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## **Perhabs I Will: A Content Analysis and Media Production Focusing on Contemporary Comedy and Comedians**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### ***PERHABS I WILL: A CONTENT ANALYSIS AND MEDIA PRODUCTION FOCUSING ON CONTEMPORARY COMEDY AND COMEDIANS***

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Northern Illinois University, 2022  
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This research examined the comedy talk shows *Billy on the Street* (2011-2017), *The Eric Andre Show* (2012-present), and *Ziwe* (2021-present) in order to discover the specific types of humor incorporated within their programs. This study searched for the presence of cringe, stand-up, surreal, sketch, and improvisational comedy in each show. The study analyzed each program using the benign violation theory and the hierarchy of influences model. A content analysis of 15 episodes selected across every program found at least three of the five genres present in their content. An additional purpose of this study was to produce a comparable program called *\*Perhabs I Will...* This show was created by the author to formulate her personal brand of comedy, based on discoveries made from observing the content of Billy Eichner, Eric Andre, and Ziwe Fumudoh. Simultaneously conducting research and producing *Perhabs I Will...* proved effective, as the study informed many decisions made in the production.

Supplemental File: *Perhabs I Will...Episode 3.mp4*. One episode of three.

**KEYWORDS:** Comedy, humor, talk show television, gen z, cringe, stand-up, surreal, sketch, improvisational, *Billy on the Street*, *The Eric Andre Show*, *Ziwe*

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
DEKALB, ILLINOIS

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*PERHAPS I WILL*: A CONTENT ANALYSIS AND MEDIA PRODUCTION  
FOCUSING ON CONTEMPORARY COMEDY  
AND COMEDIANS

BY

ABS ANDERSON  
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DOCUMENTATION OF A PRODUCTION THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE  
GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Thesis Director:  
Randy Caspersen

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“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis and accompanying production is dedicated to my comedic influences, those highlighted in this writing, and many whom I could not mention. This work is also dedicated to my future self—I love you, & I believe in you like no one else can.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Comedy is a universal language spoken by all humans, and an emotion that allows connections between them (Sauter et al., 2010). Psychologists have gathered that humor is very important in the lives of people (Goldstein and McGhee, 1983). Humor by nature has philosophical, psychological, and physiological elements. It possesses relevance to everyday life in aesthetic value, relation to truth, ethical standards, customs and norms, and use in literature (Raskin, 1985). Raskin (1985) states that “its dependency on the society and culture has occupied the minds of a great number of thinkers for centuries” (p. 326).

There is an important social dimension to humor that helps us collectively deal with cultural phenomena that trouble us (Berger, 1993). Attardo (2014) adds that humor may be an important coping mechanism when adapting to a difficult situation. Therefore, since humor is a coping mechanism, people who are able to find amusement amongst problems are more capable of dealing with stress (Booth-Butterfield, 2007). Humor has been found to be important for mental as well as physical health. Cognition is an important part of humor, particularly language and pragmatics (Booth-Butterfield, 2007). Humor is a critical element of a successful business culture (Attardo, 2014). Organizational ethnographers reported that they realized the importance of humor unintentionally (Attardo, 2014). Humor may also function as a valve to release stress and express anxiety or dissatisfaction with workplace realities (Attardo, 2014). On the psychological level, Herbert Spencer posited in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the natural muscle spasms induced by laughter exist to relieve stress of one’s psyche (Carus, 1898). Sypher (1956) writes



in *The Meanings of Comedy* that “laughter is an overflow of sympathy, an amiable feeling of identity with what is disreputably human, a relish for the whimsical, the odd, the private blunder” (p. 25). Stress relief results from experiencing humor and laughter, and it is a practical technique to utilize in day-to-day life as it is a natural human trait.

Based on the benefits of humor in society, it is valuable to acknowledge its importance. Humor and laughter have a successful legacy that has played an important role in human culture since the beginning of recorded time (Savage et al., 2017). The bible references these concepts in Proverbs 17:22, “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” Savage et al. (2017) clarifies that in the 10th century, people were able to discern between the positive therapeutic effects with the presence of joy versus the negative therapeutic effects in its absence.

Libera (2020) mentions that early philosophers drew many conclusions about the negative aspects of humor and laughter. The superiority theory of comedy developed by Plato and further by Thomas Hobbes posits that “the primary motivator for humor is triumph or pleasure at the pain, flaws, or indignities of others” (Libera, 2020, p. 602). Libera (2020) also posits that “humor results when our brains perceive things as coexisting in a manner that does not at first appear to make logical sense and that laughter or humor occurs when the discomfort caused by this incongruity is resolved in some way” (p. 603). However, there are other comedic theories that focus on constructive motivators for humor. Berger (1993) writes that “it is, in fact, the allusiveness of much of our humor that makes it such a useful and important means of getting at a given society’s interests and preoccupations” (p. 21). Much of being a comedian is understanding the ways in which humor is used, and as Berger (1993) writes, largely helps communicate in society.

Polimeni and Reiss (2006) mention that “Humor is the underlying cognitive process that frequently, but not necessarily, leads to laughter” (p. 347). They explain that laughter is a seizure-like activity that arises when the body cognitively detects humor, or when the body is physically stimulated (ex: tickling). However, Polimeni and Reiss (2006) write that based on this analysis, one can laugh without humorous stimulus as well as understand humor in the absence of laughter. Thus, one can laugh without a humorous stimulus, and similarly one can experience humor without laughter (Polimeni and Reiss, 2006). However, even though humor and laughter are similar, they are not synonymous (Polimeni and Reiss, 2006). These definitions differ in their natural form, as well as their respective roles in the millennial versus Generation Z age.

Humor has always had significance in society, but has not always been consistent in what is considered funny content. For example, generational humor varies between millennials to generation Z. *A Comic Road to Interiors, or the Pedagogical Matter of Gen Z Humor* says that “This comicality is nonsensical. It is absurd. It is strange. It does not just give off the feeling of a Dadaistic world but also a notion that the human condition is ever more unstable” (Gilbert, 2021, p. 70). Gen Z humor revolves around absurdity, as well as more detailed subcategories. Morreall (2009), writes that “‘humor’ and ‘amusement’ are not old, well-defined terms, but words given several new meanings...There simply is no single concept of humor and no single concept of amusement for which we can list necessary and sufficient conditions” (Morreall, 2009, pps. 63-64). Thus, the complex definition of humor combined with generational evolutions makes it evident that humor takes numerous forms. Comedians must recognize the style of comedy that sells during their years of performance, and in 2022, generation z humor is what’s popular. (Ehrlich, 2020).

This paper examines the television talk shows of three modern comedians that exhibit this broad style in their work. The three shows observed in this study are ‘Billy on the Street’ hosted by Billy Eichner, ‘The Eric Andre Show’, hosted by Eric Andre, and ‘Ziwe’, hosted by Ziwerekoru (Ziwe) Fumudoh. The purpose of this research is to observe which genres of humor are used and integrated into their television content.

### *Billy Eichner*

Billy Eichner was born in New York City, New York, in 1978 (IMDb), beginning his talk show host career in 2005. The first show he wrote and hosted was a stage show, an edgy program called *Creation Nation: A Live Talk Show* (Calhoun, 2005). The program blended stand-up comedy and obscure on the street interviews. In 2011, he produced his most well-known work, a game show entitled *Billy on the Street* (Calhoun, 2005). In this television show, Eichner finds strangers on the streets of New York City, plays games with them, and asks bizarre pop culture questions—frequently subjective. Eichner includes a different celebrity guest in each episode and often brings them around the city with him as he talks to strangers. *Billy on the Street* is what many people associate Eichner with. Eichner improvises most of *Billy on the Street*, and takes an insult comedy approach with many of his interviewees.

Filmed in the streets of New York, Billy Eichner searches for people to participate in his unique game show. Eichner prowls Manhattan asking hyper-specific questions about celebrities and pop culture (Ramisetti, 2021). Each episode is structured similarly, encompassing the same types of guests and recurring games. Eichner always includes at least one celebrity cameo, and several random pedestrians to partake in his gimmicks. In ‘For a Dollar,’ Eichner runs around rewarding bystanders with a dollar bill if he likes how they respond to his idiosyncratic questions

like “do you think Leonardo DiCaprio can be alone with his thoughts?” (Ramisetti, 2021).

‘Quizzed in the Face’ is a trivia game invented by Eichner where a contestant must guess the right answers in three rounds of pop-culture trivia. To win \$100, one must pass the third round of subjective questions and share Eichner’s opinion on inquiries like, “Kris Jenner or Geppetto?”

Aside from cash rewards, any other games played on the show win the contestant an obscure prize, such as a used bedspread or celebrity marionette. Ramisetti (2021) writes that “The show’s most defining feature, however, is Eichner’s faux-belligerent act. He yells at pretty much everyone — Oscar winners, college students and confused tourists” (para. 6).

Fallon (2017) states, “Billy Eichner has been screaming at strangers in the streets of New York for nearly a decade and has yet to be punched in the face. More, his drive-by shouting has had the complete adverse effect, building into the most unlikely of successful comedy careers” (para. 1). Eichner reports that people expect and demand him to be yelling all the time (Fallon, 2017). Eichner explains that Billy on the Street is simply a characterized persona, and that he “would be a serial killer if that’s the way [he] lived all the time” (Fallon, 2017, para. 7). Eichner explains that his show is successful because it forces the interviewees (including celebrity guests) to give spontaneous answers. He clarifies, “you need to get that shock response, or, not even shock, just a real response. It can’t seem canned; it can’t seem scripted” (AOL Build, 2016, 21:44).

### *Eric Andre*

Eric Andre, born in Boca Raton Florida, 1984 (IMDb), began his comedy career in 2003, and has acted in many supporting as well as lead roles in television and film. He is most known for *The Eric Andre Show*, a comedy created in 2012 for *Cartoon Network’s* late-night

programming called ‘Adult Swim’ (Foster, 2108). He released his stand-up comedy special *Legalize Everything* in 2020 and recently acted in *Bad Trip*, released in early 2021 (in addition to being a writer and producer on the film).

*The Eric André Show* is a cross between a talk show and a deconstructed parody of a talk show, starring an extreme version of the creator, Eric André. As the host, “Eric André is an unrelenting, never-slowng ball of chaos in human form” (Boone, 2020, para. 1). Andre jumps through the studio and destroys his set, with wild bits interspersed. His live band plays underneath this scene while his co-host Hannibal Buress watches from the sidelines. Boone (2020) writes that “André settles in to slowly and mentally upset his famous guests with bizarre stunts, random walk-ons from interesting characters and bad celebrity impersonators, and other surreal flights of fancy that are just barely allowed on television” (para. 1). A final layer of André’s show includes his on-the-street content, peppered between his interview and studio segments. Boone (2020) concludes that *The Eric Andre Show* is “a messy and hilarious package of free-form zaniness” (para 2).

The focus Andre’s man on the street segments “is to relentlessly confuse his subjects, rather than antagonize them” (Hersko, 2021, para. 8). Andre clarifies, ““It’s never about being mean or rude, it’s about being absurd and warping people’s reality to the point of psychosis. You want to continue to be likable or it’s not fun or funny to watch”” (Hersko, 2021, para. 8). With the ridiculous antics displayed by Andre, he admits that he keeps a security guard nearby whenever he films pranks for safety (Hersko, 2021, para. 8).

Libera (2020) notes that Andre utilizes tension and release within his intentional inclusions of cringe comedy into his TV show. Libera (2020) states that “the antics of comedians

like Andy Kaufman or Eric Andre eschew traditional release via punchline, instead building tension through deliberate provocation and awkwardness during performances as well as by creating discomfort among audience members” (p. 603). Andre intentionally acts in a way to confuse his interviewee, because it differentiates him from other comedians in a positive way.

### *Ziwe Fumudoh*

Ziwe Fumudoh was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1992 (IMDb), and started her comedy career as an intern for *Comedy Central* (Desta, 2020). She worked on the sets of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* as a junior in college, and as a senior, interned as a writer for *The Onion* and took *Improv Olympics* courses (LinkedIn). In 2018, she appeared monthly on *Pop Show* where she performed her original musical pieces. Ziwe created an internet show on YouTube titled *Baited with Ziwe* during COVID on Instagram Live, a show designed to ask complex questions about race and politics to receive an awkward or funny response from her guest (Desta, 2020). This show evolved into Showtime’s *Ziwe*.

In her show, she speaks frankly about race and white people’s fear to appear racist (Horton, 2021). She asks her guests questions like, “qualitatively, what do you like about black people?” or “how many black friends do you have?” Horton (2021) explains that you may experience second-hand cringe watching her guests try to answer the complex racial or political questions. Horton (2021) describes *Ziwe*’s structure as “20-minute episodes [that] splice in-studio interviews with musical numbers, sketches, and *Daily Show*-type field segments along broad episodic themes” (para. 6) A strong point of her show is her pinball-style interviews between awkward, endearing, and confrontational questioning (Horton, 2021).

*Ziwe*'s season one debut consists of six episodes, "full of absurd games, musical skits, and more of those uncomfortable interviews—ends up amounting to a creeping self-portrait of its namesake, rendered through flashy critiques of race and the media" (St. Felix, 2021, para. 4). *Ziwe*'s style revolves around complex questions, and she explains her interview process by saying, "How can I ask questions that confront people, but about race and politics and social-political structures?" (Late Night with Seth Meyers, 2021, 4:55). St. Felix (2021) writes, however, that the purpose of *Ziwe* "is to watch people squirm, not to hear them speak" (para 8).

Eichner, Andre, and Fumudoh all found their stride in television show hosting, each exhibiting a variety of genres within their comic style. Incorporating multiple styles of comedy can be used to demonstrate "either the overall kind of humor of a text or performance or that of an individual comic turn or moment within a larger piece" (Davis, 2014, p. 265). This permits the entertainer to incorporate multiple types of comedy into their routine as well as their personal interactions.

This study observes the comedic styles of Eichner, Andre, and Fumudoh by examining episodes of *Billy on the Street*, *The Eric Andre Show*, and *Ziwe*. The late-night comedy talk show produced by the researcher explores the genres explicated in this paper. This product will feature elements of each of the three comedians' styles and further emphasize the notion that humor is crucial to society. Three episodes will be produced of *Perhabs I Will...* that feature host Abs Anderson and various guests from Northern Illinois University. Additionally, these episodes weave moments of cringe, sketch, surreal, stand-up, and improvisational comedy throughout the content. The production is worthwhile as it succeeds in bringing amusement to its audience, which is the ultimate goal of comedy (Libera, 2020).

## *Research Plan*

The second chapter will cover the theoretical framework and literature review. Chapter three will review the methods. The fourth will report the results. The fifth chapter will explain the thesis student's production. The sixth and final chapter will focus on the discussion as well as application for the thesis student's comedy process. Chapters five and six will help explain the production completed alongside this thesis. Ultimately, this comedy content will be analyzed for integration in the student's accompanying production. The initial goal of this research study is to address the following three research questions:

*RQ<sub>1</sub>*: What genres of comedy are displayed in the comedy talk shows *Billy on the Street*, *The Eric Andre Show*, and *Ziwe*?

*RQ<sub>2</sub>*: Which genres are the most prominent in each program?

*RQ<sub>3</sub>*: Are there differences in genre distribution among the three shows?



## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

While it is important to note that generational humor exists and affects performance, a comedian need not target an audience from their generation. Although Eichner, Andre, and Fumudoh were born far closer to the ‘millennial generation’ range (roughly 1981-1996, *Pew Research Center*), their style of humor reflects a type that is more progressive. Timmeney-Tracey (2022) writes that *Ziwe*’s purpose is “to its to tackle stigmas around White people’s discomfort surrounding race through satire and pop culture innuendos that appeal to younger millennial and Gen Z demographics” (para. 9). The same demographic is reflected in the audiences of *Billy on the Street* and *The Eric Andre Show*. While all three of these comedians were born in millennial era, they are aware that their comedy appeals to younger millennials and generation Z.

According to Koltun (2018), millennials and Gen Z are attracted to dark, disruptive, and absurdist forms of humor. Seiter (2021) writes that these groups are: “very much like... aaay [funny ‘finger guns’ gesture] I went to my therapist today and told them I wanted to off myself, and they almost made me go to the mental hospital [delivered with humorous, casual tone and laughter]” (p. 40). What was formerly viewed as mentally unstable is now viewed as amusing.

Steiner (2021) continues to explain the importance of absurd details in comedy because the unusual and exaggerated content enhances perceived humor. Steiner (2021) says that the outlandish outsells the mundane. For example, a story about someone brushing their teeth with

mustard may have a lot more entertainment value than one about someone brushing their teeth with toothpaste.

To make humorous intent clear, nonverbal cues can be utilized. For instance, speakers can use silly voices or funny sounds to display humor (Seiter, 2021). On the contrary, humorous intent of the performer does not assume humorous perception by the audience. Seiter (2021) states that “comedic intentionality requires that effort be put in on the part of the source to make humor obvious in the message, either by using playful meta-signals or intentionally incorporating silly or absurd elements into the message” (p. 53). Zafarris (2019) states that adding silly and absurd details are effective in storytelling.

While absurdity is a current fad, it has not always been considered funny, harkening back to the constant evolution of comedic genres. Polimeni and Reiss (2006) say that “something evolutionarily positive seems to be occurring around humor and laughter – another reason to invite adaptationist thinking. Foremost, laughter is pleasurable and, consequently, a reinforceable behavior” (p. 348). Comedy and its respective genres change and grow in order to bring more pleasure to mankind. Research by Polimeni and Reiss (2006) discusses that evolutionary humor theories have displayed potential adaptive traits of humor and laughter.

Therefore, it is important to note that genres and styles of humor shift, as does each of their audience appeal. According to *The Encyclopedia of Humor Studies*, genres of comedy are “fuzzy, shapeshifting concepts” (p. 265). While comedy is itself a genre, it also possesses many subcategories. Further, these ‘subcategories’ are also labeled as ‘genres’ (Davis, 2014). However, the fluidity of comedy makes it difficult to identify singular types, thus, genres amalgamate with one another and additionally, adopt their own sub forms.

Davis (2014) notes that the criteria followed for categorizing genres include “form, content, style, purpose, and time and place of performance” (p. 264). *The Encyclopedia of Humor Studies* argues that the premise of comic style is more significant than comic genre. Comic style is more valuable because it prevents the comedian from being tied to one genre. This allows for more opportunity within the realm of humor as well as a more eclectic brand for the performer.

Davis (2014) writes that comic style variety is motivated by several factors, including intent and purpose of joking. Davis (2014) expounds on this, explaining that humor can be “critical and morally serious in satire and absurdist comedy, and more accepting of human follies and foibles in farce and low comedy, with comedy of manners somewhere in between” (p. 266). This analysis will not delve deep into the intent and purpose of each comedian, but it will explore the range of comic styles exhibited in each talk show.

Gordon (2015) reports that “our sense of humor enables us to laugh not only at other people, absurd situations, and the incongruous incidents that we witness but also at ourselves. Humor allows us to view the world from a perspective that is amusing and comical rather than serious, defiant, or sad” (p. 372). The idea of humorous arousal from incongruous situations can be explained in part by a comedic theory called the ‘Benign Violation Theory.’

### *Benign Violation Theory*

The main premise of the benign violation theory is that it breaks traditional norms of comedy and reality in order to trigger a humorous reaction. It originates from three former theories: the superiority theory, the relief theory, and the incongruity theory (Hye-Knudsen, 2018). The superiority theory claims that laughter is anti-social and exudes feelings of

superiority (Morreall, 2009). This theory became more and more irrelevant as the relief theory and incongruity were developed, arguing that laughter is *not* anti-social. The relief theory serves a similar function to the nervous system in that laughter is a way to expel nervous or uncomfortable energy that we find unnecessary (Morreall, 2009). The incongruity theory (in relation to humor), as stated in the name, implies that something is funny when it does not align with typical norms. Libera (2020) writes that the incongruity theory is the most broadly popular major philosophical theory of humor. Morreall (2009) notes, “Once we have experienced something incongruous, of course, we no longer expect *it* to fit our normal mental patterns. Nonetheless, it still violates our normal mental patterns and normal expectations. That is how we can be amused by the same thing more than once” (p. 14). However, since evolutionary humor theories display adaptive traits of humor and laughter (Polimeni and Reiss, 2006), incongruity based humor may evolve as well.

Puns are a lesson of incongruity. The words in these types of jokes are initially incongruent in context, but possess an additional logical meaning in a separate context. A joke that demonstrates this phenomenon is that “‘Light travels faster than sound. That’s why some people seem bright until they speak.’ An initial mental image of a person glowing brightly’ makes more sense when we understand it as referring to intelligence” (Libera, 2020, p. 603).

The benign violation theory therefore evolved from the incongruity theory as it builds upon the notion of breaking traditional norms, but is specific to comedy. Warren and McGraw (2014) suggest that “The violations necessary for humor must have a negative valence instead of simply departing incongruously from one’s expectations or mental patterns, hence why slipping on a banana peel is often considered humorous while winning the lottery is not” (p. 8). Cicero

explores this concept in his text *On the Orator*, stating, “The most common kind of joke is that in which we expect one thing, and another is said; here our own disappointed expectation makes us laugh” (Chapter 63, p. 255, para 2). Therefore, what is considered ‘funny’ is dependent either on how a statement or action aligns with traditional norms of comedy and reality, or breaks them.

To clarify further, the benign violation theory does not exclusively include immoral types of behaviors. McGraw and Warner (2014) report, “A dirty joke trades on moral or social violations, but it’s only going to get a laugh if the person listening is liberated enough to consider risqué subjects such as sex okay to talk about” (p. 11). Sarcasm is also considered a violation as it disrupts conversational norms by inferring the opposite of what is stated. However, it is deemed unsuccessful (not causing amusement) if the listener does not observe the exaggerated tone or grasp the intended meaning (McGraw and Warner, 2014). McGraw and Warren (2010) hypothesize that for the benign violation to work, people must see the behavior as violating and benign. Therefore, if the behavior is not interpreted as both, it will not be amusing.

Whether or not a joke is perceived as a benign violation relies on relative distance between the joke-teller, the joke, and the joke-listener (Kant and Norman, 2019). Social distance is important to consider as relationship, age, sex, and cultural group are all variables in joke success. To illustrate, Kant and Norman (2019) say that if a male stranger made a sexist joke to a woman, it may come across as malign and offensive, whereas the same joke performed by a close female friend in her group would be funny. Similarly, Kant and Norman (2019) write, “imagine your grandfather attempting a joke, using a term which is insulting among millennials. If you attribute a well-meaning intent and infer it to be unknowingly done due to distance to the lingo of the youth, you may still laugh” (p. 5). Therefore, it is noteworthy to recognize that

depending on any of the factors stated above, jokes are perceived differently by dissimilar parties.

In explaining this theory, tickling is a helpful illustration. By nature, tickling is violating someone's personal space, but in a benign way. No one is able to tickle themselves because it is not violating. McGraw and Warner (2014) point out, "Nor will people laugh if a creepy stranger tries to tickle them, since nothing about that is benign" (p. 11). The benign violation theory is a useful concept to decipher avenues of humor because many forms of comedy can fall under its umbrella.

The three talk shows observed in this study, *Billy on the Street*, *The Eric Andre Show*, and *Ziwe* thoroughly reflect the benign violation theory. These programs are relevant to the researcher's study and production as they aim to break traditional social norms throughout their performance (Goodwine, 2020). These three comedians riddle their content with diverse genres of humor in order to disrupt audience expectation. Billy Eichner formulates questions that are aggressive and complex (Vincentelli, 2014), Eric Andre dresses as obscure characters and approaches people on the street (Gillespie, 2016), and Ziwe Fumudoh challenges white people on critical race issues (Blake, 2021). These shows are thus worthy of studying for the purpose of humor research.

Similarly, in the late-night comedy talk show *Perhabs I Will...* the benign violation theory is evident throughout each episode. Instances of this are exhibited in the interview questions akin to "Where is JFK?" The theory is also present in out-of-studio segments with questions like "do you take your cat to a speech therapist?" Additionally, nonverbal actions can reflect the benign violation theory in the activity and sketch portions of each episode. For

example, instead of bringing milk to the guest after forcing them to partake in hot sauce shots, he's given a bag of marshmallows. A sketch example of the benign violation theory in *Perhabs I Will...* (unbeknownst to the guest) is where a lookalike for both the host and guest enter the studio in the middle of the interview and begin to mimic what is being said by the speaker at the same time. It is both harmless and a violation of the show structure. The concept of routines in media can be further explained with the Hierarchy of Influences model.

### *Hierarchy of Influences Model*

While the hierarchy of influences model is most commonly utilized to examine patterns in news (Reese, 2019). This model considers a level-of-analysis perspective, defining five levels: social systems level, social institutions level, media organizations level, routine practices level, and the individuals level. Reese (2019) explains that this model can be visualized as concentric circles, starting broadly with the outside ring, and ending with the individual level at the core. He expresses that personal characteristics matter, and directly correlate to the health of the entire piece (Reese, 2019).

The most general level is social systems. This is defined as “the structure of relationships among people and the institutions they create” (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014, p. 64). The next rung down on the model is social institutions. This level assists in comprehension of variables affecting media, which allows humans to understand it as a social practice (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). The middle level revolves around organizations, and introduces a “conceptual model for thinking about organizations...tackling organizational impact on media content” (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014, p. 130). The routines level focuses on what gives the media worker guidance. There are three sources of routines as explained by Shoemaker and Reese (2014): “audiences,

organizations, and suppliers of content” (p. 164). Last but not least, the heart of the hierarchy of influences model stipulates the individuals level. This final piece of the model asks how creators of media content are as people, what their personalities are, and how their unique traits affect their creation.

While Shoemaker and Reese (2014) base their study of levels using journalism as the template, the model can also be applied more broadly to media and thus utilized to observe patterns in comedians. The two levels focused on in this study are the routine and individual levels because of their relevance to the accompanying production. Routines and individualism are two relevant precepts present in *Perhabs I Will...* The episodes each follow a structure in sequence and content, and the personality of the host, while broad, is evident and consistent throughout.

To explicate further, routines are standard repeated practices, in this case, used to create content. The routines exhibited in content influence how programs are professionally run. This level is especially important due to audience expectation (or violation of said expectation). Further, without a set routine, the benign violation theory cannot be successful. Victor Raskin (1985) has used a script-oriented method to study verbal semantics of humor. He writes that “the scripts are designed to describe certain standard routines, processes, etc. (Raskin, 1985, p. 325). For many comedians, the scripts are required for a successful performance, and this becomes a critical part to the genre they contribute to (ex: sketch, stand-up, etc.). Some items in the production process that might exemplify routines are show structure, creative vision, edit, and of course, content. In order to maintain consistency, these routines would be upheld in a programs’



production process. Aside from routines presented in a performer's work, content is additionally influenced by actions of the creator, displaying a level of individualism (Tuchman, 1972).

The second level explored in this study, the individuals level, allows for more creative freedom. Even with routines upheld, the comedian is able to add fresh elements to the production using different characteristics of their personality. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) clarify that while individual factors affect content, the influence they have "are not categorical, fixed, or determinative as they once were" (p. 205). So, although they are more flexible than ever before, personal identity still impacts media content (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014). The individual level is majorly reliant on artist to audience communication, as well as the critical ratio between comic behavior/dialogue versus plot development (Mintz, 1985). In comedy, this means that the performer's success is reliant upon their traits and how they align with the needs of the project. The individual level influences how a comedian performs, what their process is, and the resulting product, in turn reflecting the personality and character of the performer. Research by Deuze (2007) extends his analysis of media work to incorporate film and television production, among advertising, journalism, and computer and video game development. Thus, based on this finding by Deuze (2007) alongside the work of Shoemaker and Reese (2014), the individual perspective of the comedic performer in film and television should be taken seriously.

In terms of routine, the format of *Perhabs I Will...* remains steadfast across each episode, as well as editing techniques and scripted interview questions. The genres woven throughout *Billy on the Street*, *The Eric Andre Show*, and *Ziwe* are consistently displayed in *Perhabs I Will...*, which is influenced by these programs. This sort of comedy content is not limited to one genre, as each of these talk shows intertwine multiple styles of comedy throughout the episodes.

The repetition of comedy genres also reflects a level of routine, although the execution tends to vary. On the individual plane, the genres included in performance as well as personal character traits, allow the comedian's personality to shine through in the content.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

To answer the research questions, this study relies on a content analysis of three comedic talk show programs, *Billy on the Street*, *The Eric Andre Show*, and *Ziwe*. Content analyses are frequently used in communications to categorize and describe all forms of content (Riffe et al., 2014). Neuendorf (2017) writes that a “Content analysis may be briefly defined as the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics” (p. 1). Weber (1990) reports that a content analysis “uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text” (p. 9). Since content analyses are a method of observation (Kerlinger, 1973), it is suitable to use this research technique for learning about comedic genres in talk shows. Since all visual media revolve around production (a form of content), the usage of a content analysis is more advantageous than alternate methods for this study. A content analysis is beneficial in the visual media realm since “one cannot study mass communication without studying content” (Riffe et al., 2014, p. 31). The study searches for instances of five genres: sketch, cringe, surreal, stand-up/performance, and improvisational comedy in the aforementioned programs.

#### *Sample*

*Billy on the Street* and *The Eric Andre Show* have 53 episodes published across five seasons. Since *Ziwe* was created in 2021, only nine episodes have been released across two seasons. For the purpose of this study, roughly 10% of the episodes of each program were observed. A total of 15 episodes were chosen using a stratified sample. According to Riffe, Lacy,

and Fico (2014), a stratified sample breaks a population into smaller groups sampling randomly within the new division(s). Six episodes of *Billy on the Street* and *The Eric Andre Show* were observed, one from each season, and a random sixth. Three episodes of *Ziwe* were examined, one from each of the two seasons, and a random third. Riffe et al. (2014) explains that stratified sampling works best for accommodating changes over time. Since these programs run over the course of several years, a stratified sample suits this research better. Since a completely random sample would give any member of the population an equal chance of selection, it would not offer the variety of content from each season of these talk shows. Episodes were selected at random *from each season* in order to demonstrate the shows' evolution.

Sampling must be done by first “selecting a group of content units to analyze” (Riffe et al., 2014, p. 72). The unit of analysis used for this study is the segment. Each show is divided into clear segments such as stand-up routines, interviews, on the street bits, and games. Typically, these segments are separated by a hard editing cut. Thus, each were observed individually for genre distribution. The researcher will code for how many segments are present in each show. If the same segment occurs twice, it will only be counted as one. For example, *Billy on the Street* includes a recurring game on each episode called ‘For a Dollar.’ Although the questions change, the premise remains the same. Therefore, ‘For a Dollar’ counts as one segment for coding. After counting segments, the researcher will code for the genres that are incorporated. The genre that occurs in the greatest number of segments will be considered the leading genre of an episode.

## *Research of Genres*

The five categories to be examined in each segment are cringe, sketch, surreal, stand-up, and improvisational comedy. Based on research by Kitchener (2015) and Hye-Knudsen (2018), “cringe comedy makes us feel too much of something that we would usually not want to feel at all” (p. 14). This genre can be classified in content where the audience receives second-hand embarrassment from watching a character doing something embarrassing, thus evoking an uncomfortable, cringey feeling. Therefore, this subcategory of comedy is named after the feeling it gives (Hye-Knudsen, 2018).

This research identifies sketch comedy as brief humorous acts or scenes that must be pre-planned (Brigham, 2020). However, while preparation prior to performance is necessary, sketches do not need to be scripted. According to Upchurch (1994) “there have been, almost without pause, wildly popular shows featuring sketch comedy since the inception of television” (p. 2). *Saturday Night Live!* is an example of sketch comedy, although these are all rehearsed. Sketches are possible without prior rehearsal but must be planned for the content. There are a number of sketch types, one being the continually developing sketch. Upchurch (1994) writes, “With this technique a sketch begins, but is interrupted, only to return every so often” (pgs. 76-77). Sketches can either be a onetime occurrence or repeated throughout the content. For example, Eric Andre reincorporates several of his sketches throughout his program. Andre dresses up in a green morph suit for his bit on the street, ‘bird up,’ which is repeated in many episodes throughout his five seasons.

Surreal comedy offends consumers less than genres like satire and irony (Ojeda et al., 2015). It is odd, but not typically offensive. According to WittyCompanion, a blog revolving

around comedy and self-improvement, discusses surreal comedy, which is often referred to as absurd comedy. The blog writes that surreal comedy “revolves around illogical situations, behaviors, and absurd characters that make you laugh simply because they are ridiculous and unexpected” (*WittyCompanion*, 2021, para. 2). This comedic genre can be categorized through bizarre extremes in ordinary situations, often using the element of surprise, or unpredictability (*WittyCompanion*, 2021).

Stand-up comedy is a live, public form of entertainment, typically performed in front of strangers (Rutter, 2015). This form of comedy is planned and outlined. The only improvisation that occurs in this genre is through inflection and actions in the performance. Leep (2013) reports that stand-up comics sometimes include an off the cuff comment to the audience to mix with their finely polished routine. Therefore, Leep (2013) explains that live stand up cannot ever be replicated in the same fashion. Rutter (2015) writes that stand-up can be learned and taught, which means that there is an established pattern behind it. Stand-up can be recognized by a monologue performance at a handheld microphone (and microphone stand) comprising of a series of jokes or stories by one person.

Improvisational comedy can fall under a somewhat nebulous area. One cannot be entirely certain whether or not something is ‘improv.’ However, there are some signs to be aware of while searching for this genre of comedy. In order to determine if content is impromptu, off the cuff reactions to something said or done can be indicators of improvisational comedy (Ringstrom, 2008). Additionally, if the comedian is performing without a script, notecards, or signs of reading from a teleprompter, this content can qualify as improvisational (Sawyer, 1999). Leep (2013) writes about the diverse meanings of ‘improv,’ and how its definition differs from

artist to artist. Improvisational performances often seem sketch-like in nature, although ‘improv’ is frequently defined as games that have rules. These games are conducted without scripts and usually are based on audience suggestions. Leep (2013) writes, “Taking this a step further, other groups see improv as the ultimate ensemble work, creating a spontaneous connection with the other players on stage during unplanned scene work” (p. 1). While this is the definition most know for improv comedy, a simpler alternative will be used for this study. Improv is an unscripted form of comedy (Tanner and Carter-Stone, 2020) where quick decisions must be made during performance (Westerlund et al., 2015). Thom (2000) notes that “improvisation has no existence outside of its practice” (Thom, 2000, p. 310).

### *Coding Instructions*

This research requires coding multiple episodes of comedy talk shows. The author served as the primary coder for this study. However, for intercoder reliability purposes, a second coder—a recent media studies graduate of Northern Illinois University was trained to perform the content analysis. The author instructed the secondary coder to watch each episode entirely and count the number of segments incorporated. The second coder was told to report which genre they felt was the most prominent throughout each segment. The coder then marked every moment a genre was present in each segment (using the definitions listed below), and reported how many times they occurred in the event of a draw. Finally, the leading genre of the episode was designated by tallying which genre was most prominent in the most number of segments. observing which genre was present in the most number of segments.

The researcher discussed the genre definitions with the second coder in order that he understood what was to be evaluated. The coder was instructed to search for the presence of the five genres in each segment of each episode.

A pilot test was completed with the author and coder to set coding expectations. Before conducting the pilot study, the coder was given the research done on each program. This included information about the inception and progress of the talk show as well as background information on each comedian and their productions. In addition, the coder was provided with extensive literature about each genre to explain the history of the comedic styles. Finally, the coder was given the coding sheet and the information below. To begin the pilot study, the researcher watched one episode (not from the sample) with the other coder as part of the training to answer any questions. In order to reduce miscommunication, category definition disagreements were discussed in training (Riffe et al., 2014). In order to ensure higher reliability, the coding scheme (Neuendorf, 2017) was reviewed after the first training session to make any adjustments. In order to prevent coder fatigue (Neuendorf, 2017), the schedule for coding was spread out across two weeks.

The coding protocol for this study was to first understand that multiple elements of comedy are present in these programs. For instance, if Billy Eichner screams at a normal pedestrian for their answer to his question, while it may be impromptu, it will be categorized as surreal. Since most of Eichner's content is improvised, moments of surrealism will take priority. If more than one subgenre is present in one segment, the coder will need to choose the most dominant category. The most prominent genre in each segment is determined by how many times each definition arises throughout, making it the core genre. For example, if there are four



moments of cringe comedy, two moments of surreal comedy, and one moment of sketch, cringe comedy will be considered the leading genre of that segment. Sketch and stand-up comedy may incorporate notes of other genres, but for the purposes of this study, sketch and stand-up comedy will take precedence during coding. For example, if Eric Andre does stand up that is simultaneously cringe, it will be classified as stand-up. Sketch and stand-up are specific categories of performance, so, an adjective like ‘cringe’ won’t dictate the coding for a stand-up routine. One can determine improvisational comedy by observing reactions from host after the interviewee speaks or acts. Although improvisational has broad criteria for definition, during an improvisational segment, there may be a more primary form of comedy. Again, Billy Eichner incorporates improv comedy throughout his program, but his inclusions of surrealism may dominate the episode. Genres of comedy were identified by the coders based on the following definitions.

**Cringe comedy:** Evokes an uncomfortable or second-hand embarrassment-type feeling. This subgenre can be simultaneously present with surreal or improvisational comedy. If all three are included in one segment, select which genre occurs the highest number of times.

**Sketch comedy:** Brief humorous skits or recurring bits/actions throughout the program. These can be classified as sketch comedy with or without scripts. If a segment qualifies as sketch, it will be coded first priority before the other genres present.

**Surreal comedy:** Absurd actions, characters, or dialog that is unexpected or disrupts social norms. This genre can be present at the same time as cringe or improvisational comedy.

**Stand-up comedy:** Scripted comedy consisting of jokes or stories, performed by one individual, standing up with a handheld microphone. Like sketch, stand-up comedy takes precedence in coding before the cringe, surreal, or improvisational categories.

**Improvisational comedy:** Speech or actions that appear to be created in the moment, without prior planning or rehearsal. These are often reactions to whatever unfolds in the segment. Both cringe and surreal comedy can occur within an improvisational moment. Improvisational comedy is only considered the leading genre if it has a stronger presence than either cringe or surreal comedy in a segment.

For computing the intercoder reliability of the pilot test, both coders independently coded a single episode of *The Eric Andre Show* (S2E3) to find the level of agreement.

After the training session, the results were reviewed to determine the level of agreement on the coding decisions made. This includes the number of segments, the leading genre of each segment, the leading genre of each episode, and the number of times each genre was included throughout each episode. Using Holsti's (1969) formula for intercoder reliability, the percentage of agreement was 100% for number of segments. The number of segments was recorded at a 100% level of agreement with nine segments (S) each. The leading comedic genre of each segment was perfectly matched with surreal for S1, stand-up for S2, sketch for S3, cringe for S4, sketch for S5, sketch for S6, cringe for S7, sketch for S8, and surreal for S9. The percentage of agreement for the leading genre of the pilot test was also 100%. Both coders found sketch comedy to be the leading genre (100%). The level of agreement dipped slightly in counting the number of genres included in the segments. The calculations for level of agreement with each

genre was 33% for cringe comedy, 83% for sketch comedy, 89% for surreal comedy, 100% for stand-up comedy, and 75% for improvisational comedy.

After the pilot test, the significantly lower-level of agreement on the cringe genre was discussed and explained again to the second coder. The author and coder attempted to fix this issue by further distinguishing between surreal and cringe moments (the most similar in comedic style of the five genres) by watching an episode of *Billy on the Street*, and coding it together. When there was still a dispute on definitions of either cringe or surreal comedy, and given the low level of agreement for cringe comedy, the categories were merged to create a new genre, ‘cringe/surreal.’ Further discussions between the coders revealed difficulties in coding every comedic ‘moment.’ Therefore, the decision was made to eliminate the coding procedures for ‘moments’ in the full study, and RQ<sub>3</sub>, which addressed differences in genre distribution between the three programs. Therefore, the research questions examined in the full study were:

*RQ<sub>1</sub>*: What genres of comedy are displayed in the comedy talk shows *Billy on the Street*, *The Eric Andre Show*, and *Ziwe*?

*RQ<sub>2</sub>*: Which genres are most prominent in each program?

Given the changes, the coding procedure for the full study asked coders to count the number of segments per episode, to report which genre was most prominent in each segment and in each episode. The leading genre of an episode is contingent on which genre is prominent in the most number of segments.

The intercoder reliability, using Holsti’s (1969) method, was 94.7% for identifying a program segment, and 100% for the leading genre of an episode. The most prominent genre in a segment was calculated with an intercoder reliability of 70.1%, down from perfect agreement in

the pilot study. However, given the complexity of the coding decisions, this level of intercoder reliability was deemed acceptable.

## Chapter 4 Results

A total of 15 episodes (N = 15) were examined in this study; 40% (n = 6) of *Billy on the Street*, 40% (n = 6) of *The Eric Andre Show*, and 20% (n = 3) of *Ziwe*. These episodes were selected using a stratified sample; at least one episode was selected from each season. *Billy on the Street* has 5 seasons, *The Eric Andre Show* has 5 seasons, and *Ziwe* has 2 seasons. An episode was selected from each season of every program, plus one random extra. The following was analyzed from *Billy on the Street*: S1E8, S2E11, S3E3, S4E4, S5E2, and S5E5. Six episodes were also examined of *The Eric Andre Show*: S1E6, S2E4, S3E1, S3E8, S4E1, and S5E2. Three episodes were examined of *Ziwe*: S1E6, S2E4, and S2E6.

Research Question 1 analyzed the genres displayed in the three comedy talk shows. Results found that *Billy on the Street* displayed cringe/surreal and improvisational comedy, *The Eric Andre Show* demonstrated all of the researched genres of comedy, and *Ziwe* contained only the cringe/surreal genre of comedy in the episodes examined (See Table 1).

**Table 1: Genres Discovered in Each Program**

<i>GENRES</i>	<i>BILLY ON THE STREET</i>	<i>THE ERIC ANDRE SHOW</i>	<i>ZIWE</i>
<i>Cringe/Surreal</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Sketch</i>	✓	✓	
<i>Stand-up</i>		✓	
<i>Improvisational</i>	✓	✓	✓

Research Question 2 examined the distribution of each genre with respect to each program. Table 2 displays the total number of times that a genre lead a segment in each program. The four genres appeared a total of 135 times (N=135) across the 15 episodes. Table 2 records the dispersion of segments' leading genres. *Billy on the Street* exhibited Cringe/Surreal comedy as the leading genre with 76% ( $n = 29$ ), *The Eric Andre Show* also exhibited Cringe/Surreal comedy as the leading genre with 53% ( $n = 32$ ), and *Ziwe* exhibited Cringe/Surreal comedy as the leading genre with 100% ( $n = 37$ ). However, the cringe/surreal category was not the only genre present in *Billy on the Street* or *The Eric Andre Show*. Along with the cringe/surreal genre, the former included improvisational comedy, and the latter incorporated sketch, stand-up, and improvisational comedy.

**Table 2: Leading Genres of Segments (N=136)**

	<i>Billy on the Street</i> ( $n=38$ )	<i>The Eric Andre Show</i> ( $n=61$ )	<i>Ziwe</i> ( $n=37$ )
<i>Cringe/Surreal</i>	29 (76%)	33 (54%)	37 (100%)
<i>Sketch</i>	0 (0%)	20 (33%)	0 (0%)
<i>Stand-up</i>	0 (0%)	6 (10%)	0 (0%)
<i>Improvisational</i>	9 (24%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)

The genre that occurred the most times in each episode was deemed the leading genre of the episode. The primary genre found in these talk show episodes was cringe/surreal, even though *Billy on the Street* and *The Eric Andre Show* displayed other genre(s) as well. Each of the shows examined in this study would primarily reflect a cringe/surreal style of comedy based on the episodes observed (Table 3).

**Table 3: Leading Genres of Episodes (N=15)**

<i>Genres</i>	<i>Billy on the Street (n=6)</i>	<i>The Eric Andre Show (n=6)</i>	<i>Ziwe (n=3)</i>
<i>Cringe/Surreal</i>	6 (100%)	5 (83.3%)	3 (100%)
<i>Sketch</i>	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0%)
<i>Stand-Up</i>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Improvisational</i>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

## Chapter 5

### Perhabs I Will...

This three-episode series was created, written, hosted, and edited by me, Abs Anderson, in order to formulate my own brand of comedy. Furthermore, *Perhabs I Will...* was developed to demonstrate and celebrate the importance of comedy in entertainment. As this chapter relates to the thesis student's personal production and process, first person will be used to discuss the program produced.

I drew from the choices made by Billy Eichner, Eric Andre, and Ziwe Fumudoh to inform and develop my own brand of comedy. Reviewing their comedic styles was the main goal of this content analysis. While there were many other comedic influences to consider, this diverse group of three was selected because they created similar content. The research examined four genres in established television shows that I intended to include in my own program. These genres are cringe/surreal comedy, sketch comedy, stand-up comedy, and improvisational comedy. Ultimately, this study was conducted to glean attributes of humor that could potentially be incorporated in *Perhabs I Will...* *Perhabs I Will...* uniquely wove all four genres throughout each episode, and also included elements not inspired by the programs observed in this content analysis.

#### *Pre-Production*

*Perhabs I Will...* was simply a concept in fall 2021 when I needed to firmly decide on a production thesis subject. My dream since I was a teenager has been to be a comedian. The idea



of making people laugh as a career seemed both appealing and possible. I remembered watching *Saturday Night Live!* skits growing up where I watched some of my favorite actors achieving my life goal. I was introduced to forms of comedy aside from sketch as a teenager. I enjoyed the rhythm of talk shows, and started watching *Billy on the Street*, followed by *The Eric Andre Show*. I could picture myself as a comedic host, but knew I would adopt a different style than these two programs. *Ziwe* was a newer talk show program I became interested in watching while brainstorming for *Perhabs I Will...* *Ziwe Fumudoh* seemed to balance out the aggressiveness of Billy Eichner and the chaos of Eric Andre. With my three programs of inspiration chosen for research, I decided to make *Perhabs I Will...* more than just a concept, and started to work on every detail to make it reality.

The late-night talk show I imagined started as just a simple interview with a guest. However, *Perhabs I Will...* evolved into something much greater with each episode of *Billy on the Street*, *The Eric Andre Show*, and *Ziwe* I watched. Humor is used for social bonding (Attardo, 2014), which is why it was important for me, as a comedian, to understand who I was inspired by, and how I have developed my own sense of humor.

As I researched the three talk shows and the genres within, I took notes on what I could write into my program. I brainstormed questions to ask my guest, bits to perform, and activities/games to play with my guest. Much of this material was expressed on a vision board I created.

The vision board was the first item put together for visual inspiration. I printed pictures of personal favorite comedians, screen grabs of sketches I enjoyed, and stand-up specials I wanted to try to emulate. This board also contained dozens of ideas for out-of-studio segments, interview

questions, activities to do with strangers, and games to play with my guest. Much of this board became reality for *Perhabs I Will...* The board was also riddled with tasks and reminders to be done for the production. Finally, I included some of my former projects on this vision board because my previous videos majorly contributed to how I perform today.

When I first began attending Northern Illinois University in 2018, I started a YouTube channel and posted my first video—a class project I made interviewing students about campus issues. This grew into a series I called ‘Abs on the Street’— a low budget, online-only interpretation of *Billy on the Street*. This web series was incorporated into *Perhabs I Will...* in two ways. First, the out-of-studio segments in *Perhabs I Will...* occurred in settings similar to those in *Abs on the Street*. Second, the interview segments in *Perhabs I Will...* asked questions comparable to those in *Abs on the Street*. For example, *Abs on the Street* asks, “have you ever peed in a pool?” and *Perhabs I Will...* asks “how many daddy issues do you have?” It was my hope and intention to continue having uncomfortable interviewee interactions in my program.

Aside from comedy-related materials, I included pictures of my friends and family members on the vision board. I thought this was important to keep as I have grown in my comedy from these non-celebrity influences as well. I put up screen grabs of some comedic TikTok videos that my sister and I created, and pinned a group picture of my best friends, who have been my audience for comedy since middle school. These people were my biggest supporters, so I found it appropriate to put them next to other people I admired.

While conducting research, I fantasized about creating my own comedic genre, based on a trending term: ‘out-of-pocket.’ Since no scholarly research has been done on this term in relation to comedy, I attempted to apply it specifically to this study by using what has been

written. Out-of-pocket behavior is “Doing or saying something inappropriate...It can refer to behavior considered unconventional, inappropriate, or just plain wrong” (Fogarty, 2020). Since *Perhabs I Will...* utilizes a great amount of generation z humor, and ‘out-of-pocket’ has not been defined with regard to comedy since before 2015 (Fogarty, 2020), it tracks that out-of-pocket can be used to describe the program. This new term would be used to describe comedic content that included every genre studied for this content analysis. The original goal of my show was to include cringe, sketch, surreal, stand-up, and improvisational comedy—identifying it as out-of-pocket for incorporating all five genres. I hypothesized that *Perhabs I Will...* would be the only program under the out-of-pocket category, including the shows I studied. However, *The Eric Andre Show* exhibited each of the five genres, thus categorizing his content as out-of-pocket comedy as well.

### *Production*

Spring 2022 was a demanding semester with more specific writing, shooting, and editing the production. This show’s production was possible through the advanced narrative production course at Northern Illinois University. This course taught the most important elements of film production, which were put to practice during the second half of the semester. The COMS 427 media students served as crew for NIU theater student reels, as well as any other projects the professor deemed possible and relevant. I set aside the spring 2022 semester to shoot *Perhabs I Will...*, and it was luckily chosen to be a COMS 427 project. The students served as the crew (and some on screen talent) for the production. This was valuable for them in terms of learning and practicing the ins and outs of television production, as well as demonstrative of newer forms of comedy, like Gen Z humor. The space used for this production was a studio at Northern

Illinois University, which has an adjacent control room and several green screen options along the walls. While studio equipment was available, more advanced camera and production cinematic kits were used for shooting.

This experience was invaluable since I was able to film alongside a crew and of course, perform my comedy live for the first time. The production process was highly motivating since I could bounce ideas off of my peers and physically be in the studio. Many students offered suggestions for comedic bits that even made it into the content. A recurring character in *Perhabs I Will...* was classmate and undergraduate student Jon Glienke, who appeared on screen in each episode as a different crew member, disrupting the episode using various production equipment.

Every stand-up performance, guest interview, and activity is shot in the studio, and utilizes the greenscreen. *Perhabs I Will...* starts with a stand-up segment at the beginning of each episode. Next, I welcome my guest to the studio and conduct an interview, which is intercut with segments of me performing on the street interviews. Then, the guest and I participate in an activity, like playing a game, painting, or performing blind makeovers on each other. The episode closes with the guest receiving a prize and exiting the studio in a creative way.

### *Post-Production*

Three episodes of *Perhabs I Will...* were produced, which evolved over time as I became aware of the difference between my ideal style of comedy and what was realistic or successful for the production environment I was using. For example, I was not able to get the president of the university as a guest star on *Perhabs I Will...* This may have been ideal, but it was not realistic. The cross between idealism and realism became evident in the editing process. The post-production process for the program took two additional semesters to complete. Learning

more advanced features of the non-linear editing software being used, Adobe Premiere Pro, and practicing their usage was quite time-consuming.

Aside from the three 20–25-minute episode edits, a graphic designer and composer were consulted and hired for a logo and jingle for *Perhabs I Will...*, respectively. Both of these items required several round of revision.

There were many technical issues of the footage shot in-studio, frequently with the audio of each episode slipping out of sync. The greenscreen as a whole was a new concept for me, so editing it was extremely time-consuming. Each episode required an average of twelve hours to edit.

Expectedly, not everything that was recorded for *Perhabs I Will...* made the final cuts. Whether it be a joke that did not land effectively, or something that was messed up in the live filming, much of the footage was eliminated from each episode. As the edits were further developed, I realized I needed to detach myself from what I created, and instead, assess it from an audience member's viewpoint. As a comedian, would I laugh at someone else performing this way? If the answer was no, it was removed from the episode. I enlisted the help of my roommates, friends, and peers to watch cuts of each episode and offer constructive criticism about edits to the project.

The most important thing for me to realize in editing was that I needed to step away from the project once in a while. This allowed me to re-evaluate the value of every segment. After time away, I was able to determine what was truly necessary, and what was able to be cut out while still resulting in a successful episode.

### *Incorporated Genres: Perhaps I Will...*

Since this program was modeled after the three talk shows observed in this content analysis, I was interested to see how my product compared to my inspiration. This production cleverly incorporated genres identified in the content of *Billy on the Street*, *The Eric Andre Show*, and *Ziwe*. I intentionally included segments that would reflect similar genres in order to create something akin to these programs, but with a personal, unique twist. After each episode was recorded, more was discovered about the vision and process of the program. The goal of my program was not to copy the talk show hosts I admired, but to learn from them. For example, the lookalike sketch in episode two of *Perhaps I Will...* was adapted from *The Eric Andre Show*. In *Perhaps I Will...*, more was added to this bit by allowing the lookalike characters to be reincorporated into the same episode. Furthermore, unlike *The Eric Andre Show*, my program integrated the lookalike sketch into the interview portion as well as the activity segment. Watching these comedians only motivated me to create my own original comedic content. Although I was inspired by their style, I created my own brand. *Perhaps I Will...* included cringe/surreal comedy, sketch comedy, stand-up comedy, and improvisational comedy.

Cringe comedy and surreal comedy were very evident throughout every *Perhaps I Will...* episode. The majority of segments in *Perhaps I Will...* included cringe/surreal moments. Every interview asked surreal questions such as “Where is JFK?” “How many daddy issues do you have?” and “You contracted rabies from your dead dog?” Ziwe often asks her guests complex questions similar to these, which undoubtedly reflects the cringe genre. The intended awkwardness is part of what makes her show so special. However, these two genre tropes did not need to manifest themselves verbally.

Each episode of *Perhabs I Will...* included silent bits that disrupted the flow of the episode. As stated above, there was a reoccurring scripted bit in each episode with one of the crew members, Jon Glienke. This involved Jon adjusting the lights, hitting my head with the boom microphone, and tilting the camera up and down in the middle of each episode's interview segment. After this occurred, an on-camera discussion ensued about firing Jon. Jon was not only a valuable crew member, but offset also provided me with many ideas for content in *Perhabs I Will...* Not all of his ideas were worked into the episodes, but his 'clueless' crew character offered entertaining moments in the show. This was a stylistic choice I decided to include in each episode because it takes the audience off guard, and offers a short break from the interview, which is always the longest segment. Eric Andre often features his crew members with small surreal moments in his episodes, which encouraged me to do something similar. I tried to put a surreal twist on my stand-up as well, with things like taking a phone call in the middle of a set, or seeing how many goldfish crackers I could catch in my mouth in a row.

Sketch comedy was included in *Perhabs I Will...* in some interviews. For example, I scripted a mimicking sketch where lookalike actresses for me and my guest came on set. Additionally, they copied everything we said, respectively. This was inspired by *The Eric Andre Show*. My crew and I were all prepared for this segment, but my guest was not. Although sketch comedy is not typically defined this way, this study defined it differently in the method. To reiterate, sketch comedy was defined as "Brief humorous skits or recurring bits/actions throughout the program. These can be classified as sketch comedy with or without scripts..." Between out-of-studio characters, interview bits, and scripted interactions with the crew, there was at least one sketch segment in each episode of *Perhabs I Will...*

Each studio recording began with a short 2–7-minute stand-up segment. These improved with each episode shot. Stand-up comedy was the most foreign form of comedy to me, and it took a lot of practice to understand its rhythm. By the third episode, I was much more confident and prepared with my material. At the start of *Perhabs I Will...* I used only a few bullet points for my stand-up set, and did not practice before the live shoot. This was unwise because practicing stand-up comedy is critical to its success. Even though the stand-up I performed in *Perhabs I Will...* was potentially amateurish, it was a learning experience that will help my future career as a performer. I cringed the first time I watched my stand-up performance back. I knew I had to do something differently if I wanted my reaction to change during playback. With more preparation, the level of stand-up skill grew exponentially with each episode. Due to my initial lack of knowledge in stand-up performance, a reduced amount of stand-up footage made it into *Perhabs I Will...* However, at least a small portion is present in each episode.

While I originally thought I could perform for longer, I realized while editing that I was not experienced enough for longer stand-up comedy sets. Nevertheless, this ended up working really well for my program, as I intended the stand-up portion of the episode to be the shortest, similar to how Eric Andre begins his show with a 30 second stand-up segment. I liked placing the stand-up segment near the beginning of the episode in order to tease my character as a performer and prepare my audience for my personality as a host. Since *Perhabs I Will...* forced me to practice stand-up comedy, I am now able to perform in front of live audiences in Chicago, Illinois, as a result of what I gained from this experience. *Perhabs I Will...* has strengthened my confidence in performance, and more importantly, that my content has true comedic value.



*Perhabs I Will...* was a unique way for me to display improvisational skills as I used to compete nationally in this branch of comedy. This was likely the most natural genre of comedy for me to perform. Improvisational comedy was woven through most of the segments included in *Perhabs I Will...* Each interview was outlined with questions to ask, but improv was used in every episode as the guest responses permitted a free-form conversation.

Improvisational comedy was frequently used in the out-of-studio bits as well. Whether it was an activity such as skateboarding or going to the dentist, or a question such as “do you like my outfit?” improvisational comedy was primarily used in the out-of-studio segments. The out-of-studio segments were inspired by *Billy on the Street*, approaching strangers with a microphone and an idea. On my own YouTube, I perform comparable bits to the out-of-studio segments in *Perhabs I Will...* This is likely another reason it was natural for me to question strangers; I had years of practice. The out-of-studio segments were arguably the most random, as the strangers had no idea who I was, whereas my guests on *Perhabs I Will...* at least knew the *type* of show I was attempting to create.

### *Discoveries & Limitations*

*Perhabs I Will...* was a major learning experience. The production encountered several setbacks before, during, and after shoots. Guest scheduling went smoothly for the three episodes recorded, and I was blessed to have very open and willing talent guest star on *Perhabs I Will...* The guests are what allowed each episode to succeed, because their participation was required for almost all of every episode. They were also very good sports with everything thrown at them (sometimes literally).

*Perhabs I Will...* was a successful project, but there were a few things that could have been improved:

As a performer and host, I should have prepared mentally and physically for each shoot; as a producer, I should have more carefully considered where each crew member would shine in creating this production. Originally, I intended to shoot four episodes, but this became impossible since the guest I wanted to feature never replied with availability. Although I had some fantastic guest interactions, I observed many missed opportunities for comedy during footage playback. I accepted this as most of it was improvised, and not every thought can come to fruition. Additionally, I think I could have listened to my guests much better. Listening is key in interviews, and while my program is largely centered around me as a performer, it was not designed to feature only myself.

A common negative theme in my production process was time-management. If I had allotted more preparation time for the content (scripting, set design, etc.) before getting to set, things would have run smoother for the production. On shooting days, an outline of the episode was given to essential crew members. The recording process would have gone much smoother if outlines had been written with more structure and detail and were sent out in advance to the production crew. This drawback affected me as an unprepared performer, but also disrupted the flow of the live shoots. Furthermore, it was unprofessional to inconvenience the crew and guest(s) because of poor time-management skills. After the first shoot, I recognized that there was a problem with my time-management, but it was difficult to resolve with shoots only weeks apart. Until the third episode, we started early and ran late.

In terms of the segments included, stand-up comedy could have been written more cohesively, but comic timing was salvaged in the edit. A few planned but not produced out-of-studio bits landed on the backburner. I would have enjoyed including these additional segments in *Perhabs I Will...*, but because of the lack of time-management I demonstrated, I was not able to record every one of my ideas. However, every episode did include at least one complete out-of-studio segment.

Even in the post-production process, there were challenges with editing the content. Needing to edit something that was not meant to be cut was slightly disheartening. As the host *and* editor, it was my mistake to focus only on performing while shooting. I was very concentrated on performing, which allowed me to lose track of time. I also was paying no attention to joke success. If I had thought of these things while shooting, it would have eased my editing experience. On the technical side of things, I needed to switch between several computers for editing, and often times ended up losing or unlinking footage. Although I gained great experience with the editing software, it was painstaking to ‘find’ footage that I did not know I lost. I learned that it is important to stay on one physical editing system if possible, and not remove any footage from their original folders.

There were many challenges and lessons learned in the pre-production, production, and post-production processes, but as a whole, the program was a success. Each episode was stronger than the last in terms of content, time efficiency, and editing skill. While the content was different in each episode, they were increasingly planned better, which made for more effective shoots. The crew learned about which set roles they succeeded in and what they disliked. The edit turnaround and set set-up occurred faster after learning from the setbacks in episode one.

The main vision of the piece to create a relevant piece of comedy that would cause laughter remained consistent, but it grew exponentially throughout the shoots. The episodes became more absurd and creative with each take. It became evident that production is not just recording creativity with a camera; it takes time, money, talent, and hard work. While it is rewarding, it takes energy and diligence.

### *Personal Application*

*Perhabs I Will...* has taught me a lot about my artistry. I appreciated the way the cringe/surreal genre manifested itself my program and its appearance in *Perhabs I Will...* was similar to what I hoped it would be. I would love to continue to include those traits in my comedic persona. For example, Billy Eichner discovered his angry man on the street character through his program. I also came to the realization that I enjoy forms of comedy that I was not keen on before. While I loved performing solo, I think I would benefit from team comedy, like improv and sketch. I believe that performing with others would be great practice for further developing my own character and on-screen personality.

I could tell my creation proved to be successful Gen Z comedy because my crew (fellow college-aged students) could relate to the content, and found much of it humorous. I was really the only person that saw the raw footage where crew laughter was audible. However, if something was particularly funny, the microphones picked up crew laughter strongly, and it was left in the final video edit. However, my professors who viewed the content did not quite grasp the humor in *Perhabs I Will...*, indicating a generational difference. This isn't to say that my content is not funny to people aged 30+, but it is less likely to be funny to someone in that age bracket as opposed to someone from my own generation.

Being a woman in comedy does indeed contribute to who I am as an artist and a creator. My confidence in becoming a female comedian has increased after completing this project. It was hard to watch myself perform, but it was much harder to watch myself fail. I wanted to test the notion that women are equally as funny as men, which is not culturally accepted. Rowe (1995) explains that ambitious women are often portrayed negatively, and I believe that applies to women choosing comedy as well. Rowe writes that “the only accepted narrative for the story of a woman’s life remains in the sphere of the private—the plots of heterosexual romance, marriage, or motherhood” (1995, p. 99). This is an unfortunate, singular narrative for women, and I want the opportunity to create my own. After conducting this research, I’ve realized that every performer fails, and there was no need to be concerned about something that simply comes down to talent, not gender.

A substantial amount of content was cut out of *Perhabs I Will...* both for the episode running time and comedic success of the material. Normally, I would see lack of comedic success as a loss for my content and career, but it only made my next shoot stronger. The more I practiced, the more prepared I was, and the more successful the episode was. As a result, *Perhabs I Will...* improved with each episode recording because of lessons learned from the previous shoot. Thus, the last episode of *Perhabs I Will...* was the most successful.

## Chapter 6

### Discussion

*Perhabs I Will...* demonstrated a number of comedic genres in every episode, emulating the content of several comedy talk shows. Ultimately, this comedy content was analyzed for the thesis student's career purposes, in order to explore and develop a comedic style combining genres exhibited by the influences researched in this content analysis.

Although this research examines three celebrity talk show hosts and their celebrity guests, *Perhabs I Will...* was not produced in a big city with famous people. However, the concept of guests as 'talents' transfers, as it was important to the creator that each guest on *Perhabs I Will...* could showcase what made them unique, despite the 'ordinary' location of DeKalb, Illinois. The college campus community of Northern Illinois University offers diverse options for talent, inevitably including different majors, extracurriculars, and age.

The study was chosen to compliment *Perhabs I Will...* by researching programs that included elements or comedic approaches that the creator was interested in emulating. Additionally, each program researched followed the 'talk show' format desired. Since cringe/surreal, sketch, stand-up, and improvisational comedy were included in the analyzed talk shows, *Perhabs I Will...* was written to include those same categories.

The three talk show hosts selected for this study were varied in age, race, and gender, which proved to be valuable, as it affected the diversity of their content. The three hosts taught the thesis student new ways to write and perform comedy. The author of this study sought to test

whether her show could reflect a similar tone to the programs observed. After analyzing the genres in the three programs, the author compared the genres present in her program to the ones she observed. Since her show displayed the same genres, the goal to formulate her own brand of content was accomplished.

### *Gen Z & Out-of-Pocket Comedy*

For what has been written about the ‘out-of-pocket’ genre, each episode of *Perhabs I Will...* did indeed reflect it through its demonstration of gen z comedy. Harkening back to Koltun (2018), members of gen z are attracted to dark, disruptive, and absurdist forms of humor. If unconventional behavior can be absurd and inappropriate behavior can be disruptive, then gen z humor can be defined as ‘out-of-pocket’. In *Perhabs I Will...*, the term ‘out-of-pocket’ comedy was used effectively as an umbrella term to incorporate the cringe, sketch, surreal, stand-up, and improvisational genres within the same program.

In explaining the usage and effectiveness of the following theory and model, it is important to remember that “*Humor* is the state of being amused, although it might not be accompanied by laughter” (*AMA Journal of Ethics*, 2020). Something may be successfully funny without evoking laughter.

### *Theoretical Implications*

One of the key foundations on which this study was built was the benign violation theory. The benign violation theory is based on incongruity theory, which holds that “humor results when our brains perceive things as coexisting in a manner that does not at first appear to make logical sense” (Libera, 2020, p. 603). When the discomfort caused by the incongruity is resolved, it is considered humorous (Libera, 2020). As seen in *The Eric Andre Show*, many celebrities not

known for comedy are interviewed. This combination with the absurdism of Eric Andre does not quite make sense, especially when it takes celebrities time to understand his character. However, when Mel B can begin to laugh at questions like “Have you ever had a three-way with Eddie Murphy?”, the discomfort is resolved, because Mel B no longer seems uneasy.

The benign violation theory is also apparent in *Perhabs I Will...* with harmless interruptions throughout the show, like rolling a bowl of Cheetos out on a cart. Another example from this program is when the host takes and forces the guest to take hot sauce shots at the end of episode three. Hye-Knudsen (2015) writes that “audiences find benignly masochistic pleasure in cringe-inducing media because they offer vicarious experiences with social worst-case scenarios” (p. 14). Neuroscientists have posited that humans receive satisfaction from unravelling and solving incongruous situations; this gratification fills the brain with dopamine (Libera, 2020).

The recurring silent bits intertwined in *Perhabs I Will...* segments were also a benign violation of the interview portions of each episode. Although conversation enhances comedic expression, humor does not require the usage of words in order to be successful (Polimeni and Reiss, 2006). However, while potentially successful, silent bits in each episode were used sparingly as “the vast majority of humor shared between people must involve, at minimum, several intricate symbols (words) and two concepts (incongruous and congruous)” (Polimeni and Reiss, p. 359).

The second foundation on which this study was built was the hierarchy of influences model. The hierarchy of influences model uses a system of five levels to analyze patterns within



content. This content analysis focused on two levels of the hierarchy of influences model: the routines level and the individual level.

The routines level manifested itself in repeated practices throughout the episodes. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) explain that there are three categories of routine, which are “audiences, organizations, and suppliers of content” (p. 164). In the case of *Billy on the Street*, each episode followed the same structure. Each episode began with a game, introduced a celebrity guest, played another game with a stranger, planned an activity with another stranger, and then finally, returned to the first game (often with the celebrity guest). This pattern is repeated in each episode, only changing in terms of interviewees, questions, *some* games, and activities.

In *Perhabs I Will...* the routines level was present in a similar manner in segment formatting. The organization of segments was the same for each episode produced. This reflected the routines level by consistently demonstrating the following pattern in each episode: stand-up comedy, guest interview, out-of-studio bit, activity with guest, and prize and sign off.

Routines do not only manifest in visible patterns, but also patterns of process. For example, episodes of *Perhabs I Will...* were outlined/scripted, filmed, and then edited. This is likely the same process for most television programs. Additionally, there are other elements of routine such as crew deployment, makeup, costuming, guest scheduling, prop preparation, and edit revisions that need to be consistently repeated in order for programs to be successful. As *Perhabs I Will...* only produced three episodes, there were things that could be improved about the pattern. Embracing routines in *Perhabs I Will...* allowed the content to flow while maintaining a solid structure. This was evident through the organization of each episode, as well

as episode subject matter. While the content changed, it was always written to appeal to the same type of audience. Tuchman (1972) writes that in addition to routines present in a performer's content, their work is also influenced by their actions, displaying a level of individualism.

The second level of the hierarchy of influences model used for this study was that of the individual. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) report that the influence individual factors have "are not categorical, fixed, or determinative as they once were" (p. 205). This more fluid level of the hierarchy of influences model implies that personal identity impacts media content (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014).

According to Mintz (1985), the individual level is dependent on the ratio between comic behavior and dialogue versus plot advancement. The individual level influences comedic performance and process. The content outcome, therefore, reflects the personality and character of the performer (Mintz, 1985). As different personalities inevitably change the performance of the content, the *individual* sets the tone for the content. For example, Ziwe Fumudoh has very distinct character traits. Appearance-wise, she has long, dark hair, full, glamorous makeup, and very extravagant costumes. Some of her personality-defining characteristics include her narcissism, her intelligence, and her passion for politics. Each of these things plays a part in the creation and performance of *Ziwe*. Ziwe talks about herself fondly in each episode, often fishing for compliments from her guest. Her narcissism also takes shape with her performance of many musical numbers where she is the star singer and dancer. She discusses each subject on her program intelligently, and speaks professionally and knowledgeably. Finally, her content frequently revolves around politics, as it is one of her main interests. She takes unique elements

of who she is, and incorporates them into her comedy. Her comedy is successful because it is built around her own character, 'Ziwe' is what it is because of Ziwe.

*Perhabs I Will...* has many defining characteristics on the individual level as well. The creator displayed a colorful style, a 'quirky' vibe in terms of set decoration, and out-of-the-box ideas for activities with the guest. Every performer is unique, and personality leaking into the content is inevitable in programs where creators play 'themselves.' The personality of the creator was innocent, silly, awkward, and dynamic. This was reflected in the appropriateness, randomness, discomfort, and energy of the content. The program was special precisely because of the individuals level.

The creator did not alienate herself from the crew, and welcomed their ideas. This open-mindedness allowed portions of *Perhabs I Will...* to be far more collaborative and creative than how they were originally written. The individual also desired a consistent level of appropriateness without compromising the absurdism of the program; the creator explained to her guests that crass language was not welcome on the show. It was important to the creator that the integrity of the show was protected, and that relied heavily on the integrity of the individual. Changing critical traits of the creator's character would at the very least minimize the integrity of *Perhabs I Will...*

### *Conclusion*

While filming *Perhabs I Will...* it became clear that humor was most effective when it was organic. To master the flow of natural comedy takes time to practice, even though practicing 'natural' sounds contrary to its definition. Once the student became more relaxed in front of the camera, the results yielded more organic comedy. Additionally, scripted content occasionally felt

inorganic to the viewer, and in cases like this, usage of the improvisational genre would have been wise. Content was not 'better' based on which genres were included, rather, whether or not the genres included were utilized effectively. This was an important note to remember while filming episodes of *Perhabs I Will...*

Another important goal of *Perhabs I Will...* was to prove the importance of women in comedy. The author wanted to examine a diverse sample of comedians in order to compare and contrast the differences in content. Expectedly, there were many content as well as stylistic differences among the three programs, yet the results yielded the same leading genre for all three. Since she created her own show parallel to researching the comedians and their genres, the thesis student was able to choose content that would be helpful in shaping her own program.

Does this last sentence sound awkward?

While combining the cringe and surreal categories indeed clarified some of the coder disagreements, some confusion between sketch and surreal comedy arose in the full study. In turn, some relatively low levels of inter-coder reliability arose for these genres. While this misunderstanding did not cost agreement on leading genres of episodes, it certainly affected many of the segment leading genres. The definition for sketch comedy should have been described in more detail. A justification for this coding error is due to previous knowledge of sketch comedy specific programs, like *Saturday Night Live!* or *Key and Peele*. The author should have defined sketch comedy to make clear the different shapes it can take. For example, the secondary coder was not able to recognize as many of the shorter sketches displayed in *The Eric Andre Show*. However, this program in particular sparked many sketch ideas and out-of-studio segments included in *Perhabs I Will...* For example, Eric Andre interacts with his crew members

in absurd ways, which Abs Anderson adopts and adapts by including short sketches with a crew member each episode. Additionally, Billy Eichner approaches strangers on the street and asks questions, a style that Abs Anderson copies for her out-of-studio portion of each episode.

In terms of limitations, *Ziwe* had less content available for analysis. Since *Ziwe* has fewer seasons than either *Billy on the Street* or *The Eric Andre Show*, it is possible that more genres will be present in her future seasons. Additionally, some definitions could have been further improved for the full study. Based on the goals of this study, sketch comedy could have benefitted from one more line of description. ‘Sketch’ was defined well in the original coding instruction, but could have specifically written about the difference between sketch comedy as an entire episode performance, versus sketch comedy as a small component of an episode. Additionally, more could have been altered after the pilot study in terms of combining definitions rather than re-defining them.

The coding scheme could have been developed slightly different from the start. We began by coding for each occurrence of a genre, which was too irrepressible. Once the choice was made to code for leading genres of segments instead of counting each instance, the level of agreement increased. Measurement became more clear as the full study began, but again, the definitions used to code could have been stronger.

If this study is repeated in the future, a wider selection of genres ought to be available to detect other genres present in each program. This would allow a more precise category for each unique talk show.

In the end, this thesis was beneficial for an academic and research-oriented understanding of how select comedy genres operate as well as how they present themselves in many forms of

modern entertainment. Additionally, this study provided the researcher hands-on practical opportunities to explore these comedy genres as both an on-camera talent and a behind-the-scenes media practitioner.

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