

In considering topics for this research, I wanted to write a critical paper exploring gender roles and their expression in popular media, based on my understanding of basic feminist theory. In deciding what specific topic to do, I wanted to explore an artifact both timely and relevant for its messages about gender; Amy Schumer was a natural choice because she is quickly becoming popular in the comedy world for her edgy material and bombshell looks. I read a variety of feminist rhetorical criticisms to prepare, and I looked for methods that would be able to turn a critical eye on the patriarchal influences at work in our society. Through these readings, I decided that I wanted a method that was subversive and articulated comedy's role as a rhetorical medium. My overall strategy for finding information was to initially develop a wholesome combination of qualitative and quantitative literature to give greater weight and implication to my critical analysis. I chose this because I didn't want my analysis to exist in a vacuum where it had no relevance outside of rhetorical criticism. This would help the efficacy of my analysis later in the paper when I focus on the artifact.

I had to research quite a bit before finding the lens that I wanted to use to analyze Schumer's routine. Because Proquest is an effective way to casually peruse many sources, I utilized the databases on the library's website to establish a strong foundation for my research. I created a literature review through the databases in the Fine and Performing Arts and the Humanities and Social Sciences on the library website. By this process I was able to generate a balanced display of quantitative, qualitative, and critical research to establish a groundwork for my analysis. I would then use the bibliographies of studies on humor and women to find more. My literature review on women in comedy and gendered communication availed me several dramatic analyses of Sarah Silverman's comedy. Considering this, I next typed in search phrases involving Sarah Silverman into the database to find other work that analyzed her style of

comedy. Through a trail of leads like these I discovered Kathleen Rowe's book *The Unruly Woman*, which studies the comedy of Roseanne Barr. I checked out Rowe's book from the library, and the more I read, the more it became clear that the carnivalesque, Rowe's source material for the unruly woman, was the perfect lens to analyze Schumer's comedy. This led me to get Bakhtin's book *Rabelais and His World* from Hale to research more fully the carnivalesque and grotesque body. Despite some feminist scholar's claims that Bakhtin is misogynistic, I immediately saw a parallel between feminist comedy and Bakhtin's work, and so I continued digging for material. Through the Communication & Mass Media Complete I ran across a feminist scholar named Linda Mizejewski, and I found a book by her called *Pretty/Funny* about women in comedy. In it, she looks at Sarah Silverman's comedy through the lens of the carnivalesque with respect to Silverman's "adorable" appearance. With these three books, I was able to craft an effective and multi-dimensional thesis for my project. The library provided solid resources on which to predicate valid and informed research. I did have some difficulty when I was beginning my research, because women in comedy is not a heavily researched topic because there aren't that many women in comedy. However, this problem was rectified by the use of creative synonyms in databases, and I visited some professors in the Communication Studies department for their advice on how better to find information. Using a snowball technique like this helped to generate sources and lead to applicable theories, even though it took a good deal of time.

I decided to trust the sources that I used after I had seen the context from which they came from; most of the resources on the database come from fairly reputable, peer-reviewed sources, and so I knew that they were credible. However, other material took a little more internal evaluation and I would conclude whether I could use them or not based on how well

they backed up their claims. The critical theories do not have the peer-review system to ensure their efficacy, but their general acceptance by the scholarly community indicated to me that they would be credible sources that would lend to my research. My method for evaluating these sources did not change during this project; I first conducted research last year, a content analysis for a communication research class, and through trial and error on that project I have since developed a method of consistently judging the credibility of a source which involves adhering to sources that have been peer reviewed and published in a recognizable journal. If a critical book or article has been published by a reputable publishing house, then I will take the time to read it carefully and determine whether it was at the academic level I am seeking.

I have been using the resources available at Hale for the last three years and through my exposure, I have developed the skills necessary to navigate both print and electronic resources; this skill allows me to more easily conduct valid research and get to the real questions that need to be answered instead of getting bogged down in technical details.