The Representation of Islam, Muslim, and Muslimness Within the

Slippage of Meaning: A Corpus-assisted Critical Discourse

Analysis of Saturday Night Live

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Abstract

Research on the representation of Islam and Muslim people in the media has yielded some valuable studies; however, there are few examples examining the discursive construction of Islam and Muslim people in comedy from a critical discourse analytic perspective. To help fill the sizeable gap present at the intersections of humour studies and media discourse analysis, this thesis seeks to understand the cultural politics that inform representations of Islam, Muslim, and Muslimness (MIM) in humorous discourse. It builds upon critical humour theories that interpret humour and comedy as discourses that are formed through sign slippage – or through the slippage of meaning created by incongruity –this is the movement of meaning in language use. The incongruities within humorous discourses create disparities, tension, and a continuous slippage of meanings, opening a discursive space to situate and negotiate serious experiences related to ethnicity, race and religion. More specifically, the study examines discursive representations of MIM in a specially constructed corpus of comedic sketches from the American sketch comedy show Saturday Night Live (*SNL*) taken from the years 2008 and 2020.

The research employs corpus linguistic tools in the first stage of analysis to identify areas of interest worthy of closer investigation through in-depth, qualitative analysis. It then utilises analytical tools and concepts from discourse-historical and the discourse theory of humour to examine the textual representations and evaluations of MIM in the show and highlight the historic and contemporary meanings they carry and the considerations they express. Where pertinent, the thesis offers further debate pertaining to the visual elements of the sketches. The main research question addresses whether, and if so in what respects, the dominant discourses and representations of MIM in *SNL* articulate, disarticulate, or rearticulate normative cultural understandings about MIM in contemporary America. The findings reveal a lack of fixity in the humour and emphasise the complexity of evaluating the ambivalence of humorous discourse. This suggests humour has the potential for layering multiple discursive positions and meanings, thereby discursively strengthening ambivalent or contradictory discourses about MIM. Undoubtedly, the linguistic analysis yields interesting findings regarding the textual and visual features that may guide audiences toward particular interpretations or readings. Here, the

overall discursive analysis suggests that while *SNL* may engage in some persistent and problematic trends and narratives seen in Western media, it also presents opportunities to challenge and question these narratives through comedic interventions. Nonetheless, not even the most discursively stereotype- problematising sketches can avoid categorical positioning based on pre-existing ideologies.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

In the harmless pursuit of laughter and a good time, watching American sketch comedy shows like *Saturday Night Live* is considered to be a humorous entertainment. But can humour only be regarded as an aesthetic phenomenon, as one that is pleasurable and positive? Or can it address serious issues often discussed in serious discourses? Is it truly a means of criticising social problems, as some argue? In contrast, can humour serve as a space where social problems are sustained or even created?

Critical examination of humour's role in society is a developing field of study within Critical Humour Studies, questioning the alleged benignity of humour and exploring its connection to the complex web of power relations within human societies (Abedinifard, 2015). While a number of valuable studies have explored the representation of Islam and Muslim people in the media (Helly, 2004; Hirji, 2011; Kumar, 2011; Baker et al., 2013; Ogan et al., 2014; Haw, 2018), there is little research on the discursive construction of Islam and Muslim people in the context of comedy from a critical discursive perspective. Seeking to address the sizeable gap at the intersections of Critical Humour Studies and media discourse analysis, the present thesis explores understandings of the cultural politics of representations of Islam, Muslims and Muslimness (henceforth, MIM) in humorous discourse. To achieve this, it builds upon critical humour theories that understand humorous discourses as having a distinct feature placed in the linguistic `switch' or point of slippage. In other words, what distinguishes humorous texts from other types of texts is, what Weaver (2011) calls, the 'slippage of meaning' created by incongruity. More precisely, the discursive incongruities at the heart of many humorous texts create discrepancy, tension and constant slippage, which consequently generate ambivalent meanings that audiences may draw from the text (Critchley, 2002; Weaver, 2011). Moreover, these tensions open up a space for audiences to potentially position, interpret and make sense of the discursive clashes, as well as negotiate a meaning that draws upon their orientations or conceptions of individuals, groups and the social world (Raskin, 1995). The corpus selected for this study is a specially built corpus of comedic sketches that cover MIM,

taken from the American sketch comedy show *Saturday Night Live* (henceforth *SNL*) between the years 2008 and 2020.

The following introduction first elaborates on the central foci of the thesis, i.e., the what, who, when, where and why that will organise and inform the analysis. This is followed by the list of research questions that guide the analysis and the outline of the thesis chapters.

1.1 The 'What': Humorous Discourse and Representation

This thesis is situated within the field of Critical Discourse Studies (hereafter, CDS). Therefore, it is essential to briefly define the notion of discourse and representation as it is understood within the scope of CDS. Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2003) describes 'discourse' as encompassing practices that are both semiotic and social; that is, they both indicate meaning and establish modes of social action and representation. Taking the Foucauldian notion of 'discourse' (1972) as his reference point, Fairclough describes the relationship between language and society as dialectical, with *discourse* being constructed by systems of knowledge and belief, social identities and social relationships that contribute in unison to their construction (Fairclough, 1989, 1992). In other words, not only does discourse reflect a particular representation of the world/society, but it also shapes social knowledge and social identities. In this sense, discourse can often be a site of conflicting *ideologies*, where existing power relations may variously be maintained*,* challenged or resisted. Ideologies include shared beliefs, values, and norms that underpin social structures and guide individuals' behaviours. They can be seen as the dominant or prevailing ideas within a particular social, cultural, or political context (KhosraviNik, 2016). Furthermore, discourse not only reflects and perpetuates hegemonic ideologies but also challenges and transforms them (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997)*.*

By foregrounding the practical functions of language in this way, it is possible to apply the concept of discourse to inherently humorous discourse. However, many researchers (Mulkay, 1988; Nirenburg and Raskin, 1985) find such a characterisation of humorous discourse to be problematic, given the potential circularity of the notion that stems from the difficulty distinguishing it from serious discourse. Although I acknowledge humorous discourse does not always operate in the same way as

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serious discourse, and that interpretations may not always be uniform simply because they are considered humorous, I maintain that humorous discourse structurally utilises semiotic devices (for instance, words and expressions) that inform serious meaning-making. This suggests that, even though humorous discourse may not be considered a serious form of communication, it can, nonetheless, have a variety of serious effects, rendered more potent by the specific semiotic devices that characterise comic modes of expression. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the linguistic structures involved in constructing humorous discourse, such as metonym, metaphor, intertextuality and irony, among others, as this will allow us to explain the effects of these structures on both serious and humorous meanings.

Keeping this definition of humorous discourse in mind, it is important to consider its functional effects, especially with regard to discussions about the discursive representation of social minorities. I use the term 'representation' drawing upon Hall's theory of representation, since it foregrounds the role of language in the construction of identity and its relationship to stereotypes. According to Hall (2013: 2), representation refers to how meaning is constructed through language. He maintains that "representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things" (ibid: 15). Whether through visual or verbal depictions, or verbal communication, representation contributes to establishing the norms, rules and conventions that shape our social interactions. As Dyer (2013) argues, representation is significant as a means of shaping power relations, and this is particularly evident in comedy, where such power relations are either reinforced, challenged or negotiated. Ultimately, questions of representation determine how stereotypes are either perpetuated or subverted in comedy. If, as this study argues, humorous discourse is implicated in shaping knowledge and cultural attitudes to develop certain identities, then we might reasonably ask what the ideological assumptions of representing Muslims, Islam and Muslimness in sketch comedy are. Before answering this question, I will first attempt to explain the identities in question: Muslim, Islam and Muslimness.

1.2 The 'Who': Muslim, Islam, Muslimness (MIM)

Defining 'Muslim', 'Islam' and 'Muslimness' is challenging because these concepts are far more nuanced than is readily appreciated by most Muslims and non-Muslims. Simply put, a Muslim is a person who adheres to the religion of 'Islam', hence the word Muslim. However, this 'Muslimness' is not exclusively or primarily a question of faith. 'Muslimness' integrates a host of other layers of meaning. When defining 'Muslimness', it is vital to consider individuals' various sociocultural affiliations, the entire spectrum of customs and traditions, the different interpretations and practices of Islam and the racial and ethnic diversity that exists among the 1.9 billion followers worldwide. In addition, there is the matter of choice, concerning what and how the person chooses to believe. Added to this heterogeneity are the unique and varied racialised ethnicities that are equated with 'Islam', such as Arabs and South Asians.

The concept of 'Orientalism' is relatively helpful to understand the definition of these terms in a Western context. In his book of that name, Edward Said (1978: 2) argued that "Orientalism" established the existence of a foundation of "knowledge" that constructed the "East" according to preconceived misconceptions that characterised it as exotic, backward and despotic, in contrast to the "West", which was viewed as civilised, rational, moral and Christian. These 'knowledge' frames that classified the 'East' and created an "Eastern reality" of "otherness" produced certain tropes or cultural understandings, which subsequently consistently influenced all further learning and knowledge about the East ([1978], 2003: 2-3). The term "East" has since been replaced with the designations "Arab" and "Muslim", which are often used as synonyms in Western media narratives, even though the majority of the world's Muslim population is concentrated in non-Arab countries like Indonesia, Pakistan and India (Alsultany, 2013: 23). Studies have also shown a tendency in Western media to blur the multiple and diverse identities of Arabs, Middle Easterners and Muslims, lumping them all together as 'Arabs' and/or 'Muslims' (Arti, 2007). According to Alsultany (2013: 9), such conflation makes it easier to racially profile the 'East'; alternative conflations, such as, for instance, Arab/Christian or Indonesian/Muslim would carry less weight. Due to the limited interactions that non-Muslim Americans have had with Muslims, the dominant information source for most people regarding 'Islam' or 'Muslim' has been representations presented in news, television programming and movies (Alsultany, 2022).

Throughout this thesis, I use the term MIM (abbreviation of Muslim, Islam, Muslimness) in the Saidian sense, to focus the attention on the operation of MIM as a cultural signifier referring to what might be termed an imagined 'cumulative identity' resulting from the discursive (re)construction and recontextualisation of the religion of Islam and people who are considered 'Muslims' in the Western media. It is important to acknowledge that using MIM as a collective cultural signifier does not mean disregarding the political, economic, racial, ethnic and linguistic differences that exist among Muslim individuals worldwide. I do not intend to use it as a catch-all term to gloss over representations of MIM in America. Instead, I offer the term as a useful way of seeing patterns in the representations of MIM in *SNL* and examine the extent to which such representations are in line with familiar, taken-for-granted knowledge, beliefs and expectancies about 'Islam' and 'Muslim', which may be immediately triggered in the public's perception, contrasting with terms like 'Christianity/Christian' or' 'Judaism/Jewish'. This is partly due to the heightened media attention that MIM have received through the dominant cultural lens over time, which is most likely based on preconceived misconceptions and stereotypes (see Section 2.2.2). In addition, the term MIM will be used only in reference to specific contexts, *SNL*, identifying the extent to which representations of MIM in *SNL* are aligned or realigned with familiar understandings of 'Islam' and 'Muslim' in contemporary America.

Here, it is necessary to acknowledge my position as an analyst vis-a-vis the subject matter. As a Muslim woman, I have assumptions and biases regarding the Western media's representations of MIM, based on what I have personally read about and heard in the media. Reflecting on my positionality helped me identify my own subjective viewpoint and recognise how my identity and personal experiences may impact the research process and interpretation of data. Herein, I have sought to address my biases by immersing myself in literature relevant to the subject matter to gather nuanced insights. I also used corpus linguistic tools in the first stage of the analysis to avoid some of the issues related to researcher bias and possible *cherry-picking* of data. These tools allow certain aspects to emerge through statistical rather than subjective criteria (Baker et al., 2013) (see Section 4.3.1.1). In addition, I have also shared some elements of my study at conferences and workshops, addressing diverse audiences. I have also received feedback from my supervisor and held discussions with Muslim and non-Muslim PhD researchers, who offered me diverse

viewpoints with which to interrogate my interpretations. Their comments and feedback led me to acknowledge the existence of multiple valid interpretations, each of which depends on the perspective of the interpreter.

1.3 The 'When': Obama Presidency and Trump Era (2008-2020)

The current study focuses on *SNL* comedic sketches in which MIM are mentioned, referred to implicitly or in passing during the period following the election of Barack Obama in 2008 until the final months of Donald Trump's presidency in 2020. The Obama presidency signified a tremendous transformation and was heralded as a watershed moment in American history, with many journalists and political advisors asserting that the election of a biracial president represented "the end of racism," marking the dawning of a "post-racial era" (Bonilla-Silva and Ashe, 2014). However, the version of post-racialism adopted by America at that time did not appear to include 'Arabs' and Islam (Abraham and Smith, 2013). Indeed, Obama was even 'accused' by rivals and social media users of being secretly Muslim or Arab, due to his Arabic middle name 'Hussein' and the fact that he had spent his childhood in Indonesia, a Muslim-majority country. These allegations prompted several public discussions regarding whether he belonged in the Oval Office, which ultimately intensified anti-Muslim sentiments (Kazi, 2021). Instead of pointing out that being Arab or Muslim is not inherently negative, Obama focused on denying the rumours, leaving the underlying anti-Muslim rhetoric and allegations unaddressed (ibid).

After his election, Obama did start demonstrating his explicit support for the Muslim community in America by visiting mosques, condemning anti-Muslim rhetoric and urging media outlets to portray Muslim characters positively (The New York Times, 2016). Obama's official policies toward Muslim people appeared to follow the path set out by his predecessor, with US-led wars in Muslim-majority countries continuing to severely impact the lives of Muslims residing in those countries (Nimer, 2010). In addition, the FBI's intimidation of Muslim people and Islamic institutions continued, with agents often visiting mosques to make cases of radicalism and spy on congregants (Shipoli, 2018). One case involved three Muslim men who were approached by the FBI in an attempt to coerce them into providing confidential information about other Muslim people who the FBI believed might be involved in terrorist activities. However, when the men refused to comply, the FBI retaliated by

adding them to the national No-Fly List. The CUNY Law School established CLEAR (Creating Law Enforcement Accountability and Responsibility) and, in 2014, filed an appeal against the FBI on behalf of the three American Muslim men who were placed on the No-Fly List, despite having no criminal records. The FBI offered to remove them from the list if they agreed to become informants within Muslim communities. In 2015, the US government informed them that they had been removed from the list because they never posed a security threat, but that the FBI had listed them in order to gather information on Muslim Americans (MSNBC, 2020).

The chosen timeframe for my analysis also covers the 2016 presidential race, during which people categorised as 'Muslims' were a major topic of debate among the different candidates, including Trump. According to Kazi (2021), the 2016 elections were characterised by Islamophobia, most notably embodied by the Trump campaign. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) reported that expressions of anger and fear towards Muslim-Americans had shifted from the fringes of US society and entered mainstream politics and the media.

In an interview with MSNBC on 6th November 2015, Trump commented on the series of terrorist attacks that took place in Paris earlier that month and expressed his openness to the idea of shutting down mosques. He stated that, while he would prefer not to take such extreme measures, it was something that would need to be seriously considered because he believed that some of the extremist ideas and hatred were originating from "Islamic" places (MSNBC, 2015). In another interview with CNN in 2016, Trump said he believed that "Islam hates us" (The Washington Post, 2017). He stated that there was a great deal of hatred directed towards the US within the Islamic faith. Trump emphasised the need to understand the root of this supposed hatred, characterising it as "unbelievable" (ibid). Following his election, Trump issued government surveillance practices and other policies, including an executive order that temporarily blocked Syrian refugees from entering the US and imposed a 90-day ban on individuals from seven predominantly Muslim countries. The order took immediate effect, leading to chaos and confusion at US airports and ports of entry, as well as protests and legal challenges. The ban also triggered a diplomatic dispute with Iraq, which still had a significant number of US troops stationed within its borders.

In light of these major events, it is important to examine how MIM representations are articulated and negotiated in the media and more specifically in sketch comedy, especially since there was a shift in media discourses concerning race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and religion during the target period (Turner et al., 2014; Halse, 2016). The shift marks the change in media discourses where news outlets began to highlight incidents of anti-Muslim violence and discrimination, bringing greater attention to the issue and putting pressure on authorities to take action. In response to this, a number of diversity initiatives were introduced in different sectors, aimed at promoting greater inclusion of Muslim Americans and combating discrimination against them. For instance, some media outlets began to feature more Muslim voices and perspectives, allowing for a broader representation of the Muslim community and helping to counter the negative stereotypes that had been perpetuated in the past. These efforts represented a significant shift in the way that Muslim Americans were perceived and treated and helped to raise awareness about the importance of inclusivity and diversity (Alsultany, 2022).

1.4 The 'Where': *Saturday Night Live (SNL)*

Every Saturday night at 11:30 p.m. Eastern time, *SNL* starts with a cold opening which is a parody sketch featuring a political or social commentary, often satirising current events or news stories, and ends with someone delivering the iconic tagline "live from New York, it's Saturday night," to begin the title sequence. Each episode contains a series of live and recorded sketches, two songs and a 'Weekend Update', which is a news parody segment presenting satirical views regarding current news stories. Each episode also features a well-known celebrity as host and a musical guest. The host delivers an opening monologue and also participates with the cast in some sketches. The episode ends with both cast members and host smiling and waving goodbye to the studio audience and home viewers, as the closing credits roll down the screen.

SNL is an appropriate site of analysis for exploring the representation of MIM for many important reasons. The first reason is related to the show's widespread popularity and pervasiveness in popular culture. Over the past five decades, many US television viewers have tuned in to the NBC channel on Saturday nights to watch the varying cast members of *SNL* satirise current political events in a light-hearted vein, parodying politicians and playfully mocking pop culture. Debuting in October 1975, *SNL* offered

viewers a blend of sketch comedy news broadcast parody and advertisements, all within the context of a ninety-minute live production. The show's creator, Lorne Michaels, and contributor, Dick Ebersol, have aimed to position the show as an alternative mainstream comedy offering timely commentary on current events (Marks et al., 2013).

In addition, *SNL* has achieved remarkable longevity compared to other programs within its genre and beyond. As a sketch comedy show, *SNL* has surpassed the lifespan of any other similar show and outlasted many shows in other genres as well. Over the course of the past forty-eight years, the weekly show has successfully garnered excellent ratings by attracting the attention of viewers, continuing to appeal to audiences even in today's internet era. Traditionally, *SNL* has attracted a younger demographic, particularly the targeted demographic range (adults aged 18-49), who often tune in for its satirical and comedic content (Tallman et al., 2020). *SNL* has a broad appeal and is known for its pop culture references, celebrity guest appearances, and its ability to address current events and social issues through comedy. As a result, the show has garnered a loyal following among comedy enthusiasts, fans of the performing arts, and those who enjoy satire and political humour. Despite experiencing occasional declines in viewership, the show has consistently managed to attract new viewers with the targeted demographic range (The Hollywood Reporter, 2021). The viewership of the show is almost evenly divided between males and females, with a slight skew towards a higher male audience (ibid). Wrapping its 46th season, *SNL* ended as the highest-ranked entertainment show for adults aged 18-49, attracting 9 million viewers per episode (Forbes, 2021). It has maintained its position as the leading comedy among the most important advertising target audience for the second year in a row (ibid).

Furthermore, *SNL* has pushed the limits of its regular Saturday night slot. The characters from the show's sketches have served as a source of inspiration for movies and have made their way into various aspects of popular culture. In fact, *SNL* has become an American media institution, having created enormously popular sketches and characters, some of which have been developed into feature length films, such as *The Coneheads*, *The Blues Brothers* and *Wayne and Garth* (Whalley, 2010). This sets *SNL* apart from other television shows that may reflect popular culture to some extent.

In addition, *SNL* has received many awards, being widely acknowledged favourably by the television industry. Entering its 48th season in 2022-2023, it retains the title for the most nominated television show in Emmy history, with 306 nominations and 87 wins. *SNL* has also been honoured with the prestigious George Foster Peabody Award twice, in 1990 and 2009, and is cited as a truly national institution. Being honoured with the Peabody Award holds great importance for *SNL*, considering that it is the oldest and most prestigious award in the field of electronic media. This esteemed accolade acknowledges the outstanding quality and accomplishments of the recipients' work. The show was also inducted into the Broadcasting Hall of Fame by the National Association of Broadcasters in 2000.

Late night comedy shows, such as *SNL*, maintain widespread popularity by delivering accurate information in a humorous manner through techniques, such as commentary, satire, analysis and criticism (Niven et al.,2003). These shows differ from other television programmes by presenting serious or unpleasant facts in a light-hearted way that is accessible and engaging to viewers. Such presentation has earned *SNL* the reputation of being the "serious voice in the American political landscape" (Reincheld, 2006: 190). Over its lifetime, *SNL* has been both praised and criticised (Baumgartner and Morris, 2008; Marx et al., 2013) for repeatedly and intentionally debating politics, pop culture and social norms, as well as other sensitive topics. The show has even become inextricably linked to issues of race, ethnicity, gender and the (re)production of identity (Whalley, 2010). It is due to its fluidity and influence that the show offers an ideal site at which researchers can observe and examine the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, politics and humour. The show has addressed serious content like racial and ethnic categories, gender and sexual identity, religion, social norms, politics and global affairs. While it consistently reflects on such issues in relation to US culture, it also simultaneously plays a role in shaping it (Reincheld, 2006). According to Herb Sargent, who worked as the editor of the 'Weekend Update' segment for many years, the writers never originally intended to devise jokes that would inform and educate viewers, but ultimately realised that "people would say they'd heard about this major story only on 'Weekend Update'" (ibid: 193).

To date, *SNL* has been the topic of limited academic scholarship, typically focused on discussing the history of the show (Hill and Weingrad, 2011; Hilmes, 2013), the careers of cast members after they leave the show (Whalley, 2010) and the cultural influence of the show on the audience (Smith and Voth, 2002; Miller, 2012). Marx et al. (2013: 5) describe previous academic studies of *SNL* as having a "tendency toward hagiography in the service of telling a good story." Their book, instead, aims to link the show to the broader world of American television and culture by including a collection of studies discussing *SNL* that are connected to wider political and social contexts in America. Although their book is useful, it only offers introductory studies into the show's multifaceted history without conducting comprehensive assessments of the areas discussed in each of the essays, such as issues ranging from race and gender to authorship and comedic performance.

However, there are still researchers (Day and Thompson, 2012; Abel and Barthel, 2013; Compton, 2016) who have also examined the distinctive viewpoint *SNL* offers on current events by incorporating social and political news content into comedy and involving celebrities and government officials. This approach has the potential to generate diverse opinions through both the impersonations and real-life portrayals presented. The social and political implications of parody and satire in the show, especially in the 'Weekend Update' segment and parody sketches featuring political impersonations, have also been examined by interested scholars (Voth, 2007; Thomason et al., 2009). These scholars argued that such sketches had an influence on public and political discussions about important issues, such as presidential elections. For instance, Tina Fey's portrayal of Sarah Palin during the 2008 election marked a significant shift in the political focus of *SNL* impersonations and garnered significant media coverage and, at one point, attracted the show's highest ratings in 14 years (Ressner, 2008). Fey's impersonation highlighted Palin's lack of political experience and her rural, small-town background, effectively challenging her credibility and competence to be a president (Hakola, 2017). Some have argued that Fey's parody had an impact on the election results by shaping public opinion of Palin. Esralew and Young (2012: 338) observed a correlation between the rise in *SNL* ratings during the 2008 campaign, specifically due to Tina Fey's portrayal of Sarah Palin, and a corresponding decrease in Palin's approval ratings. This phenomenon has been referred to as the "Tina Fey Effect." Cacciatore et al. (2014) suggested that

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the *SNL* parodies, specifically those featuring Tina Fey impersonating Sarah Palin, had a transformative effect on the way voters perceived Palin. The study argued that a considerable number of voters attributed false statements made by Fey during the comedic sketches to real comments made by Palin during media interviews. This indicates that the parodies may have had an unintended impact on the election, potentially shaping public opinion in a way that could have influenced the outcome. This also highlights the role of reframing and interpretation in political comedy, as comedians draw on their platform to shape public perceptions and influence political discourse (Day and Thompson, 2012; Hakola, 2017).

Moreover, *SNL* impact on politics and audiences was also evident during the 2016 presidential race. Alec Baldwin's impersonation of Donald Trump on *SNL* became a significant aspect of the show during the 2016 election and throughout Trump's presidency. Baldwin's portrayals emphasised Trump's distinctive mannerisms and speech patterns, as well as his tendency to tweet frequently and impulsively. The weekly sketches on the election were not only a topic of discussion among niche audiences, but also gained attention from mainstream media outlets like *CNN*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and *Fox News* (Hakola, 2017). As a result, there was a sense of anticipation before each broadcast and public debates followed the show (ibid). However, when Donald Trump participated in a Twitter discussion about the show, it further increased the show's importance and public attention. This again proves how humorous discourse has the power to politically appeal to audiences and perhaps influence their views on certain political matters.

It is worth noting that some discourse analysis studies (e.g., Wiedlack, 2018; Fataya, 2020; Clemente-Escobar, 2021; Yulianti et al., 2022) have explored aspects of *SNL* and its influence. For instance, Wiedlack's (2019) study presents a feminist critical discourse analysis of the *SNL* sketch *Melanianade* in which she asserts that the humorous text perpetuates negative stereotypes of Eastern European women in order to portray Melania Trump. The study suggests that the characterisation of Melania Trump in the sketch cannot be understood in isolation, but must be viewed in relation to her co-construction with her white hegemonic husband, as well as other racialised women depicted in the sketch. She concludes that humorous discourse employs stereotypical narratives about Eastern European women to

undermine not just Melania Trump, but rather the influential white men with whom she is also constructed. In another study, Fataya (2020) analyses *SNL*'s famous sketch *The Presidential Debate* using Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square framework, which lists certain semantic macro-strategies that reveal the division between in-groups and out-groups. Some of the strategies her study focuses on include disclaimer, implication, incongruity, aggressive and illustration to criticise Trump's personality and his controversial political decisions. The findings reveal that, through political and power discourse, his personality and political decisions, including his handling of global warming and views on immigrants, are criticised. By examining the humorous discourse, the analysis reveals how Trump's character is both criticised and utilised to portray his behaviour and personality.

Although former studies of *SNL* are considered valuable resources showcasing the impact of the show on audiences, the majority have focused on specificities concerning the show and its history, failing to tackle larger issues, such as the politics of representations of minority groups. Even when discussing issues related to minority groups in America, most of the studies often focused on a single sketch and did not take into consideration other related *SNL* segments or sketches. Adding to that, none of the studies have scrutinised the representation of MIM in the show. Furthermore, few of the studies have examined issues related to minority groups from a linguistic perspective or investigated the role played by language in delivering messages about gender, race and ethnicity in a comedic format, certainly not within a corpus linguistic paradigm. This provides an opportunity for this study to address this gap by investigating both language usage and the representations of MIM in *SNL*, as will be explained in the section that follows.

1.5 The 'Why': Rationale for the Study

Situated at the intersections of humour studies and media discourse analysis, this thesis seeks to expand the current body of research on MIM representational discourse in the media. Its overarching aim is to demonstrate that critical discourse analysis can serve as a legitimate lens through which researchers can consider the complexities of MIM representations in American humorous discourses. Thus, the study combines elements from corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis to examine linguistic patterns related to the representations of MIM in *SNL* and explores

the extent to which these representations are in line with normative cultural understandings about MIM in contemporary America.

While there is a reasonable body of literature exploring the representations of MIM in Western media, research into MIM representations in humorous discourses in the US is underdeveloped when compared to academic studies of MIM representations in serious discourses such as newspapers (see Section 2.2.2). Even the studies that have examined MIM in humorous discourses have tended to have some limitations. For instance, most academic studies that examine the intersection of MIM and humour focus on Muslim comedians and their use of humour as a form of identity expression and social commentary. These studies often explore how Muslim comedians navigate their religious and cultural identities while performing and how their humour reflects their experiences as members of the Muslim community. However, there is a lack of research that analyses how MIM are represented in humorous discourse created by non-Muslim people. Such research could shed light on how MIM are represented and potentially evaluated in wider society. Analysing humour 'about' MIM, rather than 'by' them, could also provide insights into broader cultural trends and attitudes towards them. Furthermore, it could help identify how humorous discourse can be used to reinforce or challenge normative cultural understandings related to MIM and how these representations may intersect with other forms of discrimination, such as racism or xenophobia (see Section 2.3.4).

Moreover, most prior studies around MIM in humorous discourse take a content-analysis approach wherein researchers focus on a certain topic or theme within a selected sample of texts. Consequently, these studies naturally focus on the incidence of topics and rarely take into consideration how they are linguistically instantiated. This is curious, given that critical humour researchers have suggested language and rhetorical mechanisms as an area of interest. In fact, there is a general consensus among critical humour scholars that, in order to explain what humorous discourse does and how it functions in regard to certain social norms, it is best to examine the linguistic structures and mechanisms of the particular discursive form (Weaver, 2013). However, most of their studies fail to provide a comprehensive methodological approach that not only consider the multiple interpretations of humorous discourse, but also take into consideration the multiplicity of levels involved in the humorous

discourse. This study, therefore, proposes that, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of cultural politics of representations of MIM in *SNL*, a synthesis of critical humour and critical discourse research is necessary (see Chapter 3). This thesis also employs a corpus approach (discussed in Section 4.3.1), which has the advantage of uncovering emergent and dominant topics that may not be immediately apparent upon reading the texts. By examining repeated linguistic patterns across hundreds of texts, implicit assumptions and values in the language used in the *SNL* discourse can be revealed. This is in contrast to content analysis, which tends to use a deductive approach that looks for preconceived topics. Instead, the corpus approach allows for the discovery of themes and patterns that emerge as salient or significant in the data, potentially uncovering new insights in the representations of MIM in *SNL*. From a corpus-assisted perspective, this is the first study I know that has used corpus tools in the first stage of analysis to identify the dominant topics around MIM in *SNL* and guide the qualitative analysis in less subjective ways.

Finally, while *SNL* has been a significant cultural touchstone in the US for over four decades, there is a dearth in academic research on how the show represents and evaluates MIM. Given the show's tendency to address current events and cultural issues through its comedic sketches, analysing its representations of MIM could provide valuable insights into how MIM is perceived in American popular culture. From a linguistic perspective, to date, there are few linguistic studies that have examined *SNL* discourse, and those which have done so mainly focused on specific sketches. In my study, however, I have included all the sketches that explicitly or implicitly mention MIM even in passing. It is, after all, important to know that a pattern was present in, say, five sketches rather than one. As a result, the inclusion of many *SNL* sketches and segments aims to provide insights into how humorous discourse addresses serious issues and societal norms within a context different from serious discourse like newspapers. It also explores the effects and functions of humorous discourse on these issues and norms.

1.6 Research Questions and Thesis Outline

Considering the above, the following overarching question was formulated: *Do emergent and dominant discourses, and the representations of MIM in SNL, articulate, disarticulate or rearticulate normative cultural understandings about MIM in*

contemporary America, and, if so, in what respects? This question was subdivided into three research questions to provide more specific focal points, as follows:

RQ1: What are the emergent and dominant discourses associated with MIM in the *SNL* corpus?

RQ2: How are MIM represented and evaluated, verbally and visually, in the *SNL* sketches?

RQ3: What meanings are generated from MIM-related stereotypes in the *SNL* sketches and what role do the humour-invoking linguistic features employed in these sketches play in the creation and interpretation of humorous and serious meanings?

The organisational structure of this thesis will be as follows. Chapter 2 offers a detailed review of the relevant literature. It is divided into two parts. Part one maps out the development of research surrounding MIM in the media past and present, focusing on representations of MIM in newspapers, social media, TV and movies. Special attention is given to studies examining MIM representations in the media from a critical discursive perspective, since it provides the basis of the theoretical framework for the current research. Part two looks at humour studies, giving a brief overview of three traditional approaches. This is followed by an overview of the representations of race, ethnicity and religion in comedy, focusing on MIM specifically. Chapter 3 introduces the theoretical frameworks underlying the research. Here, I discuss Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), referring to the most important concepts underpinning the current study and Critical Humour Studies more generally. Chapter 4 lays out the data design and methodological procedures employed to tackle the data. This chapter is divided into two parts. Part one gives a detailed account of the steps I took when collecting, categorising and transcribing the data. Part two offers an outline of the analytical frameworks used, highlighting in detail, corpus linguistics (CL), discourse-historical approach, and discourse theory of humour (DTH) devised to approach the data.

Chapter 5 sets the groundwork for exploring representation(s) of MIM in *SNL*. It aims to answer RQ1: What are the emergent and dominant discourses associated with MIM in *SNL*? – by identifying keywords from the *SNL* corpus. These keywords will be grouped into thematic categories following a close reading of the concordance lines.

An analysis of keywords will then be informed by context and co-text information (i.e., emergent and dominant topics and discourses that tend to be associated with MIM) as present in the corpus. Chapter 6 examines the discursive representations and evaluations of MIM in *SNL* sketches. It provides an answer to RQ2 concerning the verbal and visual representations and evaluations of MIM in the *SNL* sketches by concentrating on exploring discursive strategies, namely referential, predicational and argumentation strategies, implemented to represent and evaluate MIM. These discursive strategies are realised through micro-linguistic analytical categories, such as metonymy, metaphor, pronouns and semiotic modes, which were relevant to the sketches at hand. Through analysing micro-level linguistic realisations, I will also explain their discursive functions and interpret their contextual relevance. Chapter 7 builds upon observations made previously regarding the potentially ambivalent readings of MIM representations in *SNL* by looking at different levels of context (i.e., humour level) and analysing the use of stereotypes and the meaning generated, whether intended as serious or humorous. Specifically, it seeks to answer RQ3: what meanings are generated from MIM-related stereotypes in the *SNL* sketches? and what role do the humour-invoking linguistic features employed in these sketches play in the creation and interpretation of humorous and serious meanings? This is followed by a discussion linking the findings from all the analysis chapters to the wider socio-political context in America. I will then conclude the thesis by providing some recommendations for future research on the representation of MIM.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The overarching question posed in the present study concerns the emergent and dominant discourses and representations of MIM in *SNL* and the extent to which they can articulate, disarticulate or rearticulate normative cultural understandings about MIM in contemporary America. To explore the above question, it is vital to examine topics and representations associated with MIM in the media in general, as well as the medium through which these representations are mediated, in this case, televised comedy. Due to the multifaceted and complex nature of this research, the chapter is divided into two parts for better organisation and clarity. These two parts cover the literature relevant to both media studies and humour studies, highlighting the dearth of research to date and identifying the gaps which this research seeks to address.

Part one of this chapter outlines the development of research surrounding MIM in the media, both past and present, focusing on representations of MIM in newspapers, social media, television and films. Special attention is given to critical discourse studies since it forms the basis of the theoretical framework for the current research. Part two investigates humour studies, offering a brief overview of the three traditional approaches, before moving on to focus on representations of race, ethnicity and religion in comedy, with a specific focus on MIM.

2.2 Media Studies

2.2.1 The Power of the Media

The media wields considerable power in shaping and influencing the perceptions, beliefs, and values that contribute to the formation of societal identities. Some scholars, such as Comstock (1986) and Mutz et al. (1996), believe that media narratives and discourses have minimal effect on audiences. They purport that different types of media narratives do not necessarily change people's thoughts or beliefs, asserting that it is a myth that the media has a strong influence on audiences' actions or opinions. However, undoubtedly, the media has varying levels of power

through its role in providing information, as the selection of such information can have a great impact on the public and society in general. Many scholars have recognised the undeniable role of the media in creating, representing and reinforcing the dominant topics and discourses of the elite members of society (van Dijk, 1989; Wodak, 2010). According to Fairclough (1995: 2), the power of the media can "shape governments and parties and influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations, social identities." Other scholars agree that media news and narratives are not merely a reflection of reality, but rather they are shaped by a complex interplay of political, economic, and cultural forces (Fowler, 1991; Ameli, 2007). Certainly, media narratives are intentionally written, constructed, framed and occasionally supported by visual images to represent and communicate a particular version of reality to those who have not experienced the events themselves first-hand.

Media narratives convey to their audiences a vicarious understanding of events that helps them to conceptualise a certain image of the real world relative to themselves. By gaining power over the production of discourse in this way, those who influence or control media discourse and narratives can convey specific knowledge, modify public perceptions and affect opinions (Van Dijk, 2009). In terms of MIM in particular, Elgamri (2011) notes that the way in which Islam and Muslim people are portrayed in the media is a good example to show the important role that the media plays in shaping audiences' worldview. According to Elgamri, what people consume in terms of news and entertainment media can have a significant impact on their attitudes and beliefs about this group. In other words, the media can influence and shape people's opinions about Islam and Muslim people, based on the representations presented to them through various forms of media. This form of power is relevant to this study, as media discourses and narratives are at the forefront of representing and evaluating MIM in Western societies.

2.2.2 MIM in the Media: Past and Present

At the outset of this thesis, it is crucial to understand the information being conveyed and the narratives being propagated by the media concerning MIM, since such information can shape societal attitudes towards MIM and impact how they are perceived by the wider public. A search of the literature reveals an increasing number of studies interested in representations of 'Islam', 'Muslim' and 'Arab', especially in

Western and European media (Ghareeb, 1983; Said, 1997; Lockman, 2009; Merskin, 2004; Karim, 2006; Alsultany, 2013; Baker et al., 2013). Moreover, there seems to be an agreement among researchers that such representations of MIM are not "problem-free" (Akbarzadeh and Smith, 2005: 36). In his two books, *Orientalism* (1978) and *Covering Islam* (1981), Edward Said pinpoints the peculiarity of the perceptions of the 'Orient' that dominate the Western imagination. According to Said (1987: 22), "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and the Occident". He attests that this distinction is a construct that upholds Western supremacy over the Orient "politically, sociologically, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period" (Said, 2003: 3). Tracing the history and origins of the 'Orient', Said discovered the dichotomy between 'Orient' and 'Occident' actually arose from histories and traditions of thought imagined and constructed by and for the West. The chief reason for creating such dichotomy was to prepare a legitimate ground for Western domination over and against an imagined 'Other'. That 'Other' was the Orient, characterised as a collective entity "to be feared... or to be controlled" (Said, 1978: 20).

Historically, in this sense, the internal opposition between the West and the Other was conceived to serve political ends and to benefit the military, economic and political strategies and projects of Western imperialism. Said (1980: 97) offers a detailed account of the way imperialist countries authorised their domination of the East, using Orientalist narrative frameworks as valid excuses for domination. Such narratives represent Islam as a religion of irrational violence, populated by "an undifferentiated mob of scimitar-waving oil suppliers" who subordinate their women (ibid). These narratives are based on presumed imaginings and stereotypes of the 'Orient', which ignore any variability and assign to it a backward, inferior and exotic nature. In line with their imperialist objectives, those countries adopted and perpetuated such narratives to rationalise and justify their dominance and presence in the East. According to Little (2004: 10), within the narratives of British orientalists, "Ottoman despotism, Islamic obscurantism and Arab racial inferiority had combined to produce a backward culture that was badly in need of Anglo-Saxons."

By the end of World War II, America had become both a great military and economic power. With this transition of the locus of power from Europe to America, orientalist

scholarship was also transferred from European to American academia and transmitted through popular platforms, including mass media (Said, 1997; Little, 2004). Thus, the American experience of Orientalism is much less direct than the European and, consequently, much more based on abstractions. The power of the media helped with intensifying the dichotomy between the 'Islamic East' and the 'Christian West', ignoring the diversity of the East in favour of defining it according to a neat, pre-existing category (Lewis and Wigen, 1997: 54). As a result, most media narratives failed to differentiate between Arabs, Turks and Iranians, lumping them together as either 'Muslims' or 'Arabs' (Suleiman, 1999: 3). In fact, most media narratives about people who are considered 'Orients' still remain the same, although, more recently, terms like 'Middle East,' Arab World' or 'Muslim World' are more commonly used. In the current study, I examine whether this is still the case in relation to sketch comedy in the US.

Following the 9/11 attacks in, 2001, the 'Arab World' or 'Muslim World' became a focal point of political and cultural discussions, garnering significant attention in American mainstream narratives. This produced a new trend, known as neo-orientalism, denoting a shift in the selection of both subject and locale (Altwaiji, 2014). The new trend still shares key patterns and predominant themes with its predecessor, the historical Orientalism discussed by Said and outlined above, but operates in a different paradigm (Alwuraafi and Altwaiji, 2021). It is founded on the idea of an essential binary opposition between superior American values and the inferior culture of 'Arabs' and 'Muslims'. This discursive linking of MIM and negative themes has become a focal point in populist rhetoric, one that has subsequently become mainstream in politics and the media. In fact, 'Muslim world', 'Arab world' 'Muslim countries' and 'Middle East' have repeatedly been depicted in media discourses and narratives as places that are distrusted for being anti-democratic, backward, violent and filled with religious militants who represent a social and existential threat (Spigel, 2005; Salaita, 2005; Bazian, 2018). Moore et al. (2008: 11) state that, before 9/11, the most common theme in news narratives around 'Muslim/Islam' was 'terrorism', showing that, while such narratives were relatively few in number, the link between terrorism and Muslim/Islam had already been established to some degree.

In recent research, studies have found that Western media discourses in general, and those in America in particular, portray Islam as a monolithic, homogenised or sexist

religion (Mishra, 2007; Korteweg, 2008; Richardson, 2009). Muslim people are repeatedly represented as uncivilised and inhuman religious maniacs (Shaheen, 2003; Baker et al., 2013; Hoon, 2021), as terrorists, inferior, threatening and de-historicised (Muscati, 2002; Powell, 2011; Ewart, 2012), representing a problem for society (Morey and Yagin, 2010; Alsultany, 2013). Representations are often constructed around wars and conflicts, and MIM are portrayed as needing intervention from the West to save them from their own savage nature (Poole, 2002; Akbarzadeh and Smith, 2005; Altwaiji, 2014). Moreover, Muslim women have been dehumanised and disincarnated and portrayed as backward, inferior and oppressed, possibly more systematically than Muslim men. In this frame, women are depicted as living in repressive male-dominated societies, shackled by rigid social norms and religious codes, which means they are lacking in agency and require rescuing (Mehdid, 1993; Abu-Lughod, 2002; Mishra, 2007; Abdellatif and Ottoway, 2007; Alhejin, 2012). The results of these academic studies reveal that MIM have been negatively portrayed in the media, perpetuating stereotypes and misconceptions about them as violent, backward or untrustworthy. Such representations can lead to serious consequences like discrimination, prejudice and even hate crimes against them (Aradau and Van Munster, 2007). Additionally, negative media representations can fuel anti-Muslim sentiments and contribute to policies that target and discriminate against Muslim communities, such as travel bans or surveillance programmes, result in these communities feeling excluded, marginalised, targeted, and unfairly accused (Aziz, 2021: 7). Throughout the analysis, I take into account these consequences as they may relate to the representations of MIM in *SNL*.

2.2.3 MIM in Television and Film

Given that the current study examines the representations of MIM in a television sketch comedy show, it is important to review the body of research that has focused on MIM portrayals in television and films. While written media is a significant force in terms of shaping public perceptions and ideologies, television remains the most widely consumed form of media today (although social media is rapidly increasing in influence). Television programming and Hollywood films have proven to be "a powerful socialization agent that influences public discourse" (Giannino and Campbell, 2012: 60). According to Bednarek (2010: 8), "our engagement with viewing television is not just limited to viewing television programmes. Not only do we watch television, but we

also talk about it and even use it to negotiate our identities." In that, television extends beyond a mere source of entertainment. It becomes a dynamic medium that fosters social interaction, cultural influence, and identity negotiation. Historical and textual analyses examining depictions of 'Muslim' and 'Arab' images in American television and film production, while relatively few in number, reveal recurrent patterns that portray them in a negative and stereotypical manner (Karim, 1997; Little, 1998; Kublitz, 2010; Benzehaf, 2017).

Directing attention toward Hollywood films, Shaheen (2003: 23) examines plots and characters and reveals that Muslim and Arab people on the 'silver screen' are depicted as threatening and culturally 'Other'. He also notes the stereotype of the 'dirty Arab' which is often characterised as "brute murderers, religious fanatics, and abusers of women" (ibid: 202). His book *Reel Bad Arabs* (2003) analysed more than 900 Hollywood films in which there are recurrent portrayals of 'Muslim' or 'Arab' individuals with one or more of the following: "Black beard, headdress, dark sunglasses… with a limousine, harem maidens, oil wells, camels. Or perhaps he is brandishing an automatic weapon, crazy hate in his eyes and Allah on his lips'' (Shaheen, 2003: 200). His observations show that the imagining of the Muslim character acknowledges their 'oriental' identity. Similarly, Suleiman (2001: 339) maintained that Hollywood movies present an image of the 'Arab' and 'Muslim' as a "liar and a cheat, one who cannot be trusted. He is, furthermore, dirty and immoral, i.e., does not subscribe to Western codes of morality". Moreover, Alsultany's (2013) study focused on novel modes of representation of 'Arabs' and 'Muslims' in television crime dramas between 2001 and 2009. She argued that "it is evident that writers have increasingly created 'positive' Arab and Muslim characters to show that they are sensitive to negative stereotyping" (Alsultany, 2013: 163). However, a careful examination of such complex representations reveals certain predictable and commonly employed strategies that arguably create an even greater problem for Muslim and Arab people on television. The analysis of these strategies reveals that "despite the shift away from the more blatant stereotypes of previous decades, Arab and Muslim identities are still understood and evaluated primarily in relation to terrorism" (Alsultany, 2013: 165). However, both Shaheen's and Alsultany's studies fail to describe the methods implemented for data selection, which makes their findings susceptible to biases arising from self-selection. That is, arguably the shows and films referenced were

selected because their content corresponded to the researchers' personal expectations. This study, therefore, employs corpus-assisted tools to mitigate some of the problems associated with researcher bias and potential selectivity of data. These tools facilitate the identification of certain topics or aspects of the data through statistical rather than subjective means.

It, thus, seems safe to argue that the representation of MIM in Hollywood narratives has historically been largely negative, presenting stereotypes that portray MIM as terrorists and extremists. However, some shifts in representation can be associated with specific events. For example, initiatives from organisations, such as the Muslim Public Affairs Council, have worked to introduce accurate and thoughtful representations of MIM to Hollywood in response to the rise in hate crimes against Muslim people during the Obama campaign. Notably, Barak Obama discussed this during his first visit to a mosque as President, when he highlighted the necessity for Hollywood to provide a more accurate and comprehensive portrayal of Muslim characters to combat the perpetuation of negative stereotypes (Washington Post, 2016). Additionally, Alsultany (2022: 20) notes that "during the Obama years, there was some expansion and it seemed to favour secular Muslims and patriotic Muslims." There were also attempts to reverse political rhetoric characterising Muslim people as inherently incompatible with American freedoms and liberal values. However, these new frames of representation were limiting in and of themselves, as Muslim characters were thereby constrained by the binary of good and bad, either represented as loyal patriots or dangerous extremists (ibid).

According to Halse's study (2015), a new representational mode has emerged in contemporary American media narratives, focused on raising the profile of roles to be played by non-white actors on television. In his study, he specifically focuses on racial counter-stereotypes, identifying them as an attempt to break down stereotypes of a racial group by offering alternative, more 'positive' portrayals. This new representational mode presents mediated images that aligned better with the apparent post-racial context. However, such representations may not yield desirable results, as he proves by examining two Muslim characters from the televised series *24*. His textual analysis reveals that the representations of the two characters are deprived of empowering cultural references to their Muslim background. Instead, their portrayals

correspond to a 'white' set of cultural codes and practices, which include dominant standards, such as speaking proper English or being punctual. In Halse's view, these are exclusively tied to white characters in television shows and movies. Despite the intention of the producers to offer balanced counter-stereotypical portrayals of Muslim characters, the writing fails to deliver, specifically because the representations of the two characters are guided by a hegemonic point of view. In other words, representations of minority groups in Hollywood narratives which operate in a counter-stereotypical manner are instructed by the dominant-hegemonic position. This means an essential characteristic of racial counter-stereotypes is the adoption of standards typically associated with whiteness.

According to Dyer (1997: 3), research into television and film has consistently demonstrated that white people "overwhelmingly and disproportionally have the central and elaborated roles, and above all are placed as the norm, the ordinary, the standard." Put differently, while television texts do not necessarily provide stereotypical representations of race and ethnicity, the predominant production of such representations continues to be based on notions of race and racism. This means that, even when television shows or movies attempt to challenge or subvert racial stereotypes, they are still operating within a broader framework that is informed by racial and ethnic categories. As a result, it is crucial to critically analyse and question the ways in which race and ethnicity are constructed and represented in media and to work towards greater diversity and inclusivity in media production and representation.

More recent productions, especially those produced during Trump's presidency, have pushed boundaries further by providing more complex representations of Muslim characters, creating layered characters with multifaceted backstories and choices. In fact, Trump's Muslim ban was an important factor fuelling increased inclusion of Muslim characters in television narratives, expanding diversity within Hollywood (Alsultany, 2022: 132). One study by Peterson (2020) critically analyses the teenage Muslim character in the series *Ms. Marvel* focusing mainly on her image. She maintains that the show's writers visually portray her as a character who seamlessly moves between various categories, allowing audiences to connect to her multifaceted identity, which is defined by much more than her religion (ibid:173). However, research has shown that, more generally, Hollywood productions continue to ignore the voices

of Muslim people, failing to accurately reflect the diversity of Muslim communities (Alsultany, 2022). In fact, although the media has increasingly featured more positive and fair depictions of MIM, these portrayals have been less frequent than negative ones. This suggests that, while the media's coverage of MIM may not be completely one-sided, there is still a degree of bias present (Iner, 2019). In the following section, I refer to studies that have analysed the portrayal of MIM in the media from a critical discursive perspective.

2.2.4 CDS Research on MIM in the Media

Having mapped the existing literature that investigates how the media shapes particular narratives and knowledge regarding MIM, as well as the potential impact of these narratives on audiences, I now shift towards a more specific discussion of the representation of MIM within critical discourse scholarship. A number of studies have investigated how the media depicts MIM from a critical discursive perspective in order to gain a better understanding of the social effects of discourse. This perspective is highly relevant to the current study and I, therefore, explore it extensively throughout the analysis. Poole (2002) employed a qualitative discursive analysis based on CDS concepts and Hall's encoding/decoding model of representation to investigate representations of Muslim people in British newspapers. The findings revealed the press tended to select events that corresponded to an ethnocentric framework of central news values, representing MIM along an 'Us vs Them' paradigm (i.e., representing universally valid ethics and morals of 'Us', while 'Them' are usually valued negatively in comparison with 'Us' and 'our' culture). Poole also found an additional pattern of Muslim people depicted as collective members of different groups, rarely appearing as individuals in 'normal' stories (Poole, 2002: 89). Elsewhere, Richardson (2004) examined meaning – and the social implications of such meaning –within newspaper' texts. The study used Van Dijk's (1990) socio-cognitive approach, which emphasises the importance of conducting structural analysis to establish connections with a particular context. Richardson analysed four news stories from three different broadsheet newspapers. He also discovered a focus on violence and conflict in how the British press represented Muslim people. According to Richardson, this runs the risk of perpetuating orientalist tropes portraying Muslim people as a homogenous and distinct group, both separated from and fundamentally opposed to British society (ibid: 69). Given the findings of Richardson's study, it is apparent that

there are clear similarities between UK and US news media tendencies, which is valuable not only for understanding their commonalities but also for gaining insights into how they cover issues pertaining to MIM.

Lemmouh (2008) examined how Muslim people were portrayed in *The New York Times* across a three-year period from 1990 to 2000. Using corpus semantics and critical linguistics, the study analysed lexical categories and grammatical features that contribute to the stereotyped image of Muslim people. The findings showed that the chosen vocabulary indicates a non-neutral construction of Muslim people and is linked to topics and events that describe violence in association with terms that include 'fundamentalist', 'rebel', 'radical', and 'militant'. These words reflect the media's objectives when framing topics and events. The syntactic structures, however, position Muslims in the subject place in transitive active clauses and infrequently as agents in passive clauses. This contributes to the portrayal of Muslims as responsible actors for violent actions. Such insights demonstrate the value of close linguistic analysis as, in other contexts, agents may be represented as passive victims of violence. The study's final remarks indicated that the frequency of lexical and grammatical choices demonstrates patterns that represent a negatively stereotyped image of Muslim people.

Alazzany (2008) analysed news reports mentioning 'Islam' and 'Muslim' in *The New York Times* after 9/11 using a combined critical linguistic and textual approach. The examination revealed that the most commonly discussed topics included: violence associated with Islam, turmoil caused by Islam, Islam being a threat, Jihad as part of Islam and Islam as evil. The results of the analysis showed that certain lexical choices, linguistic structures and discursive strategies were employed to promote stereotypes and biased representations of Muslim people in most of the instances. One drawback of Alazzany's study is that it did not employ any quantitative methods, such as corpus linguistic tools, to identify patterns in the text and support its qualitative findings (unlike the current study, which will use corpus tools). Combining qualitative and quantitative methods allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic and strengthens the validity and reliability of the findings.

To explore the ideological similarities and differences between France, Britain and US regarding the hijab/niqab/veil, Byng (2010) employed critical analysis when examining

72 articles published in *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*. To facilitate this analysis, the articles were categorised according to three themes: the national identities of Western countries, the integration of ethnic minorities and the threat of Islamic terrorism. The findings revealed associations between Islam/Muslims and terrorism, the reinforcement of the 'Us' and 'Them' dichotomy and negative references to the Muslim women veil. Byng (2010) maintained that the reporting reinforced the interests, values, and dominance of the Western perspective that refuse the veiling of Muslim women and consider it incompatible with Western culture.

A major corpus-driven study reviewing the representation of Islam and Muslim people in the British media was carried out by Baker et al. (2013), who targeted popular British newspapers from 1998 to 2009. Their corpus included over 200,000 articles comprising 143 million words. The findings revealed salient patterns in which Muslim people are implicitly and explicitly represented according to certain stereotypes. For example, they determined that the words 'Islam' and 'Muslim' are frequently used in contexts related to conflict and collocate with words such as 'terrorism' and 'extremism'. Such findings, they attest, seem to contribute indirectly to negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslim people. More specifically, the word 'Islamic' appeared to carry extremely negative discourse prosody, being heavily connected with religious and political extremism, militancy and terror. Moreover, Muslim women were frequently represented as inferior and oppressed, living in repressive male-dominated societies.

Baker et al. (2013) further analysed 3,483 lines of concordance with verbs preceding the term 'veil', which revealed a range of negative depictions of the hijab. These ranged from acknowledging the right to wear the hijab while disregarding the person wearing it, to outright ridicule and dehumanisation, exemplified by phrases like "shroud-swishing zombies," "swaddled figure" and "bats". Left-leaning newspapers typically utilised feminist viewpoints to criticise the hijab, whereas right-leaning newspapers and tabloids regarded it as an "offensive" garment that is "incompatible" with the "British way of life" and considered as a "security loophole" associated with crime and terrorism. Furthermore, the study found that the ratio of extremist Muslims to those considered "moderate" was 21 to one, highlighting a significant imbalance. The positive recognition accorded to this subset of Muslim people was often implicitly

attributed to their perceived departure from mainstream Muslim identity (Alhejin, 2012).

Samaie and Malmir (2017) analysed a 670,000-word corpus of US news media stories published between 2001 and 2015 to investigate how Muslim people and Islam have been depicted in the US media since the 9/11 attacks. The study reported that Muslim and Islamic representations in US news media have increased in quantity since 9/11, and this growth has largely resulted in negative or sensationalised news stories. Additionally, the language used in the news to describe and frame Muslim people and Islam often reflects a negative or stereotyped bias that is often used to 'otherise' Muslim people, creating a binary in which they are viewed as 'Other' rather than as part of the American community. These findings suggest that, although there has been an increase in the representation of Muslim people and Islam in the news media, this representation has a long way to go in providing an accurate and unbiased portrayal.

A more recent corpus analysis study by Li and Zhang (2022) revealed both quantitatively and qualitatively that the way in which Islam and Muslim people are represented in the American media is largely negative. Furthermore, it was established that negative representations of Islam and Muslim people are more prominent in the news media than in other media outlets. Additionally, the study found the language used to describe 'Muslims' in the US media often contains a strong bias, which reinforces negative stereotypes and 'otherises' Muslim people. These findings further underline the need for a more accurate and balanced portrayal of MIM in the US media.

Looking at the body of research that used critical discursive perspective to examine the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the media, it is clear that there has been an uneven distribution, with a greater proportion of studies focusing on newspapers than other media forms. Only a limited number of studies have examined the portrayal of Muslims in spoken or visual media formats, such as television and radio. Not only has there been a lack of linguistic-based studies specifically examining the representation of MIM on television, but the majority of studies that have been carried out (including those aforementioned) have focused solely on factual programming. Considering that television is currently the most widely consumed media platform and given the intense

scrutiny of MIM across various media forms, this suggests an existing gap in media discourse research, which further emphasises the requirement for the current study. This is particularly pertinent in today's society where alternative media, such as television and the internet, are arguably more influential than newspapers (Farnsworth and Lichter, 2011). The current study, therefore, aims to fill this gap by conducting a linguistically-oriented study on the representation of MIM on television sketch comedy. This thesis seeks to make a relevant contribution to the existing body of research on the portrayal of MIM by focusing specifically on television and employing linguistic analysis as the primary approach.

2.3 Humour Studies

This portion of the literature review begins with a review on the concept of humour and provides a brief history of classic humour theories: superiority theory, relief theory and incongruity theory. I then outline the development of incongruity theory within the linguistics of humour to provide key insights into how humorous incongruity is structured with linguistic mechanisms. This is important because exploring the linguistic mechanisms involved in constructing humour will also allow for an understanding of how such mechanisms can influence meanings – be they humorous or serious. By recognising the functions and effects of humour, we can counter the notion that humorous texts are inherently benign or without consequences. In addition, I provide a discussion on several existing linguistic models of humorous texts that have informed my approach. Finally, I discuss representations of race, ethnicity and religion in comedy, focusing on MIM in comedy.

2.3.1 The Concept of Humour

The process of defining the concept of humour is notoriously difficult and has posed a significant challenge to researchers working in many fields (e.g., Feigelson, 1989; Norrick, 1993). For more than 25 centuries, philosophers have endeavoured to establish a clear definition of humour, but most have acknowledged the numerous difficulties inherent in attempting to encapsulate this phenomenon and its multifaceted nature, owing to its intricate complexity (Ruch, 1988). Humour scholars generally agree on definitions of humour in the broad sense. Humour is discourse created with the intent to amuse an audience and elicit laughter; it is necessarily socio-politically contextualised but may have varying degrees of critical reflexivity (Attardo, 1994;

Webber, 2013; Krefting, 2014). Berger (1995: 10) states that humour is challenging to define, but is typically associated with laughter, physical reactions and other positive emotions, such as mirth, gaiety and a sense of well-being. Meanwhile, Attardo (2017: 11) states that laughter and humour are not the same and relying solely on laughter as a criterion for humour results in both false positives (instances of laughter without humour) and false negatives (missed instances of humour). In reality, the word humour is frequently used in conjunction with other terms, such as comedy, irony, satire, ridicule, parody, mockery and scorn, while also being distinct from them. Nevertheless, since they share the aspect of incongruity, the sudden, unexpected appearance of a factor or event in the particular situation in which it is occasionally used, humour can be defined as "an umbrella phrase", as applied to related phenomena (Tsakona and Popa, 2011: 3). Therefore, I use the word 'humour' as an umbrella term throughout this research.

Humour has been explored applying multiple approaches in the domains of psychology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology and linguistics, and there seems to be agreement that humour is also necessarily socio-politically contextualised but may involve varying degrees of critical reflexivity (Krefting, 2014; Webber, 2013). Humour is not created in a vacuum but is deeply influenced by the social and political circumstances in which it arises. Jokes, comedic performances and satirical content are often shaped by the cultural, historical and ideological factors of a particular society. The socio-political context provides the backdrop against which humour is understood and interpreted. At the same time, humour can exhibit different levels of critical reflexivity. Some forms of humour are light-hearted and primarily intended for entertainment purposes. They may not engage deeply with social or political issues and may serve as a temporary diversion from serious matters. This type of humour may avoid strong critique or challenge to the status quo. On the other hand, humour can also possess a high degree of critical reflexivity. It can serve as a powerful tool for social commentary, challenging prevailing norms, beliefs and power structures. Humour can also be defined as "whatever a social group defines as such" (Attardo, 1994: 4). When social groups laugh, they connect with other people who 'get' the joke and laugh together with them and at them. In other words, humorous texts can tap into an underlying 'truth' recognised by the audience. According to Smirnova (2018), audiences typically have a shared understanding of certain perspectives and are able

to detect absurdity rationally. Humorous statements create tension by presenting multiple interpretations that conflict with previously established narratives, resulting in a clash between different understandings of humorous texts' meanings, as noted by Tavory (2014: 277). One reason for this is the questionable definition of 'truth' because there is no consensus on what constitutes truth, and it is subject to ongoing debate between various social groups (Feltmate, 2013).

One objective set by scholars in the fields of philosophy, psychology, communication and rhetoric has been to explain the structure and function of humour. To truly understand humour's role in mediating race, ethnicity and religion, it is vital to evaluate the discoveries and theories proposed by these scholars in order to discern what remains to be determined. These scholars often raise questions regarding the aspects and functions of humour, bringing forth ideas and theories that can help formulate a more comprehensive understanding of humour as a serious area of study and developing critical accounts of humour (Davis, 1995; Kuipers, 2008; Weaver, 2011). Most of these theories have taken a linguistic turn in which the semantic and pragmatic aspects of humour have found greater prominence. As my study focuses on examining the aspects and functions of humour through a linguistic lens, it is crucial to provide an initial discussion on the theories that are pertinent to my research, starting with the three classical humour theories.

2.3.2 A Brief History of Three Traditions in Humour Studies

From the philosophic eras of Plato and Aristotle to 17th century intellectuals such as Thomas Hobbes, the role of laughter and humour has been a topic of discussion amongst scholars in many fields of study. Early scholars discussed how passion, pleasure, agony and suffering in human interactions contribute to the creation of joy and laughter. For instance, Aristotle viewed comedy as the antithesis of tragedy and as its necessary counterpart. In his earlier writings on comedy, he rejected humour that seemed out of place. His understanding of humour arose from the gap between "what is presented and the way it is presented" (Watkins, 1994: 99). With just a few exceptions, modern theories of humour, particularly incongruity theory, maintain Aristotle's perspective. In his analysis, Thomas Hobbes warned against the tendency for comedy to celebrate man's cruelty. This warning prophesised styles of comedy, such as minstrelsy and vaudeville. In the conventional literature presenting theories

on humour (Weaver, 2011), there is a division between the three basic theories: superiority theory, relief theory and incongruity theory. However, Weaver (2011) argues that the three theories should be considered as essential stages in the development of a more comprehensive theory of humour. One reason for this is, while these theories offer different explanations for the aspects and effects behind humour, they all recognise that humour is not benign. Humour can indeed have serious functions and effects. Therefore, a brief account of these three theories is vital as a way to formulate a more comprehensive understanding of humour. While classical theories are not entirely disregarded in critical humour studies, such as the one at hand, their epistemological assumptions can be usefully re-examined in the context of a postmodern world where discourse, and by extension humour, are continually used as instruments of social power. If a particular emphasis has been placed on any one of these in this study, it is 'incongruity theory' as it focuses largely on the linguistic aspects and mechanism of humour, rather than on the function and effect of structure on meaning (Weaver, 2011).

Superiority theory maintains that humour is produced by, and conveys, a sense of superiority over the object of ridicule. Humour is explained as a noteworthy means of mocking and ridiculing the subject of the joke, thereby describing laughter with a particularly invective intentionality (Meyer, 2000). From this perspective, humour is viewed as having a primary function, in that being superior always means being superior to someone else. In other words, humour arises from a sense of superiority or amusement at the misfortunes, flaws or inferiorities of others. It suggests that humour can serve as a way to elevate one's own self-esteem or to assert dominance over others. In this view, humour can reinforce social hierarchies and power dynamics by mocking or belittling certain individuals or groups. It is undeniable that superiority theory can quite often be a major aspect of humour; however, it is not the only explanation when people laugh. Superiority theory serves as a useful starting point for attempting to understand humour's function, although the presence of other theories points to elements of humour not included in this concept.

Relief theory views humour as offering psychological or physiological relief from a tense or difficult situation, employed as a way to minimise anxiety-producing experiences (Morreall, 1987: 39). In this characterisation, humour is seen as a form of

catharsis, which allows people to distance themselves from uncomfortable or awkward situations by using laughter to release negative emotions such as stress, fear and anger. By laughing at a situation, people can disconnect themselves from the situation and the stress it may cause, reframing it in a more positive light. According to Freud (1991, [1905]) the 'psychic energy' in our bodies is designed to help us repress our emotions when discussing forbidden subjects, such as sex or death. When this energy is released, we laugh. This is because when prohibited ideas are being discussed, a discharge of energy occurs. However, there has been limited exploration of the issue regarding whether addressing sensitive topics such as racial tension through humour is problematic. Morreall (1987) argued that relief theory might not be distinct from superiority theory or incongruity theory, but rather may concern a different aspect of laughter that complements the other two.

The incongruity theory of humour is a theory that suggests humour is created when a person encounters something unexpected, in the form of stimuli or ideas that are not usually associated with one another (Berger, 1995; Meyer, 2000). This theory asserts that people find humour in situations where it is not usually expected or that are difficult to explain in a logical way. Generally speaking, incongruity arises when something is out of place or does not fit with what is expected. For example, a person may find a joke funny if the punchline creates an unexpected, incongruous situation. Incongruity theory is also used to offer valuable insights into how humorous incongruity is structurally constructed through linguistic mechanisms, facilitating understanding of how it can influence knowledge, understandings and ambivalent discourses.

All three theories are mostly dependent on creating tensions, dichotomies and hierarchies between subjects, which Morreall (1987: 15) labels as a form of "duality or contrast." However, classical theories are usually more concerned with humour's universal properties, therefore creating a tendency to oversimplify its powerful social functions (Weaver, 2011: 37). This focus on universality can lead to oversimplification of humour's powerful social functions. By prioritising universal aspects, the complexities and nuances of humour's socio-political dimensions may be overlooked. In other words, the classical theories may overlook the intricate ways in which humour operates within specific social and political contexts. They may fail to capture the diverse ways in which humour can be used, interpreted and understood by different

individuals or communities. Therefore, it is important to consider other perspectives and theories that delve deeper into the socio-political dimensions of humour, such as critical theories, which provide a more nuanced understanding of humour's powerful social functions (This will be pursued in the next chapter). Despite their limitations, these theories later influenced linguistic theories of humour.

2.3.3 Trends in the Linguistics of Humour

Now that we have established that humour is structured with linguistic mechanisms, it is essential to examine the linguistic theories of humour, since my study also adopts a linguistic perspective on humour. There are a number of theories of humour, such as the Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH; Raskin, 1985), the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH; Attardo, 2001) and Simpson's (2003) theory of humour, that highlight the centrality of incongruity. According to the SSTH, any potentially funny text must be compatible with two distinct and antonymous scripts that depend on the audience's perceived expectations and the reality of a situation. In other words, when something is said or done that is unexpected or violates a conventional pattern, a humorous effect can result. According to Raskin (1985: 81), a semantic script provides a significant amount of semantic information that surrounds a word or is evoked by it. In simpler terms, for a text to be considered humorous, it should be possible for language users to interpret the text in at least two opposing and contrasting ways. The theory proposes three types of opposition that can be found in a humorous text: normal/abnormal, actual/non-actual and possible/impossible.

GTVH is an extended version of SSTH that addresses its limitations and includes semantics, as well as other linguistic aspects such as textual, narrative and pragmatic aspects. It requires every humorous statement to contain two components: an 'incongruity', which is something unexpected, and a 'resolution', which is the context explaining the incongruity and resolving the joke. In contrast to SSTH, GTVH argues that humorous texts should not be seen merely as an act of mockery of somebody or something; instead, they should be seen as a way of playing with language and constructing a humorous text. GTVH proposes certain linguistic rules and conventions that should be followed to produce a funny text. According to Attardo, (2001) there are six knowledge resources where incongruity continues to endure as one of the basic elements to humour:

1. Script opposition: deviation from established scripts or patterns;
2. Logical mechanism: violation of logical expectations;
3. Target: a subject that is being addressed or commented upon. This can be a person, a group, an idea or a concept;
4. Situation: the context or situation in which the humour occurs is an important factor;
5. Narrative strategy: the way a text is structured and the narrative devices employed can enhance the humour;
6. Language: the linguistic features of a text.

Simpson (2003) also suggests the construction of humorous text comprises two elements: prime (irony in its echoic mode of another discourse event) and dialectic (irony in its oppositional mode). Accordingly, 'prime' delivers a familiar frame from within which the audience can interpret a humorous narrative, whereas the 'dialectic' stage is a discursive act that introduces a dialectic form of irony. The combination of and opposition between these elements creates tension within this satirical piece by introducing contrast (ibid: 95-96). This can be achieved by combining seemingly incompatible concepts. The resulting incongruity is what generates the humorous effect in satire, aligning with the idea that incongruity involves a deviation from expected outcomes (Attardo 2017: 383). While most linguistic approaches to humour highlight the tensions created by incongruous structures, they generally fail to question the potential degrees of functional influence that particular tensions might impose on the meanings produced by their incongruity. By shifting tensions into linguistic realms that does not seriously question or address underlying ambivalence, humour can be perceived as a tool that disguises and manages tensions rather than highlight any tensions (Weaver, 2011).

Structurally, humour is produced by specific semantic mechanisms that either resemble rhetorical devices or tropes that are commonly used in writing or that produce an incongruity that deviates from the literal meaning in a manner that is strikingly similar to that present in common rhetorical devices (Weaver, 2011). Berger's approach (1995, 2016) highlights the similar nature of the structure of humour and rhetorical devices. He identifies 45 techniques able to generate laughter. In his approach, these humorous techniques are classified into four typologies: language

(allusion, irony, sarcasm, satire, puns), logic (absurdity, coincidence, ignorance), identity (parody, imitation, caricature) and action (slapstick). His primary concern is to identify the "techniques that can be used to persuade people to laugh" rather than the content of a humorous statement itself (Berger, 1995: 53). Therefore, his approach is also regarded uncritical, although his list provides a useful typology of incongruities that benefits many humour researchers. One such researcher is Weaver (2011, 2015), who maintains that the devices rendering the humorous statement funny also contribute to the convincing or communicative nature of the humour. Weaver developed a critical rhetorical analysis framework to examine the incongruous structures of humour and to highlight the potential effect of such incongruous structures on perceived truths, social structures and cultural representations, as will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. In what follows, I discuss one aspect of the communicative nature of humour and explore how race, ethnicity and religion are variously represented in humorous studies, given that this study is also interested in investigating the functions of humorous discourse around MIM in US sketch comedy.

2.3.4 Representation of Race, Ethnicity and Religion in Humorous Discourse

In recent decades, pundits and scholars from different schools of thought have focused on humour as a serious site of scholarly investigation, questioning the ideological implications of the stereotypical treatment of racial, ethnic and religious groups in racial and ethnic jokes (Billig, 2005; Weaver, 2011), on television (Husband, 1988; Gray, 1995; Lewis, 2006; Lockyer and Pickering, 2008; Coleman, 2014), on the internet (Billig, 2005; Weaver, 2013; Boxman-Shabtai and Shifman, 2015) or in cartoons (Lewis et al., 2008; Atta, 2010; Kuipers and van der Ent, 2016). They all agree that humour, as a means of social critique, differs depending on who is using it and the functions it performs. The majority of scholars understand that humorous discourse brings with it the intention to promote amusement and laughter, assuming that it is written without malicious intent. However, given the importance of representation and pre-existing stereotypes in media, one is left to wonder what aspects are humorous and which are authentic.

Humorous representations of certain groups in humorous discourse play a crucial socio-political role. For audiences to understand and appreciate jokes, characters' behaviour and traits must be easily identifiable and comprehensible. If a joke requires

too much thought to grasp the meaning, it is likely to fail (Palmer, 1987). Therefore, creators of comedy shows often choose to draw on broader societal beliefs and assumptions about specific individuals and groups. Stereotypes are frequently used as a representational approach in television comedy as a way to ensure immediate recognition of such groups and individuals (Medhurst, 2007). It appears that when humour is used by minority groups, such as African Americans, Asian people or Muslim people in the US, it is mostly used as a way of expressing in-group membership or as a means of challenging normative understandings and disrupting stereotypes (Boskin, 1997; Bilici, 2010; Tabor, 2013). In fact, stand-up comedy has been favoured by minority groups in America, who see it as a means of discussing the challenges of being treated as 'outsiders' (Boskin, 1997; Kapoor, 2003; Dodds and Kirby, 2013). While some scholars (Berger, 1995; Gilbert, 2004; Park et al., 2006) argue that humour enacting negative stereotypes might assist in normalising racial differences, others (Lewis, 2006; Michael, 2011) regard it as a strong tool of defence used by minorities to counter the supposedly racial hierarchy. In addition, humour allows comedians from minority groups to address unspoken taboos on the basis that "it is just a joke" (McIlvenny et al., 1993; Oring, 2008; Selim, 2014). Behind the joke, however, lurks a layer of serious social critique questioning discrimination and stereotypes circulating in society.

Moreover, popular sketch comedy shows consistently engaged with the politics of racial representation, raising topics related to race and racism in American society (Wisniewski, 2014). Using costumes, sets, props and other actors to create over-the-top characters and plotlines, the shows have examined American racism and racial ideology in ways that are more elaborate than other television shows. In fact, *Chappelle's Show* (2003-2006) created by African American comedians, was considered a powerful cultural phenomenon because it offered a social commentary and response to the issue of racism in US. *Key & Peele* (2012-2015) also examined wide-ranging social and systemic inequalities by "approaching race either through the lens of personal experience or… treats it as an absurdity" (Gillota, 2013: 18). Nevertheless, a limited number of studies have investigated examples wherein the focus of humour is directed towards minority groups rather than by them (Weaver, 2013). Even some sketches on *SNL* featuring African-American comedians tried to navigate and address issues related to racial identities and racial politics in the US. As

one of the few African-American comedians on the show in the early 90s, Eddie Murphy used his platform to challenge racial stereotypes and provide social commentary (Gate, 2013). In his performances, he touched on topics such as racial profiling, interracial relationships, and the challenges of being a black person in America. His comedic style allowed him to navigate these sensitive subjects while generating laughter and sparking conversations (ibid). Although Eddie Murphy's performances on the surface appeared to be designed to attract a predominantly white audience, a closer look revealed that many of his characters and sketches included elements of subversive black humour that resonated with black audiences from a black standpoint (ibid).

Some scholars (Berger, 1993; Gilbert, 2004; Park et al., 2006) argue that humour with embedded negative stereotypes about a certain group treads a fine line between breaking down difference and maintaining hegemonic notions of racial and ethnic differences. According to Billig (2001: 285), some racists view comedy as a perfect platform for ridiculing ethnic minorities, as it allows them to express unspeakable opinions in a society where racism is taboo. Billig also argues that humour and hatred are not entirely distinct, as they both rely on unambiguous stereotypes of gender or ethnicity and require suspension of empathy as the target becomes an object of ridicule. Examining forms of racist humour that reinforce stereotypes in the UK media, Howitt and Owusu-Bempah (2005) observed that humour has everything to do with power dynamics, arguing that recurring racist humorous texts perpetuate racial ideologies. They also maintain that humorous discourse charged with discrimination not only offers a convenient outlet when expressing beliefs about the superiority of one group over another, but also reinforces the use of certain categories in an audience's cognition, thereby promoting thinking that justifies hateful attitudes and actions. In this way, repetition of specific characteristics attributed to certain groups expresses how the world both is and should be; as Hall (1989: 333) puts it, "the attempt to frame... all competing definitions of reality." Ford and Ferguson (2004: 91) take this point further, speculating that humour can increase tolerance of discrimination, especially if "the norms in a given context... dictate appropriate reactions to discrimination against members of the disparaged group." This suggests that constructing humorous discourse requires tapping into an underlying 'truth' that the audience recognises, which can coincide with inherited negative perceptions of the

mocked group. Additionally, Weaver (2011: 537), confirms that when "humour draws on dichotomous stereotypes of race and/or seeks to interiorize an ethnic or racial minority, not labelling the humour racist as opposed to racial, is a form of ideological denial."

Due to their 'comic license', comedy shows make the perfect site for examining representations of minority groups in television (Gillota, 2013). Pérez (2016) argues that some comedians rely more heavily on racial and ethnic stereotypes on the basis that the role of comedy is to rupture the touchiness of certain subjects, taboos and the like for the sake of 'being funny'. Nonetheless, given that television comedy texts are mostly censored by network executives, race-talk is often implied or inferred. In the analysis, I will examine the extent to which this is the case with MIM.

Pérez (2017: 962) contends that, by exploring beneath the "shallow depths [of comedy], we can see the prevalence and persistence of racist humour which reveals its continuity and significance in an ostensibly colour-blind society." Focusing her study on Asian American identity, Parker (2014: 647) reveals that the represented identities of minority groups in television sitcoms remain constrained by the continuing "racism, sexism and classism embedded generically within television narrative, content and institutionally within the media entertainment industry." This suggests that, even in an era of drastic demographic shift, minority groups, composed of people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, continue to be faced with the challenges of racism and inequality in so-called television entertainment.

It is important to note that a number of studies on racial humour have emphasised the important role played by humour in breaking down the stereotypes informed by dominant racial ideologies (Haggins, 2007; Gillota, 2013; Rossing, 2016). Although their work has reached some interesting conclusions, most studies have mainly centred on the 'positive' functions of race/ethnic-based humour, neglecting and downplaying continuity within contemporary racist humour. Racist humour refers to humour that reinforces and perpetuates racial stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory attitudes. While some studies have examined the positive functions of racial humor, there is a need for further research that addresses the continuity and implications of racist humour in contemporary society. This practice has minimised the important connection between humour and discrimination, contributing to the

inadequate research input concentrated on the pervasiveness of racial and ethnic inequality as maintained by humour in contemporary US society (Weaver, 2011; Pérez, 2013). Keeping this in mind, and in view of the dearth of studies, more research is needed to recognise humour as a useful site for playing the contentious views of the hegemonic order. Consequently, the present study is especially relevant as it explores both the positive and negative aspects of humour in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of its impact on social dynamics, stereotypes and intergroup relations. By broadening the scope of study, this research hopes to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of humour in shaping perceptions and attitudes related to religion, race and ethnicity.

2.3.5 MIM in Humorous Discourse

When analysing how MIM have been represented in humorous discourse, the first examples that come to mind are the controversial cartoons depicting prophet Mohammad published in Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* (2005) and French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* (2006-2012). In both instances, the cartoons elicited strong – and in some arenas, violent – reactions of outrage from Muslim communities around the world because they were considered blasphemous and Islamophobic. Both instances resulted in discussions concerning the scope of freedom of speech and self-censorship. The Danish newspaper released a series of twelve cartoons depicting prophet Mohammad, including one where he was portrayed wearing a bomb-shaped turban and another in which he was shown holding a sword with two women wearing burqas that covered everything except their eyes in the background. In 2006, the French satirical magazine republished the Danish cartoons and then published other cartoons of the prophet, including a caricature of him being in a wheelchair, the prophet naked and a 65-page special edition illustrated biography of the prophet (see Müller et al., 2009). While some argue that the cartoons were intended as a critique of Islamic fundamentalism and a defence of freedom of speech, secularism and equality, many others viewed them as offensive and disrespectful towards the Islamic faith and its followers (Davies et al., 2008; Kilby and Lennon, 2018). Critics of the cartoons argue that they perpetuated negative stereotypes by implying that the prophet was both sexist and a terrorist (Bleich, 2006; Kilby and Lennon, 2018). In response to the incidents, government officials and media outlets expressed a variety of conflicting opinions, ranging from denouncements of the violence to expressions of

disappointment over the supposed provocation, receiving universal support for freedom of speech. Of particular relevance to this study, the divergent reactions to the cartoon controversy shed light on the complexities involved in interpreting humorous discourse and demonstrate that humour can be a potent and polarising form of expression that might direct different audiences towards different interpretations simultaneously (Weaver, 2011).

This pivotal role of humour when representing MIM is also highlighted by Weaver (2011: 537), who indicated that, in the case of people categorised as 'Muslims', humour often relies on simplistic, binary portrayals of race and may attempt to internalise ethnic or racial minority experiences without explicitly labelling the humour as racist. In a relatively recent study, Weaver (2013) examines online jokes directed against Muslim and Semitic people, aiming to remove confusion around humorous and serious racism, and consider the serious impact of comic discourse. In his analysis, he discovered two logics underpinning both forms of racism: inclusive and exclusive. The former is based on social inclusion in which Muslim and Semitic people are included in the jokes and associated with certain negative stereotypes, such as inferiority and backwardness. The latter is exclusion, in which they are excluded from jokes, for instance, by images of violence and death. By conducting a rhetorical discourse analysis of metaphor and other rhetorical devices, Weaver scrutinised the ability of such stereotyped racist jokes to sustain and perpetuate negative stereotypes about Muslim people (ibid: 484). He also mentioned how "reverse discourse", i.e., a self-deprecatory humour, can reinforce stereotypes from an insider perspective and, consequently, reproduce racism. One factor in this reproduction of racism arose from the paradoxical or polysemic dimension of humour, which makes it difficult to determine the difference between apparent meaning and intended meaning, leaving the audience with multiple ways to interpret jokes. By employing polysemy, fixed meaning becomes more likely to vanish and the potential for varied political and ethical readings linked to the discursive and social space increase (ibid: 496). The many incongruities and complexities in humour, as Weaver notes, create layers of ambiguity that are open to more complex readings of humour functions.

Aiming to shed light on the influence of negative stereotypes about 'Arabs' and 'Muslims' after 9/11 in American animated television sitcoms, Hughey and Muradi

(2009) focused on portrayals of 'Arabs', 'Muslims', 'Middle Eastern' and 'South Asians' in two American animated sitcoms: *Family Guy* (1999-present) and *South Park* (1997-present). They sought to reveal how the 'intended' meaning behind identity-based satire has become more complicated. According to Hughey and Muradi (2009), more academic focus needs to be directed towards the importance of satire in a variety of social, cultural and political spheres, since it can function as a destabilising medium within the mass media narrative pertaining to controversial issues. In their examination of stereotype-based portrayals of the aforementioned groups, they assert that humour and satire can both maintain and combat racist stereotypes. This argument is highly relevant to my analysis of *SNL* discourse, specifically the serious effects of humorous discourse regarding the representation of MIM. For their analysis, they developed a conceptual framework, called 'the economy of hyper-irony and manic-satire', which they used to critically examine the covert systems of representation that rarely openly manifest in mainstream media formats (Hughey and Muradi, 2009: 206-237). This framework is used to identify the ways in which post-9/11 culture deploys political comedy as a double-edged sword, supporting dominant stereotypes about minorities, while claiming to ridicule them. Moreover, Hughey and Muradi suggest that to break down negative stereotypes and challenge racism, comedic shows need to do more than just make fun of negative stereotypes about minorities; they also need to offer alternative and more authentic narratives to avoid stigmatising the subject of satire (ibid: 237). The lack of such alternative portrayals can raise tolerance of discrimination, especially if "the norms in a given context... dictate appropriate reactions to discrimination against members of the disparaged group" (Ferguson and Ford, 2008: 91).

More recent comedy shows, such as *Master of None* (2015-2021) and *The Big Sick* (2017), which are written by writers from a Muslim background, aim to create space for narratives that counter common themes around MIM. Both shows are loosely based on the writers' real lives and attempt to offer more nuanced portrayals of American Muslims' lives. By moving characters outside the context of Islamophobia and terror and relocating them in mundane experiences, such as showing them eat bacon or being married to white women, the writers incorporate narratives of the 'moderate Muslim', as a three-dimensional character with complex identities and aspirations beyond their religious affiliation. Despite the positive reception and

success of these shows' nuanced portrayal of Muslim characters, some critics argue that they, nevertheless, uphold the notion that Muslim people must demonstrate their humanity and sense of belonging by pursuing relationships with white partners (Alsultany, 2022).

Muslim representations in humorous discourses are mostly present on the stage of stand-up comedy, which has created opportunities for comedians from marginalised communities to self-identify and express their identities to mixed audiences (Michael, 2013). Their public representations of identity offer an alternative image to counter that set out by the mainstream media, which is coloured by Islamophobic prejudice. In doing so, they invite audiences to "unite with them based on their shared normality, modernity and peacefulness" (Hirzalla and Zoonen, 2016). Many, if not all, Muslim-American comedians perform as protagonists, drawing on their ethnic identities for the foundation of their comic acts. Notably, ethnic identity is used here instead of religious identity, since the jokes address cultural stereotypes more than a set of beliefs and practices. By engaging in self-deprecatory humour, they attain the right to tackle misperceptions related to their ethnic identity (Selim, 2014). That is, by ridiculing the stereotypical negative image and emphasising their ethnic minority identity, they can identify and dispute Islamophobic stereotypes from an insider position, eliminating possible accusations of racism. Gillota (2013: 6) further argues that humour serves as a way to establish boundaries, and the collective experience of laughter helps create a sense of unity and "we-ness" within a certain group.

Amidst the rise of anti-Muslim rhetoric, Muslim-American comedians have used stand-up comedy as a platform to respond to racist and Islamophobic accusations by humorously revealing the negative effects of such misconceptions on their own lives (Michael, 2013). Comedians such as Azhar Usman, Mo Amer and Ahmed Ahmed, to name a few, have toured across the US to spread awareness of the rigid stereotypes circulating within American society and the media. Their performances are addressed directly to audiences with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Using their audiences' knowledge of stereotypes as a source of humour, they tell jokes mostly based on unpleasant personal experiences as the 'Other' after 9/11 in the US. In doing so, they draw attention to issues of belonging and exclusion as experienced by Muslim-Americans, encouraging a shared "laughter of recognition" among their peers

(Levine, 1977: 63), and pushing those not targeted by Islamophobia to acknowledge the harm caused by stereotyping. However, examining humour that focuses on MIM, as opposed to humour created by Muslim comedians themselves, has the potential to offer valuable insights into larger cultural patterns and attitudes towards this group. Such analyses can uncover how humorous discourse is employed to either uphold or question prevailing cultural norms and perceptions regarding MIM. Moreover, it can reveal how these representations intersect with other forms of discrimination, including racism and xenophobia, which is the aim of this study.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has presented an overview of relevant literature on MIM representations in overall media discourse, as well as in the specific context of humorous media discourse. The brief account of MIM representations through history has revealed that Western cultures have historically constructed and represented anyone from the 'East' (primarily the Middle East and North Africa) in a negative and exoticised manner. This orientalist perspective has influenced representations of Muslims in the media, resulting in their frequent portrayal as exotic, violent and backward. Such depictions perpetuate negative understandings and contribute to the marginalisation and discrimination of MIM in the West. As demonstrated in the preceding sections, numerous studies have investigated how MIM are portrayed in the media, with the majority of such studies focusing on newspaper content, particularly in Western broadsheet newspapers after the events of 9/11. The results have further shown that MIM have often been portrayed in a negative way, with Muslim people depicted as part of a collective and one-dimensional characters, defined solely by their religion and cultural background. However, there have also been efforts to challenge such negative portrayals and create more nuanced and diverse representations of MIM in the media, particularly in recent years.

The chapter has also highlighted the role of humour as a serious site from which to address representations of race, ethnicity and religion. Comedians using humour to commentate on issues related to racism can, through their performances, challenge societal norms and stereotypes, and provoke critical thinking and discussion about topics that might otherwise be difficult to broach. However, use of humour in this context can be controversial and comedians must balance the need to address such

issues with the risk of causing offence or perpetuating stereotypes. To date, there has been a lack of linguistic-based research on the representation of MIM in sketch comedy television programming. Furthermore, there has been a dearth of in-depth analysis of sketch comedy shows from a non-linguistic perspective. The only study that has attempted to examine MIM in television shows in the US (Alsultany, 2013, 2022) did so haphazardly without employing a clear methodology. In this study, I propose a comprehensive methodological framework that considers both the multiple interpretations of humorous discourse and the multiple levels involved in the humorous discourse. This is necessary to gain a more comprehensive understanding of cultural politics of representations of MIM in *SNL*. The literature featured in this chapter has illustrated the two bodies of knowledge I draw on in this thesis to critically analyse the representation of MIM in *SNL*, i.e., Critical Discourse Studies and Critical Humour Studies, as will be explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 3:

Theoretical Frameworks

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the theoretical frameworks that will be used to explore representations of MIM in *SNL*: Critical Discourse Studies and Critical Humour Studies. Informed by concepts of representation, stereotype, power and ambivalence, I expose the relationships, complexities and intersections of possible contradictory interpretations within *SNL*, so as to develop more nuanced and comprehensive understandings of MIM representations in humorous discourse.

The theoretical frameworks are presented in two parts. Part one commences with a general introduction to the field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS). I describe how representation is understood from a CDS perspective and how cultural assumptions and representations in a given context are closely linked to examining language in the social world. I further define some key concepts in my study in terms of CDS: representations, stereotype, power and hegemony. Defining these concepts reveals that discourse – more specifically humorous discourse – is intricately intertwined with language, power dynamics, stereotypes and representations through complex and multifaceted relationships. I then describe the various CDS approaches that I will draw on in this research to show that any analysis using CDS must go beyond describing the internal systematisation of language in order to identify its functions in a wider context.

In part two, I move on to describe Critical Humour Studies, focusing more specifically on Ambivalence Theory. I show that humorous representations possess inherent ambivalence, thereby challenging the notion of a singular, institutionally coded interpretation. In fact, the theory of ambivalence asserts that comedic content can harbour multiple meanings due to the incongruity embedded within humorous discourses. Consequently, humorous representations can be decoded in a manner that either supports or subverts cultural assumptions. Considering their polysemic nature, it becomes essential to analyse humorous discourses through a lens that acknowledges its multiplicity of meanings. By integrating these theoretical approaches

and concepts, the two parts present a framework that enables me to understand the representations of MIM in *SNL* discourse.

3.2 Critical Discourse Studies (CDS)

As briefly discussed in Chapter 2, CDS is a field of study principally concerned with the communication and discursive construction of social, including political, knowledge, as well as with linguistic persuasion and manipulation (Hart, 2011). Van Dijk (2013) suggests using the acronym CDS instead of CDA (critical discourse analysis) to encompass the theories, methods, analyses, applications, and other practices of critical discourse analysts. This recommendation aims to prevent misconception that CDA is a method of critical discourse analysis. In this thesis, I follow Van Dijk's suggestion, as supported by Wodak and Meyer (2016), who have also adopted CDS to encompass the field in both its past and present stages. CDS as a school of thought has manifold roots in many disciplines within the social sciences (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Therefore, its research adopts problem-oriented interdisciplinary approaches that mainly address the relationship between discourse and society (van Dijk, 1995). It comprises different 'schools' or 'approaches,' each with its own distinct methodology. (Hart, 2011: 2).

CDS can be explained by summarising its three central foci, which are related to the terms that comprise its name. First, language should be examined as 'discourse', indicating that the focus of analysis should not be solely on language itself, but rather on how language and its usage reveal and negotiate social processes and structures (Wodak, 1999). According to the CDS approach, language does not merely reflect the world and its people, but also constructs a particular version or representation of them. In other words, language is not neutral or objective, but rather shapes our understanding of the world and the people in it. Such views link language analysis to its social function, changing language research from static to dynamic and focusing primarily on what people can do with discourse (Flowerdew and Richardson, 2017). Second, the term 'critical' in discourse has been discussed in multiple ways as the use of language and the reproduction of power in society through discourse (see Section 3.1.2). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) maintain that discourse should be understood as both socially conditioned and constitutive of situations, objects of knowledge, social identities, and relationships among people and groups. This

perspective recognises that language is not neutral but is deeply embedded in social processes and structures. Consequently, it is understood that the ideologies, which are part of the social structure, not only express but are also actively shaped by discourse (KhosraviNik, 2014). Furthermore, if discourse plays a constitutive role in upholding and perpetuating hegemonic ideologies, it also possesses the potential to question and reshape these very ideologies (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). Third, many studies draw on a range of different theories and methods (see Section 3.1.3). In their work, Bloor and Bloor (2013: 12) outline the three chief aims of CDS analysis: (1) examining discourse practices that either reproduce or shape social problems; (2) exploring how ideologies can become rooted in language and finding ways to challenge them; and (3) raising awareness of how to effectively apply these aims to specific examples of injustice, intolerance and abuses of power.

Similar to much of the research conducted in critical discourse analysis, my study centres around the connection between language and social structure. It is driven by socio-political concerns that are both influenced by and reflected in language. The foundation of this study is largely based on Norman Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach to CDS (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 2001, 2003). However, other CDS approaches that address important aspects, not covered in the dialectical-relational approach, such as the discourse-historical approach (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001) and socio-cognitive approach (van Dijk, 2006), will also be used to varying extents in the analysis. Before explaining how different approaches were integrated for the purposes of this research, it is necessary to define key concepts in CDS.

3.2.1 The Critical Impetus in CDS

CDS is a goal-oriented approach that not only describes and interprets language in use, but also evaluates the societal implications of certain linguistic choices, particularly where they contribute by disempowering different social groups (van Dijk, 2001; Wodak and Meyer, 2009; Flowerdew, 2012). CDS is critical in the sense that it has an impact on all the levels of analysis, including the identification of social problems, selection of data, choice of methodology, and textual analysis. It is also linked with the "concept of contextualization" (KhosraviNik, 2010: 479); hence, it is essential that CDS draws on interdisciplinary perspectives (ibid). In fact, CDS usually starts with the identification of a social problem in a particular context (Chouliaraki and

Fairclough, 1999: 60). Context emphasises the connection between language and society, aiming to attain a comprehensive understanding of how language is used to shape and transmit knowledge, organise social institutions and exercise power. As Wodak and Meyer (2009: 7) explain, context is vital for obtaining proper understanding of the role of language in these processes. CDS cannot be conducted in isolation from the ideology of the culture under investigation.

Furthermore, critical discourse analysts not only focus on explicit expressions of ideologies, but also seek to uncover hidden beliefs encoded through various linguistic devices, such as analogies and conceptual metaphors (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Therefore, being critical, as Wodak and Meyer (2009: 6-7) maintain, means conducting research: (1) based on logical sociological understanding and interdisciplinarity; (2) aimed at "enlightening and emancipating" society rather than simply explaining it; and (3) that is self-reflective by making the researcher's position explicit. This last principle has generated criticisms that CDS researchers privilege interpretations that conform to their own ideological stance (Widdowson, 1996: 144). Widdowson (1996) notes that individuals may interpret discourse in different ways according to their personal experiences. This can create a situation in which researchers may believe their interpretation of a text is the only valid one, especially if they are ideologically committed to a particular perspective (ibid: 169).

Responding to this critique, I refer to Wodak's (1999: 67) explanation detailing the importance of self-reflexivity. To her, the term 'critical' implies self-reflective researchers who depend on their readings of the text, thereby requiring them to engage their backgrounds, beliefs and cognitive perceptions directly with the texts being studied while remaining constantly self-aware regarding their actions (ibid). Nevertheless, the results of my analysis should not be seen as a merely impressionistic commentary, but rather should be regarded as a departure point for future studies so that further insights or applications can be generated. In addition, results can be contextualised as a component of studies in the field of language and communication. Van Leeuwen (2006) also contends that no form of research is immune to subjectivity and political motivations. He argues that "critical discourse analysts at least make their position explicit and feel they do not need to apologize for the critical stance of their work" (ibid.: 293). The term 'critical' in CDS can also be

misleading, as it might imply a negative evaluation (Bloor and Bloor, 2013). However, in CDS research, the term is used more in the sense of a critique, which means the analysis can sometimes focus on positive outcomes (ibid: 5).

3.2.2 Representation and Stereotypes

In order to gain a better understanding of the discussions around MIM representation, it is important to define some basic concepts, starting with the notions of representations and stereotypes. The notion of representation has informed extensive exploration within the field of critical studies, with Stuart Hall's work being particularly prominent. According to Hall (2013: 15) representation means:

> [U]sing language to say something meaningful about, or to represent the world meaningfully to other people ... representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things.

According to Hall, representations are one means by which culture is created. Culture, in this sense, refers to shared meanings communicated, generated and understood through language. What makes Hall's definition of representation appealing to critical discourse analysts is the fact that he adopts a discursive approach to performing in-depth analysis on language and its relationship to culture. Hall (1997: 7) maintains that "the discursive approach is more concerned with the effects and consequences of representation - its 'politics'". Consequently, the discursive approach mainly concentrates on how knowledge, as reproduced in discourse, "regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented" (ibid: 6). Therefore, foregrounding the role of language in shaping culture, knowledge, and stereotypes highlights the relevance of the concept of representation in studies like this one, which adopts a CDS perspective and explores the potential impact of meaning generated within its context.

Representations can be understood as widely accepted beliefs or assumptions about the social world, and the meaning expressed within them is derived from pre-existing knowledge, conventional understandings, and traditional perspectives, rather than being solely based on rationality or reason. Since representations are linked to identity

and stereotypes, they provide a valuable framework for examining 'minority' or other marginalised social groups that can best be defined relative to the supposed norm or prototype to which they are expected to conform. When examining minority or marginalised social groups, it is important to consider the context of the supposed norm or prototype against which they are often compared. The norm or prototype is typically based on the dominant or majority group within a given society. These norms may encompass cultural, societal, or behavioural expectations that individuals are expected to conform to in order to be considered 'normal' or to fit within the established framework. As Hall (2013: 2) argues, the meanings conveyed through representations "contribute to setting rules, standards, and conventions that govern social life." As a result, representations not only reflect social reality, but also contribute to organising it and shaping how the social world is constructed and understood. Representation is primarily characterised by difference, as the focus is often on demonstrating what distinguishes one group from another. However, this representation tends to favour the creation of a false, superior image of 'Us', providing a contrast and emphasising differences from groups deemed as the 'other'.

Barker (2004) suggests that representations tend to be predicated on stereotypes and relate to power, since they are generated within codes that have a historical context and a specific position within the discursive structures of a particular time and place. In his work, Hall (1997: 258) highlights the significance of stereotypes in relation to representation. He argues that stereotypes capture a small number of distinct, memorable, easily understood characteristics about an individual, reducing that person to those simplified and essentialised characteristics, which results in a fixed and unchanging image of the person that conveys negative connotations of inferiority. Stereotypes can be: (a) cultural or linguistic; (b) explicit or implicit, or (c) hetero or auto, and can positively or negatively evaluate the group in question (Handford, 2022: 225). This process of fixing differences reinforces a clear hierarchy in which individuals with the power and authority to represent others appoint themselves as embodying superior values, morals and societal progress. This can be seen in media narratives about MIM, which are often negative and stereotypical, perpetuating harmful and inaccurate stereotypes about MIM culture, religion and way of life. This type of representation can produce widespread discrimination, marginalisation and stigmatisation of MIM, as well as perpetuating harmful biases and prejudices

(Alazzany, 2008). Although binary oppositions may suggest identity is based on simple oppositions, Muslim identities are frequently intricate and blended and often complex and hybrid. Their meaning is not simply rooted in common-sense knowledge but is created through change and engagement with a range of societies, cultures and different experiences. Therefore, in this study, a combination of CDS tools is employed to examine underlying meaning within *SNL* sketches. This approach aims to offer a comprehensive method for extracting both explicit and implicit meanings from *SNL* content.

3.2.3 Power and Ideology

One of the key concepts in CDS, which is also relevant to this study, is power because CDS aims at "revealing power structures and unmasking ideologies" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 8). According to van Dijk (1995: 10) power is "a social relation between groups or institutions, involving the control by a (more) powerful group or institution (and its members) of the actions and the minds of (the members of) a less powerful group." Fairclough (1992: 91) posits that this interdiscursive understanding of power aligns with Gramsci's (1971) concept of power as hegemony, which explains how power dynamics shape the creation of discursive practices, and how such practices then either maintain, alter or challenge existing power structures, usually as they are considered ideological. In a Gramscian sense, hegemony and power relate as an ongoing struggle that includes the achievement of consensus in order for a dominant group to exert their power.

Ideology is another term that requires some brief discussion to clarify its use in the context of this study. Fairclough (1992: 87) defines ideologies as "constructions of reality…which are built into various dimensions of the forms/ meanings of discursive practices and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination." Wodak and Meyer (2009: 8) argue that dominant ideologies are set of beliefs and values that appear neutral and thus often remain unquestioned and unchallenged. Ideology goes beyond being merely a dominant system of beliefs and values, as it entails the imagined connections between individuals and their actual circumstances of existence (Althusser 2001: 109). In hierarchical societies, ideologies are associated with various factors such as social class, gender, ethnicity, religion and other relevant variables. There are four key features of ideologies employed in political

science: (1) ideologies that prioritise power over cognition; (2) ideologies with the capacity to shape individuals' assessments; (3) ideologies that offer guidance for action; and (4) ideologies that are logically consistent (Mullins, 1972, cited in Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 8).

Ideologies inherently involve conceptions of power dynamics and social roles, and are also closely linked to values, attitudes, opinions, knowledge and mental models concerning events (van Dijk, 1998: 12). According to Van Dijk (2006: 225), power and dominance tend to be structured and institutionalised, with powerful elites enacting, upholding, justifying or ignoring social disparities and injustices. This dominance can also be reinforced or tolerated by other members of the group, authorised by the legal system, insisted upon by law enforcement and ideologically perpetuated and sustained by the media or educational materials. Ideologies are also based on social cognition, which is a collective system of shared representations concerning societal structures, groups, and relationships, as well as mental processes like interpretation, thinking, arguing, inferring and learning (van Dijk, 2006: 257). This indicates that ideologies are commonly held and perceived as part of a shared identity, leading to their naturalisation and frequent expression in behaviour, often unconsciously. Dominant ideologies have the potential to attain hegemony, which happens when a significant portion of society knowingly or unknowingly adheres to the beliefs and values of the most influential social group. This conformity often contributes to the preservation of the existing social order and status quo (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). When analysing something like MIM as a minority group in US society, such conceptions of power and ideology can help us address questions related to representations of MIM within the framework of politically and ideologically influenced humorous discourse. This also allows us to understand why certain language choices, narratives, and strategies are employed in specific ways and how ideologies are either sustained or challenged through specific texts within specific contexts.

When adopting a CDS approach, language is considered to be a possible means of sustaining or challenging specific ideologies in a given context. As Fairclough (1995) states, texts can contain potentially ideological properties that encompass a wide range of elements, grammar, structural and stylistic features, as well as metaphors, politeness conventions and implicatures, and more. It is crucial to note that no ideology

can ultimately be considered dominant in any given society (Augoustinous et al., 2006). This is why critical examination of language in context is grounded here in the analysis of ideologies presented in a given discourse. This is especially important in humorous discourse, where ideological tensions are often not explicitly articulated. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt a comprehensive methodological approach that provides a detailed and systematic analysis to reveal how these tensions can be spelled out through discourse strategies and structures. A critical analytical approach can uncover different opinions and attitudes towards specific controversial events or actions that shape the diverse evaluations of such actions. Longer term, these (different) evaluations may challenge people's understanding of conflict based on the dominant ideology, potentially disrupting it.

3.2.4 Approaches to CDS

A major advantage of CDS is its multidisciplinary nature (Fairclough, 2016); analytical approaches to CDS can be associated with several disciplines, including media, sociology, psychology, linguistics and political science. The approaches to CDS are inductive in nature, meaning it delves deeply into specific data or case studies before presenting novel insights. In contrast, other approaches use a deductive orientation, starting with a general theoretical framework. The distinction between inductive and deductive orientations is not rigid, and CDS demands analysts to constantly alternate between the two. This flexibility allows for the incorporation of multiple theoretical frameworks that address various aspects of linguistic, discursive, and social phenomena (Weiss and Wodak, 2003). By adopting a flexible and interdisciplinary approach, CDS provides a comprehensive analysis of language in relation to broader social phenomena and contributes to critical understanding and social change (van Dijk, 1995; Richardson, 2009). They have to, "translate their theoretical claims into instruments and methods of analysis" (Wodak and Meyer, 2016: 14). Instead of offering a fixed distinction, CDS is more accurately described as a continuum of approaches, differentiated by general themes and starting points. While there are numerous approaches along this continuum, this study will primarily employ a dialectical-relational approach (Fairclough, 2003). However, my analysis will also draw, to varying degrees, on other CDS approaches that analyse important aspects not addressed in the dialectical-relational approach, namely the discourse-historical

approach and the socio-cognitive approach. The next section aims to untangle the chief elements of the general conceptual frameworks used in this study.

3.2.4.1 The Dialectical-Relational Approach

The dialectical-relational approach (DRA), theorised by Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2003), perceives discourse according to three dimensions: text, discursive practice and social practice. The text dimension refers to language analysis of texts, such as grammar and lexical choices, while discursive practice is concerned with text production and interpretation. The social practice dimension, on the other hand, involves analysis of the wider socio-political structures in which a text is embedded. The key principle in DRA is that texts are not produced in a vacuum; instead, with society, where social understandings and dynamics have an effect on the text and, in turn, the text influences society through interaction that is mediated by language and shaped by social understandings and dynamics.

Fairclough (2001: 21) devised a procedure known as the three-dimensional model, which corresponds to the aforementioned dimensions, including:

1. Description, which focuses on the formal characteristics of the text;
2. Interpretation, which examines the connection between the text and interaction;
3. Explanation, which examines the relationship between interaction and social context.

These three stages of the analysis are interrelated. However, since the approach is not fixed, the framework only provides a theoretical grounding upon which different methods can be introduced according to how the object of the research is theoretically constructed (Fairclough, 2013: 91). As Richardson (2007: 37) maintains, the DRA is flexible as a method combining a set of analytical tools to address different questions, thereby providing an accessible method for CDS. Therefore, this study will use DRA as its chief theoretical foundation, focusing primarily on textual (linguistic) analysis and on situating the discursive functions of texts within their socio-political context. Using DRA, I will explore the complex and dialectical connection between discourse and social reality, encompassing a continuum that bridges the linguistic aspects at the micro level to the socio-political dimensions at the macro level (Hart and Cap, 2014).

3.2.4.2 The Discourse-Historical Approach

The discourse- historical approach (DHA) is a salient approach that can provide a toolkit for researchers to use to investigate the representation of a group within discourse. According to Wodak (2009: 1), DHA "focuses on multiple genres, large data corpora and on argumentative, rhetorical and pragmatic interdisciplinary analysis, while integrating multiple layers of socio-political and historical contexts in order to theorize dimensions of social change and identity politics." The approach, thus, focuses on inter-discursivity and the historical analysis of "discourses in place", which highlights the historical dimension of the issue under investigation (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999: 91). The DHA also applies to the principle of triangulation and corresponds, to some extent, to Fairclough's three dimensions of discourse, but adds one dimension concerning the historical context:

1. The text and co-text and co-discourse.
2. The intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses.
3. The extralinguistic social variables of a specific 'context of situation';
4. The historical context at the time attempts are made to interpret and explain the discourses found in texts (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016: 32).

DHA also seeks to acknowledge the effects and functions of five main discursive strategies through which language is used systematically at multiple levels of discourse (Richardson and Colombo, 2014). These discursive strategies include referential or nomination strategies, predication, argumentation, perspectivation and mitigation/intensification (for more information about the DHA, see Section 4.2.2). I incorporate aspects of DHA in the current study because: (a) it deconstructs the practices of power, inclusion and exclusion; (b) it recognises the importance of examining the intertextual references of, for example, the representations of MIM in America, which are contextually and historically bound; and (c) it focuses on the question of representation (e.g. Wodak et al., 2009; Unger, 2013), hence its relevance to the topic of the present study, which is about MIM representation in *SNL*. In fact, one contribution of the present study is that it further extends the application of DHA

to humorous discourse, an area that has received limited attention within the field of CDS thus far.

3.2.4.3 The Socio-Cognitive Approach

The dialectical-relational approach examines the link between text and social contexts and is located at a relatively considerable distance from cognitive conduct, arguably overlooking human cognition as the crucial interface between text and society (Chilton, 2005: 22-23; Unger, 2013: 6). The socio-cognitive approach (SCA), on the other hand, incorporates the cognitive dimension, accounting for the complexity of the links between the discourse and wider social levels, and incorporating the mental processes involved in the production and comprehension of text. In other words, the cognitive dimension includes "the mentally represented structure of those properties of the social situation that are relevant for the production or comprehension of discourse" (van Dijk, 1998: 92). Here, cognition can be defined as a "set of functions of the mind, such as thought, perception and representation" (van Dijk, 2006: 64).

SCA, as introduced by van Dijk, principally draws on the field of social cognition, more specifically Schank and Abelson's (1977) script theory. According to Schank and Abelson, scripts are to be understood as abstract mental models or representations of events and people, constructed through experience, stored in memory and used as the basis for knowledge and expectations (ibid: 141). Scripts are dynamic, engaged in continuous interaction with the processing occurring in working memory. These scripts are controlled by the biographical experiences of people and, at the same time, are influenced by the general social cognitions that individuals share with other members of their group. Van Dijk (2005: 19) explains that this combination of personal cognition and social information in mental models "allows us not only to explain the well-known missing link between the individual and the social, between the micro and the macro analysis of society, but also to make explicit the relations between general group ideologies and actual text and talk." An example of such a script is stereotypes, which afford a relatively fixed and often negative mental representation of a specific social group that results in the formation of preconceptions concerning group members' appearance and behaviour (Hall, 2001). Social group representations, or socio-cognitive representations as they can more accurately be called, are also considered a set of meaning-making 'propositions' permitting the classification of objects or

individuals, the characterisation of key features, the description of their actions and attitudes and similar attributes (Augoustinos et al., 2006: 258). Such representations are not individually developed mental models, but are actually processes of collective meaning-making, shared by members of a specific group (ibid). This ultimately results in constructing collective cognitions, which produce social bonds that unite some members of a given group and distance others.

Van Dijk (1995: 18) elaborates on this theory, stating that social representation can take three forms: knowledge, attitudes and ideologies. In his view, these collective cognitions of a specific social group coincide with "the system of mental representations and processes of group members" wherein "ideologies ...are the overall, abstract mental systems that organize ... socially shared attitudes." These ideologies, therefore, "indirectly influence the personal cognition of group members" and their understanding of discourse among other actions and interactions, as they construct socially shared attitudes (ibid: 19). They also function as "models which control how people act, speak or write, or how they understand the social practices of others" (ibid: 20). By including this critical lens, Van Dijk addresses the unequal power distribution problem, which often leads to marginalisation, discrimination and, ultimately, the suffering of certain social groups. Adopting an SCA approach is important within the current research because it helps with examining connections between social representations, categorisation and stereotypes of MIM in *SNL*.

3.3 Critical Humour Studies

Having discussed the theoretical framework of CDS, the focus of this chapter now shifts to examine the theoretical framework of Critical Humour Studies underpinning the study. This is relevant to my analysis because it informs the intersectional investigation of *SNL* humorous discourse, connecting humour with the complex web of power relations within human societies. In Chapter 2, I briefly discussed Critical Humour studies and what sets it apart from other humour studies. In fact, before Critical Humour Studies became a topic of academic discussion, scholars were reluctant to consider humour a serious area of study (Kuipers, 2008; Weaver, 2011; Abedinifard, 2015). Moreover, as Abedinifard (2015) contends, humour studies normally portray humour in a positive light, potentially impeding critical investigations into humour. Exculpatory and positive accounts of humour depict humour as having

only desirable outcomes, typically overlooking negative effects (Weaver, 2011). Relatively recently, a small yet increasing number of humour scholars have adopted an explicitly critical perspective on humour, aiming to investigate the negative implications of humour's unquestioned and accepted status in society (Berger, 1995; Gray, 1995; Ferguson and Ford, 2008; Weaver, 2011; Abedinifard, 2015). These scholars analyse and contextualise the socio-cultural, historical and political dimensions of humour in relation to power, ideologies and social inequality by focusing on the mechanisms involved in the process of creating humour. Lockyer and Pickering (2008: 818) maintain that challenging the notion of humour as positive or benign allows humour to be effectively integrated into other discourses or broader configurations of sociality and social relationships. They add:

> [H]umour may at times provide distraction or diversion from the serious sides of life or from entrenched social problems, but it is not separate or separable from the broad spectrum of communicative forms and processes or from the manifold issues surrounding social encounter and interaction in a multicultural society. This means that issues associated with sexism, racism, homophobia, and other types of prejudice and bigotry cannot be pardoned merely because they appear in comedic discourse. In fact, they may be more effectively conveyed, disseminated, and reinforced by being expressed through the guise of humour and comedy (ibid: 818).

Arguably, the blurred lines between serious discourse and humorous discourse, and the inherent polysemy in humour, which creates layers of ambivalent meaning, results in humorous discourse being open to more complex readings of its functions (Davies, 1996; Kuipers, 2008). However, critical humour scholars view it as an opportunity to understand the workings of power that primarily involve the problematic ethical and socio-political aspects of humour (Seirlis, 2011: 514). According to Billig (2005: 215), "the seriousness of the social world and its comedy" components can be integrally intertwined. However, merely investigating how humour functions in specific social contexts may not be sufficient to demonstrate the social underpinnings of this connection. Advancing this point, Billig proposes taking a broader view of the purportedly serious world and its impact over social actors and actions (ibid). Thus, critical humour scholars, such as Michael Billig, Simon Weaver and Raúl Pérez, have contributed to the advancement of critical analysis of humour within the context of

Critical Humour Studies. This approach highlights the "ethical boundaries" of humour (Lockyer and Pickering, 2008: 26) by examining and contextualising the socio-cultural, historical and political aspects of humour in relation to social inequality, thereby drawing attention to the mechanisms involved in the process. The majority of scholars of Critical Humour Studies undertake text-based analyses to explore the particular socio-linguistic rhetorical interpretations that arise from different layers and structures of humorous discourse, establishing how these structures mirror, alter and broaden social and discursive patterns.

3.3.1 The Theory of Ambivalence: Towards a Textual Analysis

A key characteristic of humorous discourse is its capacity to operate on multiple levels simultaneously, thereby creating tensions, contradictions and ambivalences. This is due to the inherent incongruity found in humorous discourses. Billig (2005: 176) has identified three paradoxes of humour: (a) its ability to be both universal and specific, being understood by everyone yet simultaneously isolating certain individuals; (b) its capacity to be both social and antisocial, fostering a sense of unity through laughter while simultaneously alienating certain individuals; and (c) its elusive and relatable qualities, often appearing enigmatic and resistant to analysis, yet it remains understandable and amenable to analysis. Rather than framing these paradoxes as inherently problematic, critical humour scholars view them as an opportunity and an invitation, a site for analytic and theoretical refinement and productivity. The majority use text-based analysis, relying on textual-centric approaches to decode the various meanings present in humorous discourses to understand the persuasive properties of a text. This does not avoid taking into consideration the agency of viewers, as individual viewers bring their unique subject positions, experiences, beliefs, and values to the process of interpreting and attributing meanings to the text.

In fact, many scholars have argued that textual analysis must be used in combination with audience-based analysis because viewers are actively engaged with the text and contribute to the creation of meanings. Therefore, it is important to understand this dynamic relationship between text and viewer as part of the complex process of creating meaning (see Hall, 1997). However, as Dow (1996: 67) argues, each method of analysis serves a completely different purpose and textual analysis alone can serve as an effective approach to understand the dynamics of humour, as long as

researchers' conclusions are not considered to provide definitive conclusions about a given humorous text. I believe a discourse analysis of humorous texts can lead to interesting results regarding the linguistic features that influence the audience's interpretation in specific directions. In the current study, I do not seek out definitive, absolute answers or conclusions, but aim to explore more focused and informed questions about the role of humour as a tool for representing certain groups, MIM, in comedy shows, *SNL*.

Ambivalence Theory offers a productive framework for understanding representations of minority groups like MIM in comedy shows, such as *SNL*. Gray (1995) indicates that the ambivalent nature of racial representation in sketch comedy can have diverse effects on discrimination. The theory supports the idea that humorous discourses often rely on the collision of discourses that contain ambivalent and incongruous elements that attempt, but struggle, to fix definitions of the group in question, rendering multiple interpretations both probable and possible. In his critical analysis of *In Living Color*, an American sketch comedy based on stereotypical portrayals of African-American characters, Gray observes that the portrayals are not inherently progressive or reactionary; rather, they can be both or neither, depending on who is interpreting them and under what social circumstances. Thus, viewers who believe the negative stereotypes may interpret racial humour as a reflection of reality, whereas those who do not may perceive them as a criticism of those who do (Perks, 2008).

Summarising Gray's explanation of ambivalence, the theory can be used to refer to the textual representation of certain groups in humorous discourses, and the corresponding effects that such humorous representations may have on audiences. The chief strength of Gray's ambivalence theory, and the rationale for employing it in this textual analysis, is that it does not rely on the premise of a single, institutionally enforced interpretation. While the theory does not draw a single conclusion about humorous discourse, it nevertheless limits the possibilities for interpreting humorous texts, which can sometimes be in direct opposition, either reinforcing and/or challenging dominant assumptions. However, Grays's theory of ambivalence lacks a clear methodological structure, and his critical discussion ends by only admitting the critical impasse this theory presents. He argues that drawing conclusions about the effects of humorous discourse is extremely difficult, given that individual viewers can

use their subjectivity to interpret the text, leading to many interpretations of a humorous text and to a possible multiplicity of readings. In my analysis, I view ambivalence more as a problem that pertains not only to the individual viewers' reception but also to the multifaceted style of text production. In other words, ambivalence is not solely confined to how the audience perceives the text but also extends to the way the text itself is constructed and presented.

Billig (2005) also limits the multiple interpretations of humorous discourse, describing a binary system of interpretations of social order including the dual functions of both reinforcing and resisting social norms. This is done by critically investigating the functions of humorous discourse employing a textual/rhetorical analysis. He categorises humour into two types: disciplinary and rebellious. Disciplinary humour ridicules those who violate social norms and thereby reinforces existing social structures, whereas rebellious humour mocks social norms and can be interpreted as a form of resistance against them (Billig, 2005: 202). However, it can be difficult to categorise humour as either disciplinary or rebellious, as it has high potential for multiple and ambiguous interpretations. The paradox of humour resides in the fact that "the same mechanism that ensures social compliance also expresses pleasure at subversion" (Billig, 2005: 234). Such a system of interpretation generates more than one type of serious meaning, thereby reinforcing and resisting social norms.

Weaver also (2011, 2013, 2015) recognises the relatively underexplored relationship between humour and the discourses of religion, race and ethnicity and offers a textual/rhetorical approach, which is designed to understand such relationship. Weaver defines textual/rhetorical analysis as an approach that focuses on the process by which meaning is constructed without requiring jokers to reveal intentions, acknowledge their enjoyment of humour, take responsibility for or admit to a certain intended meaning (Weaver, 2015: 329). He argues that this approach is crucial for revealing the connections between humour, supporting serious communication and the construction of persuasive messages. Weaver's (2011) rhetorical analysis of racial humour also investigates how this form of communication can reinforce and both disrupt ideological and discursive social structures. He suggests humorous discourses can support ideologies, discourses, stereotypes, prejudiced forms of social structure and ways of thinking in specific social situations (ibid). Weaver further skilfully

combines critical humour theory, sociology, critical race scholarship, sociolinguistics and semiotic analysis to provide a nuanced and persuasive discussion. Using different theoretical and empirical examples of how racist humour occurs in different historical periods and social contexts, he postulates that humorous discourse has played a central, rather than a peripheral role, in racist discourse and racist ideology in US and the UK. He goes on to state that even when humour is used as a "reverse discourse", i.e., when comedians engage in self-deprecatory humour and dispute stereotypes from an insider stance, they nevertheless sometimes reproduce racism due to the paradoxical or polysemic dimension of humour. This dimension is concerned with the struggle of determining the difference between the apparent meaning and the 'real' or intended meaning in humorous statements. Where polysemy is present, fixed meaning becomes more likely to vanish, and the potential for varied political and ethical readings arise linked to the discursive and social space (ibid: 496). All the incongruities and complexities in humour create layers of ambiguity, which are open to more complex readings of humour functions. However, Weaver has explored a wide range of contexts in his study which added complexity to the theoretical foundation of the discussion, while limiting the amount of data presented in support of his arguments, the selection of which further receives little methodological attention. In my study, I offer a comprehensive and context-specific methodological approach that would allow for a more holistic and fruitful understanding of cultural politics of representations in humorous mediated texts.

3.4 Summary

In summary, this chapter has explained how the profoundly ambivalent nature of humour plays a significant role in shaping ideologies, knowledge and everyday socio-political practices (Berliner et al., 2016). Humour's ambivalence has a potential to create a discursive moment "produced through the negotiation of contradiction and ambivalence" to negotiate identities, ideologies, and socio-political practices (Källstig and Death, 2021:24). The concept of the incongruity present between what is expected and what is actually received resides at the core of ambivalent humour (Berger, 1995: Lempert, 2014: Petrovic, 2018). As mentioned earlier, incongruous structures can be organised through linguistic and rhetorical devices to understand the multiple functions of humour. This necessitates a close verbal and, when necessary, visual analysis of such devices, so as to explore the effect of incongruous structures

on the functions and meanings of humorous discourse. While applying the underexplored theory of ambivalence, the current thesis departs from previous studies in three ways: (a) the text for analysis includes the humorous discourse of the popular sketch comedy show *SNL*; (b) the normative cultural understandings in question relate to MIM in contemporary America; and (c) the method used is CDS. These three methodological departures will, in turn, pave the way for new avenues of critical linguistic examination into humour in the context of American sketch comedy show.

Chapter 4:

Data and Methods

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 lays out the data design and methodological procedures used to tackle the data collected for this study. The chapter is organised into two parts. Part one provides a detailed account of the steps in which I engaged when collecting, categorising and transcribing the data, while part two presents an outline of the analytical frameworks I used to approach the data, particularly highlighting corpus linguistics, discursive strategies analysis, multimodal tools of analysis, and discourse theory of humour.

4.2 Part One: Data- Corpus Design

The present study uses tools derived from corpus linguistics to conduct an initial analysis of the *SNL* corpus in order to identify dominant discourses around MIM and to examine how MIM are represented and evaluated. To fulfil this specific purpose, the corpus used for this study is a specialised corpus comprising texts from *SNL* between 2008 and 2020. Unlike general corpora, which are broadly homogeneous and contain various texts of different types of languages and genres, specialised corpora are designed with a specific aim in mind (Hunston, 2002: 14). Therefore, they are likely to be more restricted in scope, targeting a particular genre or register, or a specific time or context (Koester, 2010), as in the case of the present thesis. In fact, specialised corpora are especially useful for analysing given texts because they tend to be representative of the language of a certain discourse/genre (Handford, 2010; Koester, 2010) across a given timeframe and are developed for the purpose of investigating particular linguistic or social phenomena (Hunston, 2002: 15). However, certain points concerning the design of specialised corpora need to be carefully considered before starting the analysis. In the sub-sections below, I discuss the points that I took into account when building the *SNL* corpus.

4.2.1 Size

Specialised corpora vary in size and there is varying opinion on what is considered 'large' or 'small' (Koester, 2010: 67). For instance, O'Keeffe et al. (2007: 4) maintain that ideal size differs according to the type of texts. For spoken texts, any corpus with over a million tokens[1] is regarded large, whereas for written texts, anything under five million tokens can be considered small (ibid). Flowerdew (2004: 19) states that, although there is general agreement that small corpora contain up to 250,000 words, many corpus linguists suggest there is no optimum size for a corpus. Size is, in fact, more likely to be determined by the phenomenon under investigation (ibid). It is important, however, that the size supports a sufficient number of occurrences of patterns that appear to be frequent or regular in the corpus so as to yield reliable results (ibid). Those are merely targeted theoretical assumptions and, in reality, practical limitations exist regarding the availability of resources. In some cases, the number of texts that can be included in the corpus are limited, as with the corpus of the present study. Therefore, it is advised that "corpus builder(s) may have to cut their coat according to their cloth" (Clancy, 2010: 82).

There are a number of advantages when dealing with small, specialised corpora. For example, they are very focused, designed to address the purpose of the study with precision, texts can be cleaned up and managed manually and the researcher can become very familiar with the corpus, its contents and its organisation. In addition, Koester (2010: 67) notes that the main advantage when building small, specialised corpora is that they allow contextual features and paralinguistic features to be reflected. For instance, researchers can add information about setting, stage directions, the participants, audience engagement and the purpose of communication. By focusing on such features, researchers can correlate the texts and contexts in which they occur.

However, an important issue that needs to be addressed when designing a small, specialised corpus concerns the question of representativeness. Biber (1993: 243) defines representativeness as "the extent to which a sample includes the full range of variability in a population." In other words, the concept of representativeness concerns

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[1]Token is the total word count in a corpus.

the extent to which the sample represents the whole. According to Leech (1992: 27), when a corpus is regarded as representative of the language or a particular aspect of the language as a whole, the findings can be generalisable. Nevertheless, having an ideal representative sampling may not always be possible, despite researchers' efforts to make the corpus as representative as possible. Koester (2010: 67) notes that certain restrictions make it challenging for some corpus builders to create a truly representative corpus. For example, with a spoken corpus, gaining access and transcribing can be an effortful and time-consuming process. Consequently, corpus builders typically make use of the data that is available to them.

Due to the relatively small number of sketches related to Islam or 'Muslims' in the *SNL* show, the *SNL* corpus, which is comprised of 35,734 words, is considered 'small' by corpus linguistic standards. Even though the *SNL* corpus is restricted by both the available resources and the timeframe, it does contain a sufficient number of texts, including the search terms under investigation, to answer the research questions. Rather than aiming to be representative of sketch comedy about MIM, the *SNL* corpus offers a comprehensive account of the representation and evaluation of MIM in the show over a specified time period. In other words, it does not assume that the same generic aspects apply at the larger level of the said language variety. However, through the steps outlined below, there is a good level of confidence that all relevant sketches from *SNL* have been included in the corpus.

4.2.2 Access and Copyrights

All episodes of *SNL* are available on the channel's (NBC) official website. However, streamed content is copyrighted in the US only and cannot be accessed elsewhere. Therefore, I had to look for other ways to access the sketches through *SNL* official channels, on YouTube or iTunes. I was able to watch all seasons produced in the targeted timeframe and download the sketches under investigation. I then considered the ethical issues surrounding the collection of media data. Queen (2013: 224) suggests researchers need to direct special attention towards copyright status and publishers when using media materials designed for scholarly purposes. Since exemptions to clips and audios from publishers are difficult to obtain, Queen (ibid) advises researchers to familiarise themselves with the guidelines issued by The

Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS)[2] in 2012. These guidelines are mostly concerned with fair use practices of media materials for scholarly and educational purposes. In addition, according to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, researchers can use copyrighted materials without permission from the copyright holder if the material is to be used for criticism, scholarship and education (ibid).

McEnery and Hardie (2011: 59) address this issue by proposing three ways of dealing with copyrighted material from the internet. First, researchers are expected to seek permission from copyright holders to use the data by contacting them. Second, they can collect data from official websites to support reuse of the materials. Third, they can gather data without seeking permission. After discussions with the ENCAP ethics committee and my supervisor, I followed the third approach when collecting my texts for several reasons. First, if material is not intended to be redistributed, no objections can be made to someone downloading a single copy of a document from the internet onto a single computer for their purpose of study, especially since "such copying happens every time a web browser visits a page" (McEnery and Hardie, 2011: 58). Furthermore, Baker (2006: 38) states that contacting copyright holders to gain permission is not always possible, especially in studies that are considered critical and may show the text or the producer of text in an undesirable light. Baker (2014: 10) also adds that there may be no obligation to request permission to use texts that are already in the public domain.

4.2.3 Data Sampling and Management

The 12 seasons from 2008 to 2020 are comprised of a total of 252 episodes. This offers a limited yet feasible pool of recorded accessible material. Once this has been determined, the next step involves deciding which sketches to include in the corpus and how to categorise the data. Understanding the overall messages about MIM in *SNL* required a review of all the episodes from the last 12 seasons (a single season consists of 21 episodes) to identify all the scarce and individual references. Each 90-minute *SNL* episode features a variety of parody sketches performed by regular cast

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2 SCMS is a scholarly organisation in the US, concerned with promoting a broad understanding of film, television and related media through research and teaching, grounded in the contemporary humanities tradition. It represents nearly 3000 scholars in over 500 institutions located in 38 nations.

members and special guests, which take up most of the episode. Each *SNL* episode mainly composed of four parts: stand-up comedy monologue (performed by a celebrity host), music act (performed by a musical guest), parody sketches (performed by *SNL* cast and the episode's host) and Weekend Update (satirical news segment) (See Appendix A).

Before starting the data collection process, it is essential to note the many components that are involved in creating the *SNL* text. These components include the writers, the editors reviewing the content, the contributors from NBC, production elements (such as sound effects, set design and lighting) and the cast members responsible for line delivery. Despite the many layers that comprise the overall message, the element that truly shapes the message is the text, in particular the words, images and ideas in the script, the way the actors deliver the scripted words and ideas and the accompanying images. Fiske (1987) distinguishes between a programme and a text. In his view, a programme is the audio-visual artefact (the production process), whereas the text is created when a programme is interpreted, or read, by viewers/readers. Fiske (ibid: 14) explains that "a program becomes a text at the moment of reading, that is, when its interaction with one of its many audiences activates some of the meanings/pleasures that it is capable of provoking." For the purposes of this study, *SNL* will be examined as a text, while keeping in mind the additional components that may be considered relevant to the analysis.

Careful thought needs to be given to the selection of actual texts for inclusion in the corpus. Researchers need to consider the size of the actual sample and whether to include full texts or extracts (McEnery et al., 2006: 20). As the present study's main aim is to examine representations of MIM in *SNL*, I choose to focus on one primary criterion to underscore and guide the sampling process: the presence of explicit and implicit references to Islam or to people categorised as 'Muslims'. As a result, instead of including whole texts (episodes), only extracts (sketches) that refer to Islam and 'Muslims' are included. It is important to reiterate that I use the term 'Muslim' mainly to refer to the constellation of production, histories, images, representations and meanings associated with the presence of Muslimness in a given media text. In doing so, I aim to draw attention to the constructed nature of the term and the discursive work enacted in a given context.

Two points need to be addressed with regard to the inclusion and exclusion of texts. First, the aim is not to build a corpus exclusively about Islam or 'Muslim' people, but rather to include any sketch in which a person or a group categorised as 'Muslims' is mentioned or implicitly referred to, at least once. The rationale for this is that representations of 'Islam' and 'Muslim' individuals and groups are not limited to sketches featuring commentary and impersonations of MIM, but rather extend to any sketch containing verbal and visual texts in which they are mentioned, or implicitly referred to, even in passing. Therefore, there are sketches in the *SNL* corpus that contain very limited content on Islam and people categorised as 'Muslims'. Nonetheless, an examination of the linguistic features related to MIM in all sketches was undertaken to provide a more comprehensive account of their representations rather than simply those that are the principal focus. In addition, sketches mentioning Islam or 'Muslims', or implicitly referring to them in passing, can expose additional aspects of their representation that are not typically addressed when they are the main topic.

Second, there are sketches relating to Arab countries and the Middle East, which do not necessarily mention lexical items associated with Islam or 'Muslims', which I have chosen to exclude. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, there is a tendency in the US media to blur the multiple and diverse identities of Arabs, Middle Easterners, South Asians and 'Muslims', which results in them being conflated into a single stigmatised category: 'Muslims' (Arti, 2007; Alsultany, 2013). However, including sketches mentioning Arabs, Middle Easterners and South Asians in the current study would run the risk of adding bias to the data and reifying the category of 'Muslims' by assuming the term means the same to everyone who uses it. Therefore, if the association with Islam or 'Muslims' is not made explicit, those sketches that only mention Arabs, Middle Easterners or South Asians must be excluded.

The selected texts are organised into data tables, each of which is then divided according to its position in the show's format (cold opening, monologue, sketches, commercials, Weekend Update) (See Appendix B for a breakdown of token count for *SNL* corpus for each segment/season). It is worth mentioning that cold opening, sketches, and commercials are all considered parody sketches since they impersonate or imitate a particular person, advertisement, event, or popular culture

phenomenon. I have also made notes of sketches containing stereotypes and grouping them accordingly in a separate file for Chapter 7. The texts are then classified into one of two categories: visual or verbal references relating to MIM. The first category, visual references, includes all visual texts containing signifiers of Muslimness, whether impersonations, cartoons or pictures, to determine how the show visually communicates MIM. Examples of visual references include women wearing a Hijab or veil and men with beards or turbans. The second category contains all linguistic texts that directly or indirectly comment upon or discuss MIM. In terms of verbal references, in addition to the use of generic or 'neutral' words (i.e., 'Islam' and 'Muslim'), other Islam-related words are considered, such as Quran, Allah, prophet Mohammad, Hijab, veil, sharia and Jihad, in order to maximise the number of instances identified. One major issue that needs to be addressed in relation to this is negative discourse connotations. Words, such as Jihad and sharia, have negative discourse connotations in mainstream Western media and are heavily associated with religious and political extremism, militancy and terror (Baker et al., 2013; Samie and Malmir, 2017). Their inclusion can run the risk of skewing a dataset towards these subtopics, eventually leading to a circular argument. However, humorous discourse, and *SNL* in particular, has a reputation as a force for political and social critique, able to disturb power relations, negative stereotypes and challenge forms of discrimination (Gate, 2013; Weaver, 2013; Pérez, 2017). Therefore, it is interesting to note the extent to which the words that are related to Islam and 'Muslim' are evaluated either negatively or positively in the *SNL* sketches.

4.2.4 Transcription

Documenting spoken or visual texts (as is the case in this study) can be a time-consuming and exhausting process, especially when it is necessary to transcribe unclear speech (McEnery and Hardie, 2011). In regard to using and sourcing TV and film scripts for corpora, Bednarek (2015: 69) proposes four different approaches. First, there are the corpora available as part of the collection of transcripts from TV shows or films that can be easily accessed and used by researchers. An example of this is the Corpus of American Soap Operas (https: //www.english-corpora.org/soap/), which contains 100 million words of data from the 22,000 transcripts collected from American soap operas and aired in the early 2000s. Since the current study focuses only on *SNL*, there was no pre-existing corpus available.

Second, Bednarek (2015) asserts that researchers can automatically extract subtitles. While such an approach seems practical, it should be noted that it can only be effective if automatic transcription is built directly into the service. However, Bednarek (ibid) cautions that such transcripts may not include important information about the speakers, such as their names and gender. She also points out that formats can differ from one transcript to another. Finally, she recommends using this approach only when studies are specifically investigating the language of subtitles. The majority of the *SNL* videos obtained did not include subtitles and given the aforementioned drawbacks, using them seemed inappropriate. However, I was able to access other websites that offer transcription services, such as subtscene.com. The problem with such websites is that transcripts may contain major errors and cannot even be used as raw data. In addition, sometimes researchers find themselves suddenly unable to connect to the websites and see a 'Server Not Found' error message, as can be the case with subtscene.com.

The third approach is to use 'fan transcripts' that are available on various websites. According to Bednarek (ibid), even though these transcripts can contain mistakes, they are nevertheless considered much more accurate than subtitles. Mistakes in these are more likely to be linked to the standardisation of some words, such as wanna and gonna, or non-lexical interjections, such as aah and oh, which might be overlooked by some fans. In his study of the sitcom *Friends*, Quaglio (2009: 192) used fan-transcripts, which he characterised as being "fairly accurate and very detailed, including several features that scripts are not likely to present- hesitators, pauses, repeats, and contractions." However, there are a number of issues with using fan-transcripts. According to Mollin (2007), non-linguists may fail to notice key features that are crucial for a linguistic analysis when making the transcription. This is even more important where studies are using CL or CDS methods, which require complete accuracy of data transcription, as any mistake can result in an incorrect analysis. Consistency is another problem when using 'fan-transcripts', especially since texts in a large dataset are usually transcribed by numerous different fans rather than one dedicated fan. A complete collection of transcripts for all seasons of *SNL* was not available. After considering the potential for problems to arise when using fan-transcripts, it was determined that it would be better to find a more suitable approach

that would not run the risk of producing inaccurate transcripts and, consequently, incorrect analyses.

Bednarek (2015) proposes that the last approach suggested to researchers is to transcribe the TV or film scripts themselves from scratch. Despite this approach being tedious and time-consuming, it was selected as the best option here for two reasons. First, it would mean that I am solely responsible for transcribing the data and ensure that I follow the same transcription conventions to guarantee consistency and accuracy. For example, stage directions, names of speakers and other paralinguistic information were marked using adapted opening and closing sgml tags, e.g.:

<div style="margin-left: 2em;">

<STAGE> parody Trump enters Parody Manafort office </STAGE>

<Parody Manafort> Hello Mr president. </ Parody Manafort>

<Parody Trump> Hi Paul. I just came to check on you. </parody Trump>
</div>

Second, carrying out the transcription myself activates the process of analysis at some level. While transcribing, I could identify potential patterns and consider the emerging key linguistic parameters that seem to be salient for the study. Nonetheless, human error remains a possibility, as do minor inconsistencies across the dataset (Bednarek, 2018). To counter this issue, I made sure to fully revise each transcript for errors once transcribed. Once all episodes were fully transcribed and reviewed for errors, the episodes were put together into a single .txt document, which formed the *SNL* corpus.

4.2.5 Reference Corpus

Choosing a reference corpus in corpus linguistic studies is vital to infer relevant information regarding the specialised corpus. A reference corpus is used to provide background data for keyword calculation when comparing two (special and reference) corpora. For instance, when conducting keyword analyses, researchers need to carefully select a reference corpus and address aspects, such as the language variety in the main corpus, timeframe and size. If the reference corpus is not selected correctly, this will have a considerable impact on the findings when conducting the CL analysis.

The reference corpus chosen for this study is the Open American National Corpus (OANC). The OANC comprises 15 million words and includes all genres and transcripts of spoken American English produced from 1990 onwards (http: //www.anc.org). The OANC corpus is a pre-loaded reference corpora available on Sketch Engine and is thought to be a suitable comparator to the *SNL* corpus because it is much larger than the target corpus and contains contemporary spoken American English. Table 4.1 below shows a comparison between *SNL* corpus and ONAC corpus.

	SNL corpus	OANC
Time span	2008-2020	1990-onward
Content	skits mentioning 'Muslim' or Islam.	face to face and telephone conversation and interviews in the US
Tokens	35,734	3,369,613
Purpose	Data source	Reference

Table 4.1: The *SNL* corpus and OANC as the reference corpus.

In the initial phase of my study, I intended to use two reference corpora, namely OANC and SydTv, to produce the keyword lists and see how these compared, contrasted, and interrelated. The reason why this decision was made related to the fact that *SNL* corpus includes scripted language, while OANC consists of naturally occurring conversation. Therefore, I chose to include SydTV which is a designed dataset of TV dialogue. This corpus has dialogues from one first-season-episode of 66 different series aired between 2000 and 2014. However, SydTv cannot be fully accessed unless permission is granted. Still, the frequency list, which has 10,397 words, is available for download on website (www.syd-tv.com). Keywords can be computed by comparing the frequency list of the data source (corpus being examined) with the frequency list of a reference corpus (Philip, 2012: 94).

From the list of keywords obtained from comparing to both OANC and SydTv data set, I made the choice to narrow down my selection to the top 350 in order to explore the corpus in more detail. Subsequently, I manually categorised these keywords into thematic groups based on the meanings they conveyed. As a result, shared

categories emerged from this process, including but not limited to geographical names, political figures, and Islamic references. However, the keywords compared to OANC had more words in each thematic category. For example, in the COUNTRIES AND PLACES category there were more countries than when compared to SYDTV. Similarly, the VIOLENCE category, SYDTV only included words like, *armed*, *dangerous*, but ONAC included the same words in addition to words like *bomb*, *terrorist* and *military*. It just seemed to me that the topics and keywords in *SNL* compared to OANC would allow me to gain more insights about the topic researched. For this reason, I decided to only include the keywords list with OANC as a reference corpus in the study and rule out the keywords list of the SydTv corpus.

4.3 Part Two: Method- Analytical Frameworks

4.3.1 Stage 1: Corpus Linguistics (CL)

The first stage uses corpus linguistic analysis (abbreviated to CL) to answer RQ1: what are the emergent and dominant discourses associated with MIM in the *SNL* corpus? CL involves the use of computer software to examine a collection of machine-readable texts to discover linguistic patterns (Baker, 2006: 48). As data is electronically encoded, this enables researchers to perform quantitative calculations on a large number of texts to uncover patterns and frequency data that would be time-consuming to do manually (ibid). In addition, researchers should not depend entirely on their intuition to classify and encode data. This is important since "humans tend to notice unusual occurrences more than typical occurrences, and therefore conclusions based on intuition can be unreliable" (Biber et al., 1998: 3).

According to Tognini-Bonelli (2001), there are three approaches to CL studies. First, *Corpus-driven* is a method whereby the analyst approaches the data with no prior assumptions and expectations, and conclusions are drawn strictly based on corpus calculations and observations. Second, *corpus-based* approach, which by contrast, obtains corpus evidence to support intuitive knowledge, to verify expectations and to confirm intuitions, theories or findings from other sources. McEnery and Gabrielatos (2006: 37) contend that such labels are problematic because they are unlikely to eliminate intuition and pre-formulated hypotheses completely in any research process.

Third, *corpus-assisted* is the approach which does not necessarily exclude one in favour of the other. According to McEnery (2016), using a combination of approaches is the most effective method of analysis. Researchers using this approach acknowledge "its flexibility and the possibility for exploring discursive patterns based on both researcher intuition and evidence in the corpus" (Costelloe, 2013: 117). Especially with socially motivated research, such as the study at hand, researchers are more likely to use a corpus-assisted approach to connect the corpus to external sources (e.g., other texts, theories, discourses), revealing additional avenues of analysis included in the corpus.

4.3.1.1 The Rationale for Using CL in the Current Study

There are many reasons for using computerised corpora in linguistic studies. One immediate reason is that a stored database can be readily accessed and accurately processed (McEnery and Wilson, 2001: 6). Practically speaking, using computer software programs is much faster than manually examining, selecting, tagging and processing data at minimal cost to reach reliable and generalisable findings, to some extent (ibid). Since CL is concerned with the use of statistical tools, one criticism levelled against it is that the data can be divorced from immediate and broader contexts. Baldry (2000: 36) criticises CL analysts for treating the language of texts as a self-contained object, ignoring any contextual factors that might have assisted with creating it. However, Baker (2006: 279) argues that the problem with decontextualising the data and limiting the results appears only in light of the limited conceptions of CL; i.e., they are more evident in CL studies that are restricted to an automatic analysis of corpora and which are of a descriptive rather than an interpretative nature. In the current study, I paid special attention to the concordance tool, which displays lines of texts based on the word being investigated, since it enables analysts "to observe regularities in use that tend to remain unobserved when the same words or phrases are met in their normal contexts" (Hunston, 2002: 9). I also explore expanded concordances or even whole texts from which to infer contextual factors with the aim of adequately recreating the context (Brown and Yule, 1983: 47).

In addition, employing corpus analysis methods reduces certain cognitive (and perhaps ideological) biases and enables researchers to make more confident claims

drawing on the appearance of quantitative patterns, which ultimately make the results more reliable (Baker, 2006: 11). However, Baker (2012: 255) warns that CL practitioners to not overstate the ability of CL to reduce researcher bias. In his view, the interpretation and evaluation of quantitative patterns is still very much likely to be subject to human bias. For example, researchers can be selective about choosing what aspects they report. It then becomes the analysts' responsibility to become highly aware of how to make sense of these patterns and report any important exceptions. The final reason for using the CL method is that it can be combined with additional methodologies to reinforce and strengthen the overall analysis (Baker, 2012: 13). In this study, I employ CL tools at the first stage of analysis to guide the subsequent critical analysis. A combination of aspects of CDS and CL in critical discourse studies has been applied widely to examine various fields of enquiry (Baker and McEnery, 2005; Krishnamurthy, 2008; Partington, 2010; Salama, 2011; Baker et al., 2013).

In fact, CL tools have been widely used by many discourse analysts to examine spoken and written texts, such as political speeches (Fairclough, 2000), newspaper articles (Van Dijk, 1991; Baker et al., 2013), online forums (Martin and Phelan, 2002), business-meeting interactions (Handford, 2010) and teaching materials (Stubbs and Gerbig, 1993), to name but a few examples. However, the CL method has rarely been used to analyse television and film texts. Bednarek (2018: 82) observes that the study of television dialogue has received relatively little attention within the field of CL. Despite the vast amount of television content and its significant influence on society, there have been only a few studies conducted specifically focusing on analysing television dialogue from a CL perspective. She maintains that most of the studies that do exist have compiled specialised corpora comprising scripts from an individual series or a specific genre, e.g., *Star Trek* (Rey, 2001), *Will & Grace* (Baker, 2005), *Friends* (Quaglio, 2009) and *Gilmore Girls* (Bednarek, 2010). The principal aim of the majority of these studies was either to identify the functions of scripted dialogue or compare the linguistic characteristics of everyday conversation to TV language. Having a specialised corpus seems to have fulfilled these purposes by providing adequate linguistic evidence for the phenomenon being investigated and allowing for more qualitative, contextually-informed analyses.

Moreover, CL can address some shortcomings of using CDS in the next stage of qualitative analysis. CDS's objectives are deemed political, which may prompt allegations (and possibly instances) of cherry-picking (refer to Widdowson, 2004; Jeffries, 2010, 2014; Baker, 2012). Additionally, its open and eclectic approach to useful linguistic tools and theories is criticised for promoting a lack of coherence and systematicity (Widdowson, 1996; 2004). Widdowson (1996) proposes using CL tools to address some of the more egregious flaws of CDS, particularly to address the risk of cherry-picking.

As outlined above, a small, specialised corpus has been created for this study to assist with answering the research questions. Using CL tools can help when analysing data in ways that are more targeted and systematic. They also support both dominant and emergent descriptions of MIM to emerge from the data from statistical rather than subjective criteria. Moreover, having a specialised corpus can provide a clearer assessment of discourse evaluation from the reader's perspective.[3] O'Halloran and Coffin (2004) argue that specialised corpora can uncover messages readers/viewers are exposed to the most frequently. Such corpora provide links to wider contexts and relevant discourses "in concentrated form" since it includes many texts (cumulative effects) pertaining to a specific topic, thereby allowing researchers to track important socio-political references in their studies (ibid: 144).

4.3.1.2 CL Tools

CL tools are only used in the initial stage of analysis, which involves identifying, categorising and describing the dominant discourses associated with MIM in the *SNL* corpus. To achieve this, keywords in the *SNL* corpus are identified and then manually sorted into thematic categories, employing a thorough examination of concordance lines and collocations. The generated list of keywords is used as a 'tool' to identify areas of interest worthy of closer investigation through critical discourse analysis. In other words, the keywords will act as a spotlight, drawing attention to specific areas or topics within the corpus that are worthy of further examination in order to understand how MIM are represented in *SNL*. They are considered as focal points of

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[3] According to Hall (1980), in most cases, media adopts a sender-message-receiver process that transmits coded messages that are ideologically saturated and are decoded by a reader's own ideological perspective.

discourse-determined semantic accumulation that can uncover aspects of the understandings of the underlying discourse when conducting an in-depth critical linguistic analysis in the next stage. Any analysis of keywords takes into consideration contextual information, such as events and issues typically associated with MIM in the corpus. A number of useful computer and web-based tools are also available to corpus linguists. Among these tools are keywords, collocation and concordances. In the remainder of this section, I briefly discuss the three tools I employed specifically for the purposes of this research.

The first methodological procedure is keywords analysis, which provides linguistic insights into what makes a set of texts unique when compared to other texts and gives a measure of "aboutness" (Scott and Tribble, 2006) of those texts. In Sketch Engine, keywords enable the extraction of core lexis using a 'keyness score'. The tokens (words) that are considered salient and unique are not calculated as statistically significant, so their 'keyness score' depends on the sample size (Gabrielatos and March, 2012). Other CL software, such as Wordsmith and WMatrix, relies on significance testing, which can be deemed problematic since it leads to rejection of the null hypothesis positing randomness (Kilgarriff, 2005). Extracting the list of keywords for this study is the first step in determining the different textual foci. More specifically, it serves to address the first research question which aims to determine which dominant and emergent discourses receive the most attention when it comes to MIM in the *SNL* corpus. For example, words such as *attack*, *ISIS* and *ban* are identified as keywords in the *SNL* corpus, potentially indicating that these texts focus on the semantic categories of conflict and violence. However, in isolation, keywords are simply a list of words. Therefore, researchers need to examine their use in context in order to properly understand and explain their appearance (Baker, 2006: 128). The keywords are organised into thematic categories based on their meanings to identify the dominant topics in the corpus. The thematic categories in this document are represented in capitals, e.g., WAR, COUNTRIES and PLACES and the keywords are in italics e.g., *America.*

That being the case, concordance analysis, the second technique, allows researchers to examine the occurrences and usage of a linguistic item by searching through the concordance lines (Baker et al., 2006: 42-43). Hunston (2002: 5) points out the

importance of this technique, which, in her view, was developed "because words were considered to be more important than grammatical categories, and the immediate co-text of a word, including its significant collocations, was considered to offer the most information about it." This can help in identifying all the lines of any word after exploring the surroundings of the text and ensure that the thematic categorisation is sorted correctly. Scanning concordance lines can be done by reviewing words to the right and left of a node word, which is normally displayed in a KWIC (key word in context). This can help with picking out unexpected concordance patterns and, consequently, with noting the discourses around that node word. In this way, the concordance lines analysis presents "boiled down" (Scott and Tribble, 2006: 6) samples of the text by providing all occurrences of a node word within a limited amount of context (the amount is set by the researcher).

The third technique is collocation. There is debate and disagreement about how to define this technique (McEnery and Hardie, 2011) but simply put, collocation describes words that tend to habitually co-occur together (Hunston, 2002: 12). There are many ways of determining collocation. For instance, Firth (1975, cited in McEnery and Hardie, 2011) only considers words that routinely occur next to each other, such as 'blond hair', as collocates. For McEnery and Hardie (2011: 123), on the other hand, the range of candidate collocates for a search term is understood as those items that "frequently occur in proximity to one another- but not necessarily adjacently or, indeed, in any fixed order." In Sketch Engine, there is a default span of five words included to either the right or left of the node word, offering a more balanced overview of words' interrelatedness. CL software enables analysts to examine which words are the most typical collocates for a chosen search word. Focusing on collocations with Muslim* in the *SNL* corpus, I found that the object position Muslim* collocates with verbs such as *block, ban* and *separate*, which are synonymic with RESTRICTIONS and suggest practices of exclusion and othering.

Using this technique is important because it reveals the cognitive associations between language items and the specific context and co-text of use, defined by Hoey (2007) as 'lexical priming'. Baker (2005: 114) indicates that "the strength of collocation implies that these are two concepts which have been linked in the minds of people and have been used again and again." Through repeated use of specific words in

specific contexts, a person's mind forms automatic connections which reinforce an idea of a pattern of occurrence that seems natural (ibid). Relating this to social cognition, Gabrielatos and Baker (2008: 13) state that collocation can also shed light on events, topics and aspects of the discourse surrounding a given social group. In addition, Stubbs (1996: 172) points out that "words occur in characteristic collocations, which show the associations and connotations they have, and therefore the assumptions which they embody." That is to say, words and their collocates might express different evaluations and give indications to the ideologies embedded behind the overt propositions. However, CL tools alone cannot be enough to interpret ideology without the implications of a qualitative method to explain these patterns.

4.3.2 Stage 2: Analysis of Discursive Strategies

The second stage of analysis addresses RQ2: how are MIM represented and evaluated, verbally and visually, in the *SNL* sketches? In this stage, the main focus is on the verbal features and devices that are used to represent and evaluate MIM in the examined *SNL* sketches. However, when relevant, the analysis includes a discussion on the visual elements of the sketches. The examination involves observing the discursive strategies under the discourse-historical approach's (DHA). More specifically, the analysis examines the verbal and visual choices used in the representation and evaluation of MIM in *SNL*. As mentioned in Chapter 3, DHA aims to illuminate the role of the social, political and historical contexts surrounding a given discourse. This entails examining the situational contexts surrounding the text and the broader historical contexts that relate to the discourse or phenomena being studied, in addition to analysing the linguistic, pragmatic and rhetorical-argumentative aspects of the text or speech (Angouri and Wodak, 2014). Such analysis involves examining discursive strategies, which can be described as discursive practices that are more or less accurate, aimed to achieve specific social, political, psychological or linguistic objectives. (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 44). When reviewing the language used in discourse, DHA targets specific discursive strategies, which can be explored by posing the following questions (Wodak, 2001: 72):

- How are social actors, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically?

- What qualities, characteristics and features are attributed to these social actors, objects, phenomena/events and processes?
- What arguments are used in the discourse?
- From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?
- Are the utterances expressed explicitly? Are they intensified or mitigated?

These questions serve as analytical tools that can be implemented to examine five strategies. First, referential strategies focus on the way social actors, entities, phenomena, processes and actions are named. Such strategies can be used to identify actors negatively by merely naming them 'Muslim radicals' or 'Islamic terrorists'. At the macro-level, a number of linguistic devices can be used to refer to or name social actors, actions or events in a given discourse. Reisigl and Wodak (2001, 2016) identified various of linguistic devices involved in the process of naming or referring to social actors or actions, although their list is by no means exhaustive or conclusive. Some of these devices include collectives, metonymy, metaphor, pronouns, verbs and nouns denoting processes and actions and semiotic modes.

Second, predication strategies correspond to the features and qualities linguistically assigned to entities, phenomena, processes and actions as more or less positively or negatively, deprecatory or appreciative. According to Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 45), identification of social actors or actions is frequently accompanied by a process of evaluation that may be negative or positive. This enables binary categorisations of actors or actions as 'good' and 'bad,' or what van Leeuwen (1996: 58) terms 'appraisement', and which often represents difference, similarity, collectivity, unity, social cohesion and social exclusion. The linguistic devices that realise predication strategies maybe in the form of explicit predicates or predicative nouns, adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases, similes, allusions, evocations, presuppositions and other rhetorical devices (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016: 33).

Thirdly, argumentation strategies, topoi or schemes pertain to arguments that allow a conclusion to be derived from certain premises. Topoi are defined as "the formal or content-related warrants or conclusion rules which connect the argument(s) with the conclusion, the claim" (Kienpointner, 1997: 75). In other words, topoi serve as 'signals'

or 'indications' or 'warrants', in a manner that "enables a transition to be made from evidence or data to the claim" (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016: 133). Such discursive strategy communicates the purpose of the argument to readers and audiences by ascertaining connections between topics and topoi in a given discourse (Krzyanowski, 2010: 84). There are a number of topoi that are common in discourses related to minority groups, such as topos of threat, topos of culture, topos of separation and topos of law (Bennett, 2018), all of which prove to be relevant to my data and are examined in Chapter 6.

Fourthly, perspectivisation strategies refer to how text producers locate the events they describe in the discourse. This is attained by reporting, describing, narrating or quoting particular utterances or citing specific events (Wodak, 2001: 73). Finally, intensification or mitigation strategies refer to linguistic means of modifying or reducing the illocutionary force of utterances; that is, whether they are articulated overtly, intensified or mitigated, a process realised linguistically through the use of modal verbs, adverbs and adjectives (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016: 32). All five discursive strategies will be considered within the analysis in Chapter 6. However, special attention will also be directed towards referential and predication strategies because they play an important role in the representation and evaluation of social actors and other phenomena. Where necessary, I refer to instances of argumentation, perspectivisation and mitigation/intensification.

It is important to acknowledge that the texts being analysed are not mere words on papers. They are sketches performed by *SNL* cast in front of a live audience, wearing certain clothes, choosing certain looks, using different tones of voice, facial expressions, gazes and actions while acting their sketches. These semiotic resources leveraged in the text are examined to reveal the underpinning representations and evaluations of MIM. In that, the semiotic affordances of the visual mode in this study helps further understanding the ways in which MIM are visually represented and evaluated in *SNL* and how existing understandings of MIM might contribute to such representations. However, due to the limited availability of visual modes about MIM in the examined sketches, the study uses some tools from multimodal analysis (MMA), without undergoing a complete MMA.

Examining the modes of communication accompanying the text under examination is crucial for two main reasons. First, multimodality assumes all modes have, like language, been shaped through their cultural, historical and social uses as a means to realise their social functions (Jewitt, 2009). In this sense, images can perform the same function as speech acts and also encode social/cultural messages. Therefore, analysts can "explore the way that individual elements in images, such as objects and settings, are able to signify discourses in ways that might not be obvious at an initial viewing" (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 31). This is especially important in the case of this study because images of people categorised as 'Muslims' can reveal a lot about the messages being communicated in the sketches. Second, images can affect how audiences interpret a text. Machin and Mayr (2012: 30) note that "authors will use combinations of visual and linguistic elements depending on their affordances, to best accomplish what they wish to communicate." This means such paralinguistic elements are not used randomly and are intended to meet the text's communicative purpose. When analysing such elements, analysts need to pay special attention to "which visual features and elements are foregrounded and which are backgrounded or excluded" (ibid: 31), as what is not apparent to the audience may be as, if not, more significant than what is being displayed.

This study seeks to examine the semiotic modes accompanying the sketches related to MIM within the discourse of *SNL* and the ways in which they contribute to the representations and evaluation of MIM in *SNL*. More specifically, the study focuses on modes such as skin colour, clothes, voice tone, gaze, and facial expressions that can discursively position and construct relationships, identities and groups (van Leeuwen, 2000; 2006). These modes can be employed in a text to communicatively construct and negotiate identities that may then become socially accepted or rejected. This will help foster an understanding of how linguistic representational strategies and multimodal strategies project MIM and, subsequently, represent and evaluate MIM in *SNL*. In addition, such analysis will also determine the source-cultural processes in linguistic and multimodal representations of MIM and their wider socio-political implications.

4.3.3 Stage 3: The Discourse Theory of Humour (DTH)

The third stage of analysis answers RQ3: What meanings are generated from MIM-related stereotypes in the *SNL* sketches and what role do the humour-invoking linguistic features employed in these sketches play in the creation and interpretation of humorous and serious meanings? While the previous stage of analysis only focuses on the discursive strategies used in the representation and evaluation of MIM in *SNL*, this stage of the analysis assesses the context of humour and examines the use of stereotypes in *SNL*. In order to achieve this, I use Tsakona's (2020) framework, which draws on the discourse theory of humour (DTH). Tsakona (2020) offers a discussion of the diverse forms of humorous genres, the extensive array of the socio-pragmatic functions of humour and the varying perceptions that speakers may have concerning what humour entails, what it signifies and how it functions. Tsakona argues that humorous discourse cannot be fully understood without considering the sociocultural and historical contexts in which it is produced and received. Drawing on previous linguistic theories of humour, such as the Semantic Script Theory of Humour (Raskin, 1985) and the General Theory of Verbal Humour (Attardo, 2001, 2020), and bringing context into focus, Tsakona (2020) proposes DTH as an analytical model for use as a framework when implementing critical evaluations of humour in educational contexts. The DTH approach places significance on key contextual factors that have an impact on the creation and comprehension of humorous discourse. According to DTH, such contextual factors are essential to further our understanding of background knowledge about the world, including, among other things, beliefs and assumptions relating to topics that may or may not be humorously represented and negotiated in serious discourses. The analysis of humorous texts using DTH aims to emphasise interactions between the sociocultural context of humour production and reception, as well as the specific characteristics of humorous genres, and their semiotic aspects. The framework also includes three analytical foci (AF) intended for analysing humorous texts. Below, I give a detailed account of the three AF and highlight how they are interpreted in relation to the current thesis.

1) *Sociocultural assumptions* refer to the shared background knowledge necessary for understanding and processing humour. This knowledge may vary between different communities and individuals. Thus, DTH does not assume

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the existence of a predetermined set of sociocultural assumptions that every member of the audience is expected to share in order to understand and interpret the humorous texts (for a comprehensive explanation of the DTH and its potential, see Tsakona, 2020: 103-138). In the current study, relevant sociocultural assumptions are identified as common stereotypes associated with MIM.

2) *Genre* refers to the different types of texts or contexts in which humour is used. Humour may be intrinsic to certain genres like canned jokes or stand-up comedy, and more or less common in others, such as informal conversations or advertisements, and then typically absent from genres, such as legal or religious texts. The genre of a text also influences (or may be influenced by) the social and pragmatic goals and functions of humour, such as when highlighting ingroup/outgroup boundaries, expressing criticism, mitigating aggressive or face-threatening acts, deprecating the 'self'', constructing gender, ethnic, political or other identities, and so on. In *SNL*, the show is divided into segments, which are classified as different genres: parodic sketches, satirical news and stand-up comedic monologues. Each segment is characterised by distinctive features (e.g., they can be ironic, parodic or satiric), which serve different functions. This is important because it helps to provide a clear idea of the humorous and serious meanings that are being discursively strengthened in *SNL*.

3) *Text* concerns the examination of language, as well as situational and knowledge resources, such as the semantic content, stylistic choices and visual modes. In my analysis, I focus more heavily on language and the specific humour-invoking linguistic devices used to frame the *SNL* discourse as humorous. These humour-invoking linguistic devices create incongruities and ambivalences. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, incongruity can be situated in any layer of linguistic structure, which means that it can operate at any level of language (such as narrower features of vocabulary and grammar) and discourse (such as pragmatic devices and figurative language) (Attardo, 2017;

Simpson et al., 2018). The initial phase of analysis identified the following linguistic devices at work:

a) Intertextual references: Norrick (1993: 51) suggests that intertextuality in humour is rooted in the original text, and audiences must possess some intertextual knowledge to appreciate it. In the case of humorous discourse, intertextuality can be narrowed down to the use of quotations, allusions, pre-existing texts or speech, parody and critical commentary. In this study, I focus principally on parody and allusion. According to Attardo (2013: 87), parody is linked to intertextuality, as familiarity with the text, person or form being parodied is necessary to fully appreciate the parody. Parody is based on Bakhtin's (1981) notion of double-voicing, which means adopting a second voice to exaggerate, critique, ridicule, interrogate or polemicise the first voice. Rose (1993: 15) defines it as "the imitation of form with a change to content." Through use of double-voicing, parodists create a representation of another's language and perspective of the world; one that is both portrayed and worth portraying (Vásquez, 2019). Parody involves two speakers: the first is the original speaker who produced the source text, which could be an actual event or previously established social and mental knowledge, and the second is the parodied speaker. Vásquez (2019) notes that the parodied speaker uses the original source to some extent, but then deviates from it in order to produce contrast and highlight elements of difference between the two. Dependence on the imitation of pre-existing texts represents a mode of intertextuality that permits the recontextualisation of some references, so that hybridised texts are produced and new texts created (Tsakona and Chovanic, 2020). This is typically achieved by using exaggeration and/or absurdity. For example, parody sketches related to MIM in *SNL* involve parodic impersonation of certain individuals, such as bin Laden, or stereotypical figures like 'the rich Arab sheik' and can be expressed both verbally and non-verbally to communicate humorous and, in some cases, non-humorous evaluations of the original source (Dynel, 2018) (see Section 7.2.1). In terms of allusion, this also depends on knowledge previously shared between speakers and listeners alluding to references that have a basis in culture that require listeners to access references. These references can be expressed explicitly by echoing popular

phrases, social media slogans or movie lines (e.g. Aladdin). Other references can also be expressed implicitly by alluding to beliefs, issues, ideas and statements that are commonly circulated in society or by the media, and which are more likely to be recognised by an audience, such as controversial opinions expressed in newspaper articles (e.g. the Mohammad cartoons).

b) Conceptual mappings: According to Ahrens (2010), analysing the linguistic mappings within a specific source-target domain pairing is important as a way to determine the rationale underlying this conceptual pairing. Such a conceptual relationship between two domains can be realised by the use of metonymy and frame-shifting, both of which are also regarded as mechanisms for humour generation and reception (Tabacaru and Feyaerts, 2016; Mifdal, 2019). In cognitive linguistics, metonymy can be regarded as an asymmetric mapping between two linguistic or conceptual entities (i.e., source and target) (Radden and Kövecses, 1999). In simple terms, metonymy is the act of using one entity to refer to another related entity. In humorous utterances, metonymy depends on obscure and unexpected reference points that disrupt the audience's expected interpretation process. However, in order to make sure the audience perceives the envisaged humorous interpretation, metonymic reference points still require some transparency with regard to the target. Therefore, the elements that are highlighted, although rather unexpected and surprising, nevertheless belong together in the same frame, giving the audience enough information to successfully process the humorous meaning through pragmatic inferencing. In the *SNL* sketches examined, for instance, the analysis shows how metonymic links can constitute common stereotypes and create humorous and serious meanings (see section 7.3). The notion of frame-shifting is similar to Raskin's (1985) script-switching, which has proven a significant topic in linguistic humour research. Frame-shifting is defined as "the semantic and pragmatic reanalysis in which elements of the existing message-level representation are mapped into a new frame retrieved from long-term memory" (Coulson et al., 2001: 229). This means frame-shifting also draws on background knowledge and broader context to overcome ambiguities and indeterminacy. This is theoretically complementary with the socio-cognitive perspective discussed in Chapter 3 because frame-shifting also incorporates a

cognitive dimension that accounts for the complexity of the links between discourse and society and incorporates the mental processes involved in new text production and comprehension. However, Coulson (2001: 29) emphasises the importance of conceptual flexibility in frame-shifting, arguing that the construction of meaning relies heavily on conceptual flexibility. In other words, meaning creation is not simply about manipulating pre-existing representations stored in memory; instead, it is an active process where the speaker combines perceptual and conceptual information with abstract knowledge obtained from long-term memory.

c) Reverse humour: Coined by Weaver (2011: 31), 'reverse humour' refers to humorous texts that "employ the sign-systems of . . . racism but develop or seek to develop a reverse semantic effect" to create "a discourse that is produced, situated, and directed in clear opposition to the racist meaning of the earlier discourse [from which the signs originate]." Such humorous texts are apparent in stand-up comedy, where comedians from certain groups engage in a self-deprecatory humour and dispute stereotypes from an insider stance. Weaver (2010: 31) recognises reverse discourse as effective in creating humour and challenging racist ideologies, but also acknowledges that paradoxically it can sometimes have a polysemic element that perpetuates these ideologies. Reversed discourse can also be realised in certain rhetorical devices, such as hyperbole and inversion. Hyperbole is "a device for deliberate exaggeration of meaning" (Tahir, 2013: 746). That is, hyperboles are not taken literally and are mainly employed to overstate the situation being ridiculed and, thus, are a common feature in comedic shows. Although such rhetorical devices are mostly used to express a discrepancy between the exaggerated statement and the reality being described, it is not totally devoid of truth (Attardo, 1994). What is at stake here is the realisation that any figure of speech functions as a communitive code for a certain message. In the case of hyperbole, there is a risk of achieving socially critical goals that support, rather than challenge, negative social assumptions (Hutcheon, 1995; Van Dijk, 2005). Inversion of stereotypes is another rhetorical tool used for undermining racist systems of representation, with a long history in American popular culture, due to the popularity of Blaxploitation films in the 1970s (Hall, 1997: 270). Inversion as a

rhetorical tool takes many forms, but always involves an element of incongruity, in which racial signifiers are decoupled from the signified component to invert traditional expectations about racial groups. Directly addressing what audiences seem to 'know', humorous inversions invite questioning regarding what is known about certain groups, where such knowledge comes from and the power that produces it (Zimbardo, 2007). As is the case with hyperbole, inversions of stereotypes always carry the danger of reinforcing, rather than undermining, the stereotypes in question.

4.4 Summary

This chapter started by providing a detailed description of the *SNL* corpus design and included the decisions I made with regard to sampling, categorising and managing the data. It is important to point out these details as they have implications for what the *SNL* corpus truly represents and the validity of any claims made about the discourses they contain. I then outlined the main analytical frameworks – CL, DHT, MMA and DTH – used in this study. First, I discussed the use of the corpus approach and its advantages, which are not available within other approaches. I also listed the corpus techniques to be employed in the study and showed how each aid in answering the research question. Next, I moved on to discuss the DHT, MMA and DTH tools and described how they are particularly suited because they are theoretically complementary and well-suited for tackling linguistic patterns and topics to provide comprehensive answers to the research questions posed. Findings of the analysis will be presented and discussed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 following.

Chapter 5:

Identification and Categorisation of Discourses Associated with MIM in *SNL*

5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the first level of the analysis—identification, categorisation and description—which lays the groundwork for exploring the representation(s) of MIM in *SNL*. It aims to answer RQ1—what are the emergent and dominant discourses associated with MIM in *SNL*? —by firstly identifying the keywords in the *SNL* corpus. The keywords will then be assigned to thematic categories based on close analysis of concordance lines and collocations. This process involves closely examining the surrounding textual context to determine the intended meanings of the keywords. While this chapter is descriptive, it will provide many of the contextual clues that are important to qualitatively analyse and interpret the linguistic findings that follow in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7. All three chapters aim to reveal the emergent and dominant discourses in the *SNL* corpus, as well as the representations and evaluations of MIM in the show.

In what follows, I describe the procedure of selecting and grouping the keywords in the *SNL* corpus, before moving to the description of contextual details (obtained through concordances and collocations) to reveal their actual meaning and usage from the available data.

5.2 Generating and Refining the Keywords List

To answer RQ1, the analysis first looks at keywords in the *SNL* corpus, as calculated by means of Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff, 2009). The building procedures of the *SNL* corpus and the reasons for choosing OANC as a reference corpus have already been explained in Chapter 4 (see section 4.2.4). While a simple frequency list only requires a single corpus, a keyword list requires two corpora or sets of texts. The keyword tool is useful because it highlights the words of unusual frequency when the *SNL* corpus is compared to a reference corpus (Scott and Tribble, 2006), namely OANC (See Section 4.3.4). The keyword list contains words signposting the most 'unusually frequent' words in one particular corpus compared to another, which allows for

identifying the specific 'aboutness' of a corpus (Baker, 2006). This aboutness can reveal aspects, topics and themes that express the salient or important information in a given discourse and reflect features of the genre or register to which the texts belong (Van Dijk, 2008: 68). While the methods for selecting keywords in corpus linguistics are still being discussed and debated, the process essentially attempts to measure which words occur more often in one text or set of texts compared to another, thus identifying the salient words in those texts.

Examining the keywords list, I chose to focus on the top 1,000 lexical keywords to facilitate the identification of the emergent and dominant topics that are commonly linked to MIM in *SNL* (See Appendix C). The selection of keywords followed a set of criteria specifically designed to guarantee the study's relevance and objectivity. The first criterion involved narrowing down the list of keywords by means of a statistical cut-off. There are no strict guidelines for applying statistical cut-offs, as this also depends on the research questions being asked and the restrictions of the data (see, for example, Jeffries and Walker, 2012: 36). It must be acknowledged that the application of different parameters and statistical standards for the determination of keywords can lead to varying results (McEnery and Hardie, 2012: 127). For this research, a frequency cut-off was adopted because, unlike low-frequency words, relatively frequent lexical items are likely to be more representative of the whole period considered for the current research. Therefore, it was decided that the tokens must have a frequency ≥ 3 and dispersion in at least two texts (number of sketches). This cut-off point is therefore not statistically motivated but determined by the discourse analytical aims of this study (identifying dominant discourses).

The second criterion entailed excluding the characters names. Most keywords lists are likely to include proper nouns (Scott and Tribble, 2007), which was true of the *SNL* corpus because it included characters' names and other names of real people. Only the names of the fictional characters were excluded as the other names may be related to MIM representation in *SNL*. The default settings in Sketch Engine allows certain words to be excluded from the keywords list (the total number of exclusions was 97). The next standard involved focusing mainly on the lexical, meaning-denoting and functional tokens. Partington (2010: 90) points out that different key tokens will attract interest from different researchers according to their research interests. For

this reason, grammatical tokens that are 'usually frequent' in all corpora (e.g. pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliaries etc) were also excluded from the list in order to focus more on content words that reveal the distinctive topics discussed in *SNL* regarding MIM. Additionally, several keywords were not included as they are commonly used in spoken language and are irrelevant for the purpose of this analysis (e.g., filler words, such as uh and um, and back-channels, such as yeah and okay). This decision was made to ensure that the tokens included belonged to categories that were relevant to the main area of investigation of the research. (i.e., the representation of MIM in *SNL*). This is also another reason for not using automated software, as it would not pick up this level of specificity (situated meanings).

The generated list of keywords was used to map the textual and topical foci of the *SNL* corpus. In other words, the keywords are viewed as focal points of discourse-determined semantic accumulation that can reveal a part of the history and ideology of the underlying discourse when conducting an in-depth linguistic analysis (Schröter and Veniard, 2016). In the current research, these keywords can point to the salient topics and aspects that seem to relate to MIM in the show. One way of grouping the remaining keywords is in terms of how they contribute towards certain topics or concepts (Baker, 2014). This is done by manually grouping the words into categories based on their thematic similarity in order to identify salient topics in the corpus, a procedure adopted from Baker et al. (2013). Baker (2014) suggests checking the concordance lines can help improve the accuracy of the categorisations, and that the researcher should decide on how to categorise words that fit into more than one category. It is important to note here that assigning the thematic categories manually might be criticised for being subjective and time consuming (Taylor and Marchi, 2018: 115). However, in the current corpus, these thematic categories were, in fact, topics and aspects that were developed after carefully and repeatedly studying the keyword list. As a result, tentative generalisations were inferred from specific observations. This means that, instead of using automated tools such as Wmatrix, manually placing keywords into categories involved greater attention to detail, as appropriate to the specific topic.

Prior to categorising the keywords thematically, it is necessary to examine them within their respective contexts and consider the surrounding linguistic context (cotext) of

each keyword. This is carried out by looking at the concordances in which they appear to determine their meanings, even when they seem obvious. For instance, in the current study, the word *Black* could refer to Black people, as opposed to White or Brown. An analysis of the concordances in which *Black* appeared showed that the word referred more often to *Black Friday* or *Black Jesus*, a character who appeared in two sketches. Using concordance analysis, I examined the meaning conveyed by each keyword within the texts in which they appeared. I then categorised these keywords and assigned names to these categories based on their specific contextual meanings. Table 1 below displays the keywords per category. Each category contains the thematic foci keywords that helped to identify the thematic categories. Taking into consideration that the corpus is built around the subject of 'Muslim' and Islam, the keywords tabulated in Table 5.1 below can give insights into the discourses discussed in *SNL* when MIM are involved.

Thematic Categories	Keywords
COUNTRIES/NATIONALITIES/ PLACES	*America, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Pakistan Afghanistan, Libya, Iran, Israel, Iraq, China, Egypt, Mexico, Jordan, Australia*
	Pakistani, Syrian, Americans
	Customs, airport
WAR/CONFLICT/VIOLENCE	*attack, terrorist, kill, dangerous, attack, gun, threat, armed, bomb, military, drones, enemies*
ISLAMIC RELIGION	*Muslim, Islam, Muslims, Islamic, religion, Mohammad, prophet, mosque, Quran, hijab, Allah*
POLITICAL FIGURES	*Trump, ISIS, Obama, Hilary, Putin, Osama, Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Ghaddafi*
DIFFERENTIATING ATTRIBUTES	*refugee, immigrant, brown, Jewish, Jew, Christian*
HATRED	*racist, hate, racism, anti, Islamophobia*

RESTRICTION	*ban, wall, security, block, allow, freedom*
RELIGIOUS SPECTRUM	*radical, conservative, Infidel*

Table 5.1: Key thematic categories in the *SNL* corpus compared to OANC.

The thematic categories in Table 1 above are arranged in descending order based on the number of keywords in each category. Within each category, the keywords are listed in order of frequency, with the most frequent ones appearing first. The next section examines each thematic category based on a close reading of the concordance lines.

5.3 Describing the Thematic Categories

5.3.1 COUNTRIES, NATIONALITIES and PLACES

COUNTRIES, NATIONALITIES and PLACES is considered the largest category in the *SNL* corpus. As mentioned before, *SNL* follows news and trends observed in mainstream press coverage from 2008 to 2020, including news around MIM. This category confirms expectations of where MIM reporting is most frequent. Findings in Table 5.1 indicate that, out of the keywords in this category, only eight Muslim-majority countries where Muslim people form at least 50% of the population (Pew, 2019) are at the top of the list. In fact, the reporting in *SNL* was largely restricted to only eight out of 49 Muslim-majority countries, namely *Syria*, *Pakistan*, *Saudi Arabia*, *Afghanistan*, *Egypt*, *Iran*, *Iraq* and *Jordan*. In terms of frequency, countries, such as *Saudi Arabia* (freq. 15) and *Syria* (freq. 10)*,* have higher frequency figures in the *SNL* corpus due to their relevance with conflict-ridden issues, whereas *Jordan* (freq. 3) has lower figures. One can assume that the fact *Jordan* ranks behind these countries not only suggests low coverage but may also be an indication of prototypical 'Muslimness' being made relevant and explicit in some contexts, such as *Syria* and *Saudi Arabia*, rather than others, such as *Jordan*.

The rest of the keywords include Muslim-minority countries that are involved in or related to noticeable events happening around Muslim people or Islam, namely *America* and *Israel*. It is worth noting that *America* (freq. 52) received significantly more coverage in *SNL* sketches because *SNL* is an American show and naturally

devotes much of its segments to American politics and local events. In the *SNL* corpus, some of these sketches are more centred on highlighting the role *America* plays in issues that are related to MIM, such as America's involvement in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, Obama's ISIS policy and Trump's travel ban on seven Muslim-majority countries.

A quick scan over the concordance lines shows that most of the keywords in this category are from the 'Weekend Update' segment, which is a fictional news programme that satirically discusses the news and topical events. Some keywords refer to the discussion of issues and events happening in non-Muslim-majority countries, for instance, the US-China Trade War, Trump's Colorado wall and the call between the Australian prime minister and Trump. The concordance analysis for *Australia*, *Mexico* and *China,* revealed that their use in the *SNL* corpus is not linked to any particular event that is relevant to MIM. In fact, they simply reflect stories told by guests/characters or other newsworthy events. In the Concordance 5.1, I show some examples of the some of the above discussed keywords.

	Concordance
1	America is a nation of immigrants. But once we get here, we get really suspicious of any new immigrants
2	Trump formally recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel this week and you're not going to believe this, but the Jews and Muslims had different reactions.
3	This week President Trump has escalated his trade war with China. It's estimated that this will cost the country 1.4 trillion dollars in market value.
4	I actually heard that Trump say this week he might completely close the border with Mexico

Concordance 5.1: Concordance lines of the words *America, Jerusalem, China,* and *Mexico*

Other concordance lines, however, indicate *SNL* responding to conflict and wars in some countries in the Middle East, reflected particularly in the show's comedic skits and segments. The December 2010 uprising in Tunisia marked the beginning of a perceived new political era in the Middle East. The uprisings quickly spread to countries like *Egypt*, *Libya*, *Yemen*, *Syria*, and *Iraq*, among others. Each country's uprising had its unique characteristics and triggers, but they were united by a shared

desire for political reform, social justice, and greater freedoms. *Iraq*, in particular, was affected, due to the country's involvement in conflict and instability which can be traced back to the 2003 invasion by a United States-led coalition. *Afghanistan* was found in reference to 'Al-Qaeda' and the 'war on terror' that America launched after 9/11, whereas *Iran* was found to refer to the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the Iranian regime. *Pakistan* and *Pakistani* were found in sketches hosted by Pakistani American comedians or reporting the arrest of the Pakistani-born US citizen, Faisal Shahzad, who was responsible for the attempted Times Square bombing in 2010. *Palestine* and *Israel* keywords referred to the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict, as well as Trump recognising *Jerusalem* as the capital of Israel. The keyword *Saudi Arabia* reflected concerns related to treatment of women under 'conservative' laws and the assassination of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Reviewing the concordance lines, I first observed that the most prominent thematic foci for many keywords appears to be based on negatively representing the locations where people who are considered 'Muslims' reside, as shown in Concordance 5.2 below.

	Concordance
5	Mr President, how could you be worse at social media than a band of terrorists in the desert in Syria.
6	The US Consulate at Benghazi, Libya was overrun by Islamic militants. It led to the death of Ambassador Jay Christopher Stevens and three others.
7	While it does appear that several of the September 11th hijackers were Muslim, believe me, I wasn't even aware until somebody mentioned it the other day, that Islam is popular in Afghanistan as well.
8	if someone was like, "go back to Pakistan, which was part of India until 1947, and is now home to the world's oldest salt mine!" I would be like, "that guy seems to know what he's talking about. I'll pack my bags."
9	Some conservative Muslim scholars in Saudi Arabia are concerned that if women are allowed to drive in their country that in ten years there will be no more virgins in the kingdom.

Concordance 5.2: Concordance lines of the words *Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistani* and *Saudi Arabia*

As for *Airport* and *customs,* they are found to mostly refer to sketches discussing the discrimination that Muslim people sometimes experience at airports, customs and immigrations desks. According to Michael (2011: 123), being a Muslim in the American imagination is often defined by the hijacking of planes, threatening the security of the nation and, in the case of 9/11, using planes as terrorist weapons. In fact, there has been an increase in discrimination against Muslim people in America, especially in the public sphere as a result of such associations. Bilici (2010: 198) maintains that the negative association attributed to looking or acting 'Muslim' is at its most apparent in airports around the world, particularly in the context of public screenings to protect travellers' safety. This negative relevance was intensified by Trump's proposal to ban people from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the US. Some sketches in *SNL* humorously reflect the experiences of Muslim people at airports or customs desk to account for the stereotypical attitudes related to security and safety.

	Concordance
10	New 'chat-down' security programme is being tested at Boston Logan airport in which TSA agents try to screen out possible terrorists by talking to travellers and asking questions such as 'where you are going?' and 'how long are you staying?' then they simply arrest anyone who answers 'to be with Allah for all eternity'
11	Narrator: you can now approach the customs desk. When you reach the custom officer, she will ask you a series of questions, such as: what is the purpose of your visit? visitor: I'm here to see my mother she is a … narrator: (interrupting): terrorist

Concordance 5.3: Concordance lines of the words *airport* and *customs*

The above concordance lines 5.2 and 5.3, show that these keywords are associated with recognisable topics related to terrorism, violence and conservatism, which are recursively recontextualised in media discourse about MIM. The use of words such as 'terrorists' in line 5 and 11, 'militants' in line 6 and 'hijackers' in line 7 suggest negative evaluative connotations. Still, ambivalence in *SNL*'s humorous statements is important to consider when analysing the negative themes around MIM that are used in the show. This is especially important since some of the sketches seem to employ recognisable themes but develop, or seek to develop, a reverse semantic

effect. Therefore, an in-depth qualitative analysis in later chapters that accounts for the polysemy inherent in these humorous texts is necessary.

5.3.2 WAR, CONFLICT and VIOLENCE

The second largest key thematic category in the *SNL* corpus is WAR, CONFLICT and VIOLENCE. The prominence of this category suggests that MIM are associated with conflict and violent contexts in the *SNL* corpus. Many keywords in this category actually emerge from the same context as the GEOGRAPHY, COUNTRIES AND NATIONALITIES category and indicate topics that intersect with the previously identified topics. As mentioned, major events involving MIM have taken place over the last ten years, mostly revolving around issues of war, conflict and violence, such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Arab spring, ISIS conflict, the Iranian regime, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and Syrian immigration.

The concordance lines of the keyword *terrorist* show that MIM are linked to either certain attacks or certain groups that are considered terrorists. In the former case, MIM are represented or mentioned in sketches that refer to 9/11, the attempted Times Square bombing and The Bowling Green massacre, which is a fictitious incident of terrorism. In the latter case, MIM are connected to terrorist-categorised groups, such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda and Boko Haram, as well as fictional terrorist characters. Concordance 5.4 shows some lines of the contextual environment of this keyword.

	Concordance
1	On Monday federal agents investigating the attempted Times Square bombing arrested Pakistani born US citizen Faisal Shahzad better known by his terrorist nickname Mohammad Al-Corey Feldman.
2	Finally, Mr President, you made the point that the terrorist group ISIS and the Islamic faith are in no way connected, do you still believe that?
3	So, I'm here to make another exclusive bombshell announcement. I have it on good authority from an African national that I met at a Rainforest Cafe that President Obama has been texting with some of the world's top terrorists including Abu Nazir, Jafar and the Riddler.

Concordance 5.4: Concordance lines of the word *terrorist*

The keywords *dangerous* and *enemies* refer to discussions related to the 9/11 attacks and Trump's travel ban. These discussions are found in sketches that parody Bush's statements post-9/11 and satirise Trump's decision to ban travelling from seven Muslim-majority countries. The concordance lines, shown in Concordance 5.5 below, for the keywords *dangerous* and *enemies* present the contexts with which the keywords are associated. It appears that both are mentioned in lines referring to 9/11 attacks, the Syrian refugee crisis and Trump's Muslim ban. In these lines, Muslim people are described as *enemies* or *dangerous* agents* or *dangerous* people*, embroiled in conflict and violence. It is interesting to note that in Concordance 5.5 below, the pronoun we* (line 2) is considered a prototypical exponent of the speaker-group, as opposed to the distance-establishing they*. In the same vein, the keyword *enemies* in line 6 is pre-modified with the possessive pronoun our*, which indicates a polarisation of us (Americans) against them (Radical Muslim terrorists).

	Concordance
4	At a rally in South Carolina, Donald Trump called for a total and complete ban on Muslims entering the US. Ben Carson agreed and said 'Muslims are dangerous agents of evil who speak in unintelligible language and are yellow with blue pairs and goggles' and he's definitely thinking of Minions.
5	But Mrs Schultz they are dangerous people. It's not that we are not companionate, we just wanna be safe.
6	Our enemies are a network of radical terrorists." And everyone applauded.

Concordance 5.5: Concordance lines of the words *dangerous* and *enemies*

The lines in Concordance 5.6 below suggest that the rest of the keywords in this category seem to again associate MIM with topics of criminal activity, terrorism and violence. This might indicate that the *SNL* discourse around MIM is marked by a negative evaluation, relating them to terrorism, violence and criminality. Keywords indicating violence or hostility, such as *attack*, *threat, bomb* and *gun*, consistently emerge in concordances associated with instances mentioning violent particularly when Muslim people are targeted or held accountable. Almost all the keywords in this category convey problematic and negative experiences.

	Concordance
7	American infidels, soon I will launch an attack on the Great Satan. Also, Drones, your dance moves are crap. The 90s called: they want their moves back.
8	There's 1.7 billion Muslims in this world. If you think 1.7 billion people are actively trying to kill you, maybe you're a little radical. Also, how are we even supposed to find these terrorists if the only thing we know about them is that they're one of almost two billion people. I mean there's two billion people that drink alcohol and alcohol kills like 1000 times more people than radical Islam.
9	I think one interesting thing right now is how much we're learning about government and the world from Trump. We're learning which <u>Muslim</u> countries are a threat and which <u>Muslim</u> countries have Trump hotels.
10	Hafar opens his shirt, a bomb strapped to his chest. He says, "Let's meet <u>Allah</u> together!" I smirk — of course — "Love to… but I have other plans!"

Concordance 5.6: Concordance lines of the words *attack, kill, threat* and *bomb*

5.3.3 ISLAMIC RELIGION

The predominance of ISLAMIC RELIGION as a topic in the *SNL* corpus is unsurprising since the corpus was built around the subject of 'Muslim' and 'Islam'. Religion itself seems to be a prominent topic in *SNL* reporting. These terms are focused on Islam and the social construction of Muslim identity. The keywords in this category reflect both identity (*Islam, Muslim, Islamic*) and religious practices (*Mosque, hijab, Quran*). Examining the lines of *Islam*, as presented in Concordance 5.7 below, suggests that the term is framed within the oppositional binary: violent vs. peaceful. In the *SNL* corpus, there are sketches portraying Islam as a violent religion that is intertwined with discourses of terrorism and criminality. These sketches either include characters that belong to terrorist organisations or a Trump impersonator. Other sketches, on the other hand, feature American-Muslim comedians who discuss their frustration over the representation of MIM as terrorist or violent in the media, showcasing a resistance discourse to the discourse of violence and constructing an alternative depiction of Islam as a peaceful religion. These two opposite views show that different voices exist in *SNL* and raise points that merit further investigation in the next chapters to explore how such intersecting binary can be understood.

	Concordance
1	What is radical Islam? That's too subjective of a term. I have a Muslim friend; he doesn't eat pork and doesn't have sex with White women. Now, to me that's mad radical. But he's not a terrorist.
2	Now just a few years later, ISIS small hateful perversion of Islam has grown into a multinational brand.
3	You know the God in Islam is the same God that was revealed to Abraham. Judaism, Christianity, same God. But people are scared. Why?

Concordance 5.7: Concordance lines of the word *Islam*

The term Islamic is another important keyword in the *SNL* corpus. When analysing media attitudes towards MIM in British media, Baker et al. (2013) revealed that Islamic tended to collocate with groups or concepts referring to extremism and violence, such as militant, fundamentalist and radical. They also found a tendency in these collocates to refer to organised groups that are military, extreme and illegal, to states and to political entities, such as parties. In the *SNL* corpus, the term Islamic, as the collocation analysis in Table 5.2 shows, is also used as a premodifier for nouns, such as state*, militant* and terrorist*. In other instances, the term is used in reference to the Islamic call of prayer, the Islamic faith and the Islamic law. Even in these instances, the term circulates in the same semantic space offered by the mainstream media.

Collocation	Score[4]
Call	12.41
State	12.41
Faith	11.83
Militant	11.83
Law	11.67
Terrorist	11.19

Table 5.2: Top collocates of Islamic

The word sketch analysis for the keyword *Muslim*, as shown in Table 3*,* reveals that the term is mostly used in its attributive adjectival form in the corpus, and it collocates

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[4] Sketch Engine uses logDice statistic measure for identifying the collocations that appear together. It expresses the strength of the collocation between the two words (the shorter the link, the stronger the collocation).

with a subset of nouns that can reveal different semantic meaning. These nouns provide indications to topics such as collective entity (country*, nation* group* and people*), politics (ban*, congresswoman*, immigrant*), religion (scholar*, cleric*), society and culture (women*, family*, brother*) and violence (terrorist*).

Collocation	Score
Country	11.8
Ban	11.24
Women	10.62
Scholar	10.75
Family	10.75
Congresswoman	9.83
Student	9.83
Cleric	9.80
Brother	9.71
Nation	9.71
Immigrant	9.67
Character	9.67
Terrorist	9.64
Group	9.41
People	8.55

Table 5.3: Top noun collocates of adjective *Muslim*

Moreover, *Muslim* as an adjective is found to collocate with premodifiers that distinguish Muslim people on the spectrum between somewhat 'moderate' and somewhat 'extremist', as shown in Table 5.4 below. It is worth noting that the terms *radical* and *conservative* appear on the keywords list, whereas the term moderate* is not a keyword and is rarely mentioned in the *SNL* corpus. This could indicate that Muslim people who are considered 'moderate' receive far less attention in *SNL* than those on the negative end of that spectrum like radical, extremist, and conservative.

Collocation	Score
Radical	12.68
Conservative	11.99
Extremist	11.18
Moderate	11.12
Proud	11.12
Other	11.12

Table 5.4: Top premodifiers of adjective *Muslim*

The rest of the keywords in this category include *prophet, Mohammad, Quran, mosque, Allah* and *hijab. Prophet* and *Mohammad* are found in reference to the cartoons' controversy in which *Mohammad*, a principal figure of the religion of Islam, was depicted in a series of satirical cartoons. The cartoons triggered hostile reactions condemning the artists and the publishers. Such reactions created a great deal of controversy over self-censorship, freedom of speech and accusations of religious incitement. Moreover, the category contains words, such as *mosque* and *Quran*, which both refer to deity and acts of worship. One might expect that *mosque* would primarily refer to the performance of religious rituals within a mosque. However, in the majority of sketches, *mosque* was used to refer to the physical building and its amenities. On the other hand, the keywords *Allah,* the Arabic term for God, and *hijab* are both used by fictional Muslim characters in *SNL* sketches as a sign of their Muslimness.

5.3.4 POLITICAL FIGURES

This category contains names of POLITICAL FIGURES, namely countries' leaders and political groups. *SNL* is known for its political skits that offer comedic commentary on national and international political and cultural/social matters. In some of these sketches, the cast impersonates politicians and presidents, such as Bush, Obama and Trump. Therefore, it is not surprising to find names of countries' leaders and other political figures topping the keywords list. In fact, some of the names in this category are directly related to issues linked to Muslim people and Islam (travel ban, immigration law in the US, ISIS conflict, civil wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria). After reviewing the concordance lines, it appears that some of the political figures are not relevant to Muslim people or Islam in the majority of occurrences. For instance, *Putin* and *Hilary* seem to reflect a focus on the US election, especially during the 2016 presidential race. In addition, the former Libyan leader, *Gaddafi,* who ruled the country for over 40 years until he was ousted by a revolt in 2011 became the subject of ridicule in *SNL* due to his actions and speeches during the uprising in Libya. Other political figures like *Obama* and *Trump*, however, did play roles which directly or indirectly influenced the political discourses around Muslim people or Islam in America.

The keyword *Trump* tops the list due to the fact that *SNL* frequently focuses its comedic aim at political targets, including every US president (Sciarra, 2012). Still, in

the Trump era, the topic of MIM has been discussed in many debates since Trump announced his candidature for the presidency. Starting from the 2016 presidential race, then-candidate Trump suggested closing down mosques in the US and claimed in an interview in March 2016 with CNN's Anderson Cooper that "we (Americans) are not loved by many Muslims". He also proposed that the federal government creates a database to track Muslim people living in America. Once he was elected, his anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric became official policy (The Washington Post, 2017). He also made other comments regarding hatred and Islamic extremism. Comments and decisions about MIM made by Trump provided materials for *SNL* writers to deliver their satirical political commentary, as the lines in Concordance 5.8 show.

	Concordance
1	This week Donald Trump said he would implement a database system to track all Muslims in the United States, which is absurd because there is simply no way that we as Americans don't already have that.
2	Trump says the ban is to prevent radical Islamic terrorists in America. But first of all, what is radical Islam? That's too subjective of a term.
3	Donald Trump has doubled down on his proposal to ban all Muslims from entering America. And some have criticized the other GOP candidates for not condemning his comments more strongly.

Concordance 5.8: Concordance lines of the word *Trump*

As for *ISIS,* the keyword refers to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The group, who thrives on extremist ideologies and violence, became known widely as the militants seized large parts of Syria and Iraq (Hogeback, 2018). The group's main objective is to establish a state governed in accordance with Islam's legal system—Sharia—that extends across the Islamic world. They justify their attacks on Muslim people and non-Muslim people alike by drawing on extreme interpretations of Islamic texts (BBC, 2019). In the *SNL* corpus, several sketches, advertisement parodies and 'Weekend Update' news satirised the group's ideas and practices. ISIS was also mentioned in the context of 'the global war on terror' led by the US military, as shown in Concordance 5.9 below.

	Concordance
4	You know I heard the refugees are all ISIS in disguise. That's true! I actually saw an ISIS at the A&B today when I was picking up the yams.
5	For example, did you know that the first 'I' in ISIS stands for Islamic. I mean who knew!!
6	tell me Mr President, do you think you underestimated the threat of ISIS.

Concordance 5.9: Concordance lines of the word *ISIS*

Obama is also found as a keyword due to several reasons. During the 2008 presidential election, Barack Obama, a professed Christian, found himself fighting rumours, spread by different Internet websites and some political rivals, that he was secretly a Muslim man because of his Arabic middle name, Hussein. Consequently, his rivals in the Republican party, John McCain and Sarah Palin, accused him of being friends with terrorists (The Washington Post, 2016). Obama repeatedly denied the rumours and tried to distance himself from controversial comments by engaging more with his Christian church (Kumar, 2012). Once in the Oval Office, Obama announced his plan and strategy for taking on the Islamic State militant group (ISIS) and declared that a war against ISIS is a fight against terrorism and not "between America and Islam" (The Washington Post, 2016). The concordance lines for this keyword show *SNL* engaging in the aforementioned topics and offering critical insights that enrich political discussions. In addition, there are lines that refer to a Trump impersonator who points out the problems with Obama's immigration policy, his connection with ISIS and his involvement in the civil war in Syria. The lines in concordance 5.10 show some examples for the keyword *Obama*.

	Concordance
7	President Obama defended the need for the US to maintain a close alliance with Saudi Arabia despite the country's poor human rights record.
8	MLK' GHOST: Barack Obama! I don't know, sounds like a Kenyan Muslim.
9	President Obama urged Muslim countries to join in the fight. Obama so desperate he started using his middle name again.

Concordance 5.10: Concordance lines of the word *Obama*

The rest of the keywords in this category includes *Osama* and *Boko Haram*. The keyword *Osama* is used in reference to the death of Osama bin Laden, founder and leader of the militant terrorist organisation *Al-Qaeda*. This organisation has been engaged in numerous terrorist attacks, including the 9/11 attacks that were purportedly carried out in the name of Islam. *Boko Haram* is another terrorist organisation based in Nigeria that promotes a version of Islam which makes it 'haram', or forbidden, for Muslim people to participate in any political or social activity associated with Western society. The group is found in sketches satirising their decision to join forces with ISIS. Both *Al-Qaeda* and *Boko Haram* embrace violent extremist beliefs that support acts of targeted violence and incorporate elements of the strict theology of Salafi fundamentalism into their radical political ideologies. The lines in concordance 5.11 show some examples for the keywords *Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda* and *Osama bin Laden*.

	Concordance
10	It was reported today that Boko Haram has joined forces with the terrorists group ISIS.
11	CIA drones on Friday killed Anwar al-Awlaki an American born Muslim cleric who's connected to several Al-Qaeda plots including the failed Time Square bomber and the failed Christmas day underwear bomber. Uf.. when those are your greatest hits, I bit they knock it down to like ten versions.
12	Earlier today, the Pentagon released a taped seized in Sunday's raid on Pakistan. According to video, Osama bin Laden's last will and testament.

Concordance 5.11: Concordance lines of the words *Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda* and *Osama bin Laden*

5.3.5 DIFFERENTIATING ATTRIBUTES

This category includes keywords that are considered as attributes of social group membership, such as race and religion. Such attributes are typically particularistic and ascribed to label certain people by identifying or defining qualities. Although the keywords *refugee* and *immigrant* are not usually considered as attributes of a specific social group, they are included in this category because the concordance lines show that both keywords are mostly used in the *SNL* corpus as labels assigned to people

who belong to a certain religion, namely Islam. The concordance lines also suggest that *refugee* and *immigrant* are constructed as a threat to the identities and security of the American society. Most of these lines discuss the Syrian conflict and refer to the ongoing civil war which has led to the internal displacement of 5.6 million people (unhcr.org, 2019). During his election campaign and presidency, Trump portrayed the US as a country that was filled with refugees and immigrants from all over the world, including Muslims. Drawing upon the dichotomous self-other binary, he argued that "Islam hates us", targeting Muslim-Americans as extremists and terrorists (Schleifer, 2016). On many occasions, Trump also discussed the problems and issues troubling Americans, including counterterrorism, while portraying innocent white Americans as having been neglected for so many years due to the influx of immigrants. Such discourse further constructs immigrants as a criminally inclined out-group, especially Muslims, in order to exclude them. This is consistent with literature in which refugees and immigrants are constructed as a threat to national security, displaying a tendency to assert dominance rather than integrate into Western culture (Wodak and Matouschek, 1993; Baker et al., 2013). In several sketches, *SNL* joined the ongoing debate surrounding whether the US should continue taking in Syrian refugees. Most of these sketches were aimed at satirising *Fox News*, Trump and other Republican candidates for their inflammatory comments on the Syrian refugee situation. Such sketches have the potential to demonstrate a rejection of the negative construction of Muslim refugees and immigrants. The lines in concordance 5.12 show some examples for the keywords *refugee* and *immigrant*.

	Concordance
1	Now Dr, you yourself, you've said we should carefully screen the big wave of refugees coming into this country. Do you have a plan that would separate Muslims from Christian refugees?
2	that's right. Look at this footage we at Fox have just obtained of a crazed mob of Syrian refugees fledging over our borders into this country
3	America is a nation of immigrants. But once we get here, we get really suspicious of any new immigrants.
4	this is a Muslim immigrant from Syria. She was allowed to come to America. And she discovered a permanent solution for hair loss.

Concordance 5.12: Concordance lines of the words *refugee* and *immigrant*

As for the keywords *Jew* and *Jewish*, some of the lines in the concordance analysis show that they are used in reference to Trump's Orthodox Jewish daughter and son-in-law and the White House statement on Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2017 which failed to mention Jews or anti-Semitism. On these occurrences, it appears that there is no link between Muslim people and Jewish people. Nonetheless, in the analysis of concordances where *Muslim* appears with *Jew* or *Jewish*, there seems to be an emphasis on distinguishing between the two groups. For example, the 'Weekend Update' segment reports on Trump formally recognising Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the different reactions of the Jews and Muslims. In the segment, the anchor mentions the phone call between Trump and the Palestinian president in which Abbas warned Trump that the move will result in 'dangerous' consequences. The distinction between Muslims and Jews is also found in a sketch featuring Trump's impersonator wishing the Jews happy Hanukah and asking the Muslims to 'send' him their names as he delivers his holiday naughty and nice lists. In a different sketch, *SNL* mocks Republicans for their unconditional support of Trump, even as the president's actions conflict with their own political beliefs. In a parody of *Meet the Press,* the moderator tries to come up with anything that would make his guests (impersonators of the Republican Party and its leaders) stop supporting Trump. They discuss hypothetical situations including the president becoming Jewish or Muslim. While the guests' reaction to Trump hypothetically becoming Jewish is "even better, that's great for Israel", they balked at the suggestion that Trump is a Muslim but conceded that it would be fine as long as they still got their tax cuts.

The concordance lines for the keyword *Christian* show the term is found mostly in relation to the debate on whether more restrictions should be placed on Syrian refugees entering the country. The discussions around this topic started after the November 2015 Paris attacks by Muslim radicals with GOP candidates and governors demanding Obama to block Syrian refugees from entering the country because they might be potential terrorists. Some even suggested having a religious test for refugees seeking asylum in the US. In several sketches, *SNL* tackled this issue by parodying *Fox & Friends* and GOP members, such as Ted Cruz and Ben Carson, mocking their comments and reactions towards the Syrian refugee crisis.

The keyword *brown* is used in the corpus as a distinctive characteristic for people who are categorised as Muslims. The concordance analysis of this keywords reveals that the term is used in instances discussing the misrepresentations of brown-skinned people who are often viewed as threatening Muslims. In one of the monologues, the host discusses the victimisation and discrimination described by a Sikh, wrongly identified as Muslim and blamed for terrorism. The comedian mentions the irony of Sikhs getting attacked because they are mistaken for being Muslims and how this puts them in a strange dilemma. He brings up how difficult it must be for Sikh people to be victims of Islamophobia because they have brown skin and wear turbans. This, according to him, puts the Sikhs in the awkward position of having to simultaneously say that they are not Muslims, as both consumers of Islamophobic discourse, which would seem to confirm the negative image of the Muslim people. The lines in concordance 5.13 show some examples for the keyword *brown*.

	Concordance
1	President Trump introduced his revised travel plan this week though it's probably not great, that it's just a bunch of brown colour swatches.
2	I think part of the problem is a lot of these people, they just haven't interacted with any brown people in their normal life. The only people they see are these monsters in the news who are just a drop in the ocean.
3	Sikh people get attacked all the time for being Muslim. Spoiler alert: they're not. But they're brown and they wear turbans.

Concordance 5.13: Concordance lines of the word *brown*

5.3.6 HATRED

This category contains keywords that refer to *SNL* engagement in pressing issues around *racism*, *Islamophobia* and *hate* crime. The keywords *racism* and *racist* are found in instances tackling issues related to racial inequality and structural racism in America. The concordance lines for these two keywords show that the texts tend to directly use concepts of racism and discrimination against people who are categorised as minorities. For instance, in Season 42, the comedian, Louis C.K., talks about implicit racial bias in his monologue, explaining it as a product of the environment in which he grew up. In Season 43, the Muslim American comedian Kumail Nanjian discusses the disturbing cultural trends tied to the racism that he

experienced first-hand when he moved to America. The topic of racism is also found in the show's 'Weekend Update' segment. In these instances, the anchors comically address systematic racism in America, as well as Trump's racist remarks towards Muslim people and other minority groups. In doing so, *SNL* offers a critique of racist structures through the use of satire and parody.

Similarly, the keyword *hate* reflects issues related to hateful speeches against minorities and brings to bear on the problem of racist hate crimes. Studies show that blatant hostility toward Muslim people has arguably worsened since the presidential election in 2016 (Lajevardi and Oskooii, 2018). In addition to Trump's numerous provocative anti-Muslim remarks, other Republican candidates like Ben Carson and Mike Huckabee have likened Muslim people and Muslim refugees to "rabid dogs" and "uncorked animals" (Lajevardi and Oskooii, 2018: 120). After Trump's election, Steve King, a Republican congressman, argued that America's civilisation cannot be 'restored' because of the immigration involving Muslim children. Such rhetoric against Muslim people has thus far fuelled the appeal of Islamophobia and the hate crimes it spawns. Using their platform, *SNL* brings common issues out in the open, seemingly aiming to challenge the common negative social norms. In other instances, however, the term *hate* is used by characters impersonating *Fox News* anchors or some members of the Republican Party who support Trump and condemn people for waging a campaign of '*hatred;*' against him.

The term *Islamophobia* can highlight the broad range of prejudices, discrimination, racism and hatred towards Islam and Muslims by non-Muslims (Drabu, 2018). These prejudices are apparent at both public and political leadership levels, as well as other facets of the US. In that, the US politics has aggravated the negative stereotyping of MIM and the media is an important factor in this opinion-shaping (Kassimeris and Jackson, 2011). Numerous studies and research have highlighted the prevalence of negative representations and stereotypes in media coverage, contributing to the propagation of Islamophobia (Alazzany, 2008; Bowe and Makki, 2016; Ahmed and Matthes, 2017; Khan et al., 2019).

Such portrayals not only misrepresent the vast majority of Muslim people but also contribute to the stigmatisation and marginalisation of the entire Muslim community. While portraying Muslim people follow some of the trends established by mainstream

media, *SNL* also offers another portrayal, depicting them with a more diverse picture: they are not always perpetrators of violence; they are sometimes victims of it. The concordance lines for the keyword *Islamophobia* show that some *SNL* Muslim comedians have tackled issues related to Islamophobia, especially during Trump's candidacy and presidency. Concordance 5.14 below shows some lines of the words *racism, Islamophobia* and *hate*.

	Concordance
1	Here's my problem with most racism: it's the inaccuracy. That's what bugs me. I'm like, "Do the research! Put in the work! You will see the benefits!"
2	I don't believe that Donald Trump is racist. I think he is just pandering to the most prejudice segment of the country.
3	Islamophobia is really on the rise right now. It never really went away but it's really having a moment right now. Islamophobia is kinda like Will and Grace, you know, where it was huge a while ago and we thought it was gone and done and now it's back and bigger than ever!
4	Hate crimes and stuff are on the rise. You know, as far as people in my own skin tone, brown people.

Concordance 5.14: Concordance lines of the words *racism, Islamophobia* and *hate*

5.3.7 RESTRICTION

This category contains keywords that are mostly related to contexts in which MIM is viewed as a 'security risk' in the US. Several studies have found the news discourse on MIM to be dominated by terrorism and concerns about security (Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins, 2002; Ismail, 2010; Kabgani, 2013). In fact, studies consistently reveal a troubling pattern: during times of perceived national identity and security threats, discrimination and marginalisation against Muslim individuals tend to intensify. This phenomenon can be observed across various domains, including government policies, public discourse, social interactions, and institutional practices (Esses et al., 2013; Khan and Umbreen, 2022). Policies of this nature have the potential to impact and shape dominant perceptions of the connection between MIM and terrorism (Haw, 2018). Consequently, they can contribute to the predictable portrayal of Islam as inherently violent, which reinforces and normalises prejudiced and discriminatory attitudes towards MIM.

In this regard, *SNL* has dedicated many sketches to tackling this issue and mocking Trump's administration and its policies. Restrictions criticised in the *SNL* corpus relate mostly to issues specific to Trump's policies that portray Muslim people as posing a threat to the identities and security of the US. The keywords *ban, block* and *allow* relate to Trump's travel ban on seven Muslim-majority countries. Security concerns have the potential to link Muslim people with terrorism and security threats. In some instances, the keyword *allow* collocated with not* and was, therefore referring, to restriction more often than it was to permission. The lines in Concordance 5.15 below show some examples for these keywords.

	Concordance
1	But you don't think we should block Muslims from entering?
2	My god, it's all real. If there's no Muslim ban, what about a potential terrorist attack?
3	And with millions fleeing from ISIS there's been plenty of debate whether the US should allow any refugees in from Syria.

Concordance 5.15: Concordance lines of the words *block, ban* and *allow*

5.3.8 RELIGIOUS SPECTRUM

The RELIGIOUS SPECTRUM category includes terms that are considered attributive modifiers of Muslim people, with the exception of *infidel*. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term *infidel* refers to a person who does not believe in religion or who adheres to a religion other than one's own. Shaheen (2012: 155) argues that the term is mostly used in American movies and TV shows by 'Muslim' characters who are portrayed as terrorists whose only function in life is to kill the '*infidel*' Americans and their allies. Consequently, this may forge a link between terrorism and Islamic ideology, thus reflexively reinforcing the Muslim-terrorist narrative. The concordance lines for the keyword *infidel* show that the term is used in sketches featuring terrorist characters who are considered Muslims. In these sketches, the characters mostly threaten to attack or kill 'American *infidels'*. Consequently, such term seems to be catering to the existing profile of a 'typical' perpetrator of terrorism.

The concordance analysis for the keyword *radical* shows that the term is related to Islam or Muslim people in most of the occurrences. Examining the contexts of the

term, there were contexts where the term is associated with negative connotations of Muslim people. In those contexts, 'radical Muslims' are represented as those who pose a national threat to the US. In fact, 'radical Islam' and 'radical Muslims' are considered one of the most prevalent themes in studies investigating the representation of Islam and Muslim people in the media (Arif and Ahmad, 2016; Bowe et al., 2013; Trevino et al., 2010). Findings in these studies show that 'radical' Islam and Muslims is generally associated with violence, extremist militants and a threat to the lives of innocent people. Framing the issue of terrorism in association with Islam in its radical form creates an alternate construct of Muslim subjectivity. McEnery et al. (2006: 107) maintain that the meaning of a word can be influenced by its frequent associations with other words, creating a repetitive pattern of representation or context. This pattern can result in the node word carrying evaluative meanings, even when it is used with different associated words or in different contexts.

The word sketch analysis for the term *radical* reveals that it mostly collocates with nouns, such as Islam*, terrorist*, moose-lamb*, Muslims* and group* as shown in Table 5.5 below. All of the collocates are found in contexts that indicate negative connotations. The collocate moose-lamb* is unique. The collocate is found in a sketch featuring Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary during Trump's presidency, who tries to explain and defend Trump's Muslim ban with props during a press meeting by holding up two stuffed animals—a moose and a lamb—to illustrate the dangers of letting refugees enter the country because they can be 'radical moose-lambs'. It could, at first glance, be identified as a creative wordplay. However, in the context of immigration, the representation of immigrants as animals has a contextually salient metaphorical meaning (Greenslade, 2005; Musolff, 2006; El Refaie, 2009; Ibrahim and Howarth, 2015), according to which immigrants are perceived as animals.

Collocation	Score
Islam	12.41
terrorist	12.09
moose-lamb	11.67
Muslims	11.54
group	10.54

Table 5.5: Top noun collocates of adjective *radical*

The final keyword in the RELIGIOUS SPECTRUM category relates to conservativism, which is usually represented as a patriarchal ideology that considers women to have less rights than men. The concordance lines reveal that the keyword *conservative* is used in contexts discussing women issues in Saudi Arabia, such as driving and face-covers. The concordance lines, presented in Concordance 5.16 below, show that the word is found in the 'Weekend Update' segment where anchors mock conservative clerics in Saudi Arabia asking women to cover their faces or expressing their fear of women's right to drive.

	Concordance
1	conservative leaders in Saudi Arabia are warning women with "tempting eyes" that they must cover them up or face punishment — a warning that doesn't really concern Salimah.
2	some conservative Muslim scholars in Saudi Arabia are concerned that if women are allowed to drive in their country that in ten years there will be no more virgins in the kingdom. Yikes how exactly do cars work over there? I think you're doing it wrong.
3	Saudi Arabia is a little sketchy and he has some conservative opinions on politics and women, but you listen to him anyway, and you should, 'cause he's got that loud sticky icky oil. It ain't easy to find.

Concordance 5.16: Concordance lines of the word *conservative*

5.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the findings of the keywords analysis and provided contextual readings of their concordance lines and collocates. Although only general observations can be made from concordance analysis of keywords alone, they do begin to answer RQ1 by enabling the identification of the dominant discourses in which MIM are typically associated in *SNL*. The overall discourse can be seen to confine MIM to conflict-ridden issues, including war, violence, terrorism, extremism, backwardness, freedom of speech, women's rights and discrimination. It seems that these emerging results follow some mainstream trends in media and its coverage about MIM in connection to war and terrorism (Richardson, 2004, Baker et al, 2013, and others—see section 2.3). Other practices in mainstream reporting about MIM, such as collectivising Muslim people as one homogenous entity, are also observed in

the *SNL* corpus. The prominence of these topics confirms the intuition that stereotypical topics, such extremism and terrorism, are, in fact, dominant in reporting on MIM, even in humorous discourse.

Given the ambivalence inherent in *SNL* comedic texts, the questions that immediately arise at this point are: in which way are MIM represented in these contexts? What are the roles that MIM play in such contexts? Are they violent perpetrators, victims, targets or innocent bystanders? Can these representations be considered as harmless fun? Do they perpetuate stereotypical and perhaps derogatory images of MIM? Or do they help in exposing and criticising the absurdity of all forms of discrimination and racism? To answer these questions, an in-depth qualitative analysis in the following chapters is necessary. With this in mind, the next chapter introduces the second level of analysis, where I explore the representations and evaluations of MIM more closely.

Chapter 6:

The Discursive Representation and Evaluation of MIM in *SNL*

6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses RQ2- regarding the discursive representations and evaluations of MIM in *SNL* sketches. In other words, it focuses on exploring the discursive strategies used to represent and evaluate MIM. The discursive strategies are realised by micro-linguistic analytical categories, such as metonymy, metaphor, pronouns, predictive adjectives and semiotic modes, which I found to be relevant to the sketches at hand. Through analysing the micro-level linguistic realisations, I will also explain their discursive functions and then interpret their contextual relevance. The discourses presented in this chapter are guided by the initial categorisation of the dominant keywords in the *SNL* corpus found in Chapter 5.

6.2 Dominant Discourses in the *SNL* Corpus

Table 5.1 in Chapter 5 outlines the keywords found in the *SNL* corpus, which point to the topics and discourses that tend to be associated with MIM in the ten seasons of *SNL*. After closely examining the keywords in their concordance lines, two observations were made, prompting the need for re-categorisation the discourses. The first observation is related the inclusion of certain keywords which appear to report topics and events around MIM. For example, several keywords in the COUNTRIES/NATIONALITIES/PLACES category (such as Libya, Iran, Egypt) are found in reference to civil wars, military actions, political developments, or the overall state of affairs in the Middle East. It can be assumed then that these events may be highly relevant and consequential within the broader context, leading to a heightened focus on their implications for MIM-related topics and discussions. However, reviewing the concordance lines of such keywords, it appears that they are not linked directly to the representations of MIM. The second observation pertained to the interrelation of topics and discourses, resulting in certain keywords being repeated across multiple thematic categories. For instance, some of the keywords in the WAR/CONFLICT/VIOLENCE category emerge from the same context as the countries/nationalities/places category. This necessitated a reconsideration of the

initial categorisation in order to capture the complex relationships and overlaps between different topics and discourses in *SNL*. Based on these two observations, this chapter will only focus on four discourses that are deemed recurrent and dominant in the *SNL* corpus: violence, religion, human rights, and discrimination.

To examine the ways in which MIM are represented and evaluated in these four discourses, it is important to reiterate that this thesis builds upon critical theories on humorous discourse (Gray, 1995; Weaver, 2011), as outlined in Chapter 3. These theories interpret humorous discourse in terms of texts with ambivalent meanings which can be linguistically analysed to show how discursive strategies invite particular responses from both the individual and society (Burke, 1994; Weaver, 2011). Humorous texts often contain elements of incongruity, which involve the juxtaposition of incompatible or contradictory elements. This incongruity creates a sense of discrepancy or tension, as the audience encounters unexpected or conflicting ideas, situations, or perspectives. It is within this tension that the potential for humor arises. More precisely, the discursive incongruities at the heart of many humorous texts create discrepancy, tension and constant slippage, which consequently generate ambivalent meanings that audiences may draw from the text (Critchley, 2002; Weaver, 2011). Moreover, these tensions open up a space for audiences to potentially position, interpret and make sense of the discursive clashes, as well as negotiate a meaning that draws upon their orientations or conceptions of individuals, groups and the social world (Raskin, 1995).

My central theoretical claim in this thesis is that incorporating critical discourse analysis and examining patterns and functions which are systematically worked out by rigorous linguistic analysis helps us make inferences about these ambivalent meanings. Applying a discursive analysis to the micro-level can also explain and expand the knowledge of humorous texts as their own site of meaning. Such analysis, in turn, can be interpreted in relation to the wider context. For example, the discursive analysis can also be applied when examining the representations of actors, events and social phenomena in humorous mediated texts, as will be shown in the examination below. In the four discourses that follow, I incorporate a text-centric position, engaging in an analysis of the micro-linguistic choices used in the representation and evaluation of MIM. Analysing the excerpts below, I first give

contextual information about the existing discourses which can contribute to the interpretations. I then focus on the verbal and visual levels and examine the linguistic, rhetorical and semiotic choices used in relation to the representations and evaluations of MIM.

6.2.1 Discourse on Violence

As previously mentioned in section 5.3.2, the discourse on violence appears to be one of the most recurrent discourses in *SNL*. I use violence as an umbrella term to capture a whole range of acts of violence discussed in *SNL*, such as wars, terrorism and security threats. Such dominance of this discourse raises questions concerning how violence is associated with MIM and how far this association can project a positive or negative evaluation of MIM in *SNL*. Using the textual tools outlined in Table 6.1, I explore the discourse of violence in *SNL* and analyse the mechanisms that assist in the identification and interpretation of the discursive representations and evaluations of MIM. Within the space of the humorous texts here, one overarching tension is found in the frame of violence and peace. Examining the micro-analytical categories, such as the use of conceptual metonym, metaphor, adjectives and semiotic modes, I found two discursive patterns at work: foregrounding the challenges caused by violent action, while backgrounding the negative association between MIM and violence; and the polarisation of in-group and out-group.

Discursive tension	Discursive strategy	Analytical categories
Violence and peace	• referential strategies • predicational strategies • argumentation strategies • mitigating self-negative representation and intensifying other-negative representation	• conceptual metonymy • collectives • deictics • semiotic modes • metaphor • predictive adjectives • action verbs • theme and rheme • personal narrative

Table 6.1: Summary of the discursive strategies in the discourse on violence

In what follows, I provide examples from sketches and segments that primarily discuss the discourse of violence.

Excerpt 6.1

> <Seth Meyer>: On Monday federal agents investigating the attempted Times Square bombing arrested Pakistani born US citizen Faisal Shahzad better known by his terrorist nickname Mohammad Al-Corey Feldman.

Excerpt 6.2

> <Seth Meyer>: A new 'chat-down' security programme is being tested at Boston Logan airport in which TSA agents try to screen out possible terrorists by talking to travellers and asking questions such as 'where you are going?' and 'how long are you staying?' then they simply arrest anyone who answers, 'to be with Allah for all eternity'.

In Excerpt 6.1 and Excerpt 6.2, the association between violence and MIM is left implicit. In fact, there seems to be a pattern in backgrounding the religious aspect of the people represented as violent or terrorist. This aspect is, however, substituted by metonymical references to MIM identity. For instance, during the setup of Excerpt 6.1, the anchor reports a news event concerning the arrest of the suspect involved in an attempted terrorist attack in New York. In terms of referential strategies, the suspect is referred to using his own name ('Faisal Shahzad'), his citizenship ('US citizen') and provenance ('Pakistani born'). There is no indication in the setup that suggests any relevance to MIM. The punchline, however, refers to the terrorist using the nickname 'Mohammad Al-Corey Feldman', a combination of the Arabic name 'Mohammad', which is also the name of the prophet of Islam, with the name of a famous American actor. What is interesting here is the choice of the name 'Mohammad', which can be considered as a variant of the American 'John Doe': a generic name for an average or typical man, or in this case, a generic name for an average or typical Muslim. By using 'Mohmmad' as the first part of the nickname, it is implied that the suspect is a Muslim man. The noun 'Mohammad' can be analysed by means of conceptual metonymic inferencing, in which one entity (the source) can automatically evoke another entity (the target) within the same conceptual domain (Langacker 1993; Radden and Kövecses 1999). In the case of this punchline, the metonymy 'Mohammad' not only serves the humorous goal of providing an unexpected or a surprising twist, but also allows the audience to automatically access existing

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knowledge about MIM. In doing so, the presumed association between terrorism and MIM in its most rigid, conventionalised and widespread form is implicitly activated.

The same goes for Excerpt 6.2, where the same frame (Islamic religion) is built in order to use the association between terrorism and MIM. The script in the setup of this humorous utterance is that of a report on the installation of a security programme at Boston Logan Airport to prevent terrorists from entering the country. In terms of referential strategies, the 'terrorists' in question are referred to as indetermined or unspecified individuals or groups. The punchline suddenly takes an unpredicted turn and indicates that the 'terrorists', who are represented by the indefinite pronoun 'anyone', are those who answer, 'to be with Allah for all eternity'. The identity here is somehow specified, in a metonymic sense, by the use of 'Allah', which is considered a salient feature standing for the whole Islamic religion frame. Such feature can be retrieved from common knowledge and beliefs to understand the intended meaning. Again, the negative association between MIM and violence is left implicit, but can be identifiable through common knowledge. In similar ways, predications denoting MIM and violence can also be linguistically realised by the use of the action verbs 'screen out' and 'arrest', where MIM are the implied object. Such verbs convey problematic and negative experiences, which intensifies and highlights the negative aspects of such association.

Although implicit information in both examples may demand more 'cognitive effort' to be recovered (Baker, 2006: 114), this should not suggest that the audience will necessarily interpret it as less relevant. The socio-political context outside the text (i.e., the high profile of MIM in the media) is likely to reinforce associations in the audience's mental model of terrorist. Such associations resulting from, among other things, the incremental effects of referential and predicational strategies can be so well-established that some audiences will be primed to assume the terrorist is Muslim without explicit or even implicit information to that effect (ibid).

In Excerpt 6.3 below, verbal and visual choices are examined to infer the representation and evaluation of MIM. The excerpt is taken from a cartoon segment called 'Cool Drones' on *SNL*. The cartoon features humorous portrayals of cool and entertaining drones. However, it can also be considered as a sharp political satire that

addresses the challenge of presenting the grim realities of modern warfare in a digestible way for the American audience.

Excerpt 6.3

Frame 6.1: shows the terrorist leader Ali Rahim

<stage> Open at cartoon drones attending a concert </stage>

<The cartoon Official>: In 2009, the CIA authorised a covert program to allow the assassination of high valued targets. These missions were carried out by unmanned flying vehicles known as drones. Some questioned the morality of these robotic killing machines; others said it was a necessary evil that would save American lives. So, we've produced the following film to give an unbiased look at this controversial issue. Thank you.

<Theme song>: Cool drones, cool drones. They are four super cool warriors fighting the War on Terror. Defending the country, liberty and freedom, drones are there. And when they are not on the front line, they are on stage, as a world-famous boy band. Singing, dancing and protecting our nation, drones are necessary evil.

<The cartoon General>: You're gonna wanna see this, Drones. We just received a disturbing video from terrorist leader Ali Raheem. Take a look.

<stage> English subtitles scrolls up from the bottom of the screen as Ali Raheem speaks in mock Arabic gibberish. </stage>

> <Ali Rahim>: Hahahaha! American infidels, soon I will launch an attack on the Great Satan. Also, Drones, your dance moves are crap. The 90s called: they want their moves back. Hahahaha.
>
> <The cartoon General>: It gets worse, Drones. We believe Raheem is planning to attack on the very same day your new album drops. Drones, you have the coordinates. Go, get him.

The sketch opens with an animated official in the American administration explaining the controversy around the use of drones and the conflicting arguments it has generated. The official also claims that the film included in the sketch gives an 'unbiased look' at this controversy. The sketch can be considered a biting political satire about the problem with the legality and morality of drone strikes and making modern warfare palatable to Americans.[5]

The opening statement highlights the discursive tension regarding the ethicality and legitimacy of using drones while simultaneously opening a space to negotiate the representation and evaluation of the target. The animated film included in the sketch features a quartet of drones, referred to as 'necessary evil' and 'cool warriors', whose job is 'fighting the War on Terror' and 'supporting' the country by 'killing the terrorists'. When they are not on the frontline, the drones moonlight as a 'world-famous' boy band. After their concert, the drones are asked to return to base because the Department of Defence has received a video from a terrorist leader named 'Ali Raheem', threatening 'American infidels' that he will soon 'launch an attack' on the 'great Satan'.

In terms of mitigating self-negative representation and intensifying other-negative representation, the group of references mentioned above denote some kind of necessity and legitimacy for using drones. Although it is admitted that drones are 'evil', their evilness is lessened to some extent by showing that they are the lesser of the

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[5] Drone warfare is a part of America's global war on terrorism, and it is inevitably tethered to the incidents of 9/11 (Carpentier, 2007; Dimaggio, 2008). Many studies have critically analysed the discourses around drone warfare and highlighted the ways in which the US government have justified and legitimised the use of drones as an efficient method for combating terrorism (Galasinski, 2003; Patapan, 2010; Condor et al., 2012; Hall and Coyne, 2014).

two evils. Using these strategies can lead to the achievement of the discursive function of reducing the negative portrayals of the 'self' and highlighting the negative portrayals of the 'other'. For instance, terms such as 'cool' and 'necessary evil' reduce the illegitimacy of using drones in warfare and enable the situation to be presented as less detrimental. This is also evident in the predicational strategies here where drones are largely evaluated using action verbs, e.g., 'fighting' and 'killing', which can be considered negative terms. However, looking at the objects/people, e.g., 'the War on Terror' and 'the terrorists', it appears that the verbs cushion the negative effect of using drones and put it into a more propitious context, focusing the audience's attention onto more important matters.

The other-negative representation here is intensified using different verbal and visual tools. First, the representation is verbally indexed through the use of the Arabic name 'Ali Raheem' for the 'terrorist leader', which can again be analysed by means of conceptual metonymy in which the Arabic name, as a metonymic reference point, leads to the association between MIM and violence (the target). The negative predication is realised in the verb phrase 'launch an attack', which is directed at 'the Great Satan'[6] and 'American infidels.'[7] The intertextual references to 'the Great Satan' and 'American infidels' also play a crucial role in implicitly reinforcing the link between the violent behaviour evoked in the terrorist leader's video and MIM. However, backgrounding this link may again require a cognitive effort, as mentioned above, and an understanding of 'Great Satan' and 'infidels' and their association with MIM and terrorism. As for the visual representation, shown in Frame 1, the 'terrorist leader' is portrayed as a brown-skinned man with a turban, bushy eyebrows, a thick beard and a prayer callus.[8] He angrily shouts in mock Arabic gibberish and threatens to attack America, as the English subtitles scroll up from the bottom. According to van Leeuwen

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6 'The Great Satan' is a metaphor used by the late Ayatollah Khomeini during the course of the hostage crisis in 1979 and now is used as a codename for the United States (Milani, 2013).

7 Shaheen (2003: 155) argues that the term is mostly used in American movies and TV shows by 'Muslim' characters who are portrayed as terrorists whose only function in life is to kill the 'infidel' Americans and their allies. According to Hussien (2010), the reference to 'infidels' in Hollywood plays an important role in establishing a connection between terrorism and Islamic ideology, thus reflexively reinforcing the Muslim-terrorist narrative.

8 Prayer calluses are found in the middle of the forehead of so-called devout Muslim people as a result of repeatedly bowing the head and touching the ground with the forehead during prayer (Cosner, 2010).

(2008:158), physical characteristics often carry underlying meanings or connotations, and these can be employed to indirectly categorise or assign functional roles to individuals within society. In Frame 1, the visual characteristics of the 'terrorist leader' matches the descriptions of a typical Muslim man in Western media (Wilkins and Downing, 2002: 326). Such portrayal belongs to the 'social-type category', where certain depictions of social actors/groups might be considered to be biased (van Leeuwen, 2008).

Excerpt 6.4 below is based on a real Obama interview with CNN's programme *60 Minutes* in 2014. In the real interview, Obama was asked about the US efforts to counter ISIS and his statement that "ISIL is not 'Islamic'" (CNN, 2014). The 5-second pause in the parody of Obama's utterance creates tension in the punchline and also stresses the connection between Islam and ISIS.

Excerpt 6.4

> <Parody Interviewer>: Mr President, you made the point that the terrorist group ISIS and the Islamic faith are in no way connected, do you still believe that?
>
> <Parody Obama>: Actually, I am beginning to think there is some connection [5 seconds pause] For example, did you know that the first 'I' in ISIS stands for Islamic. I mean, who knew?

To detect the evaluation of MIM within the discursive tension, the information structure of parody Obama's humorous utterance is examined. By information structure, I mean two closely related linguistic phenomena: theme and rheme and foreground and background. Here, I am borrowing Halliday's (1975, 2004) terms to divide parody Obama's humorous utterance into two elements; the theme, which includes predictable or known information (similar to the setup) and the rheme, which provides relatively unpredictable or new information (similar to the punchline). In the example above, the 'connection' between ISIS and Islam that parody Obama refers to and foregrounds is perceived as the known information, which has been circulated or discussed before (Baker et al., 2013). The rhematic element gives the unpredictable information through the use of rhetorical questions and the pronoun 'you', which assumes that this unexpected information is new to parody Obama, parody

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interviewer and maybe the whole audience. In this element, the negative evaluation of MIM is backgrounded as parody Obama implicitly refers to the presumed belief that Islamic ideology encourages or permits violence. However, considering the comedic context, it should be noted that parody includes utterances that are meant to be understood as the expression of two speakers (Bakhtin 1981, Morson, 1989). In this instance, those speakers are Obama and the comedian who is making fun of him. Seen like this, the parodied utterance by parody Obama is supposed to 'stand in' for the original utterance of Obama in order to discredit him and, thus, introduces a 'semantic direction' which challenges that of the original (Morson, 1989: 66) (this will be elaborated further in the next chapter).

The next excerpt is from 'Weekend Update' satirical news segment, in which the anchor discusses Trump's travel ban and his reason for issuing such executive order.

Excerpt 6.5

> <Michael Choe>: Trump says the ban is to prevent radical Islamic terrorists in America. But first of all, what is radical Islam? That's too subjective of a term. I have a Muslim friend; he does not eat pork and does not have sex with White women. Now, to me that's mad radical. But he's not a terrorist. Terrorism is the actual problem. When you only associate terrorism with one religion, you make them synonymous. There's 1.7 billion Muslims in this world. If you think 1.7 billion people are actively trying to kill you, maybe you're a little radical.

In his satirical commentary in Excerpt 6.5, the anchor criticises Trump for using the term 'radical Islam', which he asserts to be 'subjective'. This term, as argued by Hoewe et al. (2018:15), has been used and understood as equivalent to terrorism in the media which, consequently, has perpetuated the Muslim terrorist stereotype and reinforced a sense of understanding Islam as a threat to "us" (ibid). The anchor here echoes the same concerns, but he takes an unexpected turn, creating the discursive tension in which the representations of MIM can be analysed. Such representation is linguistically realised through the use of the rhetorical strategy, which is personal narrative or argument from testimony. According to Walton et al. (2008:310), such rhetorical strategy depends on the use of first-hand experience to testify that what has been said is true or false. In this example, the anchor uses this strategy to refute

Trump's statement. He even uses the noun 'friend', which has a positive predication to refer to the 'Muslim' man in his story. He also refers to the 'Muslim friend' as someone who 'does not eat pork and does not have sex with white women', which might be understood as failure to comply with expectations of conformity. This is reinforced with the statement 'that's mad radical', which one might argue creates a double distancing effect: it separates the 'Muslim friend' from the presumed notion of Islamic radicalism, while also separating him from the majority, which could imply a negative predication of his religious affiliation that stands in the way of conformity. Still, the anchor asserts that that people who think Muslims are terrorists are themselves radical, given the size of the Muslim population. This counter-construct creates a space where positive representations of MIM can exist free from the association with violence and terrorism. In other words, such linguistic choices can counter-argue the overgeneralisation of the (negative) association between Islam and terrorism, offering a justification as to why Trump's statement cannot represent the whole Muslim group. Still, the satirical news implicitly refers to the association between Islam and terrorism, which might establish this religion as the problematic doctrine that encourages violence and terrorism.

6.2.2 Discourse on Religion

The second dominant discourse to emerge from the corpus analysis is religion. Here, I focus on the examination of representations and evaluations of MIM in the instances where they are mentioned with or compared to other religious groups. In this discourse, an overarching tension is found within the frame of difference and sameness. To clarify, there are two aspects of representation in the discourse on religion: MIM as different and/or MIM as same or compatible with the positioned 'home' society, sometimes framed as explicitly or implicitly Judeo-Christian/American. Examining the microanalytical categories, such as the use of pronouns, metaphor, nomination and predication strategies, I noticed two patterns of representing and evaluating MIM: polarisation of in-group and out-group and parallel representation, as shown below.

Discursive tension	Discursive strategy	Analytical categories
Difference and sameness	• referential strategies • predicational strategies • argumentation strategies	• pronouns • de-spatialisation • ideologonyms • intertextual references • collectivisation • adjectives • metaphor • stress and repetition • hyperbole • simile

Table 6.2: Summary of the discursive strategies in the discourse on religion

The first example in the discourse on religion is a spoof of *Fox & Friends*, a cable news programme that caters to a conservative-leaning audience, and their handling of the Syrian refugee crisis in 2014. The main target of this sketch is *Fox News* channel, presidential candidate Ben Carson and the Republican Party's anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Excerpt 6.6

<super> The Ingraham Angle on Fox News. </super>

<Parody Doocy>: Well, the refugee's situation over in the Middle East may be even worse than we previously thought.

<Parody Hasselback>: That's right. Look at this footage we at Fox have just obtained of a crazed mob of Syrian refugees flooding over our borders into this country.

<stage> Cut to an image of a scary zombie woman reaching for the viewer. A deep voice mutters 'immigrants'. </stage>

<Parody Doocy>: I mean, look, it's a war zone. There's no screening, they're just walking in and just taking in anything they like. Wait, I'm told that's not actually Syrian refugees. It's WalMart shoppers on Black Friday.

<Parody Kilmeade>: Well, I think the point still stands.

<Parody Doocy>: Dr Carson, you yourself, you've said we should carefully screen the big wave of refugees coming into this country. Do you have a plan that would separate Muslim from Christian refugees?

<Parody Carson>: Weeding out Islamists would be simple. First, we'd say, 'You can't come into this country until I see you eat bacon while singing a Christmas carol. Or all refugees would be given Mad Libs with the phrase: death to blank. Anyone who writes 'America' won't be allowed inside America…. Those rabid dogs extremists are entering this country every day. I mean open your eyes President Obama. It's enough to make me wanna flip my top.

The parody in Excerpt 6.6 derives its primary discourse from a segment of *Fox & Friends* in which the hosts express their concerns regarding the Syrian refugee crisis The Fox hosts' fearmongering comes in the wake of a series of terrorist attacks in Paris, which left over 120 people dead. ISIS claimed responsibility for the assault, and a Syrian passport was found near one of the suicide bombers (NBC, 2015). The hosts also interview the Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson, who expresses his frustration over Obama's decision to accept 10,000 refugees. While identifying such discourse, the parodic echoing here not only creates discursive and comedic tension, but also has the potential to communicate ambivalent critical meanings – a line of argument that is further pursued in the next chapter.

Looking at the textual level, there are many linguistic and rhetorical devices in the above excerpt that serve to represent refugees as an out-group. In terms of referential strategy, the example here relies on a presupposed adversarial dichotomy between a construction of Americans/Christians and refugees/Muslims. For instance, 'Syrian refugees', referred to using the pronoun 'they', are represented as displaced, uncivilised criminals who pose a threat to American national security. In addition, the referential strategy of de-spatialisation or reference based on local orientation helps reinforce a sense of difference or alienation as the fact that those refugees are from places other than America is emphasised. The refugees are also negatively predicated through the use of metaphors of war and natural disaster. Such metaphors involve an evaluative strategy arousing emotions of threat and danger (Hart, 2010), which depicts refugees as a dangerous out-group. For instance, the metaphoric suggestions of 'crazed mob', 'big wave' and 'flooding over' serve to provide a powerful

and vivid image of a country that is overwhelmed and at risk of being submerged by dangerous people. Such image is further intensified with the use of verbs such as 'screen' and 'separate' which may suggest taking action to alienate and exclude refugees. Arcimaviciene and Baglama (2018:11) argue that metaphors referring to war and natural phenomena activate "the dehumanization myth", whereby…, while at the same time legitimising the "myth of moral authority" and "our" political decisions about "them".

Focusing on 'Muslim refugees' here, it is noted that they are subjected to a double othering and exclusion process, both as refugees and as 'Muslim'. The creation of 'Muslim refugees' as an out-group occurs within the context of suggesting a separation between Muslim and Christian refugees. Employing the topoi (see section 4.3.2.1) of separation (Wodak, 2001), the parody hosts create a positive representation of 'Us' and a negative representation of 'Them', which also leads to the tension within the frame of difference and sameness. An image of a Muslim refugee as different is reflected in the question, 'Do you have a plan that would separate Muslim from Christian refugees?', which implies a hierarchy among the two groups and establishes the conditions of accepted and unaccepted refugees. In his answer, parody Carson replaces 'Muslim refugees' with different referential strategies, using negative ideologonyms, i.e., references to actors in terms of their ideologies, as in 'Islamists' and 'extremists' (Wodak, 2001). 'Islamist', as used in the media (Alhejin, 2012; Baker et al., 2013) generally refers to Islamic political parties or movements. The media has often used 'Islamists' and 'extremists' to refer to people involved in terroristic activities, which does little to dissociate the religion from extremism and terrorism. Such referential strategies have predominantly negative predications establishing 'Muslim' as the problematic different group that encourages violence and various acts of evil. These negative implicit predicates are also intensified by the deployment of the metaphor 'rabid dogs', which suggests the sense of their uncontrolled movement and unpredictability that can be dangerous. Such metaphor creates an emotional distance and further detachment between 'Us' and 'Them' by dehumanising Muslim refugees (by portraying them as animals) and confirming their lower status in the American preference hierarchy of race and religion (Kasson 1990). Within this hierarchy, it has been argued that people identified as

'Muslim' currently appear at the bottom (Woodlock, 2011; Ahmed, 2012; Haynes, 2017; Bleich, 2018).

The tension between difference and sameness is also observed in Excerpt 6.7 below which follows the same discursive pattern and demonstrates the polarisation of in-group and out-group. Such pattern is manifested linguistically through out-group favouritism and double othering of one specific out-group, namely 'Muslim'.

Excerpt 6.7

> <stage> starts with Meet the Press with Chuck Todd intro. </stage>
>
> <Parody Todd>: Which brings to us this week's topic. What would it take for President Trump to lose your support? I'm going to give you guys some hypothetical scenarios and you tell me if any of them would be enough for the president to lose your support. First hypothetical. What if the president admits that he's not as religious as he claims? He's not even Christian. He's Jewish.
>
> <Parody Collins>: Even better, that's great for Israel.
>
> <Parody Todd>: What if you found out President Trump was a Muslim?
>
> <Parody McConnell>: A Muslim? Oh, just the thought of that makes me want to stress eat. (Takes out a vegetable leaf and stressfully bites it).
>
> <Parody Grahm>: Okay. You listen, wait just a minute, Chuck. What kind of Muslim are we talking about? Are we talking about like Dr Oz?
>
> <Pardoy Todd>: No, no, I mean like Louis Farrakhan.
>
> <Parody Grahm>: Alright! but, do we still get those tax cuts?
>
> <Pardoy Todd>: You do.
>
> <Parody Grahm>: Okay. Well, then I guess it's Asalaam Aleikhem brother President.

Excerpt 6.7 is a parody sketch of NBC News' programme *Meet the Press* in which the parody host teases parody Senate Republicans over enduring support for Trump. Here again, the parodic echoing appears to be targeting the Republicans' constant

support for Trump, especially since an NBC news poll, which was announced a week before the sketch, showed that 90% of Republicans approve of the job Trump is doing as president, despite the controversies around him and his administration (NBC News, 2019).

In this example, the first hypothetical question accentuates 'Christian' as the in-group, given Trump's professed religious beliefs and the fact that the question is asked to a parody GOP panel. However, equally, different representations of different out-groups are created, which reveals two attitudes: a more sympathetic attitude towards Them (Jewish) and a negative attitude towards Them (Muslim). The former predicates 'Jewish' as a favourable group to Trump supporters, which could be attributed to Trump's pro-Israel political agenda (Cavari, 2021). This is indicated through the stress and increased loudness on the positive predicates 'even better' and 'that's great'. The latter places 'Muslim' as a less favourable group to the parody Republicans, illustrated by the group's hesitation and parody McConnell's hyperbolic reaction, 'just the thought of that makes me want to stress eat', which suggests a negative connotation. The out-group 'Muslim' is further distinguished along a spectrum using intertextual references of two representative figures: Dr Oz, a Muslim celebrity surgeon and Trump supporter, and Louis Farrakhan, a religious leader and political activist who heads the Nation of Islam. The predication strategy, through the use of the simile 'like', assesses which 'Muslim' is more tolerated, according to GOP's standards. In the end, the GOP panel jokingly agree that they can accept Trump as 'Muslim' as long as they still get their tax cuts. One implication of this is that the economic right-wing agenda surpasses the ideological-ethnocentric part. Their agreement is marked by the Islamic salutation 'Asalaam Aleikhem'[9].

Excerpt 6.8 and Excerpt 6.9 address Trump's statements regarding MIM by directing satirical comments at his anti-Muslim rhetoric. While the butt of both jokes seems to be Trump, the representations and evaluations of MIM is less clear and more inconsistent.

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[9] As Salaamu Alaikum': The most common greeting in Muslim communities which literally means, 'Peace be upon you'.

Excerpt 6.8

<Parody Trump>: Good evening, it's the holiday season and I wanna wish everyone
a merry Christmas. To the Jews happy Hanukah, and to the Muslims send me your
names.

Excerpt 6.9

<Real Trump (in a video)>: You know, we are getting near that beautiful Christmas
season that people don't talk about anymore. They don't use the word Christmas
because it's not politically correct. Guess what! We're saying Merry Christmas.

<Michael Choe>: Dude, people say merry Christmas all the time. My deli guy is
Muslim, and he says merry Christmas every time he makes me a ham sandwich.

The parody sketch in Excerpt 6.8 reads as a continuation of the tension of difference
and sameness. The clear dichotomy between Muslim people and other religious
groups is realised through exaggerating Trump's anti-Muslim sentiments. The phrase
'to the Muslims, send me your names' renders Muslim people, referred to in a
collectivised term, a homogenous entity that is more broadly different from and, thus,
nonintegrative with the American social fabric. The 'different' Muslim is contrasted
with Christians or tolerated Jews, with an inference that only 'Muslims' need to be
alienated and excluded. In addition, the referential strategy of collectivisation can be
said to facilitate the creation of generalisations about the designated group and pave
the way for extending negative evaluations to the whole group. However, given the
fact that this is a parody sketch, it is important to note that the playfully parodic nature
of echoing Trump's anti-Muslim rhetoric can only be appreciated when the existing
discourse is recognised by the audience, as is the exaggeration differential between
the existing and humorous voices (Lempert, 2014).

Excerpt 6.9 offers a rather ambivalent representation of Muslim people through the
use of personal narratives. The example includes a video of the real Trump and a
satirical commentary from the 'Weekend Update' anchor Michael Choe. In the video,
real Trump promises to end the 'War on Christmas'[10] which, as he claims, is caused

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[10] The expression 'War on Christmas' was popularised by conservative media commentators
and some conservative political representatives who turned holiday greetings and

by political correctness and, thus, prevents Christians from expressing their religious belief. He employs the pronouns 'we' and 'they' vaguely to mystify discursive representations to strategic/ideological ends (Fairclough, 1992). One might interpret Trump's interdiscursive use of the 'War on Christmas' discourse as a way to reinforce the dichotomy between conservatives and liberals, in addition to Christians and non-Christians. This dichotomy is linguistically realised through the use of the inclusive pronoun 'we' and the exclusive pronoun 'they', which contributes to the construction of "Us" and "Them" (Duszakl; 2002). Still, the pronouns are vague in their explicit referent, in that, it is not clear if the reference to Us denotes 'American' and/or 'Christians' or the reference to Them denotes 'liberals' and/or 'non-Christians'.

In his satirical commentary in Excerpt 6.9, the anchor mocks Trump's victory over the non-existent 'War on Christmas' by asserting that 'people say merry Christmas all the time'. The generic reference 'people' includes 'Muslim', which might be understood as a positive and neutral representation of MIM through an emphasis on cultural compatibility or similarity. The success in assimilating into American practices like saying 'merry Christmas' and making a 'ham sandwich' has a potential to construct the 'Muslim' here as tolerant and, thus, compatible. This is relevant to what has been discussed in Chapter 2 about creating the 'modern Muslim' image by removing 'Muslims' from the realm of violence and terrorism and placing them in ordinary settings where they engage in everyday activities like eating bacon or being in interracial marriages (See Section 2.3.5). The use of possessive 'my' and the argumentative strategy of personal narratives or argument from testimony gives legitimacy to the anchor's comment. The argument from personal experience (e.g., Walton et al 2008: 310) relies on the premise that if an individual directly observes a specific event, then what they report can be considered plausible. Such discursive strategy helps in creating a parallel representation between Muslim and American where both are engaged in the same American practices.

Excerpt 6.10 below is part of a monologue by Aziz Ansari, an American comedian of Indian Tamil Muslim descent, in which he addresses Trump's politics, hate crimes

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decorations into potentially divisive political statements. Those conservatives complained that phrases like "Happy Holidays", which is used out of respect for people of different faiths, could be perceived as (liberal) insults to Christianity (Holt and Irwin, 2013).

and the divided state of America. The tension of sameness and difference is observed in the comedian's attempt to contradict ideas of difference, incompatibility and non-integration through parallel representations.

Excerpt 6.10

> <Aziz Ansari>: you know the God in Islam is the same God that was revealed to Abraham, Judaism, Christianity! Same God. But people are scared. Why? Because any time they watch movies, and TV shows, and a character is Arabic, or they're praying or something like that, that scary-ass music from "Homeland" is underneath it. It's terrifying!

The dichotomy between Muslim people and other religious groups in Excerpt 6.10 is blurred. The comedian states that Islam, Judaism and Christianity all have the 'same God' as he seeks to assert the unity of the three religions and to defy the negative portrayals of Muslim people in the entertainment industry. This parallel representation has the potential to challenge the representation of MIM as 'bad' and 'different' while other religious groups as 'good'. Therefore, the discursive positioning of 'Us' vs. 'Them' does not seem to hold in the comedian's representation.

The pronoun 'you' is used by the comedian to directly address the audience in the studio who may be non-Muslim and are, thus, more likely to be influenced by the ideologies of hatred and fear perpetuated by media. The stress and the repetition of 'same God' appears to be indicative of unity, sameness and inclusion, as opposed to a negative representation of difference and exclusion typically found in movies and TV shows (Shaheen, 2003). An equivalence is, thus, established between Islam and other religions, creating a discursive space where MIM can move beyond narratives characterised by suspicion and evil. By highlighting the commonality between Islam and other religions, the comedian encourages a more inclusive and empathetic understanding of Islam, fostering an environment where positive and nuanced representations of Muslims can emerge.

In addition, an oscillation between MIM and 'people' (in reference to non-Muslim people) takes place as the comedian gives his ironic statement regarding the fear of MIM. The sentence "but people are scared" is a generic statement that expresses a

sympathetic view towards people who have been influenced by the negative portrayals of MIM in the media. These misrepresentations are found in movies and TV shows in which portrayals of Arab characters or Muslim characters who appear to perform ritual practices such as 'praying' are accompanied with music that is negatively predicated as 'scary' and 'terrifying'. The mention of 'Arabic' and characters who are 'praying' could also refer to the tendency that exists in the American media to blur the multiple and diverse identities of Arabs, Middle Easterners and Muslim people, resulting in a conflation which facilitates a racial profiling of the 'Other' (Alsultany, 2013). This example could be regarded as an effort to challenge or rebut the negative link between MIM and violence or evilness through satirical irony. I pursue this line of argument in the next chapter.

6.2.3 Discourse on Human Rights

The third discourse to emerge from the corpus analysis is human rights, which includes discussions over the stance of Islam in relation to topics such as gender rights, religious freedom and artistic freedoms. It is worth noting that these discussions often conflate religious and cultural practices, as the examples below will show. Examining the sketches in this discourse, one overarching tension is found within the frame of violation and adherence. Within such tension, I examine the representation and evaluation of MIM, which are realised by analytical choices such as the use of metonymy, modal verbs and semiotic modes, among others, as shown in the examples below.

Discursive tension	Discursive strategy	Analytical categories
Violation and adherence	• referential strategies • predicational strategies • argumentation strategies	• metonymy • modal verb • comparative adjective • semiotic modes • talk dramatisation.

Table 6.3: Summary of the discursive strategies in the discourse on human rights

The first excerpt in the discourse on human rights discusses Obama's statement in which he defends the US government's willingness to co-operate closely with Saudi Arabia on national security, despite global concerns over human rights abuses (CNN,

2015). The sketch comically criticises Obama's statement by bringing up issues related to women's rights, which is considered a frequent topic in news reports about Saudi society (Kaufer and Al-Malki, 2009; Adham, 2012).

Excerpt 6.11

> <Michael Choe>: President Obama defended the need for the US to maintain a close alliance with Saudi Arabia despite the country's poor human rights record. But I get what Obama's doing. You see, oil is our drug and Saudi Arabia is our dealer and you can't expect to like everything about your drug dealer. 'cause I mean like most drug deals, Saudi Arabia is a little sketchy and he has some strange opinions on politics and women, but you listen to him anyway, and you should, 'cause he's got that loud sticky icky oil. It ain't easy to find.

In Excerpt 6.11, the anchor employs a metaphor to create a comedic tension in which Saudi Arabia is compared to a drug dealer. Such comparison activates a mental representation of illegal and dangerous behaviour that would be expected of a villain. Saudi Arabia here is represented as the villain, personified with illegal activity. The use of the metaphorical comparison activates a set of preconceived notions and stereotypes typically associated with drug dealers, such as engaging in illegal and dangerous activities. By aligning Saudi Arabia with these negative traits, the sketch employs metonymic personification, attributing the qualities of a villain to the country. This personification serves a specific purpose: to legitimise the American-Saudi cooperation by portraying Saudi Arabia as a problematic entity that requires collaboration to address the perceived issues (human rights).

The predicational strategies also add to this negative portrayal using the predicates 'sketchy' and 'strange', which convey a sense criminality, danger, and illicit behaviour. Such predicates might shape the audience's perception of the country in an unfavourable manner and further reinforce this negative portrayal. These predicational strategies contribute to the problematisation, criminalisation, and deviance associated with Saudi Arabia in the context of the sketch.

> <Seth Meyer>: Conservative Muslim scholars in Saudi Arabia are concerned that if women are allowed to drive in their country that in ten years there will be no more virgins in the kingdom. Yikes!! How exactly do cars work over there? They must be doing it wrong.

Excerpt 6.12 also discusses human rights in Saudi Arabia and focuses more specifically on women's rights. The sketch reports on the previous ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia. The 'Weekend Update' anchor discusses a report prepared by a well-known conservative academic for Saudi Arabia's legislative assembly, the Shura Council, in which he claims that there would be 'no more virgins' in the country if the government decided to lift the driving ban on women in Saudi (BBC, 2011). Studies show that there is a wide criticism on religious and cultural conservatism in Saudi Arabia, which is believed to contribute to the oppression of women (Alsaleh, 2012). By sanctioning certain dress codes and banning women from driving, a connection between religion and women's issues is established, portraying Islam as being the cause of female oppression (ibid). While such practices seem to concern the culture of Saudi in particular, the findings of these studies show that the distinction between cultural practices and Islamic laws are somewhat blurred. As a result, the underlying social cognition of Islam as being restrictive and controlling of its adherents is reinforced.

In this humorous instance, the women in Saudi Arabia are presented as agentless, oppressed and victimised. At the punchline, the interjection 'yikes', which expresses a feeling of surprise, together with the spatial adverb 'there', which indicates an outside or a difference of an actual place, serve to construct a disparaging portrayal of a backward and alien country. This notion of difference is further elaborated in the use of the third person pronoun 'they', which tends to be associated with an outgroup, and the strong epistemic modal verb 'must' (Nuyts, 2006), which in combination with the pronoun attests to the assessment of Saudis being alien or different. Such portrayal highlights a discrepancy and constructs this group as 'other' deviant group. This negative and different construction of the 'other' reinforces the discourse of difference which, in turn, supports the notion that Saudis represent as a negative-

other group who are considered alien, exotic and backward (Adham, 2012). A sense of superiority is also established in the satirical comment 'they must be doing it wrong' through language of difference, i.e., the mere reference to the entity of 'they' seems to automatically elicit negativity and conveys broader assumed knowledge of irrational and backward cultural practices, including violation of women's rights.

Excerpt 6.13

Frame 6.2: Shows a photo of Salimah, accompanying the news story

< Seth Meyer>: Religious leaders in Saudi Arabia are warning women with "tempting eyes" that they must cover them up or face punishment — a warning that doesn't really concern Salimah.

Excerpt 6.13 above, also addresses issues related to Saudi women. The excerpt discusses the dress code of women in Saudi Arabia which emerges as the focus of attention. The existing discourse for this sketch is based on a statement made by a member of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice[11] in Saudi Arabia's Ha'eal district in which he said the group, also known as the religious police, should have 'the right' to force women with attractive eyes to cover them immediately.

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[11] A public security force authorised under the King to maintain the observance of certain conservative interpretations of Islamic law. The members used to have rights of pursuing, questioning, asking for identification, arresting and detaining anyone suspected of a crime before they were stripped of their privileges in 2016.

Using referential strategies to refer to the religious police as 'leaders' instead of 'members' implies a higher level of power, authority and control. This portrays them as a powerful group who victimise and abuse less powerful groups (women). In addition, when reporting the event, the use of deontic modal 'must', which, in this example, refers to restriction modality (Nuyts, 2001), and the imperative 'cover them up or face punishment' intensifies the power of religious authority in Saudi. Equally, it constructs them as active agents, while women are assigned the roles as victims of an oppressing social structures. What is at stake here is the realisation that this practice is 'imposed', an act of anti-modernity likened to the actions and practices of reactionary regimes. The use of words like 'warning', 'covering' and 'punishing' convey a negative evaluation of women's rights in Saudi Arabia. These words also evoke a sense of the oppressive practices implemented by the conservative group against women's will and freedom, thereby perpetuating stereotypes of Saudi women's submission to the patriarchal system (Mishra, 2007; Esses et al., 2013). In addition, the image of 'Salimah' looks doctored to make the woman look unattractive. When such alterations are made to intentionally make a person appear unattractive or to evoke negative stereotypes, it can be seen as a dehumanising act.

Excerpt 6.14 below discusses the series of drawings by the *Swedish artist* Lars Vilks that visually depicted prophet Mohammed with a body of a dog, amongst other images. This generated widespread international outcry and indignation, leading to protests and significant economic consequences (Esposito and Mogahed, 2007: 142). In an interview, the artist said, "I'm actually not interested in offending the prophet. The point is actually to show that you can. There is nothing so holy you can't offend it" (New York Times, 2008). Despite his defence for freedom of expression, many Muslim people considered his piece blasphemous and claimed that it crossed the limits of freedom of expression. Such controversy has instigated debates around the world on freedom of expression, blasphemy and the nature of Islam (Zaphiris et al., 2009: 32).

<u>Excerpt 6.14</u>

> <Seth Meyer>: The Swedish artist who created a cartoon depicting the prophet Mohammad with the body of a dog said the point of the piece was to show that artistic freedom allows mockery of all religions including the sacred symbols of Islam. "aaah", said the Muslim guy murdering him.

Even though the artist has received several death threats since 2007, there has been no actual attempt to murder him.[12] However, in Excerpt 6.14 above, the anchor establishes a general argumentative line of threat, using the rhetorical strategy of talk dramatisation (Sandlund, 2004) to represent an imaginary scenario where a 'Muslim guy' murders the artist. This representation is an imaginary scenario that is mapped onto a real situation. Just as with metaphorical mappings, the dramatised talk uses source domain logic to create an imaginary scenario emphasising an intense emotional reaction that carries over to a target domain scenario constructed on the grounds of real experience. This source-target domain pairing elicits a specific emotional impact from viewers. While the main reason for using this rhetorical device in this example is to create comedic tension, it is also worth noting that it has the potential to intensify the emotional and powerful reaction to the controversy. This is achieved by means of the interjection 'aaah' (expressing surprise), which is articulated with an extra lengthened long vowel to dramatise the reaction of the 'Muslim guy'. The interjection here is, in fact, an example of hypothetical reported speech (HRS), which is defined as an utterance that never happened but is projected as hypothetical in an imaginary world (Koester, 2010).

The functions of HRS are different, according to Koester and Handford (2018), depending on the discourse at hand. In this example, it seems that the HRS has two functions. First, it adds to the humour, introducing the punchline in an engaging way since HRS boosts involvement and creates a comedic effect. In other words, by utilising HRS, the statement generates increased audience involvement and enhances the comedic effect. The other function is persuasive, reporting something that a 'Muslim guy' did not do but that a hypothetical 'Muslim guy' could actually do,

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[12] He died in a car crash, along with two police bodyguards, in 2021. The police investigation revealed that there was no indication of criminal intent (BBC, 2021).

thereby implying a presumed construct of a violent 'Muslim'. This presumption is further strengthened by the use of the definite article 'the' in 'the Muslim guy murdering him', indicating that an existential presupposition of a threatening and violent 'Muslim" has already been established. The use of the definite article 'the' in 'the Muslim guy' signifies a presupposition, i.e., that labelling MIM as violent and threatening has already been established. This linguistic choice suggests an existing perception of Muslims as inherently violent, reinforcing prejudiced notions.

Excerpt 6.15

Frame 6.3: shows a picture of people rioting and setting fires, accompanying the news story

<Seth Meyer>: This week the new film 'Innocence of Muslim' is released and so far, the reviews are not great. You guys know YouTube has a comments section, right? It's an easier way to going about it.

Excerpt 6.15 above reports about the YouTube film Innocence of Muslim, which sparked protests across some parts of the Middle East, Africa and Asia and resulted in the deaths of over 50 protesters. Such riots erupted because the blasphemous short film reportedly depicted the prophet as a "womanizer," "child abuser" and "killer" (Jan, 2015). The furore prompted debates on freedom of speech and its limits and questioned the compatibility of Islam with Western values and freedoms (The Guardian, 2012).

The reaction of Muslim protesters is negatively presented here through the use of the predicate 'not so great', which is accompanied by a picture of people rioting and setting fire to objects in the street. Although not expressed in words, the picture echoes widely circulated depictions of MIM and violence. Such portrayals can be invoked to illustrate the alleged violent and menacing characteristics attributed to Islamic ideologies and its aggression against the Western values of freedom of speech. The presupposed incompatibility of Islamic values and freedom of speech is also implied in the form of the rhetorical question 'You guys know YouTube has a comment section, right?'. Here, the inclusive reference 'you guys' is used idiosyncratically to set Muslim protestors as an uncivil and culturally incompatible group who fail to conform to Western values and freedoms. This subsequently reinforces Islam's incompatible, inferior and non-assimilative nature (See Section 2.1.2). The satirical comment 'it's an easier way to going about it' assumes Western supremacy by using the comparative adjective compared to the violent reaction of the Muslim protestors. One might argue, then, that the linguistic choices used here have the potential to perpetuate notions of Western dominance and its influence in defining acceptable social structures. By presenting the Western approach as more reasonable or effective while highlighting the violence of the Muslim protestors, the comment may perpetuate notions of Western cultural, moral, or intellectual superiority.

6.2.4 Discourse on Discrimination

The discourse on discrimination covers *SNL* engagement in pressing issues around racism, Islamophobia and hate crime. The analysis of the sketches on discrimination reveals that there seems to be an overarching tension between perpetration and victimisation. By using micro-linguistic choices such as pronouns, homonymous puns, adverbs, and semiotic modes, MIM are referred to and evaluated as both sub-groups and homogenous constructions of MIM. In other words, the representations include both sub-groups with religious attachments associated with Islamic responsibility for discrimination (e.g., Hamas, ISIS) and a homogenous understanding of MIM as the victims of discrimination (e.g., Muslims, us, we).

Discursive tension	Discursive strategy	Analytical categories
Perpetration and victimisation	• referential strategies • predicational strategies	• Pronouns • Homonymous puns • Semiotic modes • Adverbs

Table 6.4: Summary of the discursive strategies in the discourse on discrimination

Excerpt 6.16

Frame 6.4: Dora the Exploder vs. Dora the Explorer

> <Seth Meyer>: Hamas group has started a new children's show, which features Farfur, a Mickey Mouse knock-off who teaches Islamic radicalism, and hatred towards American Israelites. Farfur replaces the network's previous children show, Dora the Exploder.

Excerpt 6.16 discusses the Hamas[13]-run channel *Al-Aqsa*, which started airing a children's programme called *Pioneer of Tomorrow* in 2008. The show is hosted by Farfur, a Mickey Mouse-inspired character, and his co-host, a young girl named Saraa', who teach children about the importance of daily prayers and drinking milk, while also indoctrinating young viewers with Hamas's principles, such as teachings of

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[13] Hamas is an 'Islamic' movement with its ideological origins traced back to the Muslim Brotherhood. It advocates for Islam as the guiding framework for a struggle, known as Jihad, with the goal of liberating Palestine (Baumgarten, 2005).

Islamic supremacy, hatred of Israel and the US, and support of the "Palestinian resistance" (Yousef, 2011:98).

Looking at the textual level in Excerpt 6.16, there seems to be an attempt to focus on the problematic nature of Hamas as a religious and political organisation. The predicational strategies of Hamas are realised through explicit evaluative attributions of negative traits, where three main characteristics of the movement are brought to the fore: Hamas is a group; Hamas is radical Islamic, and Hamas is anti-American and anti-Semitic. In fact, asserting that the cartoon character teaches 'Islamic radicalism' seems to disassociate the moderate principles of the faith from acts of violence and animosity. Foregrounding these characteristics (re)establishes the connection between Islamic radicalism and violent, discriminatory practices. As for the punchline, the anchor's use of wordplay or pun to comically claim that 'Farfur replaces the previous show, Dora the Exploder' creates discursive tension. The name of this show invokes 'Dora the Explorer', an American children's cartoon, which differs by just one letter to carry an alternative meaning. Under the GTVH framework, the pun here belongs to a subset of homonymous puns which are paronyms or 'near puns' (Attardo, 1994). These puns, unrelated in meaning or origin, have either single phonemic difference or an additional or different phoneme, as is the case here (ibid). These wordplays will often involve forceful manipulation of words to resemble other words that have pertinent meanings to the main scripts. Through punning of the word 'Explorer' and replacing it with 'Exploder', the punchline represents Hamas as an organisation associated with terrorising actions.

On the visual level, the difference between the two Dora(s) is shown in the picture accompanying the news story. Frame 2 shows Dora the Exploder, on the left-hand side, as a suicide bomber. Unlike the original Dora, on the right-hand side, who always wears a backpack, the visual representation of the other Dora shows her wearing an explosive belt and holding a match in her hand. In addition, the eye gaze, as 'a standard attention-getting device' (Messaris, 1997: 21) is also different. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), images can either 'offer' or 'demand', just like linguistic representations, which can be realised by the system of gaze (van Leeuwen 2005) (see section 4.3.4). Gaze creates reaction rather than action. Even the heavy lines under Dora the Exploder's eyes give her angry/menacing look. In Frame 4, both are gazing into the frame and there is eye contact between them and the audience.

Thus, in semiotic terms, they are depicted in an image act, where the producer uses the image to do something to the viewer. In this way, this type of image 'demands' the audience to enter into an imaginary relation with them and, hence, a strong message is conveyed as the audience becomes an active participant in a relationship between both image and interpreter. Further meaning can be derived from the image as to what expectations the image has of the audience. While the expression of Dora the Exploder conveys a meaning of 'stay away', the expression of Dora the Explorer conveys a meaning of 'stay'. Such 'demand' creates a reaction from the audience, which demands something from them (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 117).

Excerpt 6.17 below is based on a real Obama interview with CNN's programme *60 Minutes* in 2012, in which he was asked about ISIS and the situation in the Middle East. In the interview, Obama mentioned that "America is not at war with Islam, but with people who have perverted Islam." Elaborating on his statement, he asserted that the threat of terrorism stems from the adoption of "hateful ideology that groups like ISIS and al- Qaeda promote" (CNN, 2012).

Excerpt 6.17

> <super> 60 Minutes with Steve Kroft. </super>
>
> <Parody Steve>: with all due respect Mr president, you had a historically effective social media campaign in 2008, how could you be worse at social media than a band of terrorists in the desert in Syria.
>
> <Parody Obama>: ISIS started co-opting popular hashtags to trick folks into reading their messages of hate towards us. For example, (reading a tweet): "one day the Black flag of ISIS will fly over the White House #TheVoiceisBack". Or how about this one; "hearing cool stuff about Sharira law, I'ma check it out". And then there is a little emoji with a ghost and an eyepatch.

Parody Obama in Excerpt 6.17 constructs ISIS perpetration and American victimisation, as indicated in the use of the phrase 'messages of hate' and collective pronoun 'us.' Such representation has the potential to show that perceptions of discrimination and hatred are a problem existent within a group of extremists, such as ISIS. After the build-up, parody Obama reaches the punchline where he reads

tweets from ISIS members. The tweets are fictitious; strictly speaking, they are hypothetical quotes that bear enough resemblance to be considered alongside HRS (Koster and Handford, 2018). Hypothetical speech or talk dramatisation can function as a persuasive device to activate prior cultural knowledge, as well as to make an assessment about that knowledge (Sandlund, 2004). Through dramatising ISIS speech, parody Obama not only invokes shared cultural understandings about ISIS speech, but also reveals the assessments tied to such speech. For instance, the use of 'sharia law' (Islamic Law) often evokes more negative evaluations far in excess of the original message (Jacobsen, et al., 2012). This indicates that cultural understandings and preconceived notions surrounding 'sharia law' play a role in shaping perceptions and evaluations. It can also be considered as a shift in language, from sub-group constructs specifically associated with ISIS to collective constructs focusing on mainstream Islam. Thus, such shift may reinforce the presumed problematic nature of MIM, and not just ISIS. In other words, this shift might imply that the negative evaluations associated with ISIS can extend to broader perceptions of MIM.

Excerpt 6.18

Frame 6.5: the parody actress wearing a kufi in a jail cell

<stage> Cut to prison guard locking an inmate in jail. </stage>

<Parody inmate>: Aunt Becky, you're wearing a kufi! You're in The Nation of Islam now?

<Aunt Becky>: That's right. I bought my way in for 100 grand. Plus, another 100 for them to stop calling me the White Devil.

The sketch in Excerpt 6.18 is aimed at the scandal of actress Lori Loughlin who, in 2019, was sentenced to two months in prison for bribing her daughter's way into the University of Southern California. The sketch places the parody actress in a jail cell with other parody celebrities and violent felons. In Frame 5, the parody actress appears wearing a kufi, a traditional and religious skull cap often worn by Muslim men. When asked if she has joined 'The Nation of Islam',[14] the parody actress replies that she paid money to join the organisation and an additional sum to make them stop calling her 'The White Devil'.[15]

On the surface, this instance appears to be a case of gratuitous humour, in that it is considered unprovoked, unnecessary and unrelated to the sketch. It appears that in comedy shows, such as *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy*, Muslim men appear to always be wearing a turban or a kufi to represent them as 'Muslims'. Such representations are mostly negative, showing them as different or alien (Feltamate, 2017). Therefore, this instance could also intertextually reinforce such, especially since it is linked to a religious sub-group that is considered to have hateful ideologies (Corbman, 2020). The representations and evaluations of MIM can be realised in the discursive representation of perpetrator of discrimination (Black Muslim sub-group) and victim of discrimination (White people). This representation can again focus on the problematic nature of NOI as a sub-group that mixes tenets of Islam with conspiracy theories and mythology deeply rooted in racism, anti-Semitism and anti-LGBT beliefs (ibid). The visual detail (the kufi), however, seems to indicate a conflation between this sub-group and other social groups, since the kufi is considered a traditional hat for men and symbolises religious affiliation, wisdom or age.

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[14] Th*e Nation of Islam (NOI)* is a religious and political organisation established in 1930 by Wallace Fard Mohammad. It is recognised for its teachings that blend elements of traditional Islam with Black nationalist concepts (Gibson and Berg, 2017).

[15] The teachings of the Nation of Islam (NOI) consisted of incorporating excerpts from the Qur'an and other texts into lessons that were transmitted from the organisation's founder, W.F. Mohammad. The initial lesson begins with a statement that can be regarded as the foundational principle of NOI's theology: "the Earth belongs to the original Black man… The Coloured man or Caucasian is the Devil" ("Lost-Found Muslim Lesson No. 1," answer 1) (Corbman, 2020).

Excerpt 6.19 below is taken from Kumail Nanjiani's monologue when he hosted one episode of *SNL*. The comedian discusses the victimisation and discrimination of Sikhs which is a consequence of them being perceived as 'Muslims'. Nanjiani's anecdote aims to shed light on the negative consequences of such misperceptions and stereotypes, highlighting the impact they can have on innocent individuals who are targeted based on their appearance or religious affiliation.

Excerpt 6.19

> <Kumali Nanjiani>: Sikh people get attacked all the time for being Muslim. Spoiler alert: they're not. But they're brown and they wear turbans, so people attack them for being Muslim, which must put them in such an awkward position, 'cause they're like, "I'm not Muslim! Not that you should attack Muslims. But if you're looking to attack Muslims, which you shouldn't, I'm not one, there is a Muslim right over there, don't attack him, unless somebody's definitely getting attacked, in which case, get it right, which is wrong."

The comedian highlights the irony of Sikh people becoming targets of attacks due to being mistaken for 'Muslims', which places them in a confusing situation. Additionally, he acknowledges the challenges faced by Sikh individuals who experience Islamophobia due to their 'brown' skin and 'turban'-wearing. The comedian points out the awkward position Sikhs find themselves in, as they must simultaneously assert their non-Muslim identity while also confronting Islamophobic stereotypes. This dilemma arises from the societal expectation that they should disassociate themselves from Islam, which inadvertently reinforces the negative stereotypes associated with MIM in the context of Islamophobic discourse.

The use of HRS and pronominal references show different alignments and explore tensions between different groups. Nanjiani creates different systems of representation whereby Sikh people are differentiated from Muslim people. In the hypothetical reported speech, the personal pronoun 'I' indicates an individual voice (Sikh voice) that can also be used to distinct 'self' from 'others' (Watson, 1987). The 'I' here refers to the identity of 'wrong kind of Muslim' that the hypothetical Sikh speaker takes on to invoke the stereotypical image embedded in the non-Muslim psyche, who are referred to with 'you'. The generic 'you' can refer to a specific person

or group and is used to invoke what is held to be normal or typical (Laberge and Sankoff, 1980). In the excerpt above, 'you' is used to refer to the 'people' who want to attack the hypothetical Sikh speaker, as the ones who might be influenced by misconceptions and ideologies of hatred and fear. The speaker creates additional distance from MIM by using the pronoun 'him' to refer to the hypothetical Muslim man. The purpose of setting up this dichotomy is to show that 'Sikh' and 'Muslim' do not belong to the same religious category.

Though both are racialised, the othering undergone by 'Muslims' is a type of a 'double othering'. MIM are marked by two labels of categorisation that prefigure a double-othering process. The combination of race and religious affiliation exposes MIM to unique challenges and prejudices that stem from both racist and Islamophobic attitudes. The intended meaning of Nanjiani's ironic statement, what is implied but never stated, operates at the level of ideology where the audience can simultaneously find humour in the highly incongruous representations and acknowledge the implied meaning as a direct attack at the discriminatory treatment of both Muslims and Sikhs.

Excerpt 6.20

> <Seth Meyer>: Moderate Muslim groups are concerned that the new season of "24",
> which features Muslim terrorists setting off a nuclear explosive near Los Angeles,
> will foster hate against them and create a climate of Islamophobia. Also creating a
> climate of Islamophobia: terrorism!

Excerpt 6.20 discusses the popular television series *24*, broadcast on the Fox Network. The show is an action-drama centring on themes of terrorism and the War on Terror. It has been criticised by many, including the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), for perpetuating negative portrayals of Muslim people as terrorists, which has resulted in creating a sense of paranoia and a climate of Islamophobia (Alsultany, 2013).

The anchor uses the term 'moderate Muslim groups', as a referential strategy, to refer to the groups, who consider themselves as potential targets or victims of the Islamophobic climate. The term 'moderate' is considered a positive adjectival modifier when used in discussions of violence and extremism (Baker et al., 2013). A difference

is being made here between these groups and 'Muslim terrorists' to juxtapose, explicitly or implicitly, two stances: moderation and extremism. In the punchline, the anchor states that terrorism can also cause Islamophobia. His humorous utterance can again be interpreted in ambivalent ways. On the one hand, he could be stating that Islamophobia is a consequence of terrorism, while on the other hand, he may be implying that MIM are victims of the stereotypical portrayals in TV and the responses to terrorism in the form of Islamophobia.

6.3 Summary

This chapter has addressed RQ2 regarding the discursive representations and evaluations of MIM in *SNL* sketches by focusing on four dominant discourses. I started with an explanation of the reasons behind re-categorising the thematic groups which resulted from the corpus analysis and why I chose to focus on four discourses: violence, religion, human rights and discrimination. Exploring the representations and evaluations of MIM within these discourses, I found that the incongruous element of humorous texts produces ambiguities, paradoxes, tensions and contradictions of MIM representation, thereby challenging the binary opposition and dichotomising tendency found in previous studies.

One salient pattern that has emerged from this analysis is that there are different representations and evaluations of MIM (with ambivalence), which allows for both positive and negative depictions. Such representational ambivalences may reflect ideological uncertainties. In addition, it appears that the same micro-analytical categories can be employed to convey both negative and positive representations, or, put differently, the link between discursive functions – conveying negative or positive representations and evaluations – and their linguistic realisation (micro-choices) does not establish a one-to-one correlation.

Chapter 7:

Humorous and Serious Meanings in MIM-related Stereotypes in *SNL*

7.1 Introduction

This chapter builds upon the observations made previously about the potentially ambivalent readings of MIM representations in *SNL* by looking at a different level of context - humour level - and analysing the use of stereotypes and their generated meaning, whether as serious or humorous. Specifically, it seeks to answer two interrelated questions: (1) What meanings are generated from MIM-related stereotypes in the *SNL* sketches? and (2) what role do humour-invoking linguistic features employed in these sketches play in the creation and interpretation of humorous and serious meanings? By humorous and serious meanings, I refer to the paradox of humour in which "the seriousness of the social world and its comedy can be integrally connected" (Billing, 2005: 215). In other words, the linguistic structures and mechanisms that are used to generate humorous meaning can also contribute to create meaning(s) regarding serious social or cultural issues. In the context of this study, these issues are related to stereotypical beliefs and myths related to MIM, as illustrated through humorous skits in *SNL* (see Section 3.3.2).

It is worth mentioning that 'stereotype-based jokes' have been a topic of discussion in many studies, examining the direct or explicit expressions of discrimination and dynamics of prejudice (Weaver, 2011). In this thesis, however, I explore MIM-related stereotypes which include both stereotype-based humour and non-stereotyped-based humour, the latter defined here as the meanings evoked by the sign of Muslimness. The MIM-related stereotypes can encourage connotations that move between discriminatory and non-discriminatory descriptions. This is especially important since the collected sketches in the corpus are not confined to sketches that only feature commentary and impersonations of MIM, but also extend to any sketch that contains verbal and visual markers in which they are mentioned, or implicitly referred to, even in passing (See Section 4.2.2). Such markers are often related to popular stereotypical portrayals of backward Bedouin bandits, angry men with full beards, harem girls, oppressed veiled women, rich oil sheiks, extremists and

terrorists; however, not all are, and this analysis does not assume that all mentions of MIM are inherently discriminatory.

When analysing the corpus, I began by identifying stereotypes in *SNL* sketches and grouping them accordingly (Chapter 4). Then, I carried out an initial analysis to closely examine the sketches in search of linguistic mechanisms that evoke incongruity and could generate humorous and non-humorous effects. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, incongruous structure is situated in any layer of linguistic structure, in that, it can be made of various devices such as vocabulary, grammar, pragmatic and rhetorical devices. The initial analysis revealed six humour-invoking linguistic mechanisms: parody, allusion, metonymy, frame-shifting, inversion and hyperbole, all of which express humour while concurrently negotiate non-humorous meanings. The analysis below will, therefore, explain the discursive and, in some cases, multimodal manifestations of these six mechanisms, and describe the trajectory of serious and humorous meanings produced by their incongruity.

Once the linguistic devices had been identified, it was important to decide on a suitable way to categorise them. My initial plan to divide the chapter based on the recurrent stereotypes in the data did not seem a good idea, as they did not show much potential to add to what had already been derived from the analysis of the dominant discourses in Chapter 6. Moreover, although conducting an analysis of each linguistic mechanism by itself can yield interesting results, it would not take into consideration contextual parameters, which are important at this level of analysis. By 'contextual parameters', I refer to the distinctive features of the genre (parody sketches, satirical news, stand-up comedy monologues), the participants and processes of discourse practice, as well as the social context and ideologies by which it is dominated (Koller, 2015). This is especially important since in this stage of the analysis I use the DTH model (Tsakona, 2020), which highlights not only the linguistic features, but also the contextual parameters that affect the production and interpretation of humorous utterances (See Section 4.3.2). For this reason, I made the decision to divide the sketches based on the segments in which they appear. First, Chapter 6 focused on the micro-language choices found in the sketches regardless of the segments to which they belong. However, moving to focus more on humour, it is important to consider the types of texts where humour appears. Second, each

segment in *SNL* has different features, which can influence the interpretation and analysis of the data at hand. The three main segments in *SNL* (parodic sketches, satirical news and stand-up comedic monologues) have distinctive features (e.g., they can be ironic, parodic or satiric), which can serve different functions. This is important because it helps to gain a clear idea of the humorous and serious meanings being discursively strengthened in *SNL*.

In what follows, I explain the potential effects of the six linguistic mechanisms involved in the process of creating humorous and serious meanings in the three *SNL* segments. This is achieved by mapping the sociolinguistic readings of these mechanisms and how they reflect and refract wider cultural stereotypes around MIM. The discussion of the findings is organised in three sections, as shown in Table 7.1 below.

Section	Segment	Identified Stereotypes	humour-invoking linguistic mechanisms
7.2	Parody sketches	- religious fanatics - terrorists - backward - misogynists - sexually deviant - rich oil sheikhs - exotic	- parody - allusion
7.3	Satirical News in 'Weekend Update'	- dangerous - deviant - sexist - homophobic	- metonymy - frame-shifting
7.4	Stand-up comedic monologues	- violent - different - misogynist and sexist	- hyperbole - inversion

Table 7.1: organisation of the discussion of the findings in Chapter 7

7.2 MIM in Parody Sketches

Each 90-minute *SNL* episode features a variety of parody sketches performed by regular cast members and special guests, which take up most of the episode. Whether it is an impersonation of public figures or a spoof of famous shows or commercials, *SNL* parody sketches engage in discussions regarding current social,

cultural and political issues. Parody sketches imitate a person, a content or style of an original work in order to deliver comic, and at times, satiric effect. The dependence on the imitation of pre-existing texts represents a mode of intertextuality that allows for the recontextualisation of some references so that hybridised texts are produced, and new texts are created (Tsakona and Chovanic, 2020). Intertextuality can be expressed in a variety of forms and can be achieved through different devices or mechanisms, such as allusions, citation and parody, among others (See section 4.3.3). When it comes to humorous discourse, Kaindl (2004) states that allusion and parody as intertextual references can contribute to comic and humorous effects. In the analysis below, I also focus on parody, more specifically multimodal parodic impersonations, and allusion to explore the way in which these rhetorical devises invoke incongruity and highlight how the use of stereotypes around MIM have ramifications for the discursive constructions of humorous and serious meanings. Exploring intertextual references in the parody sketches below reveals the fragments or complete stereotypes that are used through linguistic and paralinguistic devices, as shown in the examples below.

7.2.1 Parody: Multimodal Parodic Impersonations

In a Bakhtinian sense, parody is a dual-structured device related to stylisation as specific intersections between reporting and reported discourses. As mentioned in Chapter 4, parody and stylisation are types of what Bakhtin (1986: 53) calls a 'double-voicing' discourse, which is defined by Hodges (2008: 486) as a discourse that "serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author". In a parodic impersonation, the two speakers are the original speaker who produced the source text, which can be an actual event or pre-existing social and mental knowledge, and the parodied speaker. The parodied speaker relies, to a certain extent, on the original source, but creates a diversion to provoke incongruity and mark the change between the two. This is mostly done by employing exaggeration and/or absurdity (Anderson and Kincaid, 2013). Most of the sketches related to MIM involve a parodic impersonation, which can be expressed both verbally and non-verbally to communicate humorous and, in some cases non-humorous, evaluations of the original source (Dynel, 2018).

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Parody Sketch 7.1: Osama bin Laden Reading His Will
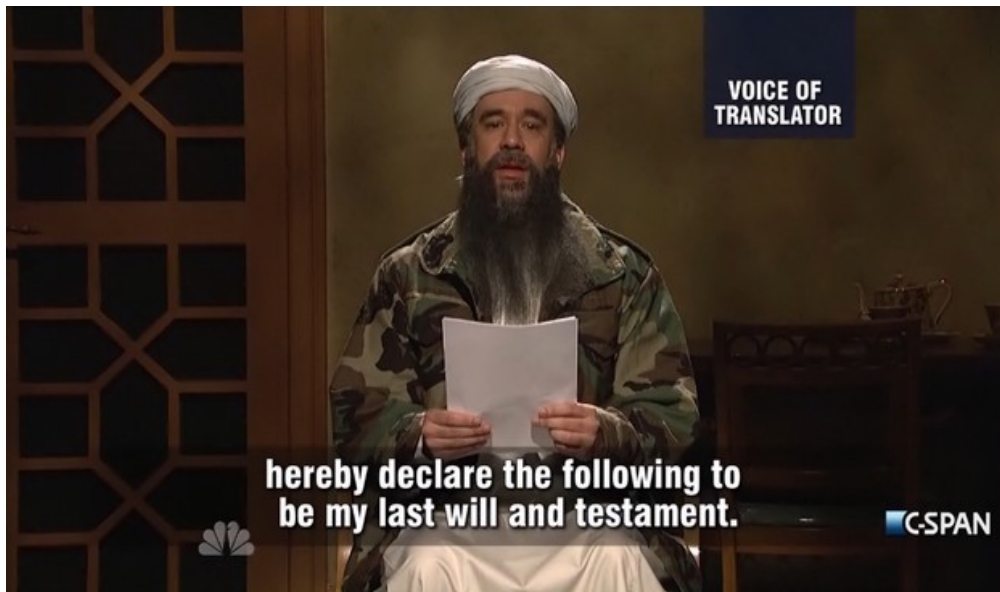
Frame 7.1: Osama bin Laden impersonator reading his will.

<Stage> open on C-Span slide. </Stage>

<Announcer>: Next on C-Span: Earlier today, the Pentagon released a taped seized in Sunday's raid on Pakistan. According to the video, Osama Bin Laden's last will and testament. The tape runs about three minutes.

<Stage> dissolve to parody Osama Bin Laden seated in chair while holding papers in his hands and speaking 'pretend' Arabic, as his will is translated to English with subtitles </Stage>

<Translator V/O:> Allah be praised. I, Osama Bin Laden, being at present in good health, and of sound mind and memory, thanks be to Allah, hereby declare the following to be my last will and testament. First, as to my funeral arrangements, it is my wish that they be conducted in strict accordance with Islamic law. As pallbearers, I designate my five oldest sons, and Dakota Fanning. If Dakota Fanning is positively unavailable, my executors may replace her with a Dakota Fanning lookalike, although I do ask that they try to get the real Dakota Fanning, if that is at all possible. If, by the time of my death, Dakota Fanning is over 12 years of age, or is no longer a virgin, my executors are to replace her with her younger sister, if she has one. Although again, a 12-year- old, virgin Dakota Fanning is my absolute first choice.

Parody Sketch 7.1 is a parody of C-Span introducing a tape found in bin Laden's compound, which turned out to be bin Laden's last will and testament. Parody bin Laden reveals, with the help of a voiceover translator and subtitles, his final wishes regarding his estate and the fact that he wants a 12-year-old virgin Dakota Fanning to be one of his pallbearers. The original source of the parodic sketch can be traced to the documents found during the May 2011 raid on bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in which he was killed (CNN, 2016). In his will, bin Laden expressed his wish to use his money on "jihad for the sake of Allah," while also directing a small portion of his estate to several family members (ibid).

The sketch above activates the original source by parodically echoing it both visually and textually. Although the recovered will is a written document, the sketch here uses a bin Laden impersonator to declare his will and testament. The visual characteristics of parody bin Laden evoke a resemblance to bin Laden "whose image with a long beard and Afghani-style turban was heavily circulated online, on television screens, and in print" (Volpp, 2004: 159). Parody bin Laden in Frame 7.1 also wears a green army jacket with a camouflage print, which is considered a standard military uniform.

The bin Laden impersonator performatively highlights his Muslimness by starting his will and testament with 'Allah be praised,' which is an intertextual reference to a widely known opening statement of praise used by Muslim people. He also expresses his wish to conduct his funeral according to 'Islamic law.' He delivers his wishes with a serious and stoic face speaking 'pretend' Arabic, which sounds like gibberish guttural noises, as his will is translated with subtitles. The use of 'pretend' Arabic serves humorous and serious ends: it creates a type of incongruity between the gibberish and English, it shows that the parodied speaker is only able to produce stereotypical approximations of Arabic (one that an American audience may recognise), it creates a sense of seriousness and it provides an aural proof of bin Laden's 'foreignness'. This comic pretence is a type of 'Mock Arabic', though its racialised voice is not as readily accessible as, say, cases of 'mock Spanish'. Hill (1995, 1998) states that linguistic representations of underrepresented languages and language varieties in American media usually function as "mock language" (see also Ronkin and Karn, 1999; Chun, 2004) because only the most prominent stereotypical features of the varieties are invoked. Mock Arabic used in this sketch is a case of a linguistic

stereotype and it provides a linkage between the Arabic language and an image of a widely known 'Muslim' terrorist.

After announcing that he is ready to declare his will, the sketch takes a diversion from what is expected when Parody bin Laden mentions the name of a young American actress as one of his pallbearers. He stresses that the young actress, or her lookalike, should be a 'virgin' and under 12 years old'. What the reference to 'a 12-year-old virgin Dakota Fanning' does, apart from being incongruous, is that it opens the sketch to serious and critical interpretations. Since it is used in the context of death, it could be read as an indirect intertextual reference to the "Doomsday Document," which was a four-page letter found in the suitcase that belonged to one of the 9/11 hijackers. In the letter, which was posted on the Justice Department's website days after the attacks, the hijacker assured his fellow hijackers that the promised 72 virgins await them in heaven. The letter may be forensic evidence for the attacks, but it also stirred up discussions about Islam, terror and Muslim women. In fact, "the heavenly virgins" have often been used in cartoons, parodies and stand-up performances, drawing on the promise of virgins in heaven to ridicule Islam or to dismiss the motivations of suicide bombers (Rustomji, 2007). Most of the references to the "heavenly virgins" used in jokes are used to evoke stereotypes related to Islam and Muslim people, depicting Muslim men as sexually deviant and Muslim women as oppressed by their own religion (ibid: 232).

Another potential reading of the above phrase is that the parody sketch plays on cultural understandings of practices and actions linked to Islam, which would be considered counter to Western morals. According to Hoewe et al (2018: 67), the attacks of 9/11 drew increased media attention to Islam and Muslim people, with stereotypical accounts depicting them as a 'backward' and 'dangerous other' closely followed by the mention of 'Islamic law'. Studies have shown that Islamic law is represented in the media as an inflexible and immutable code of religious rules that oppresses its adherents and restricts them to live in contrast to the good morals of the West (Korteweg and Selby, 2012; Hoewe et al, 2018). Among the various topics discussed in relation to Islamic law are the chastity of women and child marriage. Here, the specification of '12-year-old virgin' Dakota Fanning may be meant to invoke stereotypical understandings of Islamic beliefs and practices.

From a socio-pragmatic perspective, the visual and verbal clues found in the parody sketch above forge a link between a well-known terrorist and MIM by evoking implicit stereotypes related to terrorism, violence, backwardness and misogyny. While mentioning the name of a young actress in a terrorist's will seems absurd, it is somewhat paradoxical too, as the same name that makes the story more absurd makes it at the same time more natural. This strengthens its incongruity even more because that is precisely its function – introducing something unexpected and yet possible to be linked because of a previously known stereotype (i.e., religiously fanatical, backward and sexually deviant).

Parody Sketch 7.2: School Auction

Frame 7.2: Sheikh Akari in the high school auction.

<Stage> opens at a school auction. </ Stage >

<The principal>: now next up for bid, you may remember this band from the talent show, and I hear they're quite a hit online, it's The Emojis. So highest bid wins a 1-hour private gig with The Emojis. So, let's open up the bidding with 100 big ones. Come on.

<Sheikh Akari> (in a thick accent): I'm Michael Akari, I serve King Faydi of Qatar. The king's teenage daughter princess Sana took a liking to The Emojis on YouTube. The king insisted I attend the auction and secure their appearance to delight and amuse her. When I win the Emojis, they will immediately board on Bin Fayed's private jet and spend the next week at the palace. Upon arrival, the teens will be

bathed and groomed. The young men will spend the day on the king's yacht while the young women prepare the evening feast in the kitchen.

<The mother>: I don't know about my daughter going to the Middle East unsupervised.

< Sheikh Akari >: the king promises the young women will return with their virtues intact. And for your troubles, each entertainer's family will receive 500,000 dollars.

<The Mother>: have fun, cupcake.

< Sheikh Akari >: excellent. To the teens I just purchased, please see Ferid outside to be fitted for your robes.

< The principal >: Let's bring our star basketball players Shawn and Nate who are offering a 45-minute private basketball lesson. So, let's start the bidding at 75 dollars.

< Sheikh Akari >: 3 million!

<The principal>: wow! Okay 3 million going once, twice.

<Nate>: I don't think my mum would want me to go to the Middle East.

< Sheikh Akari >: then you're weak. But to ease your mind the King will offer you both one hour in his room of 200 virgins.

<The principal>: alright, 5 million is going once, twice and sold to Mr Akari.

While the parodied character in the previous sketch is real, the fictitious character in Parody Sketch 7.2 below echoes a familiar image of the 'rich Arab sheikh', but with a humorous twist. The humorous shift is created by a basic incongruity in the image of a rich sheikh spending undeserved wealth on a school function. In the parody sketch below, the sheikh participates in the high school fundraiser on behalf of his boss in an Arab country and bids millions of dollars for the high school rock band and basketball stars to spend a week with his boss's children. According to Shaheen (2012: 198), the 'Arab sheikh' in Hollywood production is a recurrent portrayal depicting a rich Arab man, typically seen in Arab dress, complete with headdress, often sporting a goatee and dark sunglasses when travelling abroad. Meiloud (2007) adds that the 'rich Arab sheikh' is a billionaire who is absurdly extravagant, squandering money on luxuries

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when travelling abroad and is out to buy America. The visual characteristics of the stereotypical 'Arab sheikh' are explicitly echoed in this parody sketch, as seen in Frame 7.2 above. Of great relevance to the stereotypical representation of the 'Arab sheikh' is the usage of language variation and accent to complete the image of the character, building on established cultural understandings associated with Arab people. The parody sheikh co-deployment of a thick foreign accent, serious face and shouting at people when they refuse his offer point to normative rudeness and aggression. This can also be considered a case of mock language used to parody and ridicule Arab speech and culture. In that, although the stylised mocking itself is presented as 'play', the meta-semiotic perspectives adopted by the parody sheikh subtly introduce negative social and cultural evaluations of Arab people.

As the sketch unfolds, the racial stereotypes of the Arab character are maximised and conflated with stereotypes about the religion of Islam. What is of interest here is how the religious and cultural practices are accumulated in the sketch. It is important to point out that many Arab cultural values derive from Islamic beliefs, and it is this overlap in culture and religion that frequently complicates and confuses analysts of these groups. For instance, one of the fundamental values lies in the clear distinction between men's and women's social roles and responsibilities (Bartkows and Kead, 2003). Despite the fact that the interpretations of gender roles laid out in the Quran vary with different cultures (Weiss, 2014), it is believed that patriarchal readings of the sacred text assume two primary roles of women: good mothers, (caretakers and providers of emotional support within the family structure), and good wives, (passive, chaste, and dependent on their husbands) (Barazangi, 2004). In relation to the family, women are seen to have certain obligations, which include modesty, premarital virginity, childbearing and childrearing (Read and Oselin, 2008). An example of the presumed female role is found in Parody Sketch 2 when the sheikh says, 'the young men will spend the day on the king's yacht while the young women prepare the evening feast in the kitchen.'

A depiction of stereotypical understanding of gender roles in Arab and Islamic culture is evident in Parody Sketch 2. The following implicit intertextual references to stereotypes regarding women's modesty, virginity and virtue point to and imply the religious constraints on women's gender roles. The sheikh tells the school's principal

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that, upon arrival, the young women will be 'fitted into robes', they will be 'bathed and groomed', and they will spend their night 'in the kitchen' preparing the 'evening feast'. The sheikh also promises their families that they will return home with 'their virtue intact'. As for the young men, he promises that they will spend their time either on 'the king's yacht' or in the king's 'room of 200 virgins'. Although the sketch may be an exaggeration designed for humorous effect, it still emphasises and exaggerates differences between men and women in Arab and Islamic culture. In doing so, the sketch replicates stereotypes related to MIM, but does not alter their underlying meanings; instead, it places them in an unexpected context, which elicits laughter from the studio audience.

The third Parody Sketch parodies a car company ad, featuring a daughter having a touching farewell with her dad before she goes to join ISIS. The setup is a spoof on Toyota's Super Bowl ad, 'My Bold Dad', in which an emotional father drives his daughter to the airport and tearfully says goodbye as she heads off to join the armed forces. According to CNN (2015), the sketch inspired a lot of backlashes on social media, with people criticising *SNL* for making light of the terrorist organisation.

Parody Sketch 7.3: Father Daughter Ad

Frame 7.3: Parody ISIS militant picking up his daughter from the airport

> <Screen> opens with a father driving his daughter to the airport. </ Screen>
>
> <Father>: You be careful, okay?
>
> <Daughter>: Dad, it's just ISIS.

<Father>: Take care of her.

<ISIS Member>: Death to America.

<Female V/O>: ISIS: We'll take it from here, Dad.

The stereotypical visual characteristics of 'terrorists' is evident in Parody Sketch 7.3 above, as the characters are recognised by the appearance of embodied or sartorial signifiers that indicate difference and violence, such as beards, military-style jackets and black ski masks, as well as their use of black flags, a bazooka and machine guns. The black flag is actually one of the most recognisable signifiers of the terrorist group, adorned with the Arabic writing, 'there is no god but Allah. Mohammad is the messenger of Allah.' This phrase is a declaration of Islamic faith, known as the shahada. However, in Frame 7.3, the flags with Arabic lettering that the militants are carrying read: 'انا احب قطط' (literal translation: I love cats) and 'لا نريد الا العقل' (literal translation: we only want reason/logic). The absurd writings on the flags create a difference between the original ISIS flag and the parodied copy. Although the playfully parodic nature of these absurd writings would not be obvious to most US citizens but they can still be appreciated when the (non)humorous voices are recognised. On February 2015, CNN aired a segment about ISIS's new methods to lure new recruits. They claimed that women were joining the terrorist group because of kittens, Nutella and smiley face emoticons. The report propagated the theory that women who join the organisation after seeing pictures of ISIS members cuddling kittens and eating chocolate spread in their social media accounts are brainwashed or feebleminded (Smith, 2015).

The sketch takes another surprising turn, which evokes some incongruity with the use of the chant 'death to America,'. This is also another example of intertextuality represented by its use of a chant that has resounded among terrorist organisations since Ayatollah Khomeini's Iranian revolution of 1979. According to Beydoun (2018), the negative stereotypes of Islam as a totalitarian, backward, and violent religion are deeply rooted within the collective consciousness or perception of the American society. Such stereotypes are also reinforced and perpetuated by news stories and TV shows that consistently showcase Muslim airplane hijackers and angry mobs chanting 'death to America.' This implies that the chant has been taken out of its

original context and has been recontextualised to apply to a different violent group. In other words, the same chant is echoed intertextually to highlight the identity of the 'terrorists', generating another portrayal that link MIM to violence and terror. As they start to drive off, the militants begin to shout words in an 'unintelligible' language. The words used by the parody militants are perhaps 'unintelligible', but not invented, given that they are modelled on the Islamic declaration of faith to a single god 'lā ilāha ilā Allāh'. Even though it is not explicitly stated, the Islamic declaration strengthens the stereotypical link between the terrorist group and the religion of Islam, evoking stereotypes associated with MIM. In addition, one could reasonably argue that the stylised mockery of Arabic language within the sketch would function as a semiotic channel, reinforcing the negative stereotype of Arab people and Muslim people, not only as linguistically incomprehensible but also as violent, aggressive, loud and essentially as morally different.

7.2.2 Allusion

As for allusion in humorous discourse, it is also considered a form of intertextuality, which includes references to other texts or events, often changing slightly their original form or meaning for humorous effect. Wodak (2007: 212) characterises allusions in terms of assumed/projected references based on shared knowledge between the speaker and listener. Such references can be expressed on an explicit level, echoing popular phrases or sayings from movies or newspapers. There is another level of allusion, which can be considered as a less explicit intertextual reference but may still be recognised and interpreted as an allusion, especially when the source material is widely circulated in a culture (Ermida, 2008). This implicit form can be realised through certain references that allude to issues, ideas and events with which the comedian is aware that the audience is familiar with; otherwise, the joke may not be understood by them (Schwarz, 2010).

In essence, evoking a certain allusion can also contribute to the serious and humorous effect (ibid). The analysis of intertextual references, whether they are in parodic impersonation form or allusion form, helps understand which texts are being referred to, how those texts are used, what they are used for and, ultimately, how authors can make their own statements (Bazerman, 2004). In *SNL* parody sketches

related to MIM, humour is produced by alluding to popular controversies and movies. Most of the activated allusions are associated with negative aspects of MIM.

Parody Sketch 7.4: Picture Perfect

Frame 7.4: Pictionary contestant panics when asked to draw the prophet Mohammad

< Stage> the host hands in a card and the clue is "The prophet Mohammad"

</Stage>

< Daniel> (looking scared): umm wait.

< Host>: a reminder if they don't win the million dollars prize, we will subtract a million dollars from the Hoffman's bank account.

< Tera>: what? come on! you can do it, take the pen.

< Reginald >: not doing it.

< Tera >: you can do it.

< Host >: I'm sorry, that's the time, Tera, your final guess, what did they draw? < Tera >: I don't know, the prophet Mohammed?

< Host >: Oh, my goodness that's correct. Wow-y wow-a wow. Again, the takeaway is these two men drew the prophet Mohammad.

< Daniel >: No, we drew nothing!

< Reginald >: Oh, sweet Lord, they're coming for me! I don't wanna die < Daniel >: You bet they are, Reginald! They're coming.

In this sketch, Pictionary contestants are asked to draw to win a one-million-dollar prize, and one of the characters panics when asked to depict prophet Mohammad. After another contestant also refuses to draw, their teammate guesses correctly that it is the prophet. The sketch uses allusion to indirectly refer to the controversy regarding the cartoons depicting prophet Mohammad in a satirical way and the protests and riots that followed, resulting in a total of 130 deaths related in some way to the violence (Kunelius et al., 2007).

The controversy has circulated in the media to such an extent that it has gained specific meanings in itself, allowing *SNL* writers to exploit them creatively to produce humour. The contestants did not draw the prophet, yet their teammate guessed it right, and therein lies the humour. The incongruity here plays on the prohibition of depicting the prophet in a satirical way by showing the contestants refusing to do so in a Pictionary contest. Looking at the sketch, there is nothing explicitly evaluative about it, yet there is still something implicitly critical in the contestants' reaction and their fear of being killed, especially since they drew an audible response from the studio audience. The contestants' reactions allude to the common stereotype of violent MIM without explicitly mentioning it. More specifically, the phrase 'they're coming for me! I don't wanna die' can possibly lead to some inference of expected action of MIM. This is realised by using the pronoun 'they,' allowing a particularly negative construction of MIM to prevail. By activating such stereotypes related to MIM, the sketch may potentially reinforce the focus on their alleged violence. It is important to approach the sketch with critical awareness and consider the potential impact of its content. While humour can serve as a vehicle for social commentary and satire, it is crucial to remain mindful of the potential reinforcement of harmful stereotypes and biases. Interpretations of the sketch may vary, and it is essential to engage in ongoing dialogue and critical analysis to promote a nuanced understanding of the topics at hand.

Parody Sketch 5: Caravan

Frame 7.5: The parody host and the parody reporter feel very concerned about the caravan

<Super> The Ingraham Angle on Fox News. </Super>

<Parody Ingraham>: Good evening, I'm Laura Ingraham. Tonight, we're live from the Arizona border, where a vicious caravan of dozens, maybe millions, of illegal immigrants is headed straight for you and your grandchildren. Judge Pirro, who is in this caravan?

< Parody Pirro>: Everyone you've ever seen in your nightmares, Laura. It's got Guatemalans, Mexicans, ISIS, the Menendez Brothers, the 1990 Detroit Pistons, Thanos and several Babadooks [...] This caravan's got hella Aladdins. They took the very common direct flight from Iran to Guatemala. They claimed their elephants as service animals and then rode them straight into Mexico.

The sketch above is a spoof of the Fox network show *The Ingraham Angle*, featuring parody host Laura Ingraham and parody Jeanine Pirro, a Fox TV host, a former New York State judge and a Trump supporter. The sketch is based on media discussions regarding the migrants' caravan in 2017, where thousands of migrants travelled from Central America to the US-Mexico border intending to seek asylum in the US (BBC, 2017). President Trump almost immediately made up lies about the caravan as he asserted that it was comprised of "criminals and Middle Easterners" (Washington Post, 2018). Parody Pirro creates an absurd scene when asked about the travelling immigrants and her response extends beyond the discourse of illegal immigrants to

include people from different nationalities, members of terrorist organisations, famous criminals, supervillain characters and 'hella Aladdins'. The audience can simultaneously find humour in the incongruous image of comic book supervillains and fictional characters among the travelling immigrants. On a more serious note, the humorous absurdity of parody Pirro's statement threatens Trump's claim, on the one hand, and highlights his racist remarks as the threat moves from only the migrants to all people of colour, whether real or fictional.

The allusion to 'Aladdins', a Disney fictional character, may activate a specific set of negative attributes related to the 'East' or 'Orient'. There is evidence that noun forms have a stronger ability to activate stereotypes and reveal essentialist qualities compared to adjective forms (Carnaghi et al., 2008; Graf et al., 2013). In other words, when describing individuals or groups using nouns (e.g., 'woman' or 'a Muslim'), stereotypes are more likely to be invoked and essentialised characteristics are more likely to be attributed. On the other hand, when using adjectives (e.g., "a womanly" or "a Muslim person"), the activation of stereotypes and essentialist tendencies is comparatively reduced. These findings highlight the influential role of linguistic forms in shaping intergroup and outgroup biases and perceptions. The fictional character lives in an 'exotic foreign' land with narrow streets of thieves, crooks and villains, which is based off Middle Eastern, Islamic and Asian aspects and cultural identities. The original opening song describes the land to be "where they cut off your ear if they don't like your face, it's barbaric, but hey, it's home." Disney has since taken this version out of the movie and edited the song as people deemed the lyrics as a racist portrayal of Arab, Middle Easterners and Muslim groups. Shaheen (2012: 122) condemns the Disney film for circulating negative stereotypes in their most rigid, conventionalised and, therefore, also widespread form. Such negative stereotypes about Arab and Muslim people include portraying them as 'exotic, backwards and violent.'

7.3 MIM in Satirical News

The Weekend Update segment is a satirical news-themed sketch in which the distinctions between news, politics and entertainment collapse and incoherent or absurd aspects of dominant culture are mobilised. The main aim of satirical news is to criticise socially and politically important targets (e.g., actors, organisations,

institutions), while also providing the public with an understanding of the rationale behind this criticism (Peifer and Lee, 2019). 'The Weekend Update' segment lasts for 10 minutes and has one format: the reporting of a genuine news story, followed by a punchline showcasing a surprising switch, which highlights the absurdity of the news. This format follows the basic joke format, which include two scripts: the setup and the punchline, except here the setup includes a genuine event or news story. The sudden switch to the punchline violates the audience's expectations and creates an ambiguity due to incongruity between the two scripts. However, in order to make sure the audience reaches the envisaged humorous interpretation, the punchline highlights certain elements, be they rather unexpected and surprising, which give the audience enough information to successfully process the humorous meaning. In other words, while the audience might know about the reported event or story, they need to rely on previously stored knowledge in long-term memory in order to reinterpret the joke, especially since the punchline often has atypical or incongruous information. Such cognitive process requires certain mechanisms according to which the processor or receiver of information compares and selects between two scripts, choosing the one that is relevant to the particular context of the joke (Coulson, 2001). In news related to MIM, either directly or indirectly, the satirical comments made by the anchors rely on a shared knowledge about MIM that has a prior existence in the minds of both the anchors and the audience. The analysis below shows two linguistic mechanisms, metonymy and frame-shifting, which are used to generate humorous effects, while at the same time create serious meaning regarding MIM stereotypes.

Excerpt 7.1

<Anchor>: President Trump introduced his revised travel plan this week, which will go into effect on March 16th. Though it's probably not great that it's just a bunch of brown colour swatches.

Excerpt 7.2

<Anchor>: at a rally in South Carolina, Donald Trump called for a total and complete ban on Muslims entering the US. Ben Carson agreed and said 'Muslims are dangerous agents of evil who speak in unintelligible language and are yellow with blue pairs pants and goggles' and he's definitely thinking of Minions.

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The two excerpts above discuss Trump's executive order referred to as a 'Muslim ban', aiming their satirical critique at Trump and former Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson. The two news stories about anti-Muslim sentiments – being banned from entering the country because of their difference – follow the same discursive form of representing the genuine news story, then shifting to punchlines that satirise the Republican Party's racist and anti-Muslim rhetoric. At the same time, they discursively offer a space to confront discrimination by not only addressing negative stereotypes related to MIM, but also expressing contempt to the people who believe them, mainly Trump and the GOP candidates. The incongruity in both punchlines is achieved through an exploitation of metonymic links that can constitute common stereotypes and create humorous and serious meanings. According to Tabacaru and Feyaerts (2016), metonymic patterns in humorous utterances need to be accessed through non-salient reference points, which deautomatise the initially expected interpretation routine. In other words, the joke producers evoke incongruity through metonymy, which may confuse their audience when looking for appropriate interpretations. Nonetheless, the joke producers need to make sure that the audience reaches the intended interpretation. Therefore, it is important that the reference points have some transparency with regard to the target by highlighting elements that belong together in the same frame, which gives the audience enough information to successfully process the humorous meaning through pragmatic inferencing (Feyaerts and Brône, 2005).

In Excerpt 7.1, metonymic innovation is exploited to highlight some sort of racialisation of religion of being brown, hence being 'Muslim'. The racialisation of religion is when certain phenotypical features, such as skin colour (understood and shared in a specific social and historical context) come to be associated in the collective mind with a given religion (Joshi, 2006). By a process of double stigmatisation, the racialisation of religion reinforces and exacerbates the religious marginalisation and devaluation of the minority religious groups (Goldschmidt and McAlister, 2004). As a stereotype, in the American context, race becomes a 'marker' for religion. According to Patel (2012: 216), suspicion and surveillance of "brown bodies" highlights the discriminatory treatment faced by individuals based on their racial and ethnic backgrounds. It involves the categorisation of people with Muslim, Middle Eastern, South Asian, or Arabic heritage as members of a suspect community solely due to

their physical appearance, (having brown skin). This categorisation occurs despite the lack of any actual evidence of criminal wrongdoing (ibid). In this context, both race and religion are marginalised, as the focus shifts towards the perceived association of 'brownness' with danger, deviance, and Otherness. Such association is often based on the sociohistorical moment. In broader society, the association between race and religion evolve into a conflation of the two. People with fair to medium shades of brown skin are presumed to be of a certain faith simply because of their brown skin.

In terms of analysing this example as a metonymic expression, the target frame (MIM) is accessed through some very stereotypical features, viz brown. The metonymy of referring to an entire group (MIM) by singling out an assumed specific feature (brown) immediately activates certain negative stereotypes. It is the blunt and unnuanced reference to this stereotypical feature with regard to MIM that provokes an incongruity in the humorous utterance and delivers a critique towards Trump's anti-Muslim rhetoric.

Excerpt 7.2 reports comments made by the then- Republican candidate Ben Carson, who repeatedly said during his campaign that no Muslim should be President of the United States unless they renounce the religion's system of laws and governance. Carson has also made several remarks that were noxious enough to stir up discussions regarding anti-Muslim rhetoric in America. In the punchline, the anchor quotes Carson's comments, but his reporting seems exaggerated and ridiculous, especially when he compares Muslim people to fictional yellow creatures.

When the word 'Muslim' is uttered, the audience is able to retrieve the inference from their common knowledge and beliefs, understanding the intended meaning. The phrase 'agents of evil' becomes the feature standing for the whole 'Muslims' frame, drawing on the stereotypes related to their religion. The 'Muslims' frame can call to mind negative ideas, such as 'violence' and 'difference'. By the end of the punchline, the audience is surprised by the giant leap when the anchor sarcastically exaggerates Carson's descriptions of 'Muslims' in order to create a metonymic pattern. The fact that the exaggerated descriptions of 'Muslims' are being highlighted adds a new layer to the reading of this example. More specifically, the phrase 'who speak in unintelligible language and are yellow with blue pairs of pants and goggles' verbally

marks a counterfactual space in which the anchor states – and exaggerates – Carson's anti-Muslim remarks. It is the juxtaposition in this image that urges the audience to make an inferential process. On the basis of the cultural common ground about the animated movie *Minions*, assumed to be shared by the audience, the counterfactual in the pretence can be easily accessed. The juxtaposition that the anchor shows in relation to Carson's anti-Muslim sentiments, thus, achieves criticism rather than a mere humorous presentation.

It is important to note that, while both excerpts aim to satirise anti-Muslim sentiments, the metonymic references to MIM in the punchlines are related to inanimate aspects or objects, i.e., brown colour swatches or fictional yellow creatures (Minions). Such references may run the risk of reinforcing cultural perceptions related to 'Muslim alienation' and 'Muslim immigrant's dehumanisation'. If, however, the audience does not interpret the intended meaning as a critique against Trump and Carson, then there is a chance that the aim of the satire may recede or perhaps disappear altogether, leaving only what is being said: 'Muslims' are a brown bunch of brown colour swatches and dangerous agents of evil who speak an unintelligible language and are yellow with blue pairs of pants and goggles. While a linguistic analysis cannot tell us whether the audience does interpret the meaning as such a critique, it does allow us to question the linguistic features used in the satirical texts that might influence readers' understanding in certain ways, a question based on empirical evidence.

Excerpt 7.3

<Anchor>: Taliban insurgents have ordered residents of a province near Kabul to stop watching television, saying the networks were showing un-Islamic programmes. Most notably, the popular Afghani soap opera "The Woman Who Went Outside".

Excerpt 7.4

<Anchor>: In an interview for ABC news on Wednesday President Obama said, "it is important for me to affirm that I think same sex couples should be able to get married". Okay, buddy, we get it, you're not Muslim.

The two excerpts above are seemingly intended as a satire aimed at the Taliban and Obama by invoking existing stereotypes attached to MIM. The incongruity in both

punchlines is achieved by using conceptual frame-shifting. In humorous utterances, according to Coulson (2001), the satirists adopt a frame and maintain it for a while before shattering it with incongruity. They then shift to a new frame, using a disjunctor or frame-shifting trigger which draws on prior knowledge and broader context to resolve uncertainties and vagueness in the process of constructing meanings. In essence, the joke moves abruptly from an initial mental frame and its corresponding interpretation to an unexpected and entirely different mental frame or an alternative interpretation of the initial frame. Coulson (2001) claims that contextual knowledge do much more since meaning emerges from the integration of linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge as meaning and background are intimately intertwined.

In Excerpt 7.3, the initial frame reports an accurate piece of news about the social situation in Afghanistan in which the Taliban, a fundamentalist 'Islamist' group, urged to ban every conceivable kind of entertainment including music and television on religious grounds (CNN, 2009). The anchor presents the news in the initial frame, but breaks the serious frame by introducing a disjunctor 'The Woman Who Went Outside' and creating a new frame, drawing on a popular stereotype related to MIM. What is interesting about the disjunctor here is that the name of the 'Afghani soap opera' is not true, yet it effectively facilitates a shift to a different frame and creates incongruity. Simultaneously, it manages to evoke stereotypes about the role of women in Islam. As mentioned above, there are dominant understandings of gender roles within a conservative ideology that discriminates against women. In fact, what distinguishes the Taliban from other insurgent groups in Afghanistan or elsewhere is their hard-line gender discrimination. Based on their interpretation of Islam, the Taliban stripped women of all their rights – their work, visibility, opportunity for education, voice, healthcare and mobility.

In Excerpt 7.4, the serious frame introduces Obama's interview with ABC News in 2012 in which Obama announced that after years of 'evolving' on the issue, he now supports same-sex marriage (ABC, 2012). The anchor breaks the serious frame by sarcastically referring to Obama as 'not Muslim'. Although there is no link between the two frames, once the cultural-bond information is recognised, it becomes easier for the audience to understand and appreciate the humour in the utterance. The second frame relates to the prohibition of homosexuality in Islamic doctrines, which

subsequently becomes the legal standing for institutions in some Muslim-majority countries to forbid same-sex relationships (Ouzgane, 2006). In this frame, the anchor does not include explicit mention of homophobia or prohibiting homosexuality; but he presents it as a 'presupposed content'. Wodak (2007: 214) argues, "presupposed content is, under ordinary circumstances, and unless there is a cautious interpretive attitude on the part of the hearer, accepted without (much) critical attention (whereas the asserted content and evident implicatures are normally subject to some level of evaluation)". From this perspective, presuppositions can have a significant impact on normalising a particular stereotype by relying on common-sense assumptions or presumed shared knowledge (Van Dijk 1985: 85). It is important to note here that, while Islamic institutions ban same-sex marriage, this does not mean that all Muslim people are homophobic (Khoair, 2020). In Excerpt 7.4, shifting to the comedic frame in the punchline violates the audience's expectations, on the one hand, and evokes the 'MIM are homophobic' stereotype, on the other. In order to make connection between the two frames, the audience needs to access existing knowledge about MIM and homosexuality, even if it is not explicitly mentioned.

7.4 MIM in Stand-Up Comedic Monologues

SNL's opening stand-up monologues, delivered by the guest host, resemble a stand-up comedy style, which is a show made up of several joke-telling sequences in front of a live audience (Hassaine, 2014). In other words, stand-up comedy is a live performance where comedians speak directly to the audience with a certain message they intend to deliver. The message could be about political, social or any other issues and all are wrapped in a humorous verbal language. Such live performances are also "keyed" (Goffman, 1974: 21) via linguistic cues of joke-telling, such as wordplay and punning, hyperbole, repetitions, timing and paralinguistic cues like phonological features of stereotyped styles. In stand-up comedy, comedians are often sanctioned to break with social conventions of politeness or political correctness, which restrict for example, uses of overtly stereotypical language. Still, the boundaries between comedic meanings and more serious meanings are not always clear. The two types of frames are also not noticeably separable in that they both invoke, and may reproduce, the same set of ideological meanings, such as ideologies about language, race, gender and group membership. To put it differently, the same practices that

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invoke laughter and are defined as humorous can still reproduce hierarchies of race and other social axes (Weaver, 2015).

It is worth mentioning that there are only two comedians from a Muslim background who have been asked to be hosts in two separate episodes of *SNL*. Both Aziz Ansari and Kumail Nanjiani devoted their monologues to the topics of racism and Islamophobia in the aftermath of Trump's presidency during which time Hollywood writers and producers made several attempts to criticise the proposed 'Muslim ban' policy and respond to the impact of the Trump presidency more broadly (Alsultany, 2022). Their monologues can be considered reversed discourses (Weaver, 2011), which appear in comedic acts that employ signs that belong to dominant systems of representation in order to develop a semantic reverse. In other words, comedians bring to the fore certain issues in order to break them down, or to hold them up for scrutiny. Issues of race, religion and discrimination were most prominent in both Ansari's and Nanijiani's materials. While the use of such material always runs the risk of invoking certain stereotypes related to MIM, both comedians offered critical content through the rhetorical tools of inversion and hyperbole to ridicule existing systems of representations and improve cultural understandings about MIM.

Aziz Ansari's Monologue

> \<Aziz Ansari\>: there's like this new, lower-case K.K.K. movement that started — this kind of casual white supremacy. "Oh, let me put my foot in the pool and see how cold this water really is." No! No! I'm talking about these people that are running around saying stuff like, "Trump won! Go back to Africa!" "Trump won! Go back to Mexico!" They see me: "Trump won, go back — to where you came from." They're not usually geography buffs. Lower-case K.K.K., man. They're out there. You know? Hate crimes and stuff are on the rise. As far as people in my own skin tone, brown people. I think part of the problem is a lot of these people, they just haven't interacted with any brown people in their normal life. The only people they see are these monsters in the news who are just a drop in the ocean. Maybe what needs to happen is when they do the news report, they should do a second report about some other brown people that are just up to normal stuff — just to calm those people down. So, the reports are like: "The suspects are considered armed and dangerous. Not armed

> and dangerous — these four other Muslim people that are eating nachos in Chicago. Let's go to footage of them. Uh-oh, looks like Nasir just spilled a little cheese on his khakis! Got a little overambitious with that last dip! We've all been there!"

Aziz Ansari is of South Indian origin and belongs to a Muslim family that immigrated from Tamil Nadu to South Carolina. Ansari, the first person of South Asian descent to host *SNL,* performed his stand-up monologue the day after Donald Trump's inauguration. In his monologue, Ansari tackles issues related to Trump's presidency, racism and Islamophobia. He starts his monologue by discussing voters and the need to pull together as American citizens, despite differing ideas. Coining the term 'lowercase k.k.k.', Ansari directs his aim at the 'casual white supremacy' that is often associated with the alt-right movement led by some Trump supporters who felt the results of the election were an excuse to outwardly express racism. Ansari then adds that he believes that many people who are bigoted do not know any brown people in real life and said media coverage of brown people should show Muslim people doing normal things instead of showing footage of terrorists on TV.

Ansari articulates what research which has focused on the representation of MIM in American media have already pointed out: neo-orientalist cultural stereotypes underscore the persistent hostility of media outlets toward MIM. Against this backdrop, Ansari offers an alternative representation of MIM to the one available in the media, showing 'four Muslims' who share the same normality, modernity and peacefulness with the rest of America. Ansari relies on the inversion of racial stereotypes to make his message even more pointed. The inversion of racial stereotypes is a rhetorical tool for undermining racist systems of representation, and it has a long history in American popular culture due to the popularity of Blaxploitation films in the 1970s (Hall, 1997: 270). Inversion as a rhetorical tool comes in many forms, but always involves an element of incongruity in which racial signifiers are decoupled from their signified in order to invert traditional expectations about racial groups.

In the monologue above, skin colour, the most common signifier of race, is completely displaced from its usual signified, as the four 'Muslims' cross the threshold from 'abnormal' activities to normal activities. The alternative representation Ansari offers

deviates from widely perceived activities (being armed and dangerous) through the use of attributes (eating nachos in Chicago) typically associated with the cultural codes of a non-brown or non-Muslim group. Put differently, the typical portrayal of MIM as violent and dangerous within the American media is starkly inverted: the four 'Muslims' are eating nachos and one of them spilled a little cheese on his khakis, a normal thing that 'we' have all been through. Such portrayal relocates MIM in the realm of everyday life and out of the confines of violence and terrorism. Chao (2015: 45) calls this inversion a transition from "banal oppositional" to "oppositional banality" where media portrayals showcase the mundane experiences of Muslim people and contest widely circulated representations deeming them as 'opposite', 'different' and 'other'. Such a discursive manoeuvre challenges normative understandings of Muslim identity by inserting a banal and normal gaze towards Muslim representation in the media, which deviates from politicised and radicalised Muslimness. Thus, the audience is confronted with a discursive clash in which the MIM stereotypes of violence is playfully inverted. This rhetorical tool tends to be incongruous with existing systems of representation, disrupting tropes that have been naturalised over time, thus exposing the absurdities that exist within cultural ideologies and systems of beliefs.

Kumail Nanjiani's Monologue

> <Kumali Nanjiani>: Islamophobia is really on the rise right now. It never really went away but it's really having a moment right now. I saw a guy be like, "Of course all Muslims are sexist. The Quran says all women can't drive." Yeah, pretty sure the Quran never said that. Because if the Quran had said "women can't drive cars" 1400 years ago, I would be at the mosque right now. And so would all of you! 'cause that would mean the Quran predicted cars. If 1400 years ago the Quran was like, "Someday there will be a metallic box that will carry you wherever you want. And it will have 4 wheels. And you'd have to put gasoline in it. And it will have a little speedometer to tell you how fast you're going. And it will have a Bluetooth connection. And women shouldn't drive it," I would be like, "I know two things for sure: Islam is the only true religion, and women shouldn't drive." I am so glad you laughed at that, 'cause otherwise it sounds like I'm just giving a very divisive speech. "Islam is the only true religion. Women shouldn't drive." That will definitely be the

quote on the internet tomorrow. Here's my problem with most racism: it's the inaccuracy. That's what bugs me. I'm like, "Do the research! Put in the work! You will see the benefits!" I'll give you an example. If someone yells at me, "Go back to India!" I'd be like, "that guy's an idiot". But if someone was like, "Go back to Pakistan, which was part of India until 1947, and is now home to the world's oldest salt mine!" I would be like, "That guy seems to know what he's talking about. I'll pack my bags." Just because you're racist doesn't mean you have to be ignorant. An informed racist is a better racist.

Nine months after Aziz Ansari hosted *SNL*, not much had changed for America. In his monologue, Kumail Nanjiani, who comes from a Muslim Pakistani background, also tackles the same cultural trends tied to racism and Islamophobia he has experienced first-hand. He starts by pointing to some viewers' racist reactions to his recent movie, *The Big Sick*, which tells the story of how Nanjiani fell in love with his white wife Emily. He said that his Twitter feed was filled with people asking him to 'go back to India,' a place he has never been. He also touches upon Islamophobia and mentions a story about someone who made an uninformed quip about Muslims being 'sexist' and the Quran stating that 'women can't drive'. This further makes his point about some people not being informed about race and religion yet making judgments. Nanjiani goes on to explain that Islam's sacred text was written 1,400 years ago and, thus, would not have predicted the invention of cars.

Widening the debate on Islamophobia and highlighting the absurdity of the Quran story, Nanjiani provides his audience with an exaggerated version of existing misconceptions of Islam using a different, although not necessarily new, rhetorical tool. Hyperbole is one of the very frequent linguistic devices in humorous texts (Forabosco, 2011: 356). It is used to express a discrepancy between the exaggerated statement and the reality it claims to describe (Attardo, 1994). Hyperbole describes a 'movement' of language, the specific distance between parts of an incongruity, or the direction in which they travel (Weaver, 2020). Van Dijk (2004: 120) states that hyperbole is a "semantic rhetorical device for the enhancement of meaning." Such tool can serve subversive ends by rendering stereotypes hyper-visible and thus vulnerable to critique, while also highlighting an audience's own prejudices by showing the logical extremes of commonly held stereotypes (ibid). In making systems

of representation visible, Nanjiani hopes to shatter the misconception of 'misogynist sexist Islam' and begin to critique the stereotype that has been normalised over time.

Drawing on the misconception of the prohibition of women driving in Islam, Nanjiani presents a story that demonstrates, through hyperbole and absurdity, the idea that Islam's sacred text has predicted the invention of cars centuries ago. He injects this stereotype with a sharp sense of exaggeration to cause an incongruous and serious effect. The exaggeration of stereotypes may encourage audience to rethink such understandings and beliefs about MIM. In fact, through this enticing humorous veneer, the audience is encouraged to engage with the issue of cultural misunderstandings that leads to Islamophobia, instead of the stereotype itself. Such incongruity may serve to influence audiences, causing them to question such misconception and search for a serious meaning.

7.5 Summary

This chapter has offered a discursive analysis of *SNL* sketches to firstly decode how the humorous incongruous structures relate to specific linguistic features, and secondly, to uncover how stereotyping contributes to humorous and serious effects. It is clear from this discursive analysis that there are many nuances to the stereotypes referenced in *SNL* sketches. The 11 examples discussed here include several stereotypes related to MIM, such as violence, misogyny, alienation and backwardness. The analysis focused on six linguistic devices, namely parody, allusion, metonymy, frame-shifting, inversion and hyperbole, which evoke incongruity and generate humorous effects. Behind the humorous level, however, there lurks a layer of serious critique about stereotypes related to MIM circulating in the American society.

The discursive analysis has demonstrated that an appropriate interpretation of the sketches is probably unreachable without the proper relevant knowledge about a particular stereotype. In addition, the analysis has identified divergent ways to interpret the sketches, finding that negative stereotypes related to MIM were a primary concern. The results also highlighted the lack of fixity in humour and emphasised the complexity of evaluating the polysemy of humorous incongruities. This indicates that humorous discourse has the potential for layering multiple discursive positions and

meanings, allowing ambivalent or contradictory social understandings to receive discursive strengthening.   Nonetheless, providing a detailed explanation of the relevant incongruous mechanisms used to elucidate humour has allowed for the study to explore humour's serious functions in comedic sketches referencing stereotypes related to MIM.

Chapter 8:

Discussion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to answer the overarching research question: do emergent and dominant discourses, and the representations of MIM in *SNL*, articulate, disarticulate or rearticulate normative cultural understandings about MIM in contemporary America, and, if so, in what respects? The chapter builds upon the descriptive findings of Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, using them to make inferences about the underlying representations of MIM in *SNL* and their connections to the socio-political context of contemporary America. It is, therefore, essential to first outline the main theoretical premises that were established in the theoretical frameworks chapter (Chapter 3).

First and foremost, cultural assumptions and representations in a given social order are closely linked to language in the social world (Fairclough, 2013). With this in mind, discursive analysis offers evidence for the examination of "the persuasive communication of ideological propositions" (van Dijk, 1995:17). Second, factors and forces outside the immediate context of discourse go beyond describing the internal systematisation of language so as to identify the functions it has in a wider context. In this way, it is possible to discuss the different discursive functions of micro-choices and their relevance to specific historical, social, cultural or political contexts. Some of these functions are more prevalent and salient than others, which make them more culturally available and acceptable (Wetherell, 2001). The third and final premise is that due to its polysemic nature, humorous representations are ambivalent. Therefore, they do not operate with the assumption of one dominant, institutionally encoded reading. In fact, ambivalence theory supports the idea that multiple meanings are possible and probable in comedic content as a result of the incongruous nature of humorous discourses (Weaver, 2011). Consequently, humorous representations may be decoded in a way that supports cultural assumptions and/or in a way that uproots cultural assumptions (Gray, 1995; Weaver, 2011). By virtue of their polysemic nature, humorous discourses need to be paired with a form of criticism

that takes into consideration the multiple meanings. Therefore, developing an approach that combines discursive patterns and functions with critical interventions can provide understandings on the discursive structure and potential effects of humour. In other words, investigating how such discursive patterns and functions work and what they do can yield implications of the multidimensional, functional and discursive effects of humour on negotiating humorous and non-humorous meanings.

As the patterns of representations around MIM in *SNL* have been examined in the previous chapters, it is now time to link them to the wider socio-political context and investigate the underlying ideological constructs that feed into these patterns. The aim behind creating such connections is to identify the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic elements present in the humorous discourse. This will initiate a discussion about how these elements function to create, maintain and disseminate the values and norms of dominant social and political systems in contemporary America. In what follows, I will first outline the dominant discourses in *SNL* resulting from the corpus analysis and discuss their political and ideological implications. I then move to address the representations of MIM in *SNL*, focusing more specifically on the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic readings of these representations, and how language can be employed to support and/or challenge dominant ideologies. The final section will delve into the comedic play on stereotypes related to MIM and how reappropriating stereotypical beliefs in humorous ways can run the risk of propagating them, while simultaneously critiquing the legitimacy of these stereotypes.

8.2 Dominant Discourses in *SNL*: Political and Ideological Implications

The first theoretical premise entails that critical analysis of any discourse examines the complicated relationship between language and the social structures/norms that shape its use. By understanding this relationship, CDS aims to uncover the social, cultural, and political implications of language use and contribute to a more critical understanding of ideological structures and norms (KhosraviNik, 2015). The ideological structures and norms in question in the current study are those related to MIM in contemporary America. Although the corpus findings in Chapter 5 are descriptive, they still offered many of the contextual clues which were necessary for the critical analysis and interpretation of the ideological norms underpinning the

representations of MIM in the *SNL* sketches. That is, the corpus findings constitute a body of knowledge that has been constructed about MIM and communicated through sketch comedy in contemporary America. Identifying the knowledge communicated can also unveil the underlying system of social representations.

The generated list of keywords in Chapter 5 was used to identify the main topics discussed in the *SNL* corpus. These keywords were considered to be foci points where the meaning of the *SNL* discourse is accumulated, and they can help uncover the historical and ideological context of the discourse when conducting a more thorough linguistic analysis. In this study, these keywords gave clues to the most dominant topics and salient aspects which tended to co-occur with MIM in *SNL* between 2008 and 2020. These dominant topics included issues that are related to MIM, such as America's involvement in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, terrorist attacks in America, Trump's anti-Muslim remarks, Syrian refugees, the treatment of women under 'conservative' laws in Saudi Arabia and hate crimes. Grouping the keywords into thematic categories, the analysis revealed four discourses that are deemed recurrent and dominant in the *SNL* corpus: violence, religion, human rights and discrimination. Such discourses seem to confine MIM to conflict-ridden issues, including war*,* violence*,* terrorism*,* extremism, backwardness, freedom of speech, women's rights and discrimination.

Whether it is the implicit neo-racial narratives around MIM under Obama's administration or the open embrace of anti-Muslim sentiments during the Trump era (Hilal, 2022), the dominant discourses around MIM in *SNL* engaged in the same persistent and problematic trends found in some Western media outlets about terrorism, oppression of women, lack of integration and cultural backwardness (Karim, 2018; Harries, 2019; Hilal, 2022). Problematic trends such as these usually reflect certain underlying ideologies that give them legitimacy and coherence (see Section 2.1.2). What, then, are the identifiable ideologies dominating the *SNL* discourse?

As discussed in Chapter 2, in terms of MIM representation, Western media discourses seem to be based on the same ideological premise: a fear of Muslim people as backward, sexist and/or violent (Saghaye-Biria, 2012). The religion of Islam has been characterised by theocracy, inferiority, fundamentalism and backwardness, outside of

SNL, with Muslim people mostly represented as 'uncivilised', 'terrorist' and 'fanatic' in order to suggest difference, incompatibility and threat (Jackson, 2007: 420; Samaie and Malmir, 2016: 16). Such premise is based on 'Western liberal secular' ideology that deems religions as remnants of a primitive past that are contrasted with the intellectually sophisticated liberal secular world (Poole, 2006: 134). One of the purposes of using issues related to conflict is to promote certain ideologies, such as freedom of speech or human rights, and advocate for civil liberties and democratic practices as a way to address security threats. This demonstrates that despite *SNL* being a comedy show, the discourses and narratives constructed and maintained by the media regarding MIM can be repurposed and recontextualised into other forms of media, though in a distinct and subtle manner.

While it seems that the discussion above engages in the same topics and aspects that perpetuate old trends in the media, *SNL* has often ridiculed the complexities and characteristics of dominant structures and discourses. Through mimicking and mocking comments directed at MIM, sketches in *SNL* have the potential of highlighting the absurdity of stereotypical or anti-Muslim rhetoric and, thus, open a space to critique the content of problematic trends and discourses in the Western media. With the use of certain tools such as irony, satire and parody, these sketches can mobilise 'incoherent or absurd aspects of dominant culture in order to make a sustained, powerful critique of the dominant more feasible' (Gournelos et, al 2011: 28). However, this does not remove the polysemic potential in the humorous discourse, which could lead to divergent possible meanings, including supporting and/or condemning hegemonic knowledge (Simpson, 2003).

8.3 Representations and Evaluation of MIM in the Dominant Discourses: Hegemonic and/or Counter-Hegemonic Interpretations

Focusing on MIM representations in *SNL* can be a site on which wider, public meanings are inscribed. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, representations usually stem from stereotypes, as well as the power dynamic between different groups, used as a way to make sense of people or ideas that are different and regarded as deviating from what is considered as the norm (Hall, 2003). This 'difference', according to Hall (1997: 283), is ambivalent because "it can be both positive and negative. It is both necessary for the production of meaning, the formation of language and culture,"

Additionally, the connection between representation and language, coupled with its contribution to the creation of culture, knowledge, norms, and conventions, makes it applicable in studies, such as the present one, which adopt a critical discourse analytical perspective. From this perspective, power dynamics, dominance, and exploitation are viewed as being conveyed, constructed, and perpetuated through language (Wodak and Meyer, 2016). Consequently, the discourses formulated within media narratives should be recognised as "sites of struggles", often reflecting "different ideologies", contending and struggling with the dominant power (Wodak, 2002: 10). As the current thesis seeks to identify representations around MIM, a critical discourse analysis seems well suited to carry out this task, since it acknowledges the social constitutive and constructive process of language, which serves the purpose of creating, sustaining, and perpetuating certain hegemonic elements, while also having the potential to transform them. This association between language, power, ideology, and the concept of representation explains the importance of utilising critical discourse analysis in this study.

By examining the micro-analytical choices, one can understand their functions within discourse and how they contribute to shaping discourse in a particular context. This is crucial in explaining some aspects of the discursive mechanisms of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic readings and how language can be employed to support or challenge dominant ideologies. Analysing the micro-analytical choices used to represent and evaluate MIM in the four dominant discourses (violence, religion, discrimination and human rights), the findings revealed that the incongruous element of humorous texts produces tensions and contradictions of MIM representations, thereby challenging the binary opposition and dichotomising tendency found in previous studies. This means that the representations of MIM in the four dominant discourses are dichotomised, but do not exist as isolated poles; rather, tensions are evident between violence and peace, between sameness and difference to other religions, between violation and adherence to human rights and between perpetration and victimisation of discriminatory acts. These tensions have the potential to communicate ambivalent critical meanings regarding the hegemonic and/or counter-hegemonic potential of MIM representation. Such discursive tensions encourage analytic confusion because they dilute any fixity of interpretations. However, the use

of certain discursive strategies, such as argumentation, nomination, and predication, can reveal the way in which MIM are represented and evaluated based entirely on language choices made at the textual level, rather than by looking at *SNL*'s writers' statements about their show or the statements of others. This is important because describing the linguistic features of a text and then interpreting the features within the constructed sociocultural, political and historical contexts in which the text arises can be a productive method for understanding the serious functions of humorous discourse.

The representations in Chapter 6 also hinted at narratives used in favour and against MIM in the discussions of link between MIM and violence, sexism, backwardness and discrimination, including both supporting and opposing stances towards such links. Moreover, while these strategies describe the internal structure and organisation of language, they also serve important functions within the socio-political context in which they are employed. The analysis in Chapter 6 revealed certain discursive functions, such as foregrounding the challenges caused by violent actions, while backgrounding the negative association between MIM and violence; polarisation of in-group (Judeo-Christian/American) and out-group (MIM), parallel representation between MIM and Americans, differentiating between sub-groups (ISIS, Hamas) and MIM and collectivisation of MIM as a homogenous entity. These findings beg an important question: what are the potential hegemonic and counter-hegemonic readings of MIM representations in *SNL*?

8.3.1 Hegemonic Interpretation

Hegemonic interpretations of representations refer to the knowledge and understandings about certain groups that are widely accepted by society and tend to be inflexible and controlling. Fairclough (1995, 2003, 2010) argues that these representations serve a specific social and political function: to uphold the existing power structures by perpetuating social beliefs that justify inequalities and power imbalances. Concerning MIM, hegemonic representations include negative portrayals of MIM as dangerous, terrorist, different and sexist (Baker et al, 2013; Samaie and Malmir, 2017). The negative representations of MIM are troubling from a critical perspective as they can be viewed as a continuation of a historical pattern of widely accepted representations of MIM spanning from 9/11 to Obama's presidency and the

Trump era (Ahmed and Matthes, 2017). These representations can be intentional and purposeful, where powerful and influential individuals or groups take advantage of public fears and anxieties to serve their own social, political, and cultural agendas (Lowry et al., 2003). By capitalising on these emotions, they can shape public opinion and attitudes towards MIM in a way that aligns with their objectives which can often aim to containing, monitoring, and controlling MIM. In addition, by perpetuating negative stereotypes and fostering a climate of fear and suspicion, these representations can undermine the principles of multiculturalism and enable, justify, and normalise hostile, discriminatory and exclusionary practices (Martín-Muñoz, 2010; Mansson McGinty, 2018).

My discursive analysis in Chapter 6 revealed that the representation of MIM was largely negative due to: (1) repeated use of adjectives such as 'extremist' and 'terrorist'; (2) the use of images of stereotypical 'Muslims' circulated in Western media; (3) the conflation of culture and religion; (4) ridicule and sensationalism; (5) the generalisation of specific cases to the entire religion; (6) ignorance about Islam; (7) the association of Islam with violence and backwardness. Such portrayals can be deemed to function as a means of legitimising and expanding hegemonic power (Lajevardi, 2020: 158). In fact, studies have shown the way in which media narratives project the "threat" onto "a collectivised Muslim"—legitimising and preparing a ground for Western domination in the claimed service of the liberal world (Wilkins and Downing, 2002; Karim, 2002; Ahmed and Matthes, 2017).

There are several sketches that demonstrate some of these negative representations historically accepted in mediated depictions of MIM. For instance, the linguistic analysis in the sketches across the discourse on violence in Chapter 6 (see Section 6.2.1) revealed rather unsurprising patterns where MIM are represented as dangerous and terrorists in some of the examined sketches, which ultimately echoes the presumed accepted notion of a violent Muslim/peaceful non-Muslim dichotomy (Sian et al, 2012; Baker et al, 2013; Samaie and Malmir, 2017). In one of the examples analysed in Chapter 6 (Excerpt 7.4), the parody host asked parody Obama about the connection between Islam and ISIS and parody Obama said, "the first 'I' in ISIS stands for Islamic." This comic re-framing runs the risk of strengthening unsubstantiated claims with reliability and legitimacy. Even though parody Obama implicitly refers to

the presumed belief that Islamic ideology encourages or permits violence and encourages extremist groups to commit terrorism, the audience may automatically access existing knowledge about MIM when making the connection. Under Obama's presidency when anti-Muslim rhetoric massively escalated (Kumar, 2012), connecting MIM to a terrorist group here, even with witty sarcasm that exposes the absurdity of certain claims, can inadvertently shift focus away from valid accusations and potentially sustain hegemonic interpretation at MIM's expense.

In addition, the negative representations of MIM in the discourse on religion (see Section 6.2.2) depicted them as incompatible or different from other religious groups. This difference is perceived through the lens of intolerance, incompatibility and inferiority, which has the potential to reinforce hegemonic understandings of MIM's purportedly inferior, violent and backward nature (Moore et al., 2008; Saghaye-Biria, 2012). The findings indicate the existence of discursive processes that construct certain value systems as superior based on their association with 'Americanness', potentially marginalising and devaluing other cultural perspectives. This also suggests that the *SNL* discourse may be coherent with the interests of dominant cultural understandings and ideologies, complementing the existing set of representations of MIM that are already established in the US. According to Kasson (1990) and Kalkan (2017), MIM have been continuously rated as a less favourable group than other religious groups in America and are considered to have a lower status in the American hierarchy of race and religion. This hierarchy places certain groups above others, and it has been suggested that those who are identified as 'Muslim' are currently viewed as lower in status within this system (Kalkan, 2017: 22).

Moreover, the cherished values of democracy indicate that cultural violence performed by Western states, such as publishing satirical visual depictions of prophet Mohammad, is justified in and through the ideology of democracy. These values include rights to freedom of speech, coupled with heightened self-righteous beliefs whereby the ideals of Western democracy trump those derived from a religious worldview. For instance, in most of the sketches in the discourse on human rights (see Section 6.3.3), the religious attachment (extremist leaders, conservative scholars) of human rights violators is associated with Islamic responsibility for violating human rights by oppressing women and killing artists who express their

artistic freedom. However, this attachment often focuses on backgrounding the religious aspect with little problematisation of certain practices in some countries that are deemed against liberal and democratic values. In doing so, even examples of sub-groups (extremist leaders, conservative scholars) contribute toward homogenous constructs of the MIM violators of human rights. The portrayal of violent Islamic practices as inferior is linked to a perceived failure to embrace modern societal norms where barbaric and brutal acts are no longer acceptable or tolerated (as outlined in Chapter 2). This suggests that MIM are viewed as unable to assimilate or conform to mainstream American values and cultural norms due to their perceived cultural backwardness and differences. In addition to being deemed incompatible, MIM is also portrayed as 'intolerant' towards Western values. This characterization suggests that Islamic culture not only differs from Western values but actively rejects or opposes them. The depiction reinforces a perception of a fundamental clash or conflict between MIM culture and Western values, sustaining hegemonic understanding of MIM in contemporary America.

Western media has played a significant role in constructing a negative perception of Muslim women, representing them as passive, repressed and traditional (Jawad, 1998; Abou-El-Fadl, 2001; Esposito and DeLong-Bas, 2011). In these narratives, the term 'Arab Islamic women' often evokes an image of women who are heavily veiled, isolated and whose lives revolve around their homes (Adham, 2012). In the examined sketches in Chapter 6, women in Muslim-majority countries like Saudi Arabia are represented as oppressed and victims to a conservative religious authority. Although the link between the situation in Saudi Arabia and Islam is left implicit, the discursive processes used to refer and evaluate the situation of women in Saudi Arabia activates a mental representation of oppressive practices implemented by the conservative religious groups against women's will and freedom, thereby perpetuating a cultural understanding of Islam as incompatible with Western values (ibid). Such representation could also read as "another example where the West need to intervene to save Muslims from their own barbaric nature" (Muscati, 2009: 159). Again, the popular image of MIM as backward and seemingly static who need to be saved by Western civilisation is sustained by the use of referential and predicational strategies. Although retrieving implicit information in the examined sketches may require more cognitive effort, it should be noted that the audience would not perceive it as less

important. The socio-political context surrounding the text, such as the extensive coverage of MIM in the media, is likely to strengthen the audience's mental image of oppressed women in Islam. These associations, which result from discursive processes, can become so ingrained that some members of the audience will automatically assume these associations, even without any explicit or implicit information to support this notion (Baker, 2006: 114).

These representations have reaffirmed the view of representation offered by Wodak (2002: 10). She claims that the construction of certain social groups in a given discourse can be understood as an inherently discursive process. In this process, there is a struggle to define the qualities, categories, and claims that align with a particular subject position. The dominant descriptions that conform to prevailing ideologies and norms are favoured, while less dominant descriptions that challenge or deviate from these norms are often rejected. This selective acceptance of certain descriptions can reinforce existing power dynamics and hierarchies. An example of this from the analysis is the contrasting portrayals of a 'peaceful, moderate Muslim' versus a 'violent, extremist Muslim.' The constructed representation of MIM based on dominant meanings has implications for their interactions within society. It sets expectations and assumptions about how MIM engage with others and participate in socio-political contexts. This can lead to limited interaction and reinforce divisions based on fixed social categories of difference (Morgan, 2013).

Even with many textual clues that suggest ironic and satiric readings, most of the sketches may still operate withing a hegemonic framework for some viewers, in that, they encourage expressions of discrimination and Islamophobia. This is probably due to the possibility that these representations are heavily influenced by dominant understandings regarding MIM, which present them in similar discursive frames. Although some might claim that not every sketch is ideological, discussions of MIM and the privileging of certain representations does point to a tendency of side-lining alternative worldviews, especially religious ones.

When interpreting these sketches, it is important for the audience to recognise the shift in tone from serious to non-serious, especially if they are to be understood as satirical commentary on misconceptions about MIM or criticism of anti-Muslim

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rhetoric. This understanding allows the audience to separate the representations within the sketch from the serious context they may reflect. However, despite the intended ironic, parodic, or satirical nature of these representations, there will likely be viewers who interpret them literally without recognising the underlying critique or humour (Billig, 2005; Weaver, 2011).

8.3.2 Counter-Hegemonic Interpretation

The term counter-hegemonic is used in this thesis to refer to anything that opposes hegemonic representations. This includes positive and neutral representations of MIM that replace the abovementioned negative depictions of MIM with fair, balanced and normal depictions (Halse, 2012). As an example, Akbarzadeh and Smith (2005) cite the presence of positive representations or MIM in western media such as 'peaceful', 'moderate', 'liberal', 'feminist', 'family-oriented', 'anti-terrorist' and 'community-oriented' in Western media. Obadare (2009: 244) suggests that humorous discourse that addresses serious issues, such as race, religion and gender, can be seen as a form of counter-hegemony, in that, humour challenges reasonable expectations and social norms. Examining humorous discourse from a critical perspective involves exploring how it can both reinforce and strengthen, as well as undermine and challenge, dominant power structures.

One way of offering positive or neutral representations of MIM in *SNL* is through articulation of peace and modernity which can develop a discursive space for alternative construction and play a role in challenging dominant cultural understandings of MIM as 'violent', 'sexist' and 'backward'. For instance, by dissociating negative references and predicates from the religion of Islam in some sketches, a space for an alternate representation of MIM is created: MIM are peaceful, and terrorists are evil. In the examined sketches in Chapter 6, peaceful MIM representations, albeit few in number, provide alternative representations of MIM outside the scope of violence and terrorism. In these instances, resistance to the dominant discourse of intolerance and exclusion is constructed by refuting the negative attributes that are used to exclude MIM from mainstream Western society and using positive attributes of inclusion and tolerance. In the course of such resistance, differentiating between moderate MIM and extremist MIM challenges the

dominant discourse that equates Islam with violence or terrorism. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of MIM and the terrorist subject, as well as the socio-political context in which they exist. Such use of positive and neutral constructions of MIM indicates that *SNL* offers a space to create more positive representations of MIM by emphasising peace and modernity. Nonetheless, it is found that the representation of a peaceful MIM is often limited by expectations of conformity, disregarding the challenges linked to individual Muslim agency and choice.

Another approach to representation MIM in a positive manner involves highlighting multiculturalism and cultural compatibility or similarity. Evidence of this has been identified in the analysis in Chapter 6, showing that assimilating to American practices or being compatible with American society activate positive representations. It seems that there is an active effort to redefine and rearticulate the image of MIM in *SNL*, by emphasising qualities such as goodness, peacefulness, and non-threatening behaviour (Keddie, 2018: 527). In this sense, moving away from negative representations and emphasising positive descriptions of MIM as 'similar' or 'compatible' to American society and culture enables the reconstruction of MIM as victims and not as perpetrators of violent acts and human rights violations. Most relevant here is the possibility of breaking the dominant ideologies exercised by traditional media by offering a counter-hegemonic observation that may raise awareness about discrimination against MIM in society, thereby educating the audience. However, this 'positive' representation can reinforce the agenda of assimilation, driven by the belief in the superiority of 'Americanness,' which often involves adopting mainstream practices, norms, and values while downplaying or abandoning one's cultural background (Haynes, 2017). This not only undermines the principles of multiculturalism but also exposes the existence of a hierarchical ranking of cultures, where MIM are currently situated at the bottom (Bleich et al., 2018).

Counter discourses of diversity, tolerance and unity illustrates the breaking down of cultural barriers that hinder harmonious integration and emphasise the importance of embracing multiculturalism and fostering a sense of unity. Furthermore, evidence showcasing the similarities and modernity of MIM demonstrates the compatibility of Islam with Christian, Western, and global societies. These counter-hegemonic representations challenge the notion that MIM are incompatible and unable to

integrate successfully, thereby removing the rationale for enforced assimilation and reform. However, while these discourses align with multiculturalism, the concepts of tolerance and integration seem to be contingent on the condition of assimilation and agency, where adopting 'American' traits is seen as evidence of being a 'good' MIM. The coexistence of positive and negative discourses illustrates their interconnectedness, underscoring the complex nature of representations of MIM through discourse. However, the binary categorisation of good/bad MIM contributes to negative hegemonic representations of MIM and restricts them to narrow and limiting representations. This binary perpetuates the idea that there are only two ways to be 'Muslim': either as a 'good' Muslim who assimilates to Western culture and values or as a 'bad' Muslim who is associated with terrorism and violence. This oversimplification of MIM identity ignores the diversity and complexity of Muslim experiences and perpetuates harmful stereotypes and prejudices. It is important to move beyond this binary and recognise the diversity and richness of Muslim identities and experiences.

8.4 Stereotypical Beliefs about MIM in *SNL*: Disciplinary and/or Rebellious Humour

Another concern of this thesis is related to identifying humour-invoking linguistic features that are employed in sketches that contain common stereotypes about MIM and what role these features play in the creation and interpretation of humorous and serious meanings. According to Billig (2005: 202), humorous discourse can be classified into two types of ridicule: disciplinary and rebellious. While both forms involve humour, disciplinary humour is used to mock those who violate social norms and, therefore, reinforces those norms, whereas rebellious humour mocks the norms themselves and can be seen as challenging or rebelling against them. While this method of categorisation is inherently flexible, the study has explored how humour-invoking linguistic features tend to function, even if they cannot be definitively categorised.

The analysis of the humorous structures of *SNL* in Chapter 7 helped to uncover the way in which stereotypes contribute to humorous and serious effects. Careful qualitative examination of the humorous linguistic mechanisms employed in these sketches that explicitly or implicitly contained stereotypes revealed some discursive

functions which describe the trajectory of meanings produced by their incongruity. The ambivalence, envisaged in the humorous texts, accounts for the incongruity and polysemy surrounding the use of stereotypes related to MIM in *SNL* sketches. It has been pointed out before in Chapter 2 that "humour always introduces ambivalence as to both purpose and meaning" (Davis, 1995: 112). In other words, in ambivalence, multiple, often contradictory, meanings are possible and probable due to the polysemic and incongruous nature of humorous texts. In terms of using stereotypes about racial, ethnic or religious groups in humorous discourse, studies (Billig, 2005; Collins, 2008; Hughey and Muradi, 2009) have shown that the focus is usually on negative stereotypes that invite audiences to intimately witness different power dynamics, extending beyond mere jokes that involve discrimination and stereotypes. The findings of these studies also suggest that comic enactment of negative stereotypes, however critically intended, always creates transgressive and/or oppressive meanings (Ahmed, 2017; Pauwels, 2021). While these studies highlight the functional effect of humour, they mostly fail to explain the typology of mechanisms involved in the process of manipulating the comedic and serious meanings (Weaver, 2011). It is relevant to this research, therefore, to explore the stereotypes that tend to be associated with MIM in *SNL* comedic sketches and what the linguistic devices deployed in these sketches tell us about the humorous and serious meanings. This can be achieved by mapping the discursive readings of humour-invoking linguistic features and how they are involved in the process of generating humour and negotiating popular understandings of MIM.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, the incongruous nature of humour enables the blend of different elements from distinct areas of knowledge, understandings, and discourses that were previously considered separate. It organises these elements in a manner that deviates from normal or anticipated patterns, creating a sense of incompatibility. Attardo (2001) emphasises the role of "encyclopaedic knowledge" as a necessary pragmatic tool in interpreting humorous texts. In relation to the data at hand, the previously known frames of perception - or more accurately, misperceptions - are the stereoscopical beliefs related to religion, ethnicity, race, social and cultural practices and gender roles that exist in the American mainstream media about MIM, especially in a post-9/11 world. For example, the common MIM stereotypes of

backwardness, misogyny, alienation and terrorism are again repeated in the sketches under examination.

I asked how *SNL* comedic discourse plays with the very hegemonic tropes and cultural understandings that it rejects. The analysis focused on six linguistic devices, namely parody, allusion, metonymy, frame-shifting, inversion and hyperbole, which evoke incongruity and generate humorous effects. Behind the humorous level, however, there lurks a layer of serious critique about stereotypes related to MIM circulating in American society. The serious meanings that are generated in humorous instances are not fixed in a straightforward manner, even though they draw on sign-systems that have pre-existing meanings (Weaver, 2011). When stereotypical accounts of MIM appear in *SNL*, they are discursively creating a space to negotiate humorous and serious meanings through the following mechanisms: by blurring the distance from the stereotypical models that they repeat and by employing reversed comedic discourse.

Although the humorous play in the examined sketches in Chapter 7 is mostly based on visual and verbal repetition of MIM experiences, it is a mistake to view *SNL* as a play about Muslimness. Instead, in most humorous instances in Chapter 7, it was found that there is a use of certain stereotypes to induce certain modes of representation while inhibiting others when looking at MIM. At first glance, it seems that the goal here is not about representing MIM as a given truth, but rather to highlight the tensions, complexities and barriers that exist in all representations of MIM. However, repeating certain stereotypical models related to MIM situates the audience in a stereotype-filled environment. For instance, in some of the examined sketches in Chapter 7, findings showed experiences of MIM in connecting them to stereotypes that include sexism, criminality and violence. Some viewers may read this statement as affirmation of popular stereotypes about MIM and crime or violence. For instance, some of the sketches have words and phrases that are related to MIM and have negative connotation like 'death to America' and 'sharia law' or stereotypical images of figures like 'bin Laden' and the 'rich Arab sheikh'. These sketches function within the discursive space of stereotypes and might not actively break down the negative representations in the show. Put differently, these repeated stereotypical models suggest that some viewers may see these stereotypes not as parody or satire, but as

reality. Interestingly, in these sketches and many others, the studio audience responded with laughter when comedic statements resonate with MIM stereotypes.

Still, such usage of stereotypical phrases and images may have rebellious functions if the discriminatory power of the phrase or image is diminished, or disciplinary functions if they prompt more people to use them more frequently and not consider the negative connotations and cultural roots of discrimination. In fact, the prevalence of such phrases and figures probably does not have the capacity to change the negative associations of these words or images on a societal scale. Instead, it is more likely that such phrases and figures discourage audiences from critically examining the serious implications of including such stereotypes in their sketches. As Hoey (2005: 8) states, a word or a phrase "becomes cumulatively loaded with the contexts and co-texts in which it is encountered, and our knowledge of it includes the fact that it co-occurs with certain other words in certain kinds of context". Even though this knowledge is unconscious, it becomes integrated into one's ability to communicate effectively. Consequently, repeated associations of certain words or images can sustain them and make them become unquestioned and unchallenged, granting them the ability to evoke a particular cultural stereotype. This association reflects an underlying dominant narrative within a specific community of discourse, reinforcing its influence and power (Stubbs 1996, 2001). In fact, there seems to be a lack of variety in the discursive frames surrounding the words and images around MIM. Even when stereotypical figures, such as 'the rich sheikh', are used in different contexts (i.e., bidding in a school auction), the discourse continues to be based on frameworks of stereotypical ideologies. Indeed, it seems that *SNL* was able to change the situation to achieve the humorous target, but not the ideological anchor, possibly because doing so would eliminate the humour and fail to resonate with the audience's pre-existing frameworks of understanding. This humour can form what Billig (2005: 96) describes as a "banally mundane way" of representing MIM as a stereotypical difference or 'other', but this humour goes beyond mere reproduction of representations, as it also has the potential to discursively strengthen the 'truth' behind these stereotypes (Weaver, 2011: 76).

By comparison, the reversal of stereotypes in some sketches has the potential to challenge these negative stereotypes by not only expressing contempt for the

stereotypes, but also contempt for those who believe them. In doing so, the humorous statements may work rhetorically to disturb meanings of discriminatory discourses and so will form a perpetual source of ambivalence for these discourses, forming a semantic weapon in the struggle against hegemonic order-building. For instance, in their monologues, the only two hosts from a Muslim background used stereotypes to create a reversed semantic focus or change of 'direction' by challenging the social dynamics of the speaker and the audience in which a rebellious function of humour may be privileged. Aziz Ansari changed the typical portrayal of MIM as violent and dangerous within the American media to paint an image of four 'Muslims' who are eating nachos and doing normal things that 'we' have all been through. His articulation and redirection of the normal/abnormal dichotomy creates the image of ordinary Muslim people, thus situating his comedy in opposition to one of the central tenets of embodied discrimination that is aimed at MIM. Through this, the comedian draws upon the stand-up comedy platform to actively challenge and resist such dichotomy and offer an alternative perspective or interpretation that redefines the understanding of reality.

Ninanji Kumali also used exaggeration of stereotypes regarding gender equality in Islam. He injects this stereotype with a sharp sense of exaggeration to cause an incongruous and serious effect. The exaggeration of stereotypes has the potential to prompt the audience to reconsider their own beliefs. The premise of both monologues is, of course, outrageous, but the stereotypical expressions towards MIM seem exaggerated and ridiculous. Collectively these two potentially rebellious sketches offer a critique of discrimination in the American social and cultural system. The monologues of the two comedians can motivate the audience to perceive the stereotypes as comically exaggerated, thus framing the humour as a form of rebellious expression. There are also instances where reversed comic discourses support the original meanings. In these instances, the aim of reversal fails. It is necessary to evaluate how these reactions eliminate ambiguity and reinforce pre-existing understandings and categorisations. I argue here that humorous play with popular stereotypes around MIM creates a space to (de)legitimise simplistic cultural understandings of alterity, while sometimes offering ludic alternatives in their place. By playing with images of cultural alterity and reappropriating popular stereotypes around MIM in humorous ways, there is always a risk of propagating them. However,

such comedic play can still offer critiques of dominant ideologies and show signs of similitude, conformability and recognisability that fit well with the diversity and heterogeneity of contemporary America.

8.5 Summary

In conclusion, a critical discourse analysis allowed for the study to identify discursive patterns and functions, as well as explore the interplay between laughter, humour, persuasion, and societal/cultural norms. Additionally, it explored how humorous discourse can reinforce or challenge existing ideologies and cultural norms. The findings showed that many hegemonic and counter-hegemonic readings may be made of the sketches analysed here, including several prominent aspects of ambivalence related to stereotypes and the blending of social commentary with non-serious jokes. *SNL* can be both oppressive and resistant at the same time, contingent upon the context and the identities of those involved in creating the entertainment and consuming it. Despite this complexity, conducting a textual analysis can still uncover interesting findings into the linguistic elements that may influence the audience's interpretations and perspectives and guide them towards particular readings. Here, the discursive analysis suggests that not even the most stereotype-problematising sketches can escape being categorised according to pre-existing ideologies, highlighting the persistent influence of existing hegemonic systems. While it is difficult to draw definite conclusions regarding whether these representations of MIM are hegemonic or counter-hegemonic, simply choosing a group, idea, rhetoric or claim to satirise or parody has the potential to reaffirm the legitimacy of the dominant power (Hariman, 2008).

Chapter 9:

Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The first section of this concluding chapter provides a review of the results by revisiting the four research questions that were posed in this thesis and proposes a 'taxonomy' of MIM representations in *SNL*. Subsequently, I will evaluate the strengths and limitations of the methodology and procedures used in this study. Finally, I will provide recommendations for future research on MIM representations in humorous discourse.

9.2 Answers to Research Questions

The overarching aim of this thesis was to explore the representations of MIM in *SNL*. In Chapter 1, I introduced the main topic, along with the background and context of this research. This was followed by a detailed literature review of relevant research on MIM in media, in general, and more specifically in comedy, showing the findings and discussions of previous studies and identifying the gaps which this research seeks to address. I then moved on to discuss the theoretical frameworks underlying the present study. Drawing on Critical Discourse Studies and Critical Humour Studies, informed by concepts of representation, stereotype, power and ambivalence, I maintained that humorous discourse can be constructed with the intention of negotiating serious experiences related to ethnicity, race and religion by situating them in a context that creates ambivalent interpretations. In other words, the ambivalent nature of humorous discourse can create a discursive moment that involves negotiating contradictions and different discursive positions, allowing for the mediations of identities, ideologies and socio-political practices. In terms of examining representations of certain minority groups in humorous discourse, I outlined that it is important to also examine power relations, where such power relations can be reinforced, challenged or negotiated.

Adopting this theoretical perspective, I argued that it is possible to explore the way MIM are represented in *SNL* by considering the multiplicity of levels involved in discourse and accounting for different discursive positions expressing and reproducing both hegemonic and non-hegemonic ideologies. In this way, examining

humorous discourse from a critical perspective requires careful consideration of the potential meanings and effects of humour, and an awareness of the social and cultural context in which it is being used. This necessitates a need for a nuanced and context-specific approach to understand the ambivalent meanings of humorous discourse and to recognise of the potential functions of humour in a specific social and cultural context. CDS involves various interdisciplinary methodologies and analytical tools that are complementary and enable the qualitative analysis of texts based on their dialectical-relational, socio-cognitive, socio-semantic and discourse-historical dimensions. In Chapter 4, I explained the data design and the methodological procedures which comprised corpus linguistics, discourse-historical approach, multimodal analysis and the discourse theory of humour along with various qualitative analytical tools and concepts from CDS. The methodological frameworks were realised on three levels of analysis: micro, meso and macro. At the micro-level, there were two stages: the first stage was the CL identification of keywords related to MIM in the *SNL* corpus using Sketch Engine, while the second stage entailed a description of the representations and evaluations of MIM in *SNL* sketches using discursive strategies from discourse- historical approach. Such description was composed of different verbal and visual toolkits, such as metonymy, metaphor, pronouns, predictive adjectives and semiotic modes. The meso-level looked at context (i.e., humour) and used a DTH framework to analyse the use of stereotypes and their generated meaning, whether as serious or humorous. At the macro-level, I drew on theoretical concepts from Critical Discourse Studies and Critical Humour Studies to interpret and explain socio-political and ideological implications. These frameworks were used to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the emergent and dominant discourses associated with MIM in *SNL*?

The first step to addressing this question was to generate a list of the most salient keywords in the *SNL* corpus and group them into thematic categories. Through concordance analysis, the overall discourse regarding MIM in *SNL* appeared to limit them to issues related to conflict, including war, violence, terrorism, extremism, backwardness, freedom of speech, women's rights and discrimination. The *SNL* corpus also exhibited other mainstream reporting practices, such as treating Muslims

as a homogenous group. The prevalence of these topics confirms the notion that stereotypical themes, such as extremism and terrorism, dominate the discourse on MIM, even in humorous contexts. It was also found that the *SNL* coverage was primarily focused on eight out of 49 Muslim-majority countries, specifically Syria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq and Jordan. The concordance analysis showed that *SNL* reacted to conflict and wars in certain Muslim-majority countries due to the uprisings in multiple Arab nations in 2010, also referred to as the 'Arab Spring' which is reflected in the show's comedic skits and segments. Other keywords were discussed in relation to issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ISIS conflict, the Iranian regime, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Trump's Muslim ban and Syrian immigration. MIM were found to be portrayed in oppositional terms in the *SNL* corpus, specifically as 'good vs. bad'. The sketches in the corpus depicted Islam as a violent religion, often associated with terrorism and terrorists. Some sketches featured characters who belong to terrorist organisations or a Trump impersonator. Conversely, other sketches featured American-Muslim comedians expressing frustration over the media's portrayal of MIM as terrorists or violent, offering an alternative representation of Islam as a peaceful religion and pushing back against the discourse of violence. These opposing views highlight the existence of different perspectives within *SNL* and necessitates the need for in-depth qualitative analysis. Ultimately, I have shown that by employing corpus tools, it is possible to identify the dominant and salient aspects related to MIM within humorous discourse in a more objective way compared to previous studies.

RQ2: How are MIM represented and evaluated, verbally and visually, in the *SNL* sketches?

Upon examining the representations and evaluations of MIM in the dominant discourses, it was discovered that the incongruous nature of humorous texts creates uncertainties, paradoxes, tensions and inconsistencies in the representations of MIM, which challenges the binary opposition and dichotomising tendencies identified in previous research. The referential and predicational strategies, along with their argumentative line, denote the construction of MIM in relation to problematic contexts. The findings in Chapter 6 revealed that the ways MIM are referred to and evaluated mostly convey problematic and negative experiences. For instance, there is a pattern

for using Arabic names for fictional characters who are represented as 'terrorists' or 'dangerous'. In addition, it was found that 'Muslims' are mostly referred to in a collectivised term as a homogenous entity. In other sketches, MIM are represented as villainous characters, personified with illegal activities or uncivilised criminals who pose a threat to American national security. The same reference words have predominantly negative predications, establishing 'Muslim' as the problematic different group that promotes violence and engages in various acts of wrongdoings.

The depictions of MIM are evaluated positively through the use of concepts such as multiculturalism, moderation and cultural compatibility or similarity. The analysis has identified evidence of this, indicating that adopting American practices or being compatible with American society triggers positive representations. These representations align with positive image construction processes, enabling the portrayal of 'moderate' MIM as good, peaceful and non-threatening, as noted by Keddie (2018: 527), and replacing negative constructions with "fair, balanced and normal portrayals" (Sohrabi and Farquharson, 2016: 388).

RQ3: What meanings are generated from MIM-related stereotypes in the *SNL* sketches and what role do the humour-invoking linguistic features employed in these sketches play in the creation and interpretation of humorous and serious meanings?

This discursive analysis demonstrates that there are numerous subtleties to the stereotypes referenced in *SNL* sketches. The 11 examples analysed in this thesis include various stereotypes related to MIM, such as violence, misogyny, alienation and backwardness. The analysis focused on six linguistic devices, namely parody, allusion, metonymy, frame-shifting, inversion and hyperbole, which create incongruity and generate humorous effects. However, beneath the surface of humour lies a layer of serious critique regarding stereotypes related to MIM that circulate in American society.

The discursive analysis has revealed that the reappropriation of stereotypes in a humorous manner can be seen as both a form of social commentary and a perpetuation of negative understandings and beliefs related to MIM. On one hand, it provides an opportunity to question and dismantle these stereotypes by presenting

them in an absurd or exaggerated way. This can encourage audiences to reflect on their own biases and challenge societal norms. On the other hand, the act of using stereotypes in humorous discourse runs the risk of normalising them and reinforcing existing prejudices. Even if the intention is to critique these stereotypes, the repetition of these images can contribute to their persistence in society and further marginalise the groups they represent. For example, some sketches run the risk of perpetuating and strengthening negative stereotypes towards MIM, despite comedians' intentions to satirise existing systems of representation and cultural understanding of MIM. What sets these sketches apart is that they do not attempt to change or challenge the underlying meanings of these stereotypes. Instead, they take these stereotypes and place them in unexpected or unusual situations or contexts. It is important to note that while these sketches may generate laughter and amusement in the moment, they do not necessarily contribute to changing or challenging the negative connotations associated with the stereotypes. The underlying meanings of these stereotypes remain intact, even if temporarily placed in a different context. This suggests that humour is capable of maintaining ambivalent discursive position regarding the use of stereotypes. Nevertheless, by providing a detailed explanation of the relevant incongruous mechanisms used in the sketches, this study has allowed for an exploration of humour's serious functions in comedic sketches that reference stereotypes related to MIM.

Overarching RQ: Do emergent and dominant discourses, and the representations of MIM in *SNL*, articulate, disarticulate or rearticulate normative cultural understandings about MIM in contemporary America, and, if so, in what respects?

The discursive patterns and functions of humorous discourse reveal the link between language, humour and societal and cultural norms. By analysing the structures, contents and functions of humour in *SNL*, this study has gained an understanding of the multidimensional, functional and discursive effects of humour. The findings have revealed that the sketches analysed here can be interpreted in many hegemonic and counter-hegemonic ways, including several significant aspects of ambivalence related to stereotypes and the blending of social commentary with non-serious jokes. This blending allows for a unique approach to address serious topics in a more accessible and engaging manner. The discursive analysis suggests that even the

most discursively troubling sketches cannot break free from categorical positioning based on pre-existing ideologies. Despite the presence of counter-hegemonic humorous sketches, it is important to understand that they may still operate within a larger framework of societal norms. These norms represent the dominant ideologies and values that shape and influence the society and culture. Therefore, even when humorous statements challenge these norms, they are still pushing against the established expectations and beliefs. While it is difficult to determine whether the representations of MIM in these sketches are hegemonic or counter-hegemonic, the mere act of satirising or parodying a group or idea can reaffirm the legitimacy of its power. One could go further and suggest that the mere repetition of dominant discourses, even in humorous contexts, can strengthen ideologies that have subtle yet profound implications in normalising systems of power and control.

9.3 Strengths of the Study

This doctoral thesis has made an original contribution to existing scholarly literature in the fields of Critical Humour Studies and media discourse analysis, shedding new light on the representations of MIM in humorous discourse. First, this thesis has bridged the sizeable gap at the intersections of Critical Humour Studies and media discourse analysis. it delves into the complexities of how humour intersects with media discourse, examining the various structures and strategies employed within *SNL* to convey serious meanings, be they social or political. The study has applied micro analysis of linguistic features, bridging the macro and micro levels in a rigorous way. It has also uncovered the underlying ideologies, power dynamics and socio-political implications embedded within humorous representations of MIM. By exploring these intersections, the study has shed light on the broader socio-cultural implications of humorous discourse and provided a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play, contributing to both Critical Humour Studies and media discourse analysis scholarship.

Another original contribution concerns the choice of data. To date, there are few linguistic studies that have analysed *SNL* discourse, certainly none that have examined it from a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis perspective. The other limited studies have focused on specific sketches. In contrast, my study encompasses

all the sketches that make explicit or implicit references to MIM, even if mentioned in passing. It is crucial to recognise patterns that emerge across multiple sketches rather than relying on just one, as this provides a more comprehensive understanding and exhaustive analysis of MIM in *SNL* discourse. Consequently, the inclusion of numerous sketches and segments in my research has shed light on how humorous discourse tackles serious issues and societal norms within a distinct context from traditional sources like newspapers.

Finally, this thesis contributes to Critical Humour Studies from theoretical and methodological perspectives. According to critical humour theorists, the incongruous structures of humour can be organised through linguistic and rhetorical devices. This necessitates a detailed examination of these devices through textual and, when available, visual analysis to explore how the incongruous structures affect the ambivalent meanings of humorous discourse. My central theoretical claim in this thesis is that incorporating critical discourse analysis and examining patterns and functions which are systematically worked out by rigorous linguistic analysis helps us make inferences about these ambivalent meanings. In this study I proposed a comprehensive methodological framework as it offers a detailed account of the methods, tools and stages of the research project from its first stages. This is necessary to gain a more comprehensive understanding of cultural politics of representations of MIM in *SNL*. In addition, I used a corpus approach as a starting point that guides the qualitative analysis in less subjective ways. This is in contrast to content analysis, used in previous studies, which tends to use a deductive approach that looks for preconceived topics. Instead, the corpus approach allows for the discovery of topics and patterns that emerge as salient or dominant in the data, potentially uncovering new insights in the representations of MIM in *SNL*.

9.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

There are certain limitations that must be acknowledged about this research. The first limitation is related to the small size of the dataset, which is comprised of 35,734 words. The inclusion of a limited sample size in this research restricts the ability to make broad claims of the findings beyond the samples that were studied. In addition, there were only a few instances of each salient thematic category examined. However, coincidentally, this limitation turned out to have a positive impact

on the research, as the smaller number of sketches allowed for a more thorough qualitative analysis.

Secondly, the devised methodological framework includes visual analysis which cannot be analysed as systematically as textual analysis. One of the commonly recognised challenges is finding a method to 'annotate' and 'tag' images for meaningful searches (Jewitt, 2009; Knight, 2011; Malamatidou, 2020). Consequently, studies that employ multimodal analysis have been limited in scale, often focusing on detailed examinations of only a few selected images or instances. Therefore, it is inevitable to analyse images qualitatively but in future, particularly with technological developments, it should be possible to analyse multimodal modes in a more advanced and systematic way.

Furthermore, due to the constraints of a PhD thesis in terms of scope and word count, certain aspects of the analysis received less attention than desired. For example, I would have focused more on studio audience laughter and investigated the relationship between different types of humour and their laughter response. Furthermore, it would have been ideal to conduct a comparative analysis to compare representations of MIM in *SNL* with other serious discourses like newspapers. Such comparative approach would have explored potential differences or similarities in the patterns and strategies of representation, taking into account the significant impact of other media platforms on *SNL*.

For future studies, I suggest an expansion of the existing *SNL* corpus by incorporating additional subcorpora that encompass new seasons aired under the Biden administration and perhaps make comparisons between the findings of this study and the analysis of the new seasons. Moreover, the ever-growing list of contemporary comedies necessitates the establishment of limitations to ensure the feasibility of research. As such, future research could focus on further exploring the discursive construction of identity across space and time. To do so, researchers need to delve into representations found in various forms of comedies beyond the one investigated in this study.

Furthermore, analysts can use the proposed methodological framework to investigate the representations of other minority groups in other humorous discourses. By

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examining the language choices and discursive strategies employed, it becomes possible to identify the underlying understandings associated with specific discourses and ideologies. Future projects could also explore more meaning making with respect to other connections, including ability, class, gender, and sexuality, for example.

Finally, while I believe that the textual analysis conducted in this study was informative in its own right, future research could benefit from integrating textual analysis with other audience-centred methodologies. This combination would allow for a more comprehensive and fruitful understanding of humorous mediated texts. It might also give us more knowledge about the ways and directions these humorous sketches are impacting and influencing the audience perceptions and understandings about MIM.

9.5 Methodological Reflections

Before I offer concluding remarks, in this section, I reflect on the usefulness of my methodological approach in helping me address my research questions. Ultimately, the insights and findings I obtained required the development of a comprehensive and context-specific approach that considers both the multiple interpretations of humorous discourse and the multiple levels involved in the humorous discourse. As mentioned before, humour often operates outside the boundaries of what is considered serious or conventional. Developing a new methodological approach requires a thorough understanding of the unique characteristics and dynamics of humorous discourse. Humour is a multifaceted and context-dependent phenomenon, making it difficult to apply traditional analytical frameworks directly. This necessitates the need for an interdisciplinary approach. In other words, researchers need to bridge disciplinary boundaries, incorporating theories and methodologies from different fields to create a comprehensive approach. This collaboration can be complex, as each discipline brings its own perspectives and methodologies. Therefore, researchers must grapple with the question of how to systematically and comprehensively analyse humour, considering its linguistic, cultural, and social dimensions. Therefore, the methodological approach I offered in this study is characterised by its comprehensiveness, indicating that it took into account various levels, aspects and dimensions of humorous discourse.

In the first stage of analysis, I incorporated tools from corpus linguistics to identify areas of interest worthy of closer investigation through critical discourse analysis. The main reason for including corpus tools is to analyse the data in ways that are more targeted and systematic. This circumvents one of the drawbacks of previous studies that have often focussed on limited sketches given that they carried out a content analysis. Corpus tools also allow for both dominant and emergent descriptions of MIM to emerge from the data rather than subjective criteria. However, it is important to keep in mind that human bias can still influence the interpretation and evaluation of quantitative patterns. Researchers have the potential to be selective in their reporting, highlighting specific aspects while overlooking others. Consequently, I tried my best to stay vigilant in recognising and addressing these patterns, particularly by acknowledging any significant exceptions.

Another perennial problem faced by corpus researchers concerns the size of data. Because there is a relatively limited number of sketches related to MIM in *SNL*, the corpus used for analysis, consisting of 35,734 words, is considered small in terms of corpus linguistic standards. However, this coincidentally turned out to be advantageous for the research, as these fewer sketches enabled me to carry out a more in-depth analysis around each dominant discourse. Koller and Mautner (2004: 218) discuss this tension between breadth and depth when conducting a study that involves analysing many texts and also aims to explore the connection between specific textual choices and broader socio-cultural influences. In their view, there is a risk of leaning towards one extreme or the other. On one hand, the analysts may become overly focused on nuanced features within the context, neglecting the examination of broader socio-political issues. On the other hand, the analyst may become entangled in their own political agenda, disregarding the significance of textual evidence. Corpus linguists face the challenge of selecting a level of detail to investigate based on their personal interests or research aims, as it is not feasible to examine every aspect comprehensively. Given the aim of the study and the nature of the data under investigation, I specifically focused on the keywords in the *SNL* corpus to delve deeply into specific patterns and themes within the discourse and consider the broader socio-political implications. As mentioned earlier, humorous discourse requires an examination of discursive patterns and functions with critical analysis in order to gain insights into the discursive structures and potential functions of humour

on the representations of MIM in *SNL*. In essence, investigating how these discursive patterns and functions operate and their effects requires including other methodologies that can provide an understanding of the multifaceted, functional, and discursive impacts of humour in navigating both humorous and non-humorous meanings.

In the second stage of analysis, I focused on the verbal and visual features that are used to represent and evaluate MIM in the most dominant discourse in *SNL*. In doing so, I aimed to highlight the tensions created by incongruous structures and question the potential degrees of functional influence that particular tensions might impose on the representations and evaluations of MIM in *SNL*. By examining the micro-analytical choices, one can understand their functions within discourse and how they contribute to shaping representations in a particular context. However, it was challenging to analyse these choices without considering the distinctive features of the genre (parody sketches, satirical news, stand-up comedy monologues), as well as the socio-political contexts and ideologies by which it is dominated.

To remedy this pitfall, in the third stage of analysis not only did I examine the linguistic features that invoke humour, but I also took into account the contextual factors that impact the production and interpretation of humorous sketches. As a result, I made the decision to categorise the sketches based on the segments in which they appear, as each segment has distinct qualities that can influence the interpretation and analysis of the data at hand. These segments can exhibit different features such as irony, parody, or satire, serving various functions. This distinction is important as it provides a clearer understanding of the humorous and serious meanings that are being reinforced through discourse within *SNL*.

It is also important to acknowledge my role as an analyst in relation to the subject matter. Being a Muslim woman has given me an insider position. This insider perspective has helped in providing familiarity, unique insights, nuanced understanding, and access to insider knowledge that may be valuable in the research process. However, one significant challenge I faced was the emotional toll of engaging with negative portrayals that perpetuated harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about MIM. As I delved into the analysis, I found myself confronted with recurring negative narratives that portrayed Muslim people as extremists,

terrorists, or oppressed individuals. It was disheartening to witness such misrepresentations even in comedy that erasure of the multifaceted identities and experiences within MIM.

Nonetheless, as a PhD researcher I acknowledge the need for distance to produce quality research outcomes. Therefore, I used strategies such as using corpus tools, undertaking an extensive review of relevant literature to gain a more nuanced understanding of the topic, and engaging in conversations with my supervisor and other academics with different views. Such strategies helped in navigating the fine line between objectivity and subjectivity. While reflexivity was an essential aspect of this research, I strived to maintain a balanced and nuanced analysis that objectively fulfil the aim and research questions of this research.

9.6 Concluding Remarks

What I have sought to demonstrate in this thesis is that humorous discourses go beyond mere entertainment. They can have serious functions and effects for social commentary, cultural reflection and critical engagement with serious issues related to race, ethnicity and religion. By delving into the layers of meaning within humorous discourse, we can gain a deeper understanding of their impact on audiences and their role in shaping and reflecting cultural understandings about certain groups. Through discursive analysis, we can examine the complexities and intricacies of humorous discourse, in addition to exploring the underlying messages, ideologies and cultural understandings embedded within the humorous texts, characters and situations. This analysis enables us to recognise the multifaceted nature of humour and its potential to shape perspectives, challenge assumptions and provoke social change.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Data Organisation

Season 35 (2008/2009)					
Episode	cold opening	monologue	sketch	weekend update	commercial
1	**Joint address to congress**	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	NA	NA	NA	**Nejadi's wife**	NA
3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
7	NA	NA	NA	**Gadafii converting Italian women**	NA
8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
14	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
16	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	NA	NA	NA	**Prophet Mohammad cartoon**	NA
18	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
19	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
20	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
21	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
22	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Season 36 (2009/2010)					
Episode	cold opening	monologue	sketch	weekend update	commercial
1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
4	NA	NA	NA	**FOX news Hiring Williams**	NA
5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
14	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
16	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	selection Sunday	NA	NA	NA	NA
18	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
19	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
20	Bin Laden Will	NA	NA	NA	NA
21	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
22	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Season 37 (2010/2011)					
Episode	cold opening	monologue	sketch	weekend update	commercial
1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	NA	NA	NA	Anwar assassination	NA
3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
4	NA	NA	NA	airport security program	NA
5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
7	NA	NA	NA	Saudi religious leaders	NA
8	NA	NA	NA	Saudi conservatives	NA
9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
14	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
16	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
18	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
19	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

20	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
21	NA	NA	NA	Obama on gay marriage	NA
22	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Season 38 (2011/2012)					
Episode	cold opening	monologue	sketch	weekend update	commercial
1	NA	NA	NA	innocence of Muslim	NA
2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
6	NA	NA	Fox and Friends	NA	NA
7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
8	NA	NA	"Cool Drones"	NA	NA
9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
14	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
16	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
18	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
19	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
20	Benghazi Hearings	NA	NA	NA	NA
21	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Season 39 (2012/2013)					
Episode	cold opening	monologue	sketch	weekend update	commercial
1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
3	NA	NA	Navy Seal op	NA	NA
4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
5	NA	NA	How's He Doing?	NA	NA
6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

14	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
16	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
18	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
19	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
20	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
21	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
21	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Season 40 (2013/2014)					
Episode	cold opening	monologue	sketch	weekend update	commercial
1	NA	NA	NA	Obama urging Muslim countries to join him on the attack on ISIS	NA
2	Obama on ISIS and Islamic faith	NA	NA	NA	NA
3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
5	NA	NA	Tank shark	NA	NA
6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11	M L King "Obama sounds like a Muslim name"	NA	NA	the Pope criticizing Charlie Hebderw+ Duke University cancels call to prayer	NA
12	NA	NA	NA	King Abdullah died	NA
13	NA	NA	NA	Obama wants to maintain good relations with Saudi	NA
14	NA	NA	NA	ISIS destroying art	graduation from high school going to ISIS
15	NA	NA	NA	Boko haram joining ISIS	NA
16	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

18	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
19	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
20	NA	NA	Pictionary	ISIS nail salon	NA
21	NA	Louis C.K	NA	ISIS video	NA

Season 41 (2014/2015)					
Episode	cold opening	monologue	sketch	weekend update	commercial
1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
5	NA	NA	The Adventures of Young Ben Carson	NA	NA
6	fox News on Syrian refugees	NA	Thanksgiving dinner/ Syrian refugees/ISIS	Trump on Muslim database + Syrian refugees and having a religion test	NA
7	Trump sending Christmas message	NA	NA	NA	NA
8	NA	NA	FOX NEWS on Muslim ban with Ted Cruz	Trump announced Muslim ban	NA
9	NA	NA	"ISIS enough take a walk"	NA	NA
10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	NA	NA	NA	Obama visiting a mosque	NA
13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
14	NA	NA	Sheik Hijacks School Auction	NA	NA
15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
16	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	NA	NA	NA	Bernie Sandurs campaign *showing image of women wearing hijab*	NA
18	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
19	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
20	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
21	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Season 42 (2015/2016)					
Episode	cold opening	monologue	sketch	weekend update	commercial
1	NA	NA	**Saudi prince**	NA	NA
2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
4	**the third presidential debate**	NA	NA		NA
5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
6	NA	**Dave Chappelle (ISIS)**	NA	**Hillary lost to a guy named Hussain**	NA
7	NA	NA	**the latest Donald Trump news on Anderson Cooper 360 including Muslim Ban.**	NA	NA
8	NA	NA	NA	A	NA
9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	NA	**Aziz Ansari**	NA	NA	NA
13	**Trump's phone call to Australian PM about Muslim ban**	NA	**White House press secretary Sean Spicer**	**Muslim ban + Saudi prince on flight with his falcon**	**the U.S. customs welcome video s**
14	NA	NA	**1- pitches for Cheetos 2- Trump versus the Ninth Circuit Court judge on a new People's Court**		**Leslie Jones wants to play trump**
15	NA	NA	NA	NA	**TBD hero showing a Muslim family**
16	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	NA	NA	NA	**Trump's Syria Missile Strike**	**Pepsi commercial showing a woman in Hijab**
18	NA	NA	NA	**US military dropping 'mother of all bombs**	NA
19	NA	NA	NA	**Trump taking his first international trip to Saudi**	NA

20	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
21	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

season 43 (2017/2018)					
Episode	cold opening	monologue	sketch	weekend update	commercial
1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
3	NA	Kumali Nanijai	NA	My deli Muslim guy says merry Christmas'	NA
4	politically correct	NA	NA	NA	NA
5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
7	Trump with McKinnon's Kellyanne and hilarious Muslim videos	NA	NA	British Prime Minister on Trump's retweets of anti-Muslim videos	NA
8	NA	NA	NA	Trump Recognising Jerusalem as Israeli Capital	NA
9	NA	NA	Aziz Ansari's sexual assault	Camels were disqualified from a beauty contest in SA	NA
10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
14	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
16	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
18	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
19	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
20	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
21	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

season 44 (2019/2019)					
Episode	cold opening	monologue	sketch	weekend update	commercial
1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	NA	NA	Cleopatra	NA	NA
3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
4	Caravan	NA	NA	NA	NA
5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Episode	cold opening	monologue	sketch	weekend update	commercial
6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
7	MBS	NA	NA	NA	NA
8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
9	It's a wonderful trump	NA	NA	NA	NA
10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	NA	NA	women of congress	NA	NA
13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
14	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
16	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
18	jail cell	NA	NA	NA	NA
19	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
20	Meet the Press	NA	NA	NA	NA
21	Trump Argentina	NA	NA	Judge Jeanine	NA

season 45 (2019/2020)					
Episode	cold opening	monologue	sketch	weekend update	commercial
1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
10	NA	NA	Trump and Jared	NA	NA
11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
14	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
16	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
18	NA	NA	NA	Israel rules	NA
19	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
20	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
21	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Appendix B: Breakdown of token count for SNL corpus for each segment/season

	SEASON 35		
	Monologue	**sketches**	**Weekend update**
Number of tokens:	-	998	58
Total Number of tokens for season 35:	1,056		

	SEASON 36		
	Monologue	**sketches**	**Weekend update**
Number of tokens:	-	1630	610
Total Number of tokens for season 36:	2,240		

	SEASON 37		
	Monologue	**sketches**	**Weekend update**
Number of tokens:	-	2630	246
Total Number of tokens for season 37:	2,876		

	SEASON 38		
	Monologue	**sketches**	**Weekend update**
Number of tokens:	-	2241	41
Total Number of tokens for season 38:	2,282		

	SEASON 39		
	Monologue	**sketches**	**Weekend update**

Number of tokens:	-	1,660	-
Total Number of tokens for season 39:	1,660		

	SEASON 40		
	Monologue	sketches	Weekend update
Number of tokens:	1,314	1800	560
Total Number of tokens for season 40:	3,674		

	SEASON 41		
	Monologue	sketches	Weekend update
Number of tokens:	-	2,837	841
Total Number of tokens for season 41:	3,678		

	SEASON 42		
	Monologue	sketches	Weekend update
Number of tokens:	2,666	2,608	689
Total Number of tokens for season 42:	5,963		

	SEASON 43		
	Monologue	sketches	Weekend update
Number of tokens:	1,554	1,490	470
Total Number of tokens for season 43:	3,514		

	SEASON 44		
	Monologue	sketches	Weekend update
Number of tokens:	-	2214	1,155
Total Number of tokens for season 44:	3,369		

	SEASON 45		
	Monologue	**sketches**	**Weekend update**
Number of tokens:	-	5,000	482
Total Number of tokens for season 45:	5,422		

SNL corpus
35,734

Appendix C: List of Keywords

Item	Frequency (focus)	Frequency (reference)	Score
"trump"	377	7	2675.5
"isis"	72	0	1573.3
"obama"	58	0	1267.5
"narrator"	37	0	809
"cheetos"	34	0	743.5
"hillary"	28	0	612.4
"donald"	83	9	494
"cleopatra"	22	0	481.4
"islam"	21	0	459.6
"putin"	24	1	404.9
"muslim"	55	9	327.4
"sheikh"	14	0	306.7
"interrupting"	16	1	270.2
"announcer"	16	1	270.2
"vladimir"	10	0	219.4
"ghoulish"	9	0	197.5
"host"	33	10	181.9
"muslims"	22	6	173.1
"inmate"	31	10	170.9
"gotta"	12	2	165.1
"commander"	16	4	160.2
"quran"	7	0	153.9
"drones"	7	0	153.9
"mohammad"	7	0	153.9
"molester"	7	0	153.9
"cheetah"	7	0	153.9
"tweet"	6	0	132
"barak"	6	0	132
"benghazi"	6	0	132
"pepsi"	11	3	127.6
"merry"	14	5	123.5
"racist"	20	9	119.2
"racism"	11	4	110.3
"mosul"	5	0	110.2
"hombres"	5	0	110.2
"whispering"	5	0	110.2
"boko"	5	0	110.2
"islamic"	9	3	104.5
"dissolve"	6	1	101.8
"refugees"	17	9	101.4
"caravan"	14	7	99.7
"shouting"	7	2	96.6
"emojis"	4	0	88.3
"executors"	4	0	88.3
"emails"	4	0	88.3

"madness"	4	0	88.3
"prophet"	4	0	88.3
"hijab"	4	0	88.3
"dunks"	4	0	88.3
"transgender"	4	0	88.3
"gaddafi"	4	0	88.3
"somersault"	4	0	88.3
"haram"	4	0	88.3
"shirtless"	4	0	88.3
"monologue"	4	0	88.3
"empress"	4	0	88.3
"pakistani"	5	1	85
"intro"	5	1	85
"enters"	6	2	82.8
"celebrating"	6	2	82.8
"myth"	9	5	79.5
"terrorists"	9	5	79.5
"agent"	37	31	79.3
"alright"	36	33	72.9
"fox"	23	20	72.6
"terrorist"	8	5	70.7
"bleep"	6	3	69.8
"apprentice"	5	2	69.1
"bitches"	4	1	68.1
"make-up"	4	1	68.1
"muammer"	3	0	66.5
"chuckling"	3	0	66.5
"youtube"	3	0	66.5
"handshake"	3	0	66.5
"clapping"	3	0	66.5
"anti "	3	0	66.5
"barack"	3	0	66.5
"wig"	3	0	66.5
"honour"	3	0	66.5
"tweeted"	3	0	66.5
"obamacare"	3	0	66.5
"inauguration"	3	0	66.5
"g20"	3	0	66.5
"trademark"	3	0	66.5
"christen"	3	0	66.5
"lower-case"	3	0	66.5
"islamophobia"	3	0	66.5
"homage"	3	0	66.5
"mosque"	3	0	66.5
"conservative"	3	0	66.5
"theresa"	3	0	66.5
"neighbourhood"	3	0	66.5
"epic"	3	0	66.5

"centre"	3	0	66.5
"bodyguard"	3	0	66.5
"gorilla"	3	0	66.5
"greeted"	3	0	66.5
"syrians"	3	0	66.5
"chuckles"	3	0	66.5
"infidels"	3	0	66.5
"sinema"	3	0	66.5
"ghost"	47	51	63.7
"executive"	23	24	62
"bitch"	6	4	60.4
"c-span"	6	4	60.4
"prince"	15	15	60.3
"summit"	5	3	58.3
"naughty"	5	3	58.3
"bickering"	4	2	55.4
"allah"	4	2	55.4
"oval"	4	2	55.4
"hearings"	9	9	53.8
"joining"	10	11	51.4
"holocaust"	3	1	51.3
"judaism"	3	1	51.3
"walmart"	3	1	51.3
"craziest"	3	1	51.3
"tokens"	3	1	51.3
"exited"	3	1	51.3
"hereby"	3	1	51.3
"syrian"	5	4	50.4
"mounds"	5	4	50.4
"blocked"	5	4	50.4
"pakistan"	4	3	46.7
"customs"	4	3	46.7
"nationalist"	4	3	46.7
"emperor"	5	5	44.4
"jesus"	15	23	42
"kinda"	3	2	41.7
"logo"	3	2	41.7
"props"	3	2	41.7
"ban"	35	61	40.1
"clinton"	13	21	39.4
"osama"	7	10	38.8
"syria"	7	11	36.1
"hangs"	5	7	35.8
"questionnaire"	4	5	35.6
"pretending"	4	5	35.6
"papa"	4	5	35.6
"crown"	14	26	35.2
"yells"	3	3	35.2

"via"	3	3	35.2
"escaping"	3	3	35.2
"under"	7	12	33.7
"balloon"	7	12	33.7
"chairman"	6	10	33.3
"laden"	6	10	33.3
"reporter"	19	39	33.1
"crush"	5	8	32.7
"jews"	5	8	32.7
"investigation"	4	6	31.8
"dude"	7	13	31.7
"arabia"	13	27	31.6
"underestimated"	3	4	30.4
"folder"	3	4	30.4
"rage"	3	4	30.4
"visitor"	3	4	30.4
"reveal"	3	4	30.4
"principle"	10	21	30.3
"whites"	5	9	30
"gentlemen"	5	9	30
"radical"	11	24	29.7
"rope"	6	12	28.9
"dough"	6	12	28.9
"footage"	6	12	28.9
"afghanistan"	4	7	28.7
"pulls"	10	23	28
"screen"	28	71	27.7
"director"	15	37	27.4
"tower"	6	13	27.2
"libya"	3	5	26.8
"gum"	3	5	26.8
"disappears"	3	5	26.8
"threats"	3	5	26.8
"scenario"	3	5	26.8
"colleague"	3	5	26.8
"compound"	3	5	26.8
"lip"	4	8	26.2
"president"	147	430	25
"saudi"	15	41	25
"bingo"	5	12	24.2
"stiff"	4	9	24.1
"ferrari"	3	6	23.9
"loser"	3	6	23.9
"angel"	3	6	23.9
"seated"	3	6	23.9
"attack"	15	45	22.9
"presidents"	5	13	22.7
"appears"	9	26	22.7

"strong"	75	244	22.3
"boot"	4	10	22.3
"immigrants"	9	27	21.9
"bid"	3	7	21.6
"biting"	3	7	21.6
"rally"	3	7	21.6
"sponsors"	3	7	21.6
"agents"	3	7	21.6
"secrets"	3	7	21.6
"kim"	3	7	21.6
"clip"	8	25	20.9
"secretary"	14	47	20.5
"gay"	5	15	20.2
"settle"	9	30	19.9
"bracket"	6	19	19.9
"oscar"	3	8	19.7
"launch"	3	8	19.7
"balcony"	3	8	19.7
"exit"	3	8	19.7
"tracy"	4	12	19.4
"lies"	4	12	19.4
"charity"	4	12	19.4
"testament"	4	12	19.4
"walks"	15	54	19.3
"interrupted"	5	16	19.2
"laura"	5	16	19.2
"polls"	6	20	19
"production"	7	24	18.9
"knife"	7	25	18.3
"waters"	4	13	18.2
"custom"	4	13	18.2
"opens"	4	13	18.2
"witch"	3	9	18.1
"decades"	3	9	18.1
"profile"	3	9	18.1
"welcome"	13	51	17.7
"awesome"	6	22	17.5
"aunt"	23	95	17.2
"fired"	11	44	17.2
"soul"	4	14	17.1
"leslie"	4	14	17.1
"attacked"	4	14	17.1
"ad"	6	23	16.9
"flipped"	3	10	16.8
"devil"	3	10	16.8
"taped"	3	10	16.8
"laughs"	3	10	16.8
"kingdom"	3	10	16.8

"nbc"	3	10	16.8
"idiot"	3	10	16.8
"hello"	31	134	16.6
"internet"	6	24	16.3
"image"	7	29	16
"calm"	7	29	16
"banning"	3	11	15.6
"behalf"	3	11	15.6
"bury"	3	11	15.6
"wire"	8	35	15.4
"asks"	4	16	15.4
"argentina"	5	21	15.2
"flag"	7	32	14.7
"dick"	6	27	14.6
"marching"	5	22	14.6
"thankful"	4	17	14.6
"ratings"	3	12	14.6
"rocky"	3	12	14.6
"guards"	3	12	14.6
"vines"	3	12	14.6
"bud"	3	12	14.6
"witness"	8	38	14.3
"holds"	5	23	14.1
"sex"	9	44	14.1
"mild"	8	39	14
"defendants"	4	18	13.9
"smile"	3	13	13.7
"cuban"	3	13	13.7
"arrest"	3	13	13.7
"princess"	3	13	13.7
"audience"	6	30	13.3
"nightmare"	4	19	13.3
"entering"	4	19	13.3
"auction"	4	19	13.3
"leader"	7	36	13.2
"arab"	5	25	13.1
"pat"	5	25	13.1
"hell"	13	70	13.1
"promise"	6	31	12.9
"congratulations"	3	14	12.9
"bombs"	3	14	12.9
"despite"	3	14	12.9
"enemies"	3	14	12.9
"mexicans"	3	14	12.9
"fantasy"	3	14	12.9
"carol"	3	14	12.9
"castle"	3	14	12.9
"claims"	3	14	12.9

"billy"	4	20	12.7
"bomb"	4	20	12.7
"sheriff"	4	20	12.7
"media"	15	84	12.7
"relax"	6	32	12.6
"king"	13	73	12.6
"republican"	8	44	12.5
"black"	59	351	12.3
"insane"	6	33	12.2
"crew"	4	21	12.2
"cia"	4	21	12.2
"declare"	3	15	12.2
"speaks"	3	15	12.2
"moscow"	3	15	12.2
"brave"	3	15	12.2
"thank"	59	353	12.2
"jewish"	6	34	11.9
"disaster"	4	22	11.7
"orders"	4	22	11.7
"holding"	13	79	11.7
"iran"	6	35	11.6
"laughing"	6	35	11.6
"circuit"	3	16	11.6
"immigrant"	3	16	11.6
"queen"	3	16	11.6
"representative"	3	16	11.6
"proud"	8	48	11.5
"hilarious"	5	29	11.5
"armed"	5	29	11.5
"please"	19	120	11.4
"appear"	4	23	11.3
"white"	55	362	11.1
"lie"	6	37	11
"yelling"	3	17	11
"text"	3	17	11
"so-called"	3	17	11
"message"	10	64	11
"australia"	4	24	10.9
"shootings"	4	24	10.9
"cartoon"	4	24	10.9
"yell"	4	24	10.9
"senator"	11	72	10.8
"debate"	8	52	10.7
"assistant"	8	52	10.7
"speech"	14	95	10.5
"leaders"	6	39	10.5
"boyfriend"	6	39	10.5
"chair"	6	39	10.5

"historically"	3	18	10.5
"segment"	3	18	10.5
"phrase"	3	18	10.5
"campaign"	10	69	10.2
"saturday"	24	170	10.2
"bin"	9	62	10.2
"divided"	4	26	10.1
"republicans"	4	26	10.1
"believed"	4	26	10.1
"pouring"	3	19	10
"comments"	7	49	9.9
"cry"	4	27	9.8
"rings"	4	27	9.8
"camera"	6	43	9.6
"speaker"	3	20	9.6
"rude"	3	20	9.6
"screening"	3	20	9.6
"nail"	3	20	9.6
"damn"	7	51	9.5
"confused"	4	28	9.5
"reported"	4	28	9.5
"press"	13	98	9.5
"attempt"	4	29	9.2
"controversial"	3	21	9.2
"joint"	3	21	9.2
"egypt"	3	21	9.2
"official"	3	21	9.2
"sample"	3	21	9.2
"giant"	3	21	9.2
"thanksgiving"	8	62	9.1
"senate"	4	30	8.9
"moves"	4	30	8.9
"continues"	3	22	8.8
"winner"	3	22	8.8
"intelligence"	3	22	8.8
"sorry"	42	347	8.8
"eyes"	10	81	8.8
"video"	19	157	8.7
"hey"	41	345	8.7
"religion"	7	57	8.6
"british"	5	40	8.6
"million"	24	204	8.5
"believes"	3	23	8.5
"girlfriend"	9	75	8.5
"desk"	10	84	8.5
"response"	5	41	8.4
"judges"	10	85	8.4
"congressman"	3	24	8.2

"throat"	3	24	8.2
"secret"	4	33	8.2
"truth"	15	133	8.1
"wearing"	11	97	8.1
"face"	17	154	8
"suddenly"	6	53	7.9
"teenage"	5	44	7.8
"comment"	5	44	7.8
"cut"	60	561	7.8
"everyone"	49	460	7.8
"dancing"	4	35	7.8
"failed"	4	35	7.8
"buddy"	4	35	7.8
"battle"	3	26	7.6
"leading"	4	36	7.6
"hat"	5	46	7.5
"constitution"	5	46	7.5
"dumb"	6	56	7.5
"ladies"	5	47	7.4
"including"	7	68	7.3
"burned"	5	48	7.2
"member"	11	110	7.2
"operation"	3	28	7.1
"communications"	3	28	7.1
"join"	6	59	7.1
"joke"	6	59	7.1
"showing"	9	90	7.1
"tonight"	18	183	7.1
"loud"	6	60	7
"israel"	8	82	6.9
"testify"	3	29	6.9
"screwed"	3	29	6.9
"voters"	4	40	6.9
"pitch"	4	40	6.9
"officer"	5	51	6.8
"voter"	3	30	6.7
"duke"	3	30	6.7
"seed"	3	30	6.7
"leaves"	10	108	6.6
"september"	6	64	6.6
"report"	12	131	6.6
"prepare"	4	42	6.6
"sees"	4	42	6.6
"stage"	7	76	6.5
"connected"	3	31	6.5
"volume"	3	31	6.5
"led"	3	31	6.5
"raises"	3	31	6.5

"supreme"	3	31	6.5
"rise"	3	31	6.5
"estate"	5	55	6.4
"rolling"	3	32	6.3
"politically"	3	32	6.3
"tip"	3	32	6.3
"judge"	24	276	6.3
"pizza"	6	67	6.3
"elected"	7	79	6.3
"america"	28	327	6.2
"wait"	38	448	6.2
"flight"	3	33	6.2
"according"	4	45	6.2
"belt"	5	57	6.2
"nuts"	4	46	6
"wave"	3	34	6
"mama"	5	60	5.9
"false"	3	35	5.8
"selection"	3	35	5.8
"tomorrow"	7	86	5.8
"dressed"	4	48	5.8
"picture"	11	137	5.8
"accused"	3	36	5.7
"reality"	4	49	5.7
"immigration"	5	62	5.7
"angry"	4	50	5.6
"cause"	20	262	5.6
"billion"	5	64	5.5
"airport"	4	51	5.5
"brown"	8	105	5.5
"nasty"	3	38	5.4
"singing"	3	38	5.4
"address"	6	79	5.4
"commercial"	6	79	5.4
"tank"	4	52	5.4
"man"	48	658	5.3
"grand"	6	80	5.3
"win"	9	123	5.3
"open"	25	348	5.2
"among"	4	54	5.2
"congress"	14	196	5.2
"release"	3	40	5.2
"tournament"	3	40	5.2
"sea"	3	40	5.2
"christmas"	29	411	5.2
"crazy"	22	312	5.1
"border"	7	99	5.1
"kick"	5	70	5.1

"mississippi"	3	41	5.1
"lesson"	3	41	5.1
"trust"	9	130	5
"hands"	11	161	4.9
"bell"	3	42	4.9
"draw"	6	87	4.9
"excited"	6	88	4.9
"candidates"	4	58	4.9
"potato"	3	43	4.8
"agreement"	3	43	4.8
"crack"	3	44	4.7
"bridge"	3	44	4.7
"presidential"	3	44	4.7
"prison"	11	169	4.7
"americans"	10	154	4.7
"return"	9	139	4.7
"bathroom"	6	92	4.7
"nation"	8	124	4.6
"tries"	3	45	4.6
"guard"	3	45	4.6
"following"	4	61	4.6
"drinking"	4	61	4.6
"shooting"	6	93	4.6
"simply"	8	125	4.6
"forms"	3	46	4.5
"fight"	10	161	4.5
"questions"	10	163	4.4
"suit"	6	97	4.4
"mad"	6	97	4.4
"reach"	4	64	4.4
"god"	29	481	4.4
"march"	5	81	4.4
"wall"	10	165	4.4
"dangerous"	6	98	4.4
"worst"	10	166	4.4
"absolute"	3	48	4.4
"former"	3	48	4.4
"frankly"	3	48	4.4
"christian"	6	100	4.3
"sons"	5	83	4.3
"band"	9	152	4.3
"division"	3	49	4.3
"flip"	3	49	4.3
"brings"	5	84	4.2
"result"	4	68	4.2
"travel"	11	193	4.1
"york"	23	407	4.1
"shower"	3	51	4.1

"underneath"	4	69	4.1
"voted"	6	105	4.1
"straight"	9	159	4.1
"cool"	11	195	4.1
"arms"	4	70	4.1
"fat"	4	70	4.1
"millions"	3	52	4
"deep"	6	107	4
"accept"	5	89	4
"seventies"	7	126	4
"bar"	4	71	4
"film"	4	71	4
"china"	4	71	4
"scared"	7	128	3.9
"moment"	7	129	3.9
"headed"	3	54	3.9
"honestly"	3	54	3.9
"characters"	3	54	3.9
"stands"	3	54	3.9
"relationship"	4	73	3.9
"mouth"	4	74	3.8
"religious"	4	74	3.8
"badly"	3	55	3.8
"huge"	13	247	3.8
"election"	6	113	3.8
"facts"	3	56	3.8
"final"	3	56	3.8
"asking"	7	134	3.8
"van"	8	154	3.8
"sweet"	4	76	3.8
"super"	7	135	3.7
"party"	13	255	3.7
"guys"	27	535	3.7
"present"	5	98	3.7
"statement"	5	98	3.7
"baby"	17	342	3.6
"girl"	18	363	3.6
"thoughts"	3	59	3.6
"words"	11	224	3.6
"shut"	4	80	3.6
"mexico"	9	184	3.6
"honey"	3	60	3.5
"sing"	4	81	3.5
"falls"	3	61	3.5
"surprise"	3	61	3.5
"risk"	3	61	3.5
"sound"	14	294	3.5
"entire"	7	146	3.5

"administration"	4	83	3.4
"hits"	3	62	3.4
"support"	14	300	3.4
"events"	5	106	3.4
"trend"	3	64	3.3
"literally"	3	64	3.3
"wanna"	20	441	3.3
"happy"	15	332	3.3
"hotel"	3	65	3.3
"voice"	5	110	3.3
"calling"	9	201	3.3
"excuse"	10	225	3.2
"recognise"	3	66	3.2
"women"	37	848	3.2
"turkey"	3	67	3.2
"starts"	8	183	3.2
"woman"	18	416	3.2
"anyone"	11	254	3.2
"signed"	3	68	3.1
"mom"	23	539	3.1
"plays"	6	140	3.1
"hair"	6	140	3.1
"security"	10	235	3.1
"dealer"	3	69	3.1
"race"	3	69	3.1
"moving"	9	212	3.1
"key"	4	93	3.1
"puts"	5	117	3.1
"drop"	6	141	3.1
"speaking"	6	141	3.1
"upset"	6	142	3.1
"head"	12	287	3.1
"stop"	14	336	3
"ask"	18	434	3
"cream"	3	71	3
"quote"	3	71	3
"police"	9	218	3
"walked"	5	121	3
"interview"	3	72	3
"latest"	3	72	3
"complete"	3	72	3
"parent"	7	173	2.9
"letter"	4	98	2.9
"numbers"	6	149	2.9
"lose"	10	250	2.9
"break"	11	276	2.9
"earlier"	5	125	2.9
"fighting"	4	100	2.9

"east"	13	330	2.9
"evening"	8	206	2.8
"drink"	5	128	2.8
"seriously"	3	76	2.8
"court"	10	260	2.8
"perfect"	4	103	2.8
"slow"	4	104	2.8
"jail"	7	184	2.8
"daughter"	22	585	2.8
"iraq"	3	78	2.8
"fear"	3	79	2.7
"playing"	16	432	2.7
"body"	6	161	2.7
"floor"	6	161	2.7
"met"	7	189	2.7
"simple"	5	135	2.7
"normal"	7	191	2.7
"effective"	3	81	2.7
"rich"	4	109	2.6
"gonna"	44	1228	2.6
"monday"	4	110	2.6
"roll"	4	110	2.6
"throwing"	3	82	2.6
"hanging"	3	82	2.6
"room"	21	591	2.6
"shame"	3	83	2.6
"babies"	3	83	2.6
"worse"	10	282	2.6
"miss"	9	257	2.6
"dropped"	3	85	2.5
"will"	84	2437	2.5
"worried"	4	115	2.5
"thousands"	3	86	2.5
"united"	12	352	2.5
"quick"	6	175	2.5
"young"	25	737	2.5
"blue"	6	177	2.5
"looks"	14	416	2.5
"boys"	10	297	2.5
"standing"	3	88	2.5
"listen"	19	568	2.5
"minute"	8	240	2.4
"illegal"	3	89	2.4
"character"	3	89	2.4
"reports"	3	89	2.4
"father"	15	453	2.4
"show"	24	726	2.4
"news"	37	1122	2.4

"night"	36	1093	2.4
"his"	86	2625	2.4
"friday"	5	151	2.4
"values"	3	90	2.4
"lawyer"	3	90	2.4
"leaving"	3	90	2.4
"square"	3	90	2.4
"guy"	31	953	2.4
"write"	9	276	2.4
"freedom"	3	91	2.4
"forward"	5	154	2.4
"culture"	3	92	2.3
"box"	4	124	2.3
"bus"	4	124	2.3
"meet"	7	219	2.3
"speak"	7	219	2.3
"hearing"	4	125	2.3
"correct"	6	189	2.3
"pop"	3	94	2.3
"pictures"	4	126	2.3
"star"	4	126	2.3
"table"	5	158	2.3
"today"	22	706	2.3
"wow"	29	932	2.3
"question"	19	610	2.3
"song"	3	95	2.3
"thanks"	6	192	2.3
"round"	3	96	2.3
"finally"	12	390	2.3
"middle"	16	521	2.3
"stupid"	3	97	2.2
"dead"	5	163	2.2
"possible"	6	196	2.2
"giving"	7	230	2.2
"watching"	15	495	2.2
"wrong"	16	529	2.2
"saying"	30	1002	2.2
"fine"	13	435	2.2
"threat"	3	99	2.2
"network"	3	99	2.2
"love"	29	982	2.2
"immediately"	3	100	2.2
"uncle"	3	100	2.2
"politics"	4	134	2.2
"phone"	12	407	2.2
"bush"	5	170	2.1
"human"	4	136	2.1
"office"	12	413	2.1

"alcohol"	3	102	2.1
"hate"	11	382	2.1
"painted"	3	103	2.1
"plan"	11	384	2.1
"listening"	5	174	2.1
"replace"	3	104	2.1
"example"	9	316	2.1
"himself"	5	177	2.1
"friends"	21	749	2.1
"name"	23	834	2
"move"	11	399	2
"admit"	3	108	2
"recent"	3	108	2
"look"	51	1866	2
"answer"	7	255	2
"harder"	4	145	2
"issues"	5	184	2
"blood"	3	110	2
"actual"	3	110	2
"governor"	3	110	2
"let"	58	2168	2
"send"	9	336	2
"eating"	5	186	2
"lord"	3	111	2
"ok"	8	300	2
"land"	5	187	2
"forget"	6	225	1.9
"clear"	4	150	1.9
"members"	3	113	1.9
"fly"	3	114	1.9
"me"	190	7324	1.9
"won"	4	153	1.9
"known"	4	153	1.9
"language"	4	153	1.9
"forever"	4	153	1.9
"stick"	5	194	1.9
"world"	24	941	1.9
"special"	8	313	1.9
"became"	4	156	1.9
"fourth"	3	117	1.9
"eye"	3	118	1.8
"pardon"	3	118	1.8
"soon"	8	319	1.8
"number"	19	760	1.8
"popular"	4	159	1.8
"sitting"	10	401	1.8
"raise"	5	201	1.8
"share"	4	161	1.8

"tired"	4	161	1.8
"chicago"	3	121	1.8
"next"	26	1061	1.8
"record"	5	204	1.8
"honest"	3	122	1.8
"list"	5	205	1.8
"tape"	5	207	1.8
"american"	14	585	1.8
"ride"	5	208	1.8
"ready"	10	419	1.8
"war"	13	548	1.7
"who"	94	3989	1.7
"careful"	3	126	1.7
"rough"	3	126	1.7
"twice"	6	254	1.7
"wish"	9	382	1.7
"leave"	11	468	1.7
"says"	15	639	1.7
"organization"	3	127	1.7
"this"	251	10743	1.7
"cute"	4	170	1.7
"hang"	4	170	1.7
"walking"	6	256	1.7
"country"	30	1289	1.7
"death"	11	475	1.7
"second"	12	523	1.7
"completely"	6	261	1.7
"amazing"	7	305	1.7
"hoping"	3	130	1.7
"daddy"	3	130	1.7
"week"	28	1228	1.7
"team"	11	484	1.7
"hold"	7	308	1.7
"why"	42	1862	1.7
"calls"	5	221	1.7
"serious"	5	221	1.7
"new"	52	2326	1.6
"trade"	3	133	1.6
"past"	10	447	1.6
"again"	30	1346	1.6
"after"	36	1624	1.6
"states"	12	543	1.6
"runs"	3	135	1.6
"am"	24	1093	1.6
"national"	8	365	1.6
"political"	4	183	1.6
"takes"	12	552	1.6
"nobody"	8	368	1.6

"green"	5	230	1.6
"sign"	3	138	1.6
"called"	24	1117	1.6
"first"	51	2376	1.6
"your"	143	6681	1.6
"staying"	3	139	1.6
"stuck"	3	140	1.6
"nothing"	16	754	1.6
"afraid"	5	235	1.6
"act"	3	141	1.6
"brand"	3	142	1.5
"helped"	4	190	1.5
"no"	171	8204	1.5
"hope"	11	527	1.5
"countries"	7	335	1.5
"cover"	5	239	1.5
"die"	4	191	1.5
"sent"	4	191	1.5
"brothers"	3	143	1.5
"allowed"	4	192	1.5
"carolina"	4	192	1.5
"incredible"	3	145	1.5
"grandfather"	3	146	1.5
"check"	9	441	1.5
"sense"	11	540	1.5
"waiting"	5	246	1.5
"beautiful"	7	346	1.5
"hear"	17	843	1.5
"driving"	7	348	1.5
"means"	6	299	1.5
"social"	7	351	1.5
"by"	64	3238	1.5
"come"	52	2635	1.5
"must"	11	558	1.4
"may"	22	1121	1.4
"okay"	108	5513	1.4
"him"	56	2878	1.4
"happening"	4	205	1.4
"deal"	13	671	1.4
"hit"	8	416	1.4
"fix"	3	156	1.4
"using"	8	424	1.4
"live"	31	1648	1.4
"bed"	4	212	1.4
"bring"	9	479	1.4
"bunch"	6	320	1.4
"say"	80	4286	1.4
"bad"	31	1661	1.4

"inside"	5	268	1.4
"third"	5	268	1.4
"lost"	6	324	1.4
"trouble"	8	436	1.3
"coming"	16	873	1.3
"till"	3	163	1.3
"pass"	3	163	1.3
"her"	67	3666	1.3
"killed"	5	273	1.3
"comes"	15	825	1.3
"gives"	4	220	1.3
"brother"	7	386	1.3
"allow"	3	165	1.3
"luck"	3	165	1.3
"yesterday"	3	165	1.3
"totally"	6	333	1.3
"glass"	4	222	1.3
"groups"	3	167	1.3
"knows"	5	281	1.3
"peace"	3	169	1.3
"opinion"	4	226	1.3
"best"	15	852	1.3
"wants"	7	398	1.3
"story"	12	683	1.3
"help"	15	855	1.3
"from"	118	6778	1.3
"born"	4	230	1.3
"decision"	5	288	1.3
"its"	6	347	1.3
"hot"	7	410	1.3
"eat"	11	649	1.2
"friend"	10	590	1.2
"full"	8	474	1.2
"sports"	5	297	1.2
"single"	5	297	1.2
"lady"	3	178	1.2
"happened"	11	655	1.2
"wo"	10	598	1.2
"visit"	4	239	1.2
"personally"	4	239	1.2
"fast"	5	299	1.2
"board"	4	240	1.2
"rights"	3	180	1.2
"us"	44	2650	1.2
"oil"	6	362	1.2
"behind"	5	302	1.2
"left"	10	607	1.2
"account"	3	182	1.2

"stand"	5	304	1.2
"now"	132	8073	1.2
"terrible"	5	306	1.2
"dollars"	22	1350	1.2
"call"	19	1171	1.2
"person"	21	1297	1.2
"history"	4	247	1.2
"throw"	5	309	1.2
"here"	92	5719	1.2
"is"	423	26299	1.2
"heavy"	3	186	1.2
"start"	20	1244	1.2
"heard"	22	1370	1.2
"group"	7	436	1.2
"meeting"	3	187	1.2
"against"	8	501	1.2
"these"	46	2884	1.2
"give"	21	1325	1.2
"glad"	4	252	1.2
"power"	5	316	1.2
"piece"	3	190	1.2
"are"	219	13945	1.2
"believe"	18	1147	1.2
"someone"	17	1090	1.1
"mail"	3	194	1.1
"rid"	4	261	1.1
"said"	56	3668	1.1
"day"	40	2644	1.1
"has"	66	4376	1.1
"before"	30	2010	1.1
"ca"	45	3030	1.1
"street"	6	404	1.1
"sunday"	3	203	1.1
"basketball"	3	203	1.1
"reading"	9	611	1.1
"on"	256	17389	1.1
"making"	9	615	1.1
"together"	13	889	1.1
"towards"	3	205	1.1
"case"	9	616	1.1
"sad"	4	277	1.1
"vote"	7	485	1.1
"an"	80	5552	1.1
"he"	208	14498	1.1
"respect"	3	209	1.1
"shows"	5	351	1
"child"	14	984	1
"future"	3	212	1

"doing"	39	2763	1
"morning"	8	569	1
"tell"	23	1638	1
"raised"	3	218	1
"season"	4	291	1
"dad"	9	655	1
"unless"	6	439	1
"matter"	10	734	1
"worry"	4	294	1
"house"	30	2207	1
"later"	6	442	1
"also"	30	2214	1
"stay"	11	812	1
"while"	19	1409	1
"shot"	3	223	1
"made"	19	1431	1
"hand"	7	528	1
"great"	27	2042	1
"doctor"	4	303	1
"game"	6	455	1
"people"	120	9103	1
"music"	10	759	1
"should"	32	2429	1
"changes"	4	304	1
"drive"	9	684	1
"each"	11	837	1
"gun"	8	609	1
"word"	4	305	1
"west"	3	229	1
"front"	6	458	1
"tv"	11	840	1
"lives"	6	460	1
"general"	5	385	1
"absolutely"	8	616	1
"son"	8	617	1
"trip"	3	232	1
"taking"	9	696	1
"everybody"	17	1320	0.9
"back"	53	4120	0.9
"want"	48	3755	0.9
"our"	68	5320	0.9
"away"	18	1414	0.9
"sister"	5	394	0.9