exchange between Colbert and Donald Trump demonstrates that comedians have the power to provoke responses from the highest levels of authority, even the current sitting president of the United States. Previous studies that will be examined in the literature review have proven that late-night comedy hosts can influence their viewers’ political attitudes and behavior (Cao and Brewer, 2008; Hoffman and Thompson, 2009; Moy, Xenos, and Hess, 2005).

*The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* were arguably two of the most influential political late-night comedy series of their time (Amarasingam, 2014). Since Colbert ended *The Colbert Report* in 2014 and Jon Stewart left *The Daily Show* in 2015, Jon Stewart retired from late-night comedy and Colbert took over from David Letterman as the host of *The Late Show* in 2015. This new format of late-night comedy series is uncharted territory for Colbert as a comedian. On *The Colbert Report*, Colbert played a parody of a conservative pundit using satire. On *The Late Show*, Colbert does not play a
character. The opinions and commentary Colbert delivers to the audience are entirely his own. This transition in Colbert’s comedic career warrants its own study to determine how his role has changed regarding the additional commentary this persona has allowed Colbert to deliver without the burden of playing a character.

One subject that has not been studied in late-night comedy is how comedians like Colbert discuss sexual assault and harassment. Late-night comedy is a male dominated arena. Samantha Bee is the first female host of a late-night comedy show, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, and her series began in 2016. The focus on sexual assault and harassment is particularly relevant to the current political climate. On October 7, 2016 *The Washington Post* released Donald Trump’s *Access Hollywood* tape in which he made inappropriate comments about women on a bus to show host Billy Bush (Fahrenthold, 2016). On October 12, 2016 *The New York Times* published a story in which two women accused Donald Trump of sexual assault (Twohey and Barbaro, 2016). Since that time, at least 19 women have accused Donald Trump of sexual harassment and assault (Ford, 2017) and Trump is involved in a lawsuit with an adult film star Stephanie Clifford, known professionally as Stormy Daniels. Clifford claims that she was threatened to keep quiet about her affair with Donald Trump. Trump’s lawyers sued Clifford for $20 million, claiming that she violated a non-disclosure agreement (Luckhurst, 2018). On April 1, 2017 *The New York Times* published a report stating that Bill O’Reilly, the Fox News host, and parent company 21st Century Fox paid out about $13 million in settlements to women who had accused O’Reilly of harassment. (Otterson, 2017). On April 19, 2017 *Fox News* officially fired O’Reilly (Otterson, 2017). The Harvey Weinstein scandal in which the Hollywood producer was accused of sexually harassing
and assaulting dozens of women followed in a *New York Times* story published on October 5, 2017 (Kantor and Twohey, 2017). All of these scandals have served to bring violence against women to the forefront of the worldwide political conversation and sparked the social media movement, #MeToo, in which women began to speak out about their experiences with sexual harassment and assault (Zacharek, Dockterman, and Edwards, 2017).

This paper will argue that through his late-night comedy monologues as host of *The Late Show*, Colbert acts as an advocated for women’s rights in relation to sexual harassment and assault. Using President Donald Trump as the main example of inappropriate conduct, Colbert disrupts the hegemonic assumption that sexual harassment and assault against women are a normal and accepted part of everyday life. This study contributes to the literature on late-night political comedy in three ways. First, comedians offer commentary on the political issues of the moment, so a focus on sexual harassment and assault is particularly timely, and using a feminist approach offers a framework which is not often discussed in late-night comedy due to its male dominated orientation. Second, though Colbert is one of the most thoroughly studied late-night hosts, previous scholarship has focused on his tenure as host of the Colbert Report. The current study extends this analysis to his work as host of *The Tonight Show*, in which he is no longer playing a parody of a conservative pundit. Finally, the current study examines humor as a feminist rhetorical strategy, which is also novel.
Literature Review

Political impact of late-night comedy

Late night comedy can exert a significant impact on viewer’s political attitudes, knowledge, and engagement. Rutenberg (2017) argued that late-night comedy shows used to be an outlet for Americans to unwind after a long day of work. They were not expected to be political, or to cover controversial and deep issues. That view of late-night comedy has changed however. Feldman and Young (2008) found that viewers of late-night comedy are more likely to be interested in traditional forms of news. Other studies found that viewers of *The Tonight Show* and *Late Show* were more likely to be politically involved (Cao and Brewer, 2008; Hoffman and Thomson, 2009; Moy, Xenos, and Hess, 2005), participate in political discussion (Moy, Xenos, and Hess, 2005), be politically knowledgeable, and have more positive attitudes towards the political process (Pfau, Houston, and Semmler, 2007).

Other studies have examined the effect of late-night comedy on the public’s perceptions of politicians. During the 2000 election, viewers of *The Late Show* with David Letterman were more likely than non-viewers to base their opinions of George W. Bush on character traits, as opposed to his policies (Moy, Xenos, and Hess, 2006). Viewers of Letterman’s show were more likely than non-viewers to form their overall favorable opinions of George W. Bush based on his perceived disposition for “caring.” Perceptions of his other character traits or policies were unaffected. On the other hand, a study that focused on John Kerry’s 2004 appearance on *The Late Show* with David Letterman found that candidates appearances on late-night talk shows can engage otherwise politically disinterested viewers. These appearances can cause the audience to process and recall substantive policy information (Parkin, 2010). The difference seems to
suggest that viewers’ impressions of politicians can change from interview to interview. If Letterman discussed more substantive issues with John Kerry and more surface issues or moral questions with George W. Bush, the topic of conversation would affect viewer impression after the interview.

Moy and colleagues (2005) focused the late-night network genre, examining viewer’s impressions of Al Gore and George W. Bush after their appearances on The Late Show with David Letterman and The Tonight Show with Jay Leno. At the beginning of the survey period, non-viewers favorability ratings of Bush were significantly higher than that of viewers. In the second and third week of the survey period there was no difference between the two groups. In the week following Bush’s Late Show appearance, viewers’ favorability rating was significantly higher than non-viewers.’ Ratings among both groups were the same in week five and six, even after Bush’s appearance on The Tonight Show. In the weeks prior to Bush’s appearance on The Late Show, survey respondents’ late-night comedy viewing was only a marginal predictor of their favorability rating but was significant after Bush appeared on the show. The results for Al Gore, on the other hand, were different. For all six weeks of the survey, viewers’ assessments of Al Gore were significantly higher than nonviewers. This shows that an individual’s impression of a candidate can be affected by the candidate’s appearance on a late-night talk show. The candidate’s party affiliation also has an effect, as the Democratic candidate Al Gore was viewed more favorably by viewers of the show than Bush, the Republican candidate, was for all six weeks of the survey.

No two shows have been studied more for these types of effects than The Daily Show with Jon Stewart (1999-2015) and The Colbert Report with Stephen Colbert (2005-
2014), both of which aired on *Comedy Central*. These late-night shows focused almost solely on political content, with Jon Stewart offering his own opinions and research on the political issues of the day. Stephen Colbert played a parody of a conservative pundit to relay his opinions to the public. One study on *The Daily Show* found that the show provided as much substantive news coverage of political events as traditional news outlets (Fox, Koloen, and Sahin, 2007). A poll in the July 2009 issue of *Time* magazine even found Jon Stewart to be “America’s Most Trusted Newscaster” (Poniewozik, 2015). He received significantly more votes than NBC’s Brian Williams, CBS’s Katie Couric, and ABC’s Charlie Gibson (Faina, 2013). This unscientific poll offered insight into the mindset of the American public towards traditional news outlets and late-night comedians: Jon Stewart was not a journalist in the traditional sense, but the respondents trusted him more than those newscasters who were considered journalists.

On October 15, 2004 Jon Stewart made a remarkable appearance on the popular CNN program *Crossfire*. The two hosts, Paul Begala and Tucker Carlson, expected Stewart to just tell jokes and stick to his role as a comedian while on the show, but Stewart did not hold back. During the interview, Stewart criticized the two hosts for “hurting America” with their support of argument culture and the argumentative way they discussed political figures. When Carlson challenged him on how he had interviewed John Kerry on the *Daily Show*, by “sucking up” to him as Carlson called it, Stewart challenged Carlson’s status as a journalist. He argued that the news organizations looked to *Comedy Central* for their cues on integrity, and because viewers relied on *The Daily Show* for their news, reporters like Carlson and Begala had failed in their responsibility as journalists. The crux of Stewart’s argument was that shows like *Crossfire* only presented
argumentative discussions that were detrimental to the public (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014). Kovach and Rosenstiel believe that Stewart’s attack of the program’s format contributed to CNN’s decision to cancel Crossfire in January of 2005. This episode demonstrated the changed role and potential public impact of the late-night comedian and offered a cogent critique on mainstream news.

It is important to note that The Daily Show, The Colbert Report, The Late Show, The Tonight Show, and others influenced a certain type of people. The viewers for late-night shows were found to be younger (mean age 45.8 years) (Coe et al. 2008; Morris 2009; Young and Tisinger, 2006) male (Coe et al. 2008; Young and Tisinger, 2006) educated (median is some college) (Morris, 2009), and more liberal than non-viewers. Colbert’s viewers followed this same pattern, falling in the 18-29 age group, but The Colbert Report was perceived differently by conservative and liberal viewers. The satire Colbert used to deliver his points sometimes went undetected or was interpreted differently if the viewer was conservative. Conservative viewers were much more likely to think that Colbert pretended to be joking and disliked liberalism. Liberals were more likely to report that Colbert was using satire and was not serious when offering political statements (LaMarre, Landreville, and Beam, 2009). Baumgartner and Morris (2008) found that Republican ideology was associated with some viewers believing that Colbert was serious about the points he was making. After viewing the show, some participants had a more favorable view of Republicans rather than a less favorable view of Republicans.

Other scholars have focused on certain segments from The Daily Show with Jon Stewart and The Colbert Report and their effect on viewers. For example, a 2007 article
analyzed the “Better Know a District” segment of *The Colbert Report*. In this segment, Colbert completed a short interview with a member of Congress, mixing humor with specific policy questions. The goal of this segment was to interview all 435 sitting members of Congress. This study found that the segment exposed viewers to serious political issues and humanized the politicians that appeared in them. It gave the members of Congress access to a younger audience and in turn familiarized viewers with politicians whom viewers had known next to nothing about before (Baym, 2007).

Another study focused on *The Daily Show*’s “Indecision 2004” coverage of the Democratic and Republican Party conventions. The study found that the show’s humor was much harder on the Republican Convention than it was on the Democratic Convention. The humor for both conventions exploited political stereotypes and deprecation the attendees. However, the ridicule of the Republicans focused more on character flaws and policy. The ridicule of the Democrats tended to focus more on harmless physical attributes. In consequence of this, analysis of panel data collected by The National Annenberg Election Survey during the 2004 conventions showed that viewing *The Daily Show*’s convention coverage was associated with increased negativity toward President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney. The results remained significant even when controlling for political party affiliation and political ideology. By contrast, attitudes toward the Democratic candidates, John Kerry and John Edwards were unchanged by *The Daily Show* coverage (Morris, 2009).

Both Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert have moved on to other pursuits since their respective tenures at *Comedy Central*. Jon Stewart retired from *The Daily Show* in 2015, and Colbert ended *The Colbert Report* in 2014. Colbert is now the host of *The Late
Show with Stephen Colbert on CBS, practicing a whole new kind of political comedy. He is no longer playing a parody of a conservative pundit, but is now offering his own genuine political opinions. The risk of misinterpreting his satirical views is therefore miniscule. His political stance is unmistakably liberal, and more specifically anti-Trump. The format of the Comedy Central shows like The Daily Show and The Colbert Report are slightly different than network talk shows like The Late Show or The Tonight Show (Amarasingam, 2011; 2014). All these shows have similar segments: a monologue at the beginning, different skits or discussions, an interview, and a musical guest at the end. Network talk shows, however, have multiple interview segments, and typically run for about an hour instead of 30 minutes like the Comedy Central shows. The additional time that hosts have on late-night talk shows gives them more opportunities to discuss a wide range of issues, especially in the monologue section.

In an interview on December 30, 2016 with Terry Gross on NPR, Colbert discussed why he ended The Colbert Report. He told Gross that he felt he could no longer stomach playing the character because he was tired of not being able to be himself. Maintaining the discipline of portraying the character every night had become too difficult to maintain, and he was worried that he would eventually slip into being like the person he was mocking. If Colbert began to slip in his portrayal, it would just be him saying “horrible things,” rather than the character of “Stephen Colbert” (NPR, 2016). On the new Late Show, Colbert can deliver his unfiltered thoughts and beliefs to his audience, potentially influencing his viewers even more than he was able to with satire and parody.
Colbert as an advocate for women’s issues

Outside of his show, Colbert has established a record of advocating for women’s rights. During the promotional period leading up to his debut episode of *The Late Show*, Colbert wrote a feminist essay in *Glamour Magazine* (Colbert, 2015). In this essay, he expounded to female viewers that his new *Late Show* would focus on women’s issues.

“I’m going to make a show that truly respects women, because I know that there’s more than one way to be one. Maybe you're a woman who likes women. Maybe you like women and men. Maybe you're a woman who's recently transitioned. Maybe you're a guy who's reading this magazine because your girlfriend bought a copy and it looked interesting. Whoever you are, I promise: I'm going to lean in on this. It really accentuates my muffin top” (Colbert, 2015).

On January 21, 2017 Colbert posted a picture of himself on Twitter at the Women’s March in New York City with the caption: “Meanwhile…quite a few people here too” (Colbert, 2017). Colbert’s post of himself attending the Women’s March demonstrates that the comments he makes about women’s issues in his monologues go beyond jokes and turn into advocacy.

This is not the only instance of Colbert using his stature to engage in political advocacy. Bishop (2015) argues that Colbert’s in-character appearance as “Stephen Colbert” in front of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law blurred the lines between comedy and advocacy. She argues that comedy served as a veil behind which Colbert accomplished serious work, allowing him to span the boundary of comedy and advocacy, encouraging his audience to acknowledge him as a powerful and persuasive force (Bishop, 2015). She
analyzes Colbert in terms of racial politics. I am interested in how Colbert uses humor to combat gendered inequities, particularly when it comes to the political subjugation of women. Although Colbert is no longer playing a character, I will show that he demonstrates this advocacy position as the host of *The Late Show* in his opening monologues. He uses jokes to discuss women’s issues such as sexual harassment and assault, hiding serious positions behind a veil of comedy.

**Sexual harassment and sexual assault as anti-feminist hegemony**

Hegemony can be defined as preponderance of power held by one group of people within society, as well as the institutions, strategies, and tools used to establish and maintain dominance (Gramsci, 1971). Robinson (2005) argued that the use of sexual harassment and sexual violence is considered a legitimate and expected means to reinforce hegemonic masculinity. Connell’s (1987) theory of hegemonic masculinity argues that men use sexual harassment to reinforce their masculinity and claim power over women because society presents one normative ideal of male behavior. Men who are perceived as feminine are at risk for being alienated.

Siegel (1991) found that one out of every two women experiencing sexual harassment at least once in their work or academic life (Siegel, 1991). Fineran and Bennett (1999) found that young women regard sexual harassment as a normal part of everyday life in middle and high schools. A study conducted by the American Association of University Women study found that almost half (48%) of the 1,965 students surveyed experienced harassment. Girls experienced harassment more than boys, 56% for girls versus 40% for boys (AAUW 2011).
Sexual harassment has been established as an organization problem within academia, with one study suggesting that universities and other academic institutions are a “model patriarchy” which indicates harassment as a larger societal problem (Zalk, 1996). A survey of women in creative industries in the Netherland initially sought to understand hiring and promotion practices. The researchers shifted their focus when the women reported sexual harassment as both prevalent and normalized without being asked (Hennekam and Bennett, 2017). They also found that women’s concern about the sexual harassment they encountered was affected by the common perception of harassment as a normal part of occupational culture and a necessary part of career establishment or enhancement (Hennekam and Bennett, 2017). Another study on workplace authority and sexual harassment found that women in supervisory positions were more likely to experience sexual harassment and accepted it in order to keep their jobs. It also found that sexual harassment functioned in part as a tool to enforce gender appropriate behavior (McLaughlin, Uggen and Blackstone, 2012).

A 1995 study argued that for men, sex and power are separated, allowing men to deny the label of sexual harassment (Kitzinger and Thomas, 1995). Dougherty (2006) found that women believed sexual harassment could be initiated by anyone in a position of power. Men tended to believe that only behavior engaged in by a hierarchical authority could be labelled sexual harassment; men also viewed fewer behaviors as sexual harassment compared to women. This difference in perception of what can be considered sexual harassment indicates a societal difference in how men and women are taught to think about sex and sexual behavior. This gendered difference in the perception of sexual
harassment is another indicator of the hegemony of sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Media play an influential role in framing these perceptions and enforcing the hegemony of sexual harassment and sexual violence. Mainstream news presents cases of sexual harassment as psychological imbalances or individual aberrations rather than an entrenched societal problem (Mahood and Littlewood, 1997). McDonald and Charlesworth (2013) found that the overwhelmingly dominant discourse in mainstream news media, 88% of the texts sampled, framed sexual harassment as an individual aberration, a reflection of conduct of one individual against another. The news articles examined frequently reported uncertainty about the claim, as it was the word of one person against another. The dominant discourse made little mention of the broader workplace context in which the harassment occurred, and generally did not cite broader trends in the prevalence or patterns of sexual harassment.

**Research Question**
The research question this paper will address is how Stephen Colbert uses rhetorical strategies in his late-night comedy monologues to undermine anti-feminist hegemony and advocate for women’s rights in relation to sexual harassment and assault.
Method

To answer this research question, this paper will examine Stephen Colbert’s *Late Show* monologues on the allegations of sexual assault and harassment against Donald Trump using a feminist rhetorical framework (Foss, 2018). Foss describes feminist rhetorical criticism as stemming from the feminist social movement, created by women to improve living conditions for women and to advocate for gender equality. Feminist rhetorical criticism views texts through this lens, examining the content of artifacts for rhetorical strategies that disrupt established hegemonies, rhetors create alternatives to these dominant perspectives of practices. Feminist rhetorical analysis is an appropriate framework for analysis of Colbert’s discussion of sexual assault and harassment. Colbert’s goal is to disrupt established hegemonies and to discuss issues relevant to women viewers of late-night comedy.

Sample

The first step in feminist rhetorical analysis is selection of a rhetorical artifact, in this case, Stephen Colbert’s *Late Show* opening monologues. *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert* airs weeknights on CBS from 11:35 pm to 12:35 am. Colbert begins each episode with a monologue averaging about 5 to 7 minutes. The monologues cover current events and breaking news topics, mainly focusing on events centered around the Trump administration. For the 2018 season so far, Colbert’s Late Show has averaged 3.87 million viewers per episode, and a 0.60/4 rating in the 18-49-year-old demographic (Nielsen, 2018). This means that of the 4% of households surveyed, 60% of Colbert’s viewers were under the age of 50.
To collect the transcripts from Colbert’s monologues from October of 2016 to the end of 2017, I used the website, Television Archive. This website is an archive of television news and public television shows. I read the 291 monologue transcripts from every night of Colbert’s *Late Show* from October 1, 2016 to December 12, 2017, the last day of Colbert’s show before the winter break. I chose October of 2016 as the starting point for my monologue selection, the same week when the *Access Hollywood* tape was released. The *Access Hollywood* tape is a leaked audio recording of inappropriate comments about women that Donald Trump made to host of the show *Access Hollywood*, Billy Bush, on a bus. Starting a few days before that in October gives context for Colbert’s criticism of Trump and sets up his commentary on Trump’s treatment of women.

I chose the end of 2017 as the end point for my monologue selection in order to include Trump’s response to major sexual harassment and assault scandals like Bill O’Reilly and Roy Moore. Bill O’Reilly is a former Fox News pundit accused of sexually harassing his female co-workers. O’Reilly paid $32 million to settle a sexual harassment lawsuit and was eventually fired from Fox News over the scandal (Farhi, 2017). Roy Moore was a candidate for the Alabama Senate accused of sexually harassing and assaulting teenage girls. He ended up losing the election (Stolberg and Martin, 2017). After reading through all the transcripts from October 1, 2017 to December 18, 2017 I was left with a selection of 62 monologues in which Colbert discussed issues of sexual assault and harassment. In 39 of these, Colbert discussed the allegations of assault and harassment against Donald Trump. From these monologues, I selected representative quotes that demonstrated the various rhetorical devices of feminist rhetorical analysis.
Procedure

The next step in feminist rhetorical analysis is to analyze the artifact in terms of rhetorical strategies of disruption used in the work. Strategies of disruption are used by the rhetor to disrupt a dominant perspective or practice and to create alternatives to it. Foss lists and describes the rhetorical strategies used in feminist rhetorical criticism to disrupt established hegemonies. These devices were: *juxtaposing incongruities, reframing* and *redefinition*, *enactment*, *generating multiple perspectives*, and *repetition with variation*. These six rhetorical strategies serve to disrupt established hegemonies. A “hegemonic perspective” is one that is presented as dominant or natural, meaning there is only one right answer. When established hegemonies are disrupted, the dominant perspective is challenged and alternatives are presented.

The first is *juxtaposing incongruities*. In the strategy of *juxtaposing incongruities*, the rhetor merges categories typically believed to be mutually exclusive by removing a word from one category and applying it to another. This strategy upsets normal patterns of association to disrupt established hegemonies.

The second strategy is *redefinition*. *Redefinition* provides a new meaning for a word. This strategy can change a word with a positive meaning to a negative meaning and vice versa.

The third strategy is *reframing*. *Reframing* is the process of shifting perspective to view a situation from a different vantage point. The rhetor places the situation in another frame which fits the facts of the same situation even better, and therefore changes the meaning of the situation entirely.
The fourth strategy is *enactment*. In *enactment*, the rhetor acts out or embodies an interpretation of a situation that is counter to the one normally accepted. One form of *enactment* is performing an impression of someone. In this strategy, the rhetor acts out the argument and is the proof of what is being said.

The fifth strategy is *generating multiple perspectives*. In this strategy, the rhetor presents multiple perspectives on a subject. Rhetors usually construct messages by focusing and refining a perspective and then reinforcing it with evidence. When a perspective is “hegemonic” it means that there is only one “correct” perspective on a subject. By generating multiple perspectives, the rhetor makes clear that the ideology or perspective being presented as dominant and natural is not the only one available.

The sixth strategy is *repetition with variation*. This strategy involves repetition of a phrase, sentence, sound, or image each time with slight variation (Foss, 2018). The rhetor is using the same phrase but inserting it into situations or arguments that change the meaning of the phrase slightly each time.
Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that Stephen Colbert uses specific rhetorical strategies, coupled with humor, to act as an advocate for women’s rights pertaining to sexual harassment and assault in his late-night comedy monologues. During the time period under consideration, Colbert performed 291 monologues, 62 of which (21.3%) engaged on the issue of sexual assault or sexual harassment. Of these, 39 monologues (13.4% of the total monologues) specifically focused on allegations of sexual harassment or sexual assault naming Donald Trump. Table 1 shows the frequency with which Colbert employed each strategy during the time period sampled; some monologues used more than one strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhetorical Strategy</th>
<th>Number of Times Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juxtaposing Incongruities</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redefinition</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reframing</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enactment</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating Multiple Perspectives</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition with Variation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This paper is organized by rhetorical strategy. An example of a monologue that exemplifies each strategy is transcribed and analyzed in each section. The sections are organized in order from the strategy that was used the most to the strategy that was used the least. The first section analyzes a monologue that displays juxtaposing incongruities, followed by reframing and redefinition, reframing, enactment, generating multiple perspectives, and repetition with variation. Further examples of each strategy are listed in the Appendix.

**Juxtaposing Incongruities**

In his October 27, 2016 monologue Colbert used the rhetorical strategy of juxtaposing incongruities to subtly remind his audience about the *Access Hollywood* video and the allegations of assault and harassment against Trump.

*Colbert:* Donald Trump is getting a lot of heat for taking time off from campaigning to open his new Trump hotel just a mile from the White House—which hopefully is as close as he gets. But yesterday, Trump was asked about and had a perfect defense for the ribbon cutting.

*The camera cuts to a clip of Trump being interviewed by George Stephanopoulos*

*Trump:* I can’t take one hour off to cut a ribbon at one of the great hotels of the world? I mean, I think I’m entitled to it.

*Colbert:* Yes, “I think I’m entitled to it.” Which is also the motto on the Trump family crest. Ya, and his pickup line at bars. Colbert imitates Trump. I mean, after all the money I spent on tic-tacs I think I’m entitled to it.
In the strategy of juxtaposing incongruities, the rhetor merges categories typically believed to be mutually exclusive (Foss, 2018). Connecting the ribbon cutting and Trump’s dialogue in the Access Hollywood video may not seem logical, but Colbert uses this juxtaposition as a device to highlight the sense of entitlement behind Trump’s behavior. Trump believed he was entitled to take time off campaigning to go to a ribbon cutting ceremony, and he also believed that he was entitled to do whatever he wanted with women because he was a star. This judgement on Trump’s character and his sense of entitlement is what drives Colbert’s criticism. In each argument, Colbert mentions something detrimental about Trump’s personality: that he doesn’t take responsibility for his actions, and he uses his status as a celebrity to take advantage of women. All of this is part of Colbert’s strategy to influence his viewers to not vote for Trump in the election. By tearing down Trump’s character and sense of entitlement, Colbert encouraged his audience not to relate to Trump, and to believe that Trump’s sense of entitlement would drive him to use his position to further his own agenda instead of helping the American people.

Redefinition

In his October 17, 2016 monologue Colbert employed the rhetorical strategy of redefinition.

Audio of Trump from a 2005 Howard Stern interview plays >> I’ll go backstage before a show and everyone is getting dressed and everything else, and I’m allowed to go in because I’m the owner of the pageant and
therefore, I’m ‘inspecting it.’ They’re standing there with no clothes on and you see these incredible looking women, and so, I sort of get away with things like that.

*The audience reacts*

*Colbert:* Folks folks, folks, - What are you going to do? It’s a classic case of she said, he said - Hell yeah!

In the strategy of *redefinition*, a new meaning for a word is provided, creating a qualitatively new experience with that word (Foss, 2018). By turning the phrase “he said she said” into “she said he said-hell yeah!” Colbert transformed a classic phrase often used to discredit women accusing men of sexual harassment into a way to indict Donald Trump for his language and behavior. Instead of the original meaning of the phrase, “he said, she said” which means that accusations of sexual harassment pit the word of one person against another, Colbert changed the meaning of the phrase to indicate the exact opposite. By adding “he said-hell yeah!” onto the end of the original phrase, it was now an expression of the man blatantly admitting to performing the behavior of which the woman accused him. In this case, Colbert used the phrase to show that Trump bragged about walking in on naked women without their consent.

*Reframing*

In his first response after the release of the *Access Hollywood* video, in a monologue filmed at his home on October 10, 2016 Colbert utilized the rhetorical strategy of *reframing*. 
Colbert: And right out of the gate, Trump let everybody know that his comments to Billy Bush had a simple explanation.

*The camera cuts to Trump responding to the leaked Access Hollywood video at the debate*

Trump: This was locker room talk. I’m not proud of it. I apologized to my family, I apologized to the American people. Certainly I’m not proud of it, but this is locker room talk.

Colbert: By the way, what gym does Donald Trump belong to? In my locker room we’re just trying to avoid eye contact and gently encourage old man Wallace to put on a towel.

In the strategy of *reframing* (Foss, 2018) the rhetor shifts perspective to view a situation from a different vantage point. In this case, Colbert *reframed* the phrase “locker room talk.” By saying “By the way, what gym does Donald Trump belong to?” Colbert shifted the perspective of the phrase from Trump’s vantage point to that of other men who use the gym. From Colbert’s personal perspective, he asserted that he didn’t hear the kind of language Trump used to describe women being used by men when he went to the locker room at the gym. By *reframing* this phrase, Colbert established Trump’s behavior as deviant. Establishing Trump’s behavior as deviant allowed Colbert to encourage his viewers to see that a man who talked about women in the manner Donald Trump did was not fit to hold the office of the president.

*Enactment*
In his October 26, 2016 monologue Colbert employed the rhetorical strategy of \textit{enactment}, and further established himself as an advocate for women’s rights, referencing an interview in which \textit{Fox} news reporter Megyn Kelly asked Senator Newt Gingrich about the accusations of assault and harassment against Trump.

\textit{The camera cuts to a clip of Newt Gingrich being interviewed by Megyn Kelly}\n
\begin{quote}
Kelly: If Trump is a sexual predator that is.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Gingrich: He’s not a sexual predator, you can’t say that.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Kelly: Ok, that’s your opinion. I’m not taking a position on it. I’m not taking a position on that.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Gingrich: It’s not true. Now I’m sick and tired of people like you using language that’s inflammatory that’s not true. You wanna go back through the tapes of your show recently, you are fascinated with sex and you don’t care about public policy.
\end{quote}

\textit{Camera cuts to Colbert}\n
\begin{quote}
Colbert: Okay, first off, everybody is more fascinated with sex than public policy. If you’re not, there’s a pill for that now. But the thing is, Megyn “Kelly File” isn’t talking about fun time, bedroom whoopi making, she’s talking about assault. Wait, unless Newt doesn’t know the difference. Maybe no one gave him the talk. Hold on, let’s do this. “Newt,” sweetheart, you’re growing up so fast. In fact, you’re 73. Your body’s changing. You’ve probably noticed some strange new hair growing on your earlobes. It’s perfectly natural. You’re old enough to finally learn about the birds and the bees, and the consent. You see, when a man has special feelings for a}
woman, and he wants to give her a special hug, he asks her a special question: ‘You up?’ But grabbing a lady because you’re a TV star is not sex, it’s assault, and fun fact, assault is a matter of public policy, because it’s illegal, even if you use tic tacs. I hope that clears things up buddy. I would explain to you what sex is, but then I would have to picture you doing it.

In the strategy of enactment, the rhetor acts out or embodies an interpretation of a situation that is counter to the one normally accepted (Foss, 2018). By performing the role of a parent giving Newt Gingrich “the talk” about sex and consent, Colbert portrayed Gingrich as an ignorant child who needed to be lectured and educated. When he mentioned that Gingrich was 73 years old, Colbert argued that Gingrich was of an age at which he should know better. Gingrich should already have known the difference between sex and sexual harassment/assault, but like Trump, he clearly didn’t understand the difference. By criticizing Gingrich in this manner, and making him look like an immature child, Colbert established for his audience that he, Colbert, has a higher moral standing. Colbert knows the difference between sex and sexual harassment, so his audience should listen to him, not Gingrich or Trump. Colbert used this strategy to further distance his viewers from Trump and his supporters. He alienated Trump and the behavior of his followers, encouraging his audience to take the moral high ground with him and vote against Donald Trump in the election.

Also, this demonstrated that Colbert stepped into the role of advocate by stating that sexual assault “is a matter of public policy” because it’s illegal. This is where Colbert
turned from discussing sexual harassment and assault in a theoretical moral sense to discussing it in a manner of concrete legal policy. He signaled to his audience that the discussion about sexual assault and harassment happening in America was more than just a discussion of what was morally right or wrong, but what was legal and illegal. By establishing this for his audience, Colbert advocated that the accusations against Trump should not be seen as just a scandal, but as serious accusations of criminal acts.

*Generating Multiple Perspectives*

In his December 11, 2017 monologue, Colbert further addressed the allegations of assault against Trump by *generating multiple perspectives*.

*Colbert:* Of course, Donald Trump and Roy Moore have something else in common. At least 16 women have accused Donald Trump of sexual assault, and today, three of Trump’s accusers retold their stories on the “Today Show.” One woman described being assaulted by Trump on an airplane. The woman left her seat and hid in the back of the plane after Trump groped her but ran into him two years later at an event.

*Video clip of the woman being interviewed on the “Today Show” plays*

*Woman:* He says, I remember you. You were that—woman from the airplane. He called me the worst name ever.

*Megyn Kelly the interviewer:* Does it begin with a C?

*Woman:* Yes, yes.

*Megyn Kelly:* Does it end with a t?

*Woman:* Yes.
Camera cuts to Colbert

Colbert: He called her a cat? At least that’s what I hope her called her, because if he called her the other thing, that would make our president a huge, begins with an a, ends with a hole.

In the strategy of *generating multiple perspectives*, the rhetor presents many different views on a subject, making clear that the perspective being presented as dominant and natural is not the only one available (Foss, 2018). Colbert *generated multiple perspectives* by bringing in one of Trump’s accusers. Colbert played the video clip of Trump’s accuser telling her story of assault on the “Today Show” so she recounted the incident and the name Trump called her in her own words. By doing this, Colbert showed his audience that Trump’s accusers did not just exist on paper, they were real individuals prepared to come forward and be interviewed on television. Giving his audience the accuser’s perspective strengthened Colbert’s argument that Trump was guilty. Further, and he provided his audience with another source of information other than himself. The tone of Colbert’s argument here shifted to become personal, as he insulted Trump by calling him a word that started with “a” and ended with “hole.” Colbert’s arguments before were generally focused on Trump’s denial of the accusations, his willingness to lie about the incidents, and his lack of integrity. Now, Colbert personally attacked Trump by calling him names. By calling Trump names, Colbert showed his audience that he had no respect for Trump and felt perfectly comfortable insulting him regardless of his status as President. This signaled to Colbert’s audience that they shouldn’t respect Trump either.
Repetition with Variation

In his September 25, 2017 monologue, Colbert used repetition with variation to refer to the allegations of sexual harassment against Trump.

Colbert: Yes, there are rules when it comes to the flag. There are actually written rules. For instance, don’t use it to sell merchandise, like this Trump Pence T-shirt, only $35. Also, don’t hug it. That’s just weird. And it didn’t look consensual, frankly. Ask. You’ve got to ask the flag. Never stopped him in the past.

In the strategy of repetition with variation, the rhetor repeats a phrase, sentence, sound, or image each time with slight variation (Foss, 2018). Colbert referred to an incident at a Trump rally where Trump hugged an American flag on stage. Colbert had also referred to this incident in his October 25, 2016 monologue, in which he made a joke about Trump “groping the American flag.” In that monologue, Colbert used dialogue from the Access Hollywood tape of Trump saying, “They let you do it if you’re a star.” In this case, Colbert said “It didn’t look consensual frankly. Ask. You’ve got to ask the flag. Never stopped him in the past.” The phrasing was different, but it delivered the same message and had the same effect. Colbert argued that Trump did not ask for permission before initiating physical contact with women, using the American flag as a stand-in for this behavior. By saying “Never stopped him in the past.” Colbert referred to Trump’s history of sexual harassment, showing that he didn’t ask for consent. Like the message from his October 25, 2016 monologue, Colbert told his audience that Trump’s behavior and history of sexual harassment was an insult to the office of the president. Colbert argued that Trump was
violating the American flag, symbolism for Trump violating American values and disgracing the country.

Multiple Strategies

In his February 15, 2017 monologue, Colbert used redefinition and enactment to discuss the allegations against Trump.

Colbert: We just learned that Trump aides were in “constant touch” with senior Russian officials during the campaign. “Constant touch” by the way, is also Trump’s secret service code name>> Colbert imitates a secret service officer >> I got constant touch on the move. Constant touch is on the move. Constant touch is coming backstage. Hide the girls. Constant touch.

Colbert changed the meaning of the phrase “constant touch” to mean actual physical contact instead of a continuous exchange of correspondence. In its original context, the phrase referred to Trump aides having continuous meetings and conversations with Russian officials. The new meaning that Colbert used allowed him to criticize Donald Trump’s alleged history of sexual assault. The second part of the joke, in which Colbert imitated a secret service agent, demonstrated enactment. Colbert pretended to be a secret service agent using “constant touch” as Donald Trump’s code name. He embodied the new meaning of the phrase “constant touch” for his audience, creating a situation in which a secret service agent would actually use that phrase as Donald Trump’s codename. This imitation also served as a platform for Colbert to argue that
even Trump’s secret service agents might have so little respect for him that they would use a code name like that to refer to him.
Conclusion

Through his monologues on the allegations of sexual assault and harassment against Donald Trump, Colbert acts as an advocate for women’s rights in relation to sexual assault and harassment. He disrupts the established hegemony that violence against women is a normal and accepted part of life. Using the various rhetorical strategies discussed, Colbert continually broke down Trump’s status for his audience, showing them that Trump’s behavior did not change after he took office. Colbert told his audience that even though Trump was the president, he did not deserve their respect or support because of his history of sexual harassment and assault. Colbert acted as an advocate for women in relation to sexual harassment and assault by using Trump as an example of unacceptable behavior. By criticizing the president, who is the head of United States society, Colbert criticized the entire system. He offered the audience commentary on the systemic issue of sexual harassment and assault. He used his platform as a late-night comedian to advocate for change and to disrupt the established hegemony of sexual harassment and assault as an accepted part of life for women.

The literature clearly establishes Colbert as an advocate. Before Colbert took over from David Letterman as host of The Late Show he wrote an essay in Glamour Magazine (Colbert, 2015) promising to address women’s issues and expand what he defined as the traditionally male-centered viewpoint of late-night comedy. Bishop’s (2015) analysis of Colbert’s in-character Congressional testimony demonstrated that Colbert encouraged his audience to see him as a powerful and persuasive force. This highlights the often-
understated influence that comedians can have on public opinion. This study expands Bishop’s conclusion and applies it to Colbert’s commentary on women’s issues.

Colbert discussed the allegations of sexual harassment and assault against Donald Trump in 39 of the 291 monologues he performed between October 1, 2016 to December 12, 2017, or 13.4%. In these monologues, he communicated a forceful anti-Trump stance to his audience, based on his alleged misconduct with women. Colbert used various rhetorical strategies, including *juxtaposing incongruities*, *redefinition*, *reframing*, *enactment*, *generating multiple perspectives*, and *repetition with variation* (Foss, 2018). Colbert undermined Trump’s authority for his audience, calling Trump a “liar”, insulting his intelligence, arguing that Trump was unfit for office, and definitively labelling Trump as a sexual harasser. Colbert established himself as an advocate for women’s rights in relation to sexual harassment and assault by encouraging his audience not to vote for Trump because of his conduct toward women before the election, and by advocating for Trump’s impeachment or resignation after the election. Colbert’s appearance at the Women’s March on January 21, 2017, proved that Colbert’s discussion of women’s issues was not just part of his stage performance, but a part of his real-life commitment to advocacy of women’s issues.

Using *juxtaposing incongruities*, Colbert offered critiques of sexual assault and harassment culture, by continuing criticism in situations that didn’t seem to be related to the subject at all. Taking these opportunities to discuss the issue kept the topic of assault and harassment in the conversation, preventing the behavior from normalization. If an issue is not discussed continuously, it fades from people’s minds, making it more likely that the behavior would just become a part of everyday life. Through *juxtaposing*
incongruities, Colbert did not allow this normalization to take place. Through redefinition, Colbert disrupted the established hegemony by changing the meanings of words to offer critiques of harassment and assault culture in America. For example, Colbert redefined the meanings of “locker room talk” and “he said she said.” Colbert turns these terms on their heads to mean the exact opposite of what was intended. By doing this, these terms can no longer be used to excuse inappropriate or violent behavior towards women. Using reframing, Colbert provided his audience with interpretations of situations not necessarily addressed by the mainstream media. He didn’t brush off any of Trump’s behavior as “just talk” and validated the statements made by every one of Trump’s accusers. He reframed every situation to indict Trump for his behavior, thus offering a critique of the acceptance of harassment and assault in American society. By reframing these situations to say that Trump never should have been elected because of the accusations of assault and harassment against him, Colbert criticized the American public for electing Trump. By putting the allegations of harassment and assault forward as the main reasons why Trump shouldn’t have been elected, Colbert disrupted the established hegemony that harassment and assault are an accepted part of everyday life.

Using enactment, Colbert performed multiple imitations of Trump, undermining Trump’s authority and highlighting the absurdity of his behavior towards women. Through his impersonations, Colbert disrupted the established hegemony that sexual harassment is a normal and accepted part of everyday life by making Trump, who Colbert used as the prime example of deplorable behavior towards women, look foolish. Through generating multiple perspectives, Colbert disrupted the hegemony and acted as an advocate by using a myriad of perspectives to strengthen his argument. Instead of just
providing his own opinions and expecting his audience to agree with him, Colbert offered his audience multiple points of view to prove that sexual harassment and assault were not normal and accepted.

Using repetition with variation, had a similar effect. By repeating jokes about the allegations of sexual harassment and assault against Donald Trump continuously, Colbert kept the issue in the minds of his audience. When the mainstream news cycle had moved on from discussing the topic, Colbert did not allow his audience to move on. By repeating the jokes, Colbert made sure that his audience remembered the importance of the allegations and did not become desensitized.

Examination of the rhetorical devices Colbert uses to impart his messages is significant in that it demonstrates the ways in which a comedian can use his/her platform to potentially influence an audience in ways not accessible to the news media. Colbert does not have the burden of providing his viewers with a fair and balanced perspective, as the news media is meant to do. Colbert is at liberty to deliver his own opinions and perspectives to his audience in whatever way he sees fit. Through humor, Colbert has the potential to establish himself as moral authority for his audience, inserting himself in that role by using his monologues to continuously undermine Donald Trump’s authority as president.

By disrupting the established hegemony of violence against women as an accepted and normal part of life, Colbert begins to change the narrative within mainstream society. As the literature demonstrated, late-night comedy shows exert influence on viewers political attitudes and behavior, making individuals more likely to be politically active (Cao and Brewer, 2008; Hoffman and Thomson, 2009; Moy, Xenos,
This analysis argues that Colbert exerts such an influence with regard to women’s issues. The arguments that Colbert presented in his monologues labelling sexual harassment and assault as irrefutable criminal acts and claiming that Trump’s conduct with women made him unfit for the office of the President, present a valuable critique of American society. By using Trump as the main example of this misconduct, Colbert takes aim at the highest figure of authority, highlighting that sexual assault and harassment are not isolated to individual cases, but as a systemic problem. Colbert repeatedly mentions that allegations of sexual assault and harassment won’t even stop a man from being elected president. By calling attention to these issues, Colbert continues the discourse, potentially influencing his viewers to change their views, and encourage others to do the same.

One of the limitations of this paper is that it addresses only one late-night comedian, limiting the scope of the research. This paper does not address Samantha Bee, host of Full Frontal with Samantha Bee, the only female host in late-night comedy. Such a study could offer a unique viewpoint on the topic of sexual harassment and assault.

Another limitation is that this paper does not include an audience survey, so the effects of Colbert’s messages on his audience are only speculation. Due to the narrow focus of the topic, the paper only addresses Colbert’s monologues on the allegations of sexual harassment and assault against Donald Trump. Colbert’s commentary on allegations against other politicians and entertainers remains a topic for future study.

Expanding on this study, researchers could analyze other comedians and their commentary on women’s issues, or to establish a pattern of commentary on sexual harassment and assault within late-night comedy. Almost all the literature used as the
foundation for this study was dated by a few years. The other studies (Baumgartner and Morris, 2008; Feldman and Young, 2008; Morris, 2009) mostly focused on comedic commentary from the 2008 election and the George W. Bush era of politics, leaving commentary from late-night comedians in recent years unstudied. The research in this paper served to begin filling in that gap, so other researchers could continue this work to guarantee that another gap does not occur. More research needs to be done to study the effect that comedians have on an administration such as the current Trump administration, and how their commentary affects their viewers. It is important to examine every avenue that is being used to cut through all the noise and grab the public’s attention. In light of the literature comedians have the ability to cut through this noise using humor. Future studies could examine if the influence of comedians has become more pronounced under the Trump administration than previous administrations, and if this signals an even bigger shift in the public’s trust of late-night comedians as opposed to traditional news journalists. Almost ten years have passed since Jon Stewart was voted the most trusted newscaster in a Time magazine poll in 2009 (Faina, 2013); future studies could conduct audience polls to see if another comedian is now the most trusted newscaster, or if the public trust has reverted back to traditional newscasters.

Donald Trump has made various public attacks against the United States press (Nelson, 2018) so future researchers could conduct studies to see what effect these attacks have had on the influence of comedians and the public’s trust in mainstream news. A component that is missing from much of the literature and this study is a range of late-night comedy audience surveys. Future studies could conduct a number of audience surveys with viewers of different late-night talk shows to offer concrete
evidence for the arguments and analyses made in this study and the ones before it.
Although the surveys would be subjective as each audience member would have a different interpretation of the arguments being made and views being discussed, each would serve to illuminate the actual influence of the arguments and opinions put forth by late-night hosts. Interviews could also be conducted with late-night hosts to study the intentions behind their arguments, and to gauge whether they would label themselves advocates, as opposed to just studying how their viewers would label them.

The analysis presented in this study shows that Colbert disrupted the established hegemony of sexual harassment and assault as a normal and accepted part of everyday life. He used rhetorical devices and made humorous, yet serious commentary in ways that are not available to the mainstream news media. As the public moves away from establishment values and politicians, as evidenced by the election of Donald Trump, non-traditional avenues of political and social commentary are becoming increasing in relevance. As host of The Late Show, Colbert is a prime example of this kind of non-traditional commentator with the ability to influence his viewers and change the mainstream discourse.


The Late Show With Stephen Colbert. (2017, May 2). This Monologue Goes Out To You, Mr. President [Video file]. Retrieved from www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaHw1STqA7s


Appendix

Juxtaposing Incongruities

October 18, 2016

Colbert: So let me get this straight. Melania’s defense of Trump—the man who wrote “The Art of the deal” is that he got outmaneuvered by a guy who has been deemed by “The Today Show” to be unqualified to watch someone else make a festive frittata?

December 5, 2016

Colbert: In fact, the exchange touched “the most sensitive spot” for China’s foreign policy. No surprise. Donald Trump has a long history of sensitive spot-touching.

December 16, 2016

Colbert: In part one of my one-part segment “Stephen Colbert’s ba, humbug!” tonight’s humbuggery: mistletoe. This one is a messed-up tradition. If you catch somebody underneath the mistletoe, tradition says you can kiss them whether they want it or not! It should be called “mistle-Trump.” Donald Trump said if you’re a star you can grab them by the holly and they can’t stop you.

January 20, 2017
Colbert: My man, Timothy Cardinal Dolan, of course, quoted Solomon >>
clip of a pastor, Timothy Cardinal Dolan, giving a speech at Trumps
inauguration plays>> From your glorious throne, dispatch her that she may
be with us and work with us that we may grasp what is pleasing to you.>>
Colbert: Yes, “that we may grasp what is pleasing to you.” I believe that’s
the same prayer Trump said to Billy Bush on that bus. Let us grasp. Let us
grasp what is pleasing.

February 2, 2017

Colbert: Meanwhile, Donald Trump started his day at the national prayer
breakfast. I’ve always said the prayer breakfast is the most important prayer
meal of the day, and Trump took a moment to show his tender side.>> Video
clip of Trump speaking at the national prayer breakfast plays >> Trump:
What I hear most often as I travel the country are five words…>> Colbert:
please. don’t. grab. my. pussy. Is that five? Is that five?

May 11, 2017

Audio of Trump explaining his firing of Comey in an interview plays >> Oh,
I was going to fire him regardless of recommendation.>> Colbert: Yes, he
was going to do it regardless. But hey, when you’re a star, they let you do
it. Comey should have known he was in trouble when Trump pulled out the
tic tacs.
July 13, 2017

*Colbert:* Today, Trump met with France’s elegant first lady Brigitte Macron and of course he treated her like any other woman, by objectifying her>>

*Colbert pretends to scold Trump >> Colbert:* Bad Donald. No! Bad. This is not one of your European wife shopping trips. This is business, he’s got to learn. The man has got to learn his limits.

Redefinition

April 3, 2017

*Colbert:* Well, after the rally, the protestors filed a lawsuit claiming that Trump encouraged violence and that they were the targets of racial and sexist slurs, or as Trump calls them, “campaign promises.”

September 6, 2017

*Colbert:* If you’re worried that Donald Trump doesn’t have a real plan for the economy, that’s fair>> Video of Trump speaking at a rally plays>> My administration strongly rejects this offshoring model, and we’ve embraced a new model, it’s called the American Model, very simple, the American model.>> Colbert: I’m not surprised. He is known for embracing American models. Doesn’t even ask, just grabs them. That’s an oldy but a goody. That’s an oldy but a baddie. But by far, the most awkward moment—for Trump that’s a pretty high bar—was when he brought up Ivanka.>> Video of Trump speaking at the rally plays>> Sometimes they’ll say, you know,
“he can’t be that bad a guy, look at Ivanka.” >> Trump speaks to Ivanka>>

No, come on up honey. She’s so good. She wanted to make the trip. She said, “Dad, can I go with you?” She actually said, “Daddy, can I go with you?” I like that right? “Daddy, can I go with you? I said yes, you can. >>

Colbert: Not weird at all.

December 1, 2017

Colbert: Apparently, while being maximum interviewed, Trump pointed out a “young socialite” at Mara-Lago and told a reporter, “There is nothing in the world like first-rate…” and there it is, “the grabby area.” Now, why are we just now hearing about this? Well, because, according to the interviewer, the editor in chief changed the quote to “there is nothing in the world like first-rate talent.” Wow, I gotta say, an editor who lacks the courage to run that quote is a real…talent.

December 4, 2017

Colbert: And Trump wasn’t done tweeting. He also threw his weight behind Republican candidate and Sheriff of Teen Town, Roy Moore, tweeting, “Democrats refusal to give even one vote for massive tax cuts is why we need Republican Roy Moore to win in Alabama. We need his vote on stopping crime, illegal immigration, border wall, military, pro-life, V.A. judges, second amendment and more. No to Jones, a Pelosi/Schumer puppet!” Colbert: And no one wants a puppet in the Senate, but if Moore
gets elected, they will need a few more of those “show me where he touched you” dolls.

**Reframing**

October 31, 2016

*Colbert:* So this is it. E-mails that could tip the election in favor of a sexually ravenous, shambling, orange baby man.

November 9, 2016

*Colbert:* I don’t know what you should tell them. Tell them what you always tell kids, be kind, don’t be selfish, don’t grab them where they don’t want to be grabbed, and they’ll make the world a better place than Donald Trump can.

January 18, 2017

*Colbert:* What I have in my hand here are the backup Trump slogans just in case they need a different slogan. First one is make America great again…again. I like this one. Okay, this time we really are going to make America great again I swear. This one might come in handy, those women are liars.

April 5, 2017
Colbert: Here’s where the worlds collide. O’Reilly’s in a real pickle, but today Donald Trump’s got his back. The president told “The Times,” “He is a good person. I think he shouldn’t have settled. I don’t think Bill did anything wrong.” >> Colbert: Mr. President – Hold on. Mr. President, I want to remind you, you just declared April sexual assault awareness month, and there are two allegations of sexual assault I’m aware of: Bill O’Reilly’s and yours. So maybe—I’m going out on a limb here—maybe you’re not the perfect person to weigh in on this one.

April 19, 2017

Colbert: But, listen, in case—don’t forget, in case you’re a fan of sexual harassers who are still on TV all the time, we still have Trump.

October 6, 2017

Colbert: Of course, it’s no secret that Donald Trump loves the ladies. It’s been well documented in gossip magazines and court depositions.

December 8, 2017

Colbert: Eight women have accused Moore of sexual misconduct while they were young teenagers, but Donald Trump still supports him.

Enactment

October 19, 2016
Colbert: Now, Trump was quick to shoot down sexual assault allegations against him of course. Audio of Trump talking at the debate plays >> Nobody has more respect for women than I do, nobody.>> Colbert imitating Trump: That’s why I used the tic-tacs, it’s out of respect. Nobody wants to be groped and have bad breath okay.

October 24, 2016
Colbert: To his credit, Donald Trump stayed focused on his message of uniting the country…for about 60 seconds, and then- - Camera cuts to a clip of Trump from his Gettysburg speech>> Trump: Every woman lied when they came forward to hurt my campaign. Total fabrication. All of these liars will be sued after this election is over. >> The monologue then transitions into a special appearance from “The ghost of Abraham Lincoln” delivering a “first draft of the Gettysburg Address>> Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that I did not proposition those women. They’re liars! And just look at them, they wouldn’t be my first choice. And when I said, “grab them by the petticoat,” that was merely log cabin talk! I will sue those lying jezebels into the ground!>>

October 25, 2016
Colbert: Speaking of Donald Trump, I’m starting to worry about our future not-president. Some weird stuff happened on stage with him. Yesterday, he
held a rally in Tampa, Florida and you might want to get the children out of
the room because things got pretty steamy. There he is on stage, saying hi
to the crowd, going over to hug one of his loved ones, and it’s an American
flag. Yes, that’s right. Donald Trump just groped the American flag. Colbert
imitating Trump: You know they let you do that if you’re a star.

December 5, 2017

Colbert: We are exactly—one week—one week from the possible election
of Alabama Senate candidate and depressing sequel to “Toy Story,” Roy
Moore. You do not want him to play “woody.” He has been accused by at
least nine women of sexual misconduct while they were teenagers, but the
president is standing by his man for a simple reason >> Video of Trump in
an interview at the White House plays >> “We don’t want to have a liberal
Democrat in Alabama, believe me. We want strong borders. We want
stopping crime.” >> Colbert imitates Trump >> “Yes, we want stopping
crime. We just not want stopping sexual assault.”

December 12, 2017

Colbert: Speaking of shady characters, Donald Trump. Yesterday, we heard
from three of the 19 women who have accused Donald Trump of sexual
misconduct. Well, this morning, the president fired back>> Colbert reads
Trump’s tweet using an imitation of Trump’s voice>> “Despite thousands
of hours wasted and many millions of dollars spent, the Democrats have been unable to show any collusion with Russia. So now they are moving on to the false accusations and fabricated stories of women who I don’t know and or have never met.>> Colbert continues imitating Trump >> “And that is the absolute truth and or a complete lie.” >> Colbert: Because—because that is a lie. Included in the list of his accusers are a former business partner, women from the Miss U.S.A pageant, which Trump owned; and a contestant in season four of The Apprentice. >> Colbert imitates Trump >> “Your challenge is for me to sexually harass you and then you having to watch me become president of the United States. Enjoy!”

Generating Multiple Perspectives

October 17, 2016

Colbert: Ever since the tape of Donald on the Billy Bush-locker bus came out, Trump has been fending off attacks like a woman meeting Donald Trump. There’s the woman who sat next to him on the plane, a “People” magazine reporter, a contestant on “The Apprentice,” and a former Miss Arizona who described Trump’s behavior backstage at the Miss U.S.A pageant. The camera cuts to a video clip of the former Miss Arizona talking in an interview >> He just came strolling right in. There was no second to put on a robe or any sort of clothing or anything. Some girls were topless, other girls were naked. >> Colbert: Okay that sounds bad. Mr. Trump, do you have a response? The camera cuts to a clip of Trump talking at the
debate >> Lies lies. No witnesses. No nothing. All big lies. >> Colbert:
Okay, lies. Was there anyone backstage at this pageant who could corroborate her story?

December 11, 2017

Colbert: Of course, Donald Trump and Roy Moore have something else in common. At least 16 women have accused Donald Trump of sexual assault, and today, three of Trump’s accusers retold their stories on the “Today Show.” One woman described being assaulted by Trump on an airplane. The woman left her seat and hid in the back of the plane after Trump groped her but ran into him two years later at an event.>> Video clip of the woman being interviewed on the “Today Show” plays >> the woman: He says, I remember you. You were that—woman from the airplane. He called me the worst name ever.>> Megyn Kelly the interviewer: Does it begin with a C?>> the woman: Yes, yes.>> Megyn Kelly: Does it end with a t?>> the woman: Yes.>> Colbert: He called her a cat? At least that’s what I hope her called her, because if he called her the other thing, that would make our president a huge, begins with an a, ends with a hole.

Multiple Strategies

April 10, 2017

Colbert: Earlier today—was it this morning? This afternoon? He spoke at a women’s empowerment forum, and it was the first women’s event he’s
attended since sneaking into the dressing room at the Miss U.S.A pageant>>

Colbert imitates Trump>> “Hiya! Who wants to be empowered first?”

April 25, 2017

Colbert: Today, Trump sent Ivanka to Berlin to participate in a women’s conference, making her the first Trump to attend a women’s conference that didn’t include a swimsuit competition. This morning, Ivanka spoke on a panel titled, “inspiring women: scaling up women’s entrepreneurship” and the Trump family has a long history of inspiring women—to march, to sue, to flee from a dressing room. And Ivanka shared her story of becoming a successful entrepreneur. Step one: be born rich. Step two: just in case, marry rich. But, unfortunately, when Ivanka was talking about her father and how he was a champion of family leave, she was met with groans and hisses from the audience.

June 12, 2017

Colbert: President Trump can’t stop crashing parties at his golf clubs. The latest incident was Saturday night. Trump dropped in on a wedding reception taking place at his Bedminster New Jersey golf club. Every wedding has a best man, but only a select few get the worst man. Plus, you know what they say about weddings: something old, something new, something orange, someone get him away from the bridesmaids!
September 7, 2017

Colbert: It could be worse. Apparently, the president has invited a lot of lawmakers onto the plane for private arm-twisting sessions. And it’s effective, as Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart says, “They can’t go anywhere. They can’t run away from you.” Same reason Trump loves dressing rooms>> Colbert imitates Trump>> “I’m sorry was I not allowed? I didn’t see the signs. Oops.”

November 29, 2017

Colbert: Donald Trump weighted in on the Lauer story tweeting, “Wow.” Wait a minute, “wow?” I’m still not used to a president typing the word, “wow.” That’s like if the first draft of the Gettysburg Address was, “holy guacamole, this war sucks.” Wow. Wow. Back to Trump’s tweet: “Wow, Matt Lauer just fired from NBC for ‘inappropriate sexual behavior in the workplace.’ But when will the top executives at NBC and Comcast be fired for putting out so much fake news.” Colbert: By “fake news” do you mean, “more than a dozen women have accused Trump of improper conduct or sexual assault?” Is that what you mean by fake news? Listen up! You don’t get to comment! That’s like the pot calling the kettle at 3:00 am and asking what she’s wearing. Plus, remember the whole Billy Bush bus thing? Turns out, in private, Trump’s told multiple people that it may not have been him on the tape after all. But you know what, let’s take him at his word. He’s the president of the United States, maybe it wasn’t him>> Audio from the
Access Hollywood tape plays

>> Colbert: When you listen to it again it can’t be him because anybody who said that wouldn’t get elected president of the United States. He’s got to be innocent, there’s no two ways about it.

December 6, 2017

Colbert: Ladies and gentlemen, this morning, if you haven’t seen, “Time” magazine has announced their person of the year in a moment that inspired a lot of people. It was not Blake Shelton. No, the person of the year is the #MeToo movement. I think really a great choice. Though a movement where sexual assault survivors are actually believed shouldn’t be on the cover of “Time” it should be on the cover of “It’s About Damn Time.” Last year’s winner was Donald Trump, and this year, he came in behind the #MeToo movement at number two. But that’s fine with Trump. He’s got a long history of creeping behind women.