

Ocean Hopper:

A contemporary approach to creating a stand-up performance that challenges acceptable norms about a Mexican American living in Wales.

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Abstract:

This project explores the development and performance of a stand-up comedy set as a method of examining cultural identity, race, and lived experience as a Mexican American living in Wales. The research combines both theoretical analysis and practical application, drawing upon established comedic frameworks, including the humor techniques identified by Arthur Asa Berger, to understand how comedians construct effective and engaging performances. A range of contemporary stand-up comedians were critically evaluated to identify common structural patterns and techniques, particularly in relation to handling sensitive or potentially offensive material. These findings informed the creation of an original stand-up script, which was developed through an iterative process incorporating audience feedback, self-reflection, and performance practice. The project specifically investigates how comedy can be used as a tool to address complex themes such as xenophobia, stereotypes, and cultural misunderstanding, while maintaining audience engagement. The final performance and subsequent reflection demonstrate the importance of delivery, timing, and audience awareness when presenting controversial material. Overall, the project highlights how stand-up comedy can function as both a creative practice and a form of social commentary, while also showcasing the development of transferable skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and independent learning within a performance context.

I acknowledge the use of ChatGPT (<https://chatgpt.com>) on January 18th, 2026 to help with sentence structure and to correct punctuation on my work. I used

the prompts:

1. Please provide examples on how to structure my sentences and paragraphs more academically.
2. Please check over my writing for any punctuation mistakes I may have made or missed.

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It was September 17th, 2025, when I arrived in Wales after a thirteen-hour flight from the United States to begin my studies at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Prior to this, I had never lived outside of my home country, nor had I lived independently in my twenty-two years. It quickly became apparent that my new environment differed significantly from what I was accustomed to, particularly in terms of the people and their culture. While it was uncommon to encounter other Americans, it was even more unusual to meet someone of Mexican descent. Within less than two weeks of my arrival, I experienced a moment that highlighted this difference, when an individual in the town square of Carmarthen verbally insulted me upon discovering that I was American. This interaction was particularly striking, as it contrasted with my prior experiences as part of a marginalized group in the United States. Rather than being judged based on the color of my skin, I found myself being judged on my accent and national identity.

Shortly after this experience, I was assigned a substantial research project to be completed during my time in Wales. I wanted to base my project on something personal and relevant to my own experiences. Initially, I considered focusing on the concept of typecasting, as this is a subject I am likely to encounter as an actor. However, this topic proved too broad, and I found it difficult to narrow the scope of my research in a meaningful way.

It was not until I was informed that the project could incorporate practical work related to my acting skills that I decided to change direction entirely. From that point, I chose to develop a stand-up comedy set that explored the experiences of my heritage while living in Wales. My intention was to address themes such as immigration, representation, and cultural identity. However, upon beginning my research, I quickly discovered that there was very little documented history regarding individuals of Mexican descent living in Wales. This became

evident when I consulted *A Tolerant Nation? Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Wales* by Charlotte Williams, Neil Evans, and Paul O’Leary, in which there was no reference to Mexican heritage.

As a result, I decided to take a more personal and creative approach. Given the lack of existing documentation, I concluded that the most effective way to explore this topic was to present my own experiences through comedy. While this approach may initially appear unconventional, it aligns with a long-standing tradition of using humor to address sensitive subjects. During the medieval period, for example, individuals known as court jesters were permitted to speak openly about controversial issues without fear of punishment. As noted by Ian Mortimer, jesters could communicate difficult truths through humor, such as in the case of the Battle of Sluys, where a jester was tasked with delivering news of defeat to the king “How brave the Frenchmen are, throwing themselves into the sea, unlike those cowardly English, who cling to their ships.” (Mortimer, 2008, p. 247). This highlights how comedy has historically functioned as a means of discussing uncomfortable or challenging topics.

With this in mind, my objective became to create a stand-up set that challenges social norms surrounding the experiences of a Mexican American living in Wales. Although I had prior experience writing stand-up comedy, addressing topics considered “sensitive” or “controversial” presented a new challenge. My material needed to engage with themes such as xenophobia, racism, and cultural comparison, while remaining accessible and respectful to a live audience.

Importantly, I was not entirely alone in this process. My collaborator, Charlie Delisle, who is also of Mexican descent, provided valuable insight through discussions about our respective experiences. Through these conversations, it became clear that our interactions in Wales were shaped not only by ethnicity but also by gender. As Charlie explained, “I’ve had people approach me and say positive things such as ‘I love your accent’ or ‘How do you say this

in Spanish?’ which contrasts with your experience, despite us sharing the same accent” (Delisle, 2025). In contrast, my own experiences included being asked dumb questions such as why Americans had re-elected Donald Trump, often in a confrontational manner.

Taking all of this into account, it became clear that I needed to develop a strong understanding of how to translate these experiences into a stand-up format. This required careful consideration of tone, structure, and delivery in order to ensure that my material could address sensitive topics without alienating the audience.

My Research Into Writing Challenging Comedy.

When going through the process of writing the short stand-up set, much of the inspiration for its structure was drawn from a variety of sources, most notably successful comedians and their comedy specials. However, I could not simply take inspiration from any successful comedian, as my stand-up set was intended to be challenging and slightly offensive, addressing topics such as race and xenophobia. To investigate this, I conducted a comparative analysis of five stand-up specials, using Arthur Berger’s (2011) humor framework as a structured method of evaluation. Because the subject matter I am exploring largely revolves around race, I chose to focus my research primarily on non-Caucasian comedians (with a few exceptions that will be discussed later).

While selecting comedians to evaluate, I noticed that many of them follow similar patterns or employ comparable tactics in their material. One of the most noticeable techniques was self-deprecation. At some point during their sets, every comedian analyzed would insult or make fun of themselves as a way to help illustrate a story or perspective. This method appears to be one of the most commonly used strategies in stand-up comedy, as it appeared in every special

I examined. Self-deprecation is only one example, however. There are numerous other techniques that comedians utilize to enhance their performances. These methods will be discussed further, alongside an explanation of how some of them influenced the development of my own stand-up set.

Berger's list of 45 humor techniques provides a useful framework for understanding why certain comedic strategies are effective. Berger categorizes these techniques across several areas; language, logic, identity, and action, which helps explain why particular methods are perceived as humorous or successful. This framework also served as a useful reference when writing my own set. Here is Berger's list so it can be referred to later (Berger, 2011, p. 3):

Table 1. Humor techniques			
LANGUAGE	LOGIC	IDENTITY	ACTION
Allusion	Absurdity	Before/After	Chase
Bombast	Accident	Burlesque	Slapstick
Definition	Analogy	Caricature	Speed
Exaggeration	Catalogue	Eccentricity	
Facetiousness	Coincidence	Embarrassment	
Insults	Comparison	Exposure	
Infantilism	Disappointment	Grotesque	
Irony	Ignorance	Imitation	
Misunderstanding	Mistakes	Impersonation	
Over literalness	Repetition	Mimicry	
Puns/Wordplay	Reversal	Parody	

Repartee	Rigidity	Scale
Ridicule	Theme & Var.	Stereotype
Sarcasm	Unmasking	
Satire		

At the end of each evaluation I will share which two humor techniques apply best to each comedian. A useful starting point for learning how to create a stand-up set is one of the most successful comedians and actors of this generation, Kevin Hart.

A Strong Start, With Kevin Hart.

Kevin Hart's Netflix comedy special *Irresponsible* (2019) provided a strong foundation for understanding how a stand-up set can be structured. From the beginning of the performance, it is clear that this special leans less toward offensive humor and instead focuses more on personal storytelling and observational comedy. Although Hart occasionally references his own ethnicity and makes jokes about it, there are very few moments in the special where other ethnic groups are the target of humor. Nevertheless, the performance still serves as a valuable example of effective comedic structure.

In terms of structure, Hart (2019) begins the show using the technique mentioned earlier: self-deprecating humor. Interestingly, he does not only make jokes about himself but frequently discusses his family, which becomes the most recurring topic throughout the show. There are also brief moments of crowd work where he addresses individual audience members directly, creating memorable interactions. These moments are effective largely because the stories he tells are presented as authentic experiences, many of which are highly relatable to other parents in the

audience. Another technique Hart frequently uses during storytelling is mimicry. When describing a person involved in a story, he often imitates their voice or behavior. This method helps amplify the image he is creating for the audience and often generates strong comedic reactions. Later in the show, Hart also jokes about stereotypes associated with his own race, using them as a way to introduce his experiences and perspectives on other cultures. Importantly, these jokes rarely come across as insulting, largely because they are framed through his personal experiences. To conclude the show, Hart uses one of the most effective techniques in stand-up comedy: the callback. In fact, four of the five comedians analyzed in this research end their performances using a similar method. Hart closes the show by referencing a joke he made earlier about his wife. When the callback occurs near the end of the set, the audience recognizes the earlier reference, which results in a strong comedic payoff.

Overall, this special serves as an excellent example of effective stand-up performance. The self-deprecating opening is particularly notable because it quickly establishes a connection between the comedian and the audience. By making fun of himself first, Hart creates an environment in which the audience feels comfortable laughing. This technique can also make the material more relatable, as it allows the audience to recognize shared experiences or insecurities. I kept this method in mind while writing my own stand-up set, and it appears multiple times throughout my script because of how effective it can be. For instance, at the beginning of my performance I joke that I might be the worst example of a Mexican, even admitting that I do not speak Spanish, which unfortunately is true.

Hart's use of crowd work is impressive; however, it is not a technique I chose to incorporate into my own set. He is actually one of the few comedians I analyzed who regularly interacted with audience members in this way, which suggests that crowd work is not essential

for creating a successful performance. His use of impersonations during storytelling, however, is something I found more practical to incorporate. In my own set, there is a moment where I imitate the accent of someone I encountered who strongly disliked the fact that I was American. I chose to use this technique because it helps keep the audience engaged in the story while also making the situation more vivid and easier to visualize. For all comedians going forward I'd like to give each comedian two of the 45 humor techniques Berger provides to best describe which two they utilized the most in their performance. As for Kevin, I observed his two most utilized techniques on the list would be Eccentricity and Exaggeration. The reason I picked these two techniques is because of the way Kevin tells stories on stage, his eccentricity and exaggeration are so apparent throughout the whole show. He goes over the top when talking about any story, even screaming and moving in such an over exaggerated way, it lands with the crowd every time. We could argue that Impersonation should be one of the primary techniques utilized during the show, but I noticed that his impersonations wouldn't have been as strong, had it not been for his over exaggerations and his strong eccentricity.

Learning How To Do It Right, With Ronny Chieng.

Ronny Chieng is the next comedian in line; with his Netflix special *Asian Comedian Destroys America* (2019). To me, this special is one of the most important examples when it comes to challenging another country or culture through humor. The premise of the special centers on Chieng, a foreigner, moving to a different country and finding ways to make fun of everything he has experienced while living there. This concept aligns very closely with the direction I hoped to take in my own work. It is also worth noting that, although it may not directly relate to my topic, the special feels somewhat ahead of its time, addressing themes such

as how Americans may live their lives in the future, as well as political issues and what they inevitably boil down to (which as he stated, is race).

Moving on to the structure of the show, Chieng (2019) comes out swinging, immediately poking fun at things he has observed in America while using over the top exaggerations to emphasize his points. He discusses subjects such as American food, the country's reliance on technology like smartphones and tablets, and the prevalence of screens in everyday life, as well as general laziness. He approaches these topics with extreme exaggeration and very little storytelling, yet the style works remarkably well because the audience responds with laughter after nearly every line. This approach is quite different from the styles seen in the other specials analyzed. Making fun of cultural observations in such a burlesque and exaggerated way makes Chieng's style stand out among other comedians.

An interesting moment occurs when Chieng briefly praises America by explaining that in Chinese the name historically used to refer to the United States translates to "beautiful country." From there, Chieng transitions into race-based jokes, specifically pointing out behaviors or stereotypes associated with different racial groups. What makes this effective is that he is not spreading hatred; rather, he directs humor toward everyone involved, including his own background. After making numerous jokes about Asian culture, he suddenly shifts into political humor and makes a joke about Donald Trump. Although the joke received a fair amount of laughter, one particular Trump joke, an inappropriate remark about touching people in inappropriate places, did not seem to land as strongly as others. This weaker reaction may have been due to the context where the performance was taken place or simply because the joke was so unexpected that the audience was unsure how to respond. Regardless of the reason, it is an interesting moment worth noting.

At this point in the show, I began to notice that Chieng tends to end each segment with a particularly clever line before smoothly transitioning into the next topic. Observing this structure was especially useful when thinking about transitions in my own material. Slightly past the halfway point, Chieng makes a joke about ISIS, which in 2019 was still considered a very serious topic. When the joke received a mixed reaction, he immediately addressed the audience's hesitation with another joke about their reaction, which quickly eased the tension and brought the crowd back on his side. Shortly after this moment, Chieng begins discussing his tone of voice, mentioning that his wife claims he always sounds either angry or sarcastic. He then plays into this idea throughout the remainder of the segment by delivering lines in a way that makes the audience question whether he is being sarcastic or genuinely angry. Chieng ends the show with a callback, transforming an earlier joke into a surprisingly inspirational and appreciative statement about America, creating a bittersweet but effective ending. This is the second show analyzed so far that concludes with a callback, which further reinforces the importance of learning how to incorporate callbacks into my own performance.

There was a great deal that I learned from Chieng's show. Personally, this was one of the most inspiring stand-up specials I analyzed, as it made the idea of performing a set about visiting a new country feel achievable. The overall premise of the show closely aligns with the direction I wanted to pursue, and seeing such a performance reassured me that this type of material can be both effective and entertaining.

Starting with the opening, Chieng made an interesting decision to begin by making fun of the country he was visiting rather than starting with jokes about his own background. This is the opposite of the self-deprecating opening used by Kevin Hart. Beginning a set in this way could be risky, as it might prevent the audience from immediately feeling comfortable laughing along

with the comedian. However, in Chieng's case it appeared to work in his favor. For my own performance, I chose to remain closer to Hart's approach, as a self-deprecating opening felt like a more natural way to transition into storytelling about my experiences living in Wales.

One aspect of Chieng's performance that I did take inspiration from was his ability to include everyone in the humor. He demonstrates a strong skill in joking about all groups involved in American society, both racially and politically. I applied this idea to my own script by including jokes not only about Americans, Mexicans, and Welsh people, but also about England. It also seemed fitting to include occasional jokes about Donald Trump. As mentioned earlier, Chieng's show appears somewhat ahead of its time, and his inclusion of Trump-related humor reflects an awareness of the political climate. Referencing political events occurring in the United States feels appropriate for my performance as well, particularly because my ethnicity is directly affected by policy decisions related to organizations such as U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which I also reference in my set.

When considering Berger's list of humor techniques, the two methods that Chieng appears to use most frequently are burlesque and comparison. These two techniques work closely together throughout his set. His exaggerated and absurd descriptions, combined with the unexpected comparisons he makes, create a unique comedic style that keeps the audience engaged. What makes this particularly effective is that his comparisons are often so unusual that the audience cannot predict where the joke will go next. This unpredictability is a major part of what makes his style feel distinctive and memorable.

Pushing Limits, With Jimmy Carr.

Jimmy Carr's Netflix special *Natural Born Killer* (2024) is one of the most offensive pieces of work I have ever seen, and I love it. If I needed to learn from someone on how to be offensive on stage and not get beaten in the parking lot following my show, It's him. Carr is one of the two Caucasian comedians I have chosen to critically analyze as he does offensive comedy so well, to me it would be foolish not to learn from him. Obviously since I am touching on a topic such as race that comes with a bit of hesitancy, but Carr pushes those limits on subjects that are also considered very sensitive.

Carr (2024) decides to open the show with something we have not seen before: he openly challenges the audience by telling them, "We're going to kick off our evening with short edgy jokes, get the measure of each other, see if we're going to be friends!" (Carr, 2024). This immediately signals to the audience what kind of show they are about to experience. He then begins delivering short, edgy jokes, touching on a wide range of controversial topics such as suicide, pedophilia, sex, disability, drunk driving, abortion, and more. Carr continues with these rapid-fire jokes until roughly halfway through the performance, at which point he transitions into storytelling about his experiences as a father, while also incorporating callbacks to some of the shorter jokes he made earlier in the show.

Throughout the performance, Carr gives equal treatment to the topics, beliefs, and people he jokes about. He repeatedly emphasizes that these are jokes and that they are not intended to cause genuine offense. During the show, he references the idea of "Cancel Culture" and explains that he does not allow it to prevent him from performing the type of comedy he wishes to present. This type of mindset is valuable for a comedian, as it reflects a refusal to allow criticism or controversy to dictate the boundaries of comedic expression. Carr illustrates this point with a humorous analogy. He explains that if he were to apologize sarcastically, someone might respond

by saying, “Ugh, you didn’t actually mean that.” His response to this is, “Now you understand what it’s like to say something and not mean it.” This line effectively highlights his broader argument that jokes are not always intended to be taken literally.

Another technique Carr uses effectively throughout the show is misdirection. He frequently leads the audience to believe he is about to say one thing before suddenly shifting the direction of the joke, resulting in clever punchlines that generate strong reactions from the audience. Toward the end of the show, Carr returns to delivering short jokes, this time focusing on the topic of consent and humorously addressing a younger audience member about its importance. It is worth noting that this is the first special analyzed that does not end with a callback. Despite this, the show still concludes with a strong and memorable ending.

Earlier, I mentioned that during the medieval period, court jesters were often protected by law and allowed to make jokes about any subject, even if that meant highlighting uncomfortable truths or criticizing those in power. In my opinion, Jimmy Carr represents one of the closest modern equivalents to that role. The subjects he jokes about are often considered far too offensive for modern audiences, yet he disregards these expectations and delivers a highly confident performance. Importantly, Carr makes it clear from the very beginning what kind of show the audience is attending: stand-up comedy that pushes boundaries. He consistently reinforces the idea that jokes are not meant to be interpreted literally and that audiences should not take offense at something he clearly does not intend to mean seriously.

This approach was particularly inspirational for me. Because my own set includes jokes about Wales, it is important that I establish early on that my jokes are meant in good humor and that I mean no disrespect toward Wales or its people. Although Carr may not have a large influence on the specific wording of my material, his special did demonstrate the importance of

confidence when performing controversial jokes on stage. As long as the material is genuinely funny, confidence in delivering it becomes essential.

When considering Berger's list of humor techniques, the two strategies Carr appears to rely on most heavily on are puns/wordplay and facetiousness. These techniques appear frequently throughout the performance, particularly during the rapid-fire segments. Carr often manipulates the meanings of words or phrases in clever ways to produce unexpected punchlines. In addition, he frequently introduces jokes into situations where humor would not normally be expected, which creates surprising moments that result in strong audience reactions.

Giving A Great Example, With Jeff Dunham.

Without a doubt Jeff Dunham and his special *Beside Himself* (2019) showcase why he is one of the most talented comedians on the planet. Dunham is the second of the two Caucasian comedians I will be evaluating for information on racial or offensive comedy. Dunham presents his comedy in a way that no other comedian on here has done before, and that is with ventriloquism. Each one of his puppets plays such a unique character, so unique that you wouldn't have guessed they were all played by the same person. Watching Dunham's performance is like watching two completely different people with vastly different backgrounds have a conversation on stage that's so hilarious, you sometimes forget it's just one person on stage. It's also shocking to find out he voices characters with completely different ethnicities, which he shared during this show that this has caused him problems with people saying he's wrong for doing so. We will discuss more on that later when we cover that segment in the show but for now let's go onto the structure.

Just like the other comedians previously analyzed, Dunham (2019) begins his set by joking about himself and his family. It is worth noting that he does not immediately introduce his puppets, which demonstrates his ability to engage an audience without relying on them. Dunham discusses topics that are highly relatable, particularly for parents of young children, which allows him to establish a connection with the audience early in the performance. He then transitions into storytelling about his family, often highlighting embarrassing moments he has experienced. Shortly after, he introduces his first puppet, a character named Walter, an older white man. Dunham uses Walter, along with his other puppets, to mock himself in creative ways, often referencing stories told earlier in the set and creating effective callbacks.

The next puppet introduced is a newer character named Larry, who had not previously appeared in one of Dunham's specials. The premise of this character is that he is a white man working as a personal advisor to Donald Trump. As the show took place in 2019, near the end of Trump's first presidential term, this segment includes a wide range of political jokes. Dunham addresses topics such as Trump's policies, the border wall, and even his appearance, demonstrating that no subject is off-limits. At one point, the puppet makes a joke about Mexico's currency, the peso, which I personally found humorous given my own background. Because the audience is primarily American, it is notable that the crowd responds positively throughout this segment, suggesting that differing political beliefs do not prevent the audience from engaging with the humor.

Dunham then introduces Bubba J., arguably his most stereotypical American character. Through this puppet, he leans heavily into stereotypes associated with the American South, including themes such as drinking, regional accents, and exaggerated cultural behaviors. During this segment, Dunham also incorporates language that could be considered offensive, including

slurs directed at white people. One of the most significant lines in the show occurs during this segment, when Bubba J. states, “That’s the way this comedy stuff works, you say something that makes a few uptight a-holes mad, but all the normal folks who heard the same thing are like bahahaha!” (Dunham, 2017). Despite its simplicity, this line stands out as one of the most powerful moments in the performance. It reflects the broader idea that comedy will inevitably offend some individuals, but that humor relies on an audience’s ability to recognize and accept jokes as such. This idea reinforces the importance of understanding intent in comedy, and the role laughter plays in social interaction.

Dunham’s final two puppets, and arguably his most controversial, José Jalapeño on a Stick and Achmed the Dead Terrorist, are introduced consecutively toward the end of the show. Before bringing José on stage, Dunham acknowledges that some people believe it may not be appropriate, particularly in the political climate of 2019, to include such a character. In response, the audience begins to cheer and call for the character’s appearance, demonstrating that, despite the potentially offensive nature of the material, the audience is still eager to engage with the humor. As someone of Mexican background, I found this reaction particularly interesting, as it reflects a willingness among audiences to separate humor from offense when it is delivered effectively.

As for Achmed, the character has gained popularity not only in the United States but also internationally, including in parts of the Middle East, with performances in cities such as Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv. This popularity can be attributed to the way the character satirizes serious topics such as terrorism, allowing audiences to engage with difficult subjects through humor. It is fitting that Achmed appears as one of the final characters in the show. The performance

concludes with a well-executed callback to an earlier moment in which Dunham accidentally threw one of the puppets, providing a cohesive and satisfying ending.

In *The Comedy Bible Workbook* (2017), Judy Carter emphasizes the effectiveness of using personal and familial experiences in comedy, stating, “What follows is a solid method for writing jokes, with TURNS, about your family. Make sure everything you write is BASED ON TRUTH” (Carter, 2017, p. 22). Dunham clearly applies this principle in his opening segment, demonstrating the strength of self-deprecating humor and its ability to connect with audiences. This is one of the key reasons I chose to incorporate similar techniques into my own set. In addition to self-deprecation, Dunham demonstrates a strong command of callbacks. His consistent use of callbacks throughout the performance has directly influenced how I structured my own material, including my closing line. Similarly to Jimmy Carr, while Dunham may not heavily influence the exact wording of my script, his techniques and stage presence provide valuable insight into effective performance.

When applying Berger’s framework, Dunham’s two most prominent techniques are impersonation and stereotype. Impersonation is central to his performance style, as it forms the foundation of his ventriloquist characters. At the same time, many of his characters are built around exaggerated cultural, social, or personality stereotypes, making stereotype another defining element of his comedy. Together, these techniques explain both how Dunham delivers his humor and why it resonates so strongly with audiences.

Go Big Or Go Home, With Gabriel Iglesias.

Gabriel Iglesias has always been and will always be my number one inspiration as to why I enjoy comedy so much, both watching it and performing it. Seeing how big of an inspiration he

is to not only me but the whole Latino community, it's only right to include him and his special *I'm Sorry for What I Said When I Was Hungry* (2016). Although Iglesias has plenty of specials to choose from, I decided to go with this one as I saw it fit best to my chosen topic. Iglesias covers close to everything I've needed to learn when it comes to writing offensive comedy, such as making jokes like self-deprecation, stereotypes, racism, mockery, callbacks, and overall amazing storytelling. With that being said, let us dive into our final comedian evaluation.

Iglesias (2016) is the first plus-sized comedian I have personally watched, and he makes this aspect of his identity immediately apparent in his opening by beginning with self-deprecating humor about his weight. This aligns with the self-insulting opening that has already proven to be effective among many comedians discussed previously. In addition to jokes about his weight, Iglesias also incorporates humor based on Mexican stereotypes. Given that the audience for this performance consists largely of Mexican viewers, these jokes land particularly well, as they are both relatable and grounded in partial truth, providing the audience with familiar material to engage with.

As the show continues, Iglesias frequently discusses people's interests and hobbies, often incorporating his own opinions. This serves as an effective technique, as it encourages audience engagement by prompting listeners to reflect on their own experiences. He also shares stories about his interactions with other individuals, including celebrities and fans, often recounting unusual or unexpected situations. These stories are effective because they provide insight into experiences unique to him, while still maintaining a level of relatability that resonates with the audience. This effect is further enhanced by his vocal abilities, as he frequently uses different voices and accents to portray various individuals, adding depth and humor to his storytelling.

Midway through the performance, Iglesias unexpectedly shifts to discussing people from the United Kingdom, making comparisons between how Americans perceive British accents and how British people perceive American accents. Throughout this segment, he remains respectful, making it clear that his jokes are not intended to be taken seriously. He even acknowledges this directly, joking that he does not want to face negative consequences from the audience after the show. This balance of comparison and respectful humor allows the segment to remain lighthearted while still generating strong audience reactions.

Iglesias then transitions into making race-based jokes about his friends, particularly those of different racial backgrounds. A key aspect of this segment is that he emphasizes the mutual understanding within his friend group, explaining that these types of jokes are acceptable among them due to their long-standing relationships. By establishing this context, he avoids presenting the humor as genuinely offensive, instead framing it as part of a shared dynamic.

Throughout the entire performance, Iglesias demonstrates a high level of skill in storytelling. His narratives are clear, detailed, and well-structured, rarely straying off topic and consistently transitioning smoothly between ideas. These seamless transitions contribute to the overall flow of the performance and help maintain audience engagement. The effectiveness of his storytelling is largely due to the combination of truth, relatability, and humor, which are essential elements of successful comedy. The show concludes with a callback to the beginning of his final story, which involves a racist gift basket he received on stage, providing a cohesive and memorable ending.

Iglesias' performance provided me with more inspiration than any of the other shows analyzed. His approach to storytelling had a significant influence on my own stand-up, even though his performances are typically longer in duration. This difference did not present a major

challenge; instead, it encouraged me to incorporate more detail into my own stories, creating additional opportunities for humor, much like Iglesias does in his routines.

His ability to discuss accents and stereotypes also influenced the development of my script, as both of these elements are present in my final performance. Additionally, his use of callbacks directly impacted my own writing, particularly in moments where I reference Mexican food and the fast-food restaurant Taco Bell, because often people mistake it as authentic Mexican food. Overall, his performance was highly influential, helping shape my script into its final form.

Closing it off with Berger's techniques for one last time, Iglesias' two most used comedic techniques would have to be exaggeration and mimicry. Iglesias frequently exaggerates real-life situations, emotions, and personal experiences, amplifying them to a level that makes otherwise ordinary moments far more humorous and engaging. This technique allows him to transform relatable scenarios into memorable comedic highlights. In addition to this, his use of mimicry plays a crucial role in his storytelling. By imitating voices, accents, and mannerisms of the people he describes, Iglesias is able to bring his stories to life in a way that feels vivid and dynamic. This not only enhances the audience's understanding of the situation but also increases the overall comedic impact. Together, these techniques demonstrate how Iglesias effectively combines expressive delivery with exaggerated realism to create a highly engaging and entertaining performance.

Critically evaluating these five comedians provided a clear understanding of what contributes to a successful stand-up comedy performance, both in terms of structure and delivery. Across all of the acts analyzed, several key patterns emerged, including the effectiveness of self-deprecating openings, the importance of relatability through personal experiences, and the consistent use of techniques such as callbacks, exaggeration, and mimicry. Each comedian

demonstrated a unique approach to engaging an audience, whether through storytelling, rapid-fire jokes, character work, or cultural commentary, yet all maintained a strong awareness of audience connection and timing. What became especially clear is that success in stand-up is not defined by a single style, but rather by how well a comedian commits to their chosen approach while maintaining authenticity and control over their material.

From this process, I was able to identify which techniques aligned most closely with my own strengths as a performer. Self-deprecation, storytelling, and the use of cultural comparisons became central elements in my own set, as they allowed me to connect with audiences while still addressing more challenging topics such as race and identity. Additionally, observing how each comedian handled potentially offensive material reinforced the importance of intent, confidence, and clarity in delivery. These insights directly influenced both the structure and content of my performance, shaping how I approached joke writing, transitions, and audience engagement.

Alright, so now that I have covered material to what makes a successful stand-up comedy set, it was time to finally get my own set on its feet and see how it does out in a public open mic setting.

So I Performed Stand-Up.

My first attempt at showcasing my set wasn't actually in a public setting just yet, it was to a group of my friends. The reason for this was I needed feedback to be obtained in order to know if it was acceptable enough to be brought to a wider audience. My first attempt was interesting to say the least. I had given a form to everyone at the end of the 10-minute show to write down any criticisms and likings they had towards the performance, this proved to be effective as the results I got back were not what I was expecting. Turns out that I had succeeded

very early on in making jokes that were considered humorous, however the problem actually resided in my own way of performing it.

I had failed to provide a satisfying tone that gave life to the performance. On top of that I had failed to give time for jokes to land at the end of sentences, taking away from the performance overall. So rather than going over my material, as that was not the problem, I decided to listen to the feedback and go at a much slower pace, as well as adding in spaces of air for jokes to land. An important part of performing stand-up is being confident in what you say on stage. That sentence alone can carry anyone through any performance, even outside of stand-up comedy.

Once I had cleaned up my act, it was time to go out into a public setting and give it a go. This proved to be another problem of sorts, as finding a venue in the small town of Carmarthen Wales proved to be challenging. My collaborator Charlie and I had slight trouble with booking a venue, seeing as our most available venue at our school had conveniently been shut down around the time period we needed to perform. We got lucky and ended up settling for a small bar called *CWRW Studios*, which funny enough, was doing an open mic but just for music. The host of the event was gracious enough to let both of us perform our sets that night, even though stand-up wasn't the focus of that night, regardless, the setting still worked out perfectly. I had actually done a bit of improv at the start to poke fun at the fact we weren't meant to be doing stand-up here, which worked out really well.

As for the actual performance and the material I covered in the set, as you can see from the photo, my outfit of choice is quite peculiar compared to normal everyday wear. What I had decided to wear that night was a poncho, a traditional South American outer garment designed to keep the body warm or dry. This played an important role for multiple reasons. Firstly, this piece of clothing is not very common in Wales, given that they are across the globe from where this type of clothing is created. Secondly, there are more than one type of ponchos, and I had learned throughout my time here that in some parts of Wales, they call a poncho with sleeves a “Drug Rug” which to me is insanely funny. There’s a big stereotype with Mexicans and the idea of smuggling drugs across borders, so knowing that was the name they gave my beloved piece of clothing, I most certainly had to make it apart of my set, which proved to work out insanely well.

I decided throughout my set I would reference local stores and locations around Carmarthen, such as the grocery store Tesco and the town square. This worked well in my favor as it gave the crowd that night a glimpse of what it was like for someone that was Mexican American to be living in their town, and it garnered a ton of laughs. Tesco even has a dedicated section in their store labeled “Mexican”, but all it contained were kits to make tacos and fajitas. This was too good of an opportunity to pass up, so I had written a joke about my first time seeing it, as well as ending my show with a callback to the aisle itself. In the end, my performance touched on all the things I wanted to cover; xenophobia, stereotypes, politics back home, comparisons, experiences, and ending with overall praise for the great country that is Wales.



Before moving on I think it's only right that I discuss what my two most utilized Berger techniques I used during my own set. The two most prominent humor techniques used in my performance are exaggeration and stereotype. Exaggeration is consistently applied to amplify personal experiences and cultural differences, transforming realistic situations into more impactful comedic moments. Additionally, stereotype is used throughout the set to explore perceptions of Mexican, American, and Welsh identities. However, rather than reinforcing these stereotypes, my performance often subverts them through self-awareness and inclusion, allowing the humor to remain engaging without appearing solely offensive.

Thoughts and Conclusion.

Subjectively, I feel that I successfully achieved what I set out to do throughout this project. I am extremely proud of the outcome, and the experience has inspired me to pursue stand-up comedy again in the future. While it may not become my primary career path, it is certainly a skill I would like to continue developing and showcasing.

As an actor, this process has been particularly valuable. The work I undertook during this period has allowed me to demonstrate and develop a range of transferable skills that will support my future career, especially within comedic performance. The ability to write, adapt, and refine a script based on real-life experiences and audience feedback has strengthened my creative thinking skills, which are essential within both stand-up comedy and acting more broadly. Additionally, responding constructively to feedback proved to be an important part of this process, reinforcing my ability to critically evaluate my own work and make necessary improvements.

Furthermore, my ability to identify and resolve issues within my script demonstrates growth in problem-solving skills, particularly within a creative context. I was able to navigate challenges such as how to appropriately address sensitive topics in a public setting, while still maintaining a positive and engaging experience for the audience. This required careful consideration of tone, intent, and delivery, all of which are crucial when working within comedy.

Overall, this experience has demonstrated my capability to independently create, develop, and perform original work in a public setting. It highlights my ability to take initiative, apply feedback, and manage my own creative process, all of which are essential skills within the creative industries.

I do hope that comedy stays strong in the future, and that our right of free speech never gets taken away by anyone. The freedom to express ourselves through jokes and tackle problems with a smile is what keeps us going, without it, what life are we truly living? “Jesters are not a thing of the past. They are here today.” (Smith, 2019).

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Appendix:

Video of Stand-up Performance:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/19iuc-70IN7yIQpmjeTCyez7fUEPhJYtt/view?usp=sharing>

Stand-up Script:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1G0sDyEwgeAg8m5eF2YkCZLMFhBEeX6NPr8stin02zGM/edit?usp=sharing>

Rough Draft and all my Paragraphs before the use of AI:

[Joseph Gillen Final IP Draft \(before AI\).docx](#)

IP Presentation note card (helped with writing conclusion):

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KtxXxmMgAI_Bqq3bLA4QYcOWnkxQMOctgoM62389iYM/edit?usp=sharing