

2022

## Fostering The Funny: A Case Study Of Undergraduate Women In Collegiate Comedy Troupes

Jaymi Courtenay Thomas

College of William and Mary - School of Education, [jaymesthomas@gmail.com](mailto:jaymesthomas@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Thomas, Jaymi Courtenay, "Fostering The Funny: A Case Study Of Undergraduate Women In Collegiate Comedy Troupes" (2022). *Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects*. William & Mary. Paper 1686662772.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.25774/w4-8z95-1138>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@wm.edu](mailto:scholarworks@wm.edu).

Fostering the Funny: A Case Study of Undergraduate Women in Collegiate Comedy Troupes

A Dissertation

Presented to the

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

---

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education

By

Jaymi C. Thomas

December 2022

Fostering the Funny: A Case Study of Undergraduate Women in Collegiate Comedy Troupes

By

Jaymi C. Thomas

---

Approved October 31, 2022 by

**James Barber, PhD**

---

Committee Member

**Vernon Hurte, PhD**

---

Committee Member

**Stephanie J. Blackmon, PhD**

---

Chairperson of Doctoral Committee

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmothers, Violet May and Virginia Ann who always encouraged me as a child to love reading, storytelling, and supported me as I prepared lessons for my diverse classroom of stuffed animals. I am incredibly blessed and thankful to be the granddaughter of two beautiful, grounded, family-oriented, education advocates.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to my dissertation chair, Dr. Stephanie Blackmon for the guidance, support, and wisdom throughout the journey. I am grateful for the time, energy, and feedback provided along the way. Additionally, thank you to my committee members, Dr. Vernon Hurte and Dr. Jim Barber for your time, wisdom, and for your culture-shifting work within higher education student affairs and academic spaces. And, a special thank you to Dr. Hurte for the advising and opportunity to learn from him and others in Student Affairs at The College of William & Mary's Center for Student Diversity.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my parents for encouraging me and for believing in me when I did not think that I could complete the dissertation. I am grateful for their support and a special note of thanks to my mother for being my biggest prayer warrior and cheerleader. To my friends who cheered for me along the way and helped me process ideas, thank you for showing up for me and rooting for me along the way.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>IX</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....	3
TABLE 1 .....	8
RATIONALE OF SELECTED TROUPES.....	10
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.....	12
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	13
DEFINITIONS OF TERMS.....	18
ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION .....	18
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Examining the Landscape of Comedy in Higher Education.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Comedy: The Science Behind Laughing .....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Laughter and Wellness.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Examining COVID-19’s Impact on Loneliness &amp; Isolation .....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>University of Pennsylvania's Bloomers Comedy Troupe.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>National College Comedy Festival .....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Examining Student Participation in Campus Activities.....</i>	<i>38</i>
TABLE 2 .....	40
<i>Conclusion of the Literature Review.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<b>METHODS .....</b>	<b>43</b>
RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE.....	44
<i>Bechdel Test.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Bloomers Comedy .....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Circular Reasoning Improv .....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Control Top Improv .....</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>Derby Comedy .....</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>The Girlie Project .....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Indecent Exposure.....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Ladies Night Comedy.....</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Sphincter Comedy .....</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy .....</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Tuft Funny Ladies .....</i>	<i>62</i>
PARTICIPANTS.....	63
<i>Individual Interview Participants .....</i>	<i>64</i>
TABLE 3 .....	65
<i>Focus Group Interview Participants .....</i>	<i>65</i>

DATA HANDLING: A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CODING .....	66
<i>Research Question 1</i> .....	67
<i>Research Question 2</i> .....	68
RESEARCH DESIGN .....	68
<i>Individual Interviews</i> .....	69
<i>Data Handling and Coding: Individual Interviews</i> .....	74
<i>Focus Group Interview</i> .....	75
<i>Data Handling and Coding: Focus Group Interview</i> .....	81
<i>Piloting Individual Interviews</i> .....	82
<i>Observations</i> .....	83
<i>Data Handling and Coding: Observation</i> .....	87
<i>Document Analysis</i> .....	88
TABLE 4 .....	90
<i>Instagram</i> .....	91
<i>Twitter</i> .....	92
<i>Social Media Protocol</i> .....	95
<i>Data Handling and Coding: Document Analysis</i> .....	96
TRUSTWORTHINESS, VALIDITY, AND RELIABILITY .....	97
<i>Triangulation</i> .....	98
<i>Reflection and Reflexivity</i> .....	98
<i>Rich and Thick Descriptions</i> .....	100
RELIABILITY .....	101
RESEARCHER AS INSTRUMENT STATEMENT .....	101
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	103
SUMMARY .....	106
<b>FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>107</b>
POPULATION, SAMPLE, AND PARTICIPANTS .....	108
QUALTRICS FORM .....	108
INTRODUCTION TO THEMES .....	109
COMMUNITY-BUILDING SKILLS: INTRODUCTION.....	110
TABLE 5 .....	112
CREATIVE OUTLET FOR CREATING COMMUNITY SUBTHEME: INTRODUCTION.....	112
<i>Values</i> .....	113
<i>Attitudes</i> .....	114
<i>Beliefs</i> .....	114
<i>Creative Outlet for Creating Community Subtheme on Twitter</i> .....	117
<i>Bloomers Comedy Tweets</i> .....	117
<i>Circular Reasoning Improv Tweets</i> .....	118
<i>Derby Comedy Tweets</i> .....	119
TABLE 6 .....	120
<i>The Girlie Project Tweets</i> .....	120
<i>Sphincter Comedy Tweets</i> .....	122
<i>Summary of Creative Outlets for Creating Community Related Tweets</i> .....	122
<i>Creative Outlets for Creating Community: Examining Instagram Posts</i> .....	123
<i>Bechdel Test Instagram Posts</i> .....	123
<i>Bloomers Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	124

<i>Circular Reasoning Improv Instagram Posts</i> .....	124
<i>Control Top Improv Instagram Posts</i> .....	125
<i>Derby Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	126
<i>Ladies Night Instagram Posts</i> .....	128
<i>Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	128
<i>TFL Instagram Posts</i> .....	129
<i>Observations: Creative Outlets for Creating Community</i> .....	130
<i>Cultivating a Creative Community Through Pitching</i> .....	130
<i>Cultivating a Creative Community Through Improv Games</i> .....	131
<i>Cultivating a Creative Community Through Organized Rehearsals</i> .....	132
<i>Cultivating a Creative Community Through Humorous Vignettes</i> .....	132
SPACE FOR WORKSHOPPING, DELIVERING, AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK: INTRODUCTION .....	134
<i>Values</i> .....	135
<i>Attitudes</i> .....	135
<i>Beliefs</i> .....	135
<i>Bloomers Comedy Tweets</i> .....	137
<i>Circular Reasoning Improv Tweets</i> .....	138
<i>Derby Comedy Tweets</i> .....	138
<i>The Girlie Project Tweets</i> .....	139
<i>Sphincter Comedy Troupe Tweets</i> .....	140
<i>Workshopping &amp; Feedback Subtheme: Summary of Tweets</i> .....	140
<i>Workshopping &amp; Feedback Subtheme: Examining Instagram Posts</i> .....	140
<i>Bechdel Test Instagram Posts</i> .....	141
<i>Bloomers Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	141
<i>Circular Reasoning Improv Instagram Posts</i> .....	143
<i>Control Top Improv Instagram Posts</i> .....	143
<i>Derby Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	144
<i>Ladies Night Instagram Posts</i> .....	144
<i>Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	145
<i>TFL Instagram Posts</i> .....	146
<i>Workshopping/Feedback Subtheme: Summary of Instagram Content</i> .....	149
<i>Workshopping &amp; Feedback Subtheme Observations</i> .....	149
MENTORING THROUGH JOKES SUBTHEME: INTRODUCTION .....	151
<i>Values</i> .....	152
<i>Attitudes</i> .....	153
<i>Bloomers Comedy Tweets</i> .....	154
<i>Circular Reasoning Improv Tweets</i> .....	155
<i>Derby Comedy Tweets</i> .....	156
<i>The Girlie Project Tweets</i> .....	157
<i>Sphincter Comedy Tweets</i> .....	158
<i>Bechdel Test Instagram Posts</i> .....	158
<i>Bloomers Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	159
<i>Circular Reasoning Improv Instagram Posts</i> .....	159
<i>Control Top Improv Instagram Posts</i> .....	160
<i>Derby Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	160
<i>Ladies Night Instagram Posts</i> .....	161



<i>Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	162
<i>TFL Instagram Posts</i> .....	163
<i>Mentoring Through Jokes Subtheme: Troupe Observations</i> .....	164
<i>Community Building Skills Theme Summary</i> .....	165
LAUGHTER AND PLAY SKILLS THEME: INTRODUCTION .....	166
TABLE 7 .....	167
BENEFITS OF GAMES AND PLAY SUBTHEME: INTRODUCTION .....	168
<i>Values</i> .....	169
<i>Attitudes</i> .....	169
<i>Beliefs</i> .....	169
<i>Bloomers Comedy Tweets</i> .....	170
<i>Circular Reasoning Improv Tweets</i> .....	171
<i>The Girlie Project Tweets</i> .....	171
<i>Sphincter Comedy Tweets</i> .....	172
<i>Bechdel Test Instagram Posts</i> .....	172
<i>Bloomers Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	172
<i>Circular Reasoning Improv Instagram Posts</i> .....	173
<i>Control Top Improv Instagram Posts</i> .....	174
<i>Derby Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	175
<i>Ladies Night Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	175
<i>Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	176
<i>Benefits of Games and Play: Observations</i> .....	177
BENEFITS OF VARIOUS HUMOR STYLES SUBTHEME INTRODUCTION.....	178
<i>Values</i> .....	180
<i>Attitudes</i> .....	180
<i>Beliefs</i> .....	181
<i>Bloomers Comedy Tweets</i> .....	183
<i>Circular Reasoning Improv Tweets</i> .....	183
<i>Derby Comedy Tweets</i> .....	184
<i>The Girlie Project Tweets</i> .....	186
<i>Sphincter Comedy Tweets</i> .....	186
<i>Benefits of Various Humor Styles Subtheme: Twitter Summary</i> .....	187
<i>Bechdel Test Instagram Posts</i> .....	187
<i>Bloomers Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	188
<i>Circular Reasoning Improv Instagram Posts</i> .....	189
<i>Control Top Improv Instagram Posts</i> .....	190
<i>Derby Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	191
<i>Ladies Night Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	191
<i>Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy Instagram Posts</i> .....	192
<i>TFL Instagram Posts</i> .....	192
<i>Benefits of Various Humor Styles Subtheme: Observations</i> .....	193
<i>Summary of Laughter and Play Skills Theme</i> .....	194
SUMMARY OF RESULTS.....	195
<b>INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>197</b>
PURPOSE .....	197
SUMMARY OF RESULTS.....	198

<i>Results From Question 1</i> .....	198
<i>Results from Question 2</i> .....	200
<i>Summary Statement</i> .....	201
IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	201
IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS .....	203
RELATIONSHIP OF RESULTS TO THEORY .....	206
LIMITATIONS.....	207
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION .....	208
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>209</b>
<b>TROUPE OUTREACH LOG</b> .....	<b>250</b>
<b>INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL</b> .....	<b>261</b>
<b>FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR’S GUIDE</b> .....	<b>263</b>
<b>FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT GROUND RULES</b> .....	<b>266</b>
<b>FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL</b> .....	<b>267</b>
<b>INFORMED CONSENT FORM: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW</b> .....	<b>268</b>
<b>TROUPE OBSERVATION LOG NOTES</b> .....	<b>270</b>
<b>BLOOMERS COMEDY TROUPE SKETCHES</b> .....	<b>276</b>
<b>TROUPE OBSERVATION PROTOCOL</b> .....	<b>278</b>
<b>INFORMED CONSENT FORM: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW</b> .....	<b>280</b>
<b>EMOJI CODE DATABASE</b> .....	<b>286</b>
<b>HUMOR STYLES MINI QUIZ</b> .....	<b>294</b>
<b>VITA</b> .....	<b>296</b>

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1.</b> <i>Testing Provine’s 10 Tips for Increasing Laughter</i> .....	8
<b>Table 2.</b> <i>Examining Mission Statements of Student Affairs Divisions</i> .....	40
<b>Table 3.</b> <i>Demographics of Individual Interview Participants</i> .....	65
<b>Table 4.</b> <i>Historically Women’s Collegiate Troupe Social Media Accounts</i> .....	90
<b>Table 5.</b> <i>Aligning Community Building Skills with Provine s Tips to Enhance Laughter</i> .....	112
<b>Table 6.</b> <i>Derby Comedy Tweets Connected to Creative Community</i> .....	120
<b>Table 7.</b> <i>Aligning Laughter and Play Skills with Provine’s Tips to Enhance Laughter</i> .....	167

## **Abstract**

During a global pandemic, another pandemic of loneliness impacted undergraduate college students and influenced the way members of the 18-25-year-old population lived and learned throughout a time of intentional distancing. Additionally, the insurgence of loneliness impacts members of the 18-25 age group in startling rates. This qualitative case study explored how undergraduate women who participate in comedy troupes fostered community while living and learning during a global pandemic known as COVID-19 between the spring of 2020 and the fall of 2021. The research added to the body of knowledge on how comedy and levity can enhance wellness and how humor can be brought into various aspects of life from work to play. This study explored how undergraduate students living in a time of heightened loneliness infused humor in their relationships with one another. The study explored the relationship dynamics built by women-identified comedians and focused on how the participants developed community by using humor, comedy, and levity as the pillars of their interactions. Lastly, this study is rooted in better understanding how higher education student affairs practitioners can better support collegiate comedians invested in their relationships with one another.

*Keywords:* comedy, collegiate comedy troupes, community, women comedians, humor, loneliness, COVID-19, student affairs

FOSTERING THE FUNNY: A CASE STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN IN  
COLLEGIATE COMEDY TROUPE

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Many universities have student-led and student focused comedy troupes permitting students to engage in forms of comedy ranging from improvisational, musical sketch groups, and stand-up opportunities to share their talents and build their humor muscles. Some of the most well-known comedians were members of their college comedy troupes (Campus Explorer, 2021). In fact, participating in comedy can help build essential skills like “teamwork, leadership, public speaking, and creative thinking” (Campus Explorer, 2021, para. 9). Despite there being work written on humor, comedy, college students and the “poetic nature” of sketch comedy (Upchurch, 1994), little has been written about undergraduate women and their involvement in comedy troupes. Even less has been written about women in collegiate comedy troupes, both historically women-led comedy troupes and co-gendered comedy troupes at institutions of higher education.

I examined the culture of undergraduate women who participated in historically women’s and co-gendered comedy troupes engage in their community during one of the loneliest times to be a college student in modern history, in the midst of a global pandemic and a more silent pandemic of heightened loneliness. I provided insight into the group dynamics, bonds, and relationships formed by women-identified students who participated in a comedy troupe during a global pandemic known as COVID-19.

Additionally, I examined how the comedy troupe participants defined their sense of community, understanding of leadership, and how they used their comedy skills and humor-engaging practices to sustain relationships with one another while living and learning in the

midst of COVID-19 and a time of heightened loneliness (Walsh, 2021). There are benefits to unpacking and hearing from a range of undergraduate students aged 18 to 25 who were active members of their comedy troupes ranging from improv comedy to sketch comedy. In some of the study's featured troupes, the students organized their teams into specializations including writers, performers, costume designers, and producers. Other troupes were not as team-oriented and members were responsible for writing, crafting, and performing. University of Pennsylvania's Bloomers Comedy troupe featured departments including cast, writing, band, business, tech, and costumes. The comedy elements of the troupe are performed by the cast; however, the troupe could not exist with the cast only. Stand-up comedy focuses more on the individual; sketch comedy and improv comedy involve collaboration and a team. The teamwork in this case involves the organizational teams that compose the troupe including the troupe's performers (the cast), the storytelling and crafting of the sketches (writing), the musical performances (band), the handling of all administrative duties (business), the operations of technical elements and production (tech), and the designation of wardrobe (costumes).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Students continue to seek opportunities to combat loneliness and foster a sense of wellness during a heightened season of loneliness. Laughter's ability to fulfill a sense of wellness is a component of holistic well-being that institutions of higher education should consider more fully. Research from Colin Stewart (2016) revealed that students benefit from participating in comedy, more specifically, improv as detailed in the dissertation *Effects on Improv Comedy on College Students*. Stewart found that "improv comedy helped them create connections and build bridges to new worlds" (p. 106). Stewart also uncovered how students actively participating in college improv groups benefited in numerous ways.

Additionally, there is research revealing the benefits of laughter and humor to improve wellness supporting the concept that laughter is “generally associated with good times, good performance, improved attitude, and desirable outcomes” (Provine, 2000, p. 209). In the work published in 2000, *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation*, Provine (2000) provided a list of 10 tips to help “people designing programs or environments for increasing laughter” (p. 210). Provine noted the list was not tested empirically; the tips “focus on general principles, not specific techniques” (p. 209). Provine’s tips are rooted in exploring people and environments shaped by people where one suggestion is “the more the merrier” (p. 210). The 10 tips to increase laughter are:

- Find a friend or personable stranger
- The more the merrier
- Increase interpersonal contact
- Create a casual atmosphere
- Adopt a laugh-ready attitude
- Exploit the contagious laugh effect
- Provide humorous materials
- Remove social inhibitions
- Stage social events
- Tickle

The concepts and suggestions offered by Provine (2000), an expert in laughter, focus on things groups and people can do to enhance laughter. In the text, *Laughter*, Provine claimed “Laughter is the kind of powerful, body wide act that really shakes up our physiology, a fact that has motivated speculations about its medicinal and exercise benefits since antiquity” (p. 192).



While the study and understanding of laughter and its benefits is not new, there are gaps that remain in how undergraduate students benefit from intentionally engaging in laughter as a wellness technique outside of the classroom in co-curricular activities. There are gaps in understanding how Provine's tips can be used, especially when faced with challenges of a global pandemic forcing social distancing, and how the tips can be useful during a pandemic of increased loneliness (Walsh, 2021).

The gap in the knowledge and understanding is that we know students benefit from participating in improv groups because they were "able to believe fully in themselves, learn about who they were by gaining new perspectives, explore other cultures, and find their voice" (Stewart, 2016, p. 241). However, we do not have more insight into how examining the relationships of women-identified students who participate in historically women's collegiate comedy troupes and co-gendered troupes create a space for women to practice comedy (Berman, 2015). Stewart (2016) claimed college students who participate in improv groups experienced a thirst for knowledge. Stewart's (2016) research on improv comedy found that improv teams "develop students' ability to generate multiple ideas, solutions, or develop problem-solving abilities" (p. 40). The research done by Stewart revealed that undergraduate students gain skills and benefit from the pursuit of comedy. Higher education stakeholders and leaders, in particular student affairs practitioners are well versed in the benefits of joining student organizations and have some insight into the benefits of participating in improv due to work from Stewart (2016); however there is less data to better understand the benefits of being in a comedy-centric organization as an 18-25-year-old woman living and learning in a global pandemic and a time of heightened loneliness (Walsh, 2021).

Provine (2000) created tips rooted in enhancing laughter. Grounding the work in

understanding how the 10 tips can work, not work, or be adjusted in a time that requires social distancing due to the global pandemic served as a form of test to Provine's tips. Provine's tips were not specifically created with women-identified undergraduate college students in mind. The 10 tips Provine (2000) suggested "are informed predictions" and are "good starting point for people designing programs or environments for increasing laughter" (p. 210). By using Provine's 10 tips for increasing laughter, this study added to the ever-growing body of literature and research on how communities can use laughter as the catalyst to enhanced wellness.

During a global pandemic, many of Provine (2000)'s suggestions for increasing laughter presented a challenge. On the list of 10, tip number two was "The more the merrier" (Provine, 2000, p. 210). Provine (2000) explored the concept that "a large crowd laughs more than a small one" (p. 210). The eligible participants, members of comedy troupes, complied with regulations around COVID-19 that made "more the merrier" a risk for public health and safety. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.), a large gathering "brings together many people from multiple households in a private or public space" and are "often planned events with a large number of guests and invitations" (para. 2). The next section of this dissertation features Provine's suggestions in more detail and centers the study's troupes in relation to the 10 tips. As depicted in Table 1, the 10th tip Provine (2000) offered is "tickling." Due to the problematic and intimate nature of tickling (Gillespie, 2017; J. Marder, 2020), I did not explore tickling as a valid method of enhancing laughter.

For the purposes of Table 1, I used Bloomers Comedy troupe, the oldest historically women's troupe, to test Provine (2000)'s suggestions. I tested the 10 tips to increase laughter from Provine with Bloomers Comedy troupe to deepen the understanding of the tips, acknowledge the practicality of the tips, and to explore how the tips function as a framework for

this study. While other troupes were central to this study, I used Bloomers in the Provine test because the troupe served as a catalyst to better understand how undergraduate women operate in comedy.

**Table 1***Testing Provine's 10 Tips for Increasing Laughter*

Tip	Centering Collegiate Women Student-Comedians
Find a friend or personable stranger	Bloomers Comedy troupe is made up of students from the same university who work together to create original comedy material (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.; Penn Clubs, n.d.)
The more the merrier	Bloomers Comedy troupe is made up of 71 members and they specialize in performances across the campus of UPenn and performing at external venues. The troupe continues to expand with more UPenn students auditioning and the troupe hosted five sold-out shows in 2018 (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.; Lissner, 2019; Penn Clubs, n.d.).
Increase interpersonal contact	Bloomers Comedy troupe typically hosts events on campus including “coffeehouses, academic programs, and special campus events” (Penn Clubs, n.d.). Due to COVID-19, the interpersonal contact with “face-to-face” (Provine, 2000, p. 211) contact was reduced for safety and to minimize risks of spreading COVID-19 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.).
Create a casual atmosphere	Bloomers Comedy troupe participants are part of the greater community of UPenn artistic groups (Penn Clubs, n.d.).
Adopt a laugh-ready attitude	Bloomers Comedy troupe incorporated humor into their events and created a festival known as “LaughtHERfest” -- an annual event “to celebrate any and all underrepresented comedians-- young and old, professional and amateur -- who have an interest in comedy” (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). The festival’s focus is on comedy and includes workshops, activities, and panels culminating in a performance (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.).
Exploit the contagious laugh effect	Bloomers Comedy troupe holds auditions (Penn Clubs, n.d.) and the “auditions consist of written and in-person components tailored to the specific sections for which a person is applying” (DiSanto, 2018, para. 14). The auditions serve as one way to create a group of “laughing people” (Provine, 2000, p. 212).
Provide humorous materials	Bloomers Comedy troupe produces original materials and has done so since their founding in 1978 with the premiere show in 1979 “Fruit of the Bloomers” (DiSanto, 2018; Penn Clubs, n.d.). The comedy sketches are written and produced by Bloomers Comedy participants, and historically the troupe has created space for women in comedy. Additionally, the troupe members have created sketches rooted in “feminist humor” as a “comedy muscle” (DiSanto, 2018, para.10).
Remove social inhibitions	Bloomers Comedy troupe is known for pushing boundaries typically held by women in comedy (DiSanto, 2018). Bloomers troupe members “are constantly pushing against the stereotypes that hinder women in comedy” (Gross, 2020, para. 1).
Stage social events because most folks enjoy an excuse to cheer, laugh, and revel	Bloomers Comedy troupe is known for their fall and spring show (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.) and their content is shared via YouTube (Bloomers Comedy, n.d-b.). The social events hosted by Bloomers Comedy troupe include their shows and the annual “LaughtHERfest” which creates a space to recognize comedy via workshops, panel events, and a culminating show (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.).
Tickling	Because tickling “can have harmful side effects” (Provine, 2000); this dissertation did not explore tickling as a valid or suitable suggestion in relation to the Bloomers Comedy troupe participants.

*Note.* The 10 tips to enhance laughter were featured in the Provine text, *Laughter* published in 2000.

This study helped fill a gap in the knowledge around how and why college students laugh and

build comic-centric communities and added to the body of work done by Stewart (2016); additionally, the study revealed how Provine's (2000) recommendations for "increasing laughter" (p. 209) can work in a time of heightened loneliness specifically among undergraduate women-identified students within the 18-25-year-old age group.

## **Background**

With a rise of loneliness and cultural researchers like Harvard University's Making Caring Common's team examining the increase of loneliness and isolation due to COVID-19 (Sweet, 2021; Walsh, 2021; Weissbourd et al., 2021), it is important to understand that humor can be a part of self-care including using humor to take care of yourself, practice self-confidence, and practice problem-solving (Breazeale, 2019). The study expanded the conversation of how undergraduate women used comedy, comedic talent, and engaged in women-led and co-gendered troupes as an outlet for creative expression, leadership building, and combating isolation.

GOLD Comedy (n.d.) markets their online platform as one that serves as an "all-inclusive comedy world centering young women and non-binary folks" (para. 3). According to a popular culture article posted on GOLD Comedy, three of the top universities for women-led comedy troupes are: Brown University's Skorts Sketch Comedy, UPenn's Bloomers Comedy, and New York University's Bechdel Test (C. Smith, 2017). This qualitative case study sought to understand how undergraduate students who identify as women and participate in active comedy troupes both historically women's and co-gendered used comedy, humor, and laughter to explore their identities and build communities through the joy of humor and comedic arts while living and learning in the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Rationale of Selected Troupes**

In order to reach as many students as possible and hear from diverse voices, the study was open to both historically women's and co-gendered troupes at a range of colleges and universities across the United States. The study was timely due to a rise in research focused on unpacking humor and comedy in professional spaces as seen in Aaker and Bagdonas's (2021) text, and to better understand how undergraduate students who identify as women navigate humor and relationships as they live and practice comedy in a world that often deems women less funny than men (Greengross et al., 2020). The work intentionally centered experiences of women involved in various aspects of comedy ranging from production to costumes to tech to writing and performing at various institutions of higher education. In examining the culture of comedy troupes at UPenn, one Bloomers Comedy troupe member noted that women have to do more to be deemed as funny as men (Gross, 2020). As a premier collegiate comedy troupe with multiple functioning organizational teams whose work has opened the door for other women-centric comedy troupes (Park, 2016), studying a historic troupe and troupes that have been created after enhances the knowledge we have of students' creativity and their ability to create community with one another in comedy-centered student organizations. All of the troupes selected in the study are known for their approach to humor and comedy. Specifically, since launching in 2005, The Girlie Project at Emerson College is known for their commitment to "promote female performers, writers, and directors" (EmConnect, n.d., para. 1).

Additionally, as Bloomers Comedy troupe becomes more of a mainstream name in comedy with famous comedians including Saturday Night Live alumni, Vanessa Bayer (Lissner, 2019), the troupe's public identity, notoriety, and branding has become increasingly visible in recent years. The time spent examining the first and oldest historically women's collegiate

musical sketch comedy troupe provided insight into relationships and dynamics of a troupe that has inspired other women-identified undergraduate students to pursue comedy (Park, 2016). Around UPenn and outside of the campus, Bloomers Comedy is known for their ability to create spaces for those most traditionally underserved and underrepresented in comedy (Gross, 2020; Park, 2016). Bloomers Comedy troupe's work in comedy expands beyond the campus of University of Pennsylvania; the troupe's work to expand the voices of college women in comedy is one reason why LaughtHERFest exists (Yusuf, 2019).

Bloomers Comedy has a storied history dating back to 1978 when "a few women decided that it was high time to create a vehicle for funny, spirited, talented women at The University of Pennsylvania" (Friedman, 2010, para. 4); further, they have continued to expand the conversation of women in comedy (Yusuf, 2019). Bloomers Comedy troupe was created in part to help answer the call for women at the university to participate in comedy because the door was closed on them by The Mask and Wig Club founded at UPenn in 1888 (Freidman, 2010). All of the historically women's collegiate comedy troupes featured in the study were created in part to explore their identities as women via comedy and to push back against the narrative and stereotypes of women being less funny than men (Greengross, 2019). By centering the experience of a group created to explore women's place in comedy intentionally named after an early women's rights social activist (Friedman, 2010), the troupe lends itself as a student-run campus organization, comedy troupe, and creative outlet worth exploring, researching, and worthy of collective insights that can further enhance student affairs, campus activities, and wellness in higher education.

It is important to better understand the historic troupe at UPenn because it provides context to why the study sought to hear from undergraduate women in comedy in both women-

centric and co-gendered troupes. The women-identified comedians from the respective institutions have all participated in a space that had been previously deemed male-only within higher education institutions. The common tie among the troupes featured in the study is that they all have student comedians who identify as women and actively pursue comedy as undergraduate students.

In summary, it is important to highlight and unpack the relationships formed by undergraduate student comedians who identify as women who lived and learned during a global pandemic and a time of heightened loneliness (Walsh, 2021; Weissbourd et al., 2021). In the initial meeting for Bloomers Comedy troupe, there were fliers around campus that said, “Women, the time has come for the first all-female musical comedy group in the Ivy League” and “200 women came to the meeting” (Berman, 2015, p. 82). Bloomers Comedy troupe’s legacy in the collegiate comedy space is worth noting because of their impact on undergraduate women-identified students to create a space for women to explore and hone their comedic talents. In honor of the 40th anniversary of Bloomers Comedy troupe, the former chair said that “women’s voices in comedy are more important now than ever” and this study seeks to further establish the voices of women identified student comedians who are members of diverse comedy troupes across the United States (The F-Word Magazine, 2018, para. 4). The study acknowledged the voice of women who craft, build, and practice comedy many years after Bloomers was founded in the 1970s.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this case study was to explore the community and support system built by undergraduate women between the ages of 18 to 25 participating in collegiate comedy troupes that were active during the years of 2020–2022, a time of a global pandemic known as COVID-



19, and a more silent epidemic of heightened loneliness. The study explored how undergraduate college women used comedy to build community, express themselves, and gained further insight into how these students used comedy as an outlet to combat loneliness and isolation during COVID-19. Additionally, this study contributed to the body of work around the benefits of studying laughter as a form of wellness within the context of a campus-sponsored activity.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study contributed to the literature on college students and comedy by providing a multi-site case study of undergraduate women actively participating in collegiate comedy troupes. In a similar way that Stewart (2016) studied the effects of improv comedy on college students, the study sought to better understand how students' well-being is affected by owning their sense of humor and practicing comedy. The study added to the body of knowledge around comedy's effects on well-being and the importance of cultivating a sense of humor amid trauma. Additionally, this dissertation contributed to the body of knowledge around student development and how campus activities benefit students' well-being. With COVID-19 as the backdrop to the study, this research added to the literature around students living, learning, and finding community during a heightened time of loneliness and isolation due to the pandemic.

### **Overview of Methodology**

One component of the case study is the boundedness of a case (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 165). Within every case there exist numerous sites that could be visited (as in the model science program), events or activities that could be observed, people who could be interviewed, and documents that could be read" (Merriam, 2009, p. 81). The case was bound by outreach to undergraduate students (18-25-years-old) who identified as women and who were active in a collegiate comedy troupe during the time of the outreach that occurred between August 2021 to

April 2022. The basic design of this study was a qualitative case study that included a series of data collection methods: individual interviews, focus group interviews, observations, and document analysis. The qualitative design of the case study approach for this dissertation involved interviews conducted using Zoom's web conference platform. The individual interviews included open-ended questions with 15 undergraduate students from a range of collegiate comedy troupes.

I sought to host individual interviews with a member from all of the troupes featured in the study to help strengthen the validity of the study (Creswell, 2014). The study's initial proposal was to hold multiple focus-group interviews; due to constraints of time and participant willingness, the study only featured one focus-group interview. The focus group interview protocol aligned with Merriam's best practices which included asking good questions and ensuring that there were "different types of questions" to "yield different information" (Merriam, 2009, p. 95). When designing focus group interviews, "there are no hard and fast rules about how many to include in a group, most writers suggest somewhere between six and ten participants" (Merriam, 2009, p. 94). Focus group interviews "tend to result in information being generated more quickly than from individual interviews" (Savin-Baden & Major, p. 389). All troupes that were contacted for individual interviews were also invited to participate in a focus-group interview. Throughout the study's interview phase, 14 of the 15 interviews took place remotely using the Zoom platform in part due to COVID-19 enforced restrictions and the normalization of video calls for today's college students. One individual interview occurred at the National College Comedy Festival held at Skidmore College that I attended in April 2022.

The study's design was a qualitative case study as defined by Merriam (2009) with some methods aligning with the anthropological approach. The disciplinary case study for

anthropology can “focus on the culture of a given organization or institution” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 156). The anthropological case study provides “a sociocultural analysis and interpretation of the unit of study” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 156). In this case study, the unit of study was collegiate comedy troupes located within four-year colleges and universities in the United States that were active between 2020 - 2022. The various data collection methods in the study focused on the selected troupes’ cultures and “provide an in-depth examination” of the troupes’ cultures in the context of living and learning during COVID-19. In addition to individual interviews and a focus group interview, the case study included observation of three troupes’ rehearsals and writer’s room sessions, observations of pre-recorded materials from the selected troupes housed on YouTube, and document analysis of social media content from the selected troupes owned and operated social media accounts including Twitter and Instagram as data collecting methods (Merriam, 2009). Research questions unlike interview questions are “broader, identifying areas to ask questions about” (Merriam, 2009, p. 60). The next section of the dissertation highlights the study’s research questions.

### **Research Questions**

The dissertation uncovered details into the relationships built by students who participated in comedy troupes, both historically women-centric and co-gendered troupes during the isolating time of a global pandemic, COVID-19, and a culture of heightened loneliness for those within the ages of 18-25 (Sweet, 2021; Walsh, 2021). The study was guided by the following questions:

1. How do women-identified undergraduate students who participate in collegiate comedy troupes housed in the United States describe their relationship with fellow troupe members?

2. How does being a part of a collegiate comedy troupe in the United States help women-identified undergraduate students build community with one another and mitigate loneliness permeating the culture during a global pandemic?

### **Limitations**

The study was limited to data collected from individual interviews, a focus group interview, observations of rehearsals from three troupes observations of previously recorded comedic performances, and document analysis of posts shared on two social media platforms, Twitter and Instagram, between March 2020 to August 2021. Due to the qualitative nature of the case study approach with individual interviews and a focus group interview, the study was limited in the responses from the students who participated in the individual interviews and the focus-group interview. The study was limited because the data was collected from the troupe's public-facing records including their public-facing social media accounts that ranged in posting cadence on Twitter and Instagram. These limitations did not allow for a more historic take on the study's selected troupes and instead focused on the interactions of the study's selected troupe members living and learning in 2020, 2021, and 2022, during various phases of life with COVID-19.

I sought to hear from undergraduate participants in selected comedy troupes throughout the United States. All of the troupes had different sized rosters, capacities, and comedic interest and expertise levels. Another limitation was the willingness of the various troupes' participants to be involved in the individual interviews and focus group interviews. Because of limits on travel and students living and learning in a remote setting due to COVID-19, I used technology to conduct a majority of the interviews via Zoom. As with qualitative research, the interview responses came with their own biases including the respondent may answer in a way that seems

more suitable for a research study than if asked in a more casual setting (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

Another limitation to the study was that I sought to understand how students live and learn during a global pandemic, COVID-19, but the interviews did not occur during the first 15 months of COVID-19 including March 2020 through May 2021. Most interviews took place in from February–April 2022 after expanding the outreach to include co-gendered comedy troupes.

### **Delimitations**

This study was delimited by the research in several ways, and they were “rational” choices to narrow the study (Calabrese, 2006). First, the sample included students who identified as women in various comedy troupes and not all students within comedy. Some historically women’s comedy troupes have expanded their scope to include a broader range of identities. Specifically, Bloomers Comedy troupe - a comedy group that originated as a space for undergraduate college women became open to “all gender identities underrepresented in comedy” at The University of Pennsylvania (Bloomers Comedy, n.d., para. 1). The study focused on hearing from students who identified as female and women regardless of gender assigned at birth or sexual identity (Penn State Student Affairs, n.d.). The target population was students who identified as female and women regardless of gender assigned at birth or sexual identity in order to better understand a wide range of various troupes’ experiences. Inclusivity is a hallmark of Bloomers Comedy troupe (Beesam & Yakoob, 2021) and influenced the design of the study. As an ethical and inclusive researcher, I intentionally did not want to limit the study to participants who identify as cis-gender heterosexual women (Penn State Student Affairs, n.d.). All of the study’s determined troupes are composed of undergraduate college students between the troupe’s designated limited ages of 18–25. Students in the various troupes during the study’s

selected season represented members of various classes including the class of 2022, 2023, and 2024. The next section provides a definition of terms used in the study.

### **Definitions of Terms**

There were key terms used throughout the study including case study, co-gendered, comedy, troupe, and women-identified.

1. Case Study is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” as defined by Merriam (2009, p. 40).
2. Co-gendered: This term is used to define a troupe that includes students that identify as women, men, and non-binary.
3. Comedy: This dissertation implements the definition of comedy as found in the book, *Humor, seriously: Why humor is a secret weapon in business and life* by Jennifer Aaker and Naomi Bagdonas published in 2021. Aaker and Bagdonas (2021) defined comedy as “the practice of humor as a structured discipline” (p. 37).
4. Troupe: This term is used throughout the study to designate a group or collective of comedians.
5. Women-identified: This term references anyone who identifies as a woman or female regardless of the identity assigned at birth.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the importance of the study, limitations, and delimitations. Additionally, the conceptual framework of the study was established, and the research questions were clarified. Chapter 2 contains literature and research related to broad topics including research on the impact of heightened loneliness and its impact on college students, research on

comedy's benefits to mental health and group formation, includes articles and research written about the troupe that ignited the study, Bloomers Comedy troupe, and examines campus activities as a catalyst to enhance the undergraduate student experience. The methodology for this study is included in Chapter 3 along with the research design and qualitative approach procedures. Results obtained from the individual interviews, focus group interview, observation, and document analysis are included in Chapter 4. And, the final chapter, Chapter 5 presents the results of the efforts aimed at better understanding the relationship dynamics and communities built by women-identified undergraduate students active in collegiate comedy troupes.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review examines the connection of comedy and comedy troupes as an effective tool and method for community building, helping with isolation, and an opportunity to explore the strengths of collegiate comedy troupes and their role within the higher education universe. This chapter includes the literature connected to the various themes of the research study. First, the chapter includes review of literature that addressed the landscape of comedy groups in higher education. Next, the literature review provides an overview of the current state of loneliness and the effects of loneliness on college students, specifically the 18-25-year-old population. Next, the literature review highlights content related to research conducted on laughter and wellness. The section on laughter and wellness grounds the work in the growing body of research on comedy, humor, and laughter's impact on wellness. The literature review includes a section on comedy festivals in the collegiate space and ends with a section on the importance of campus activities as a part of higher education research.

#### *Examining the Landscape of Comedy in Higher Education*

Comedy troupes have a space on college campuses and some of the most recognizable of college campus comedy troupes are big-name improvisational comedy groups like Harvard University's Immediate Gratification Players founded in 1986 who are committed to branding themselves as a "Harvard staple" (Voss, 2012, para. 7). They even wear "red and yellow ties" as a nod to the club culture at their home university (Voss, 2012, para. 7). And, while well-known for comedy, Harvard University is not the only institution with a comedy troupe worth knowing (Voss, 2012). Voss found that for many students in college improvisational groups, there are



strong ties, and claimed groups are often composed of people who are best friends that “live together, travel together, spend several hours a week rehearsing together” and often have ties with one another that expand to more intimate relationships (Voss, 2012, para. 2).

While all comedy troupes do not have alumni that go on to be on well-known comedy shows like Saturday Night Live, some alumni from college improv groups go on to establish local comedy theatres. For example, University of North Carolina's Chapel Hill Players alumni, Zach Ward “returned from Chicago in 2005 to establish the DSI Comedy Theater” in Carrboro, North Carolina which hosts the NC Comedy Arts Festival every year (Voss, 2012, para. 14). Comedy troupes take on different faces across many colleges and university campuses. Maxam (2019) looked at universities that are ranked as the best universities for aspiring comedians; Maxam claimed, “no famous comedians rose to stardom without practice” (para.1). College comedy troupes can be a training ground for students who want to tap into comedy and learn more about how to form the funny, including the joke formula of “setup + punchline” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p. 81). The formulaic structure of “setup + punchline” is described as “the setup is the observation or truth, and the punchline is what surprises audiences by flipping expectations” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2012, p. 81). By practicing and getting spotlight at New York University, where students hold free monthly shows and get to perform at top “New York comedy venues like Upright Citizens Brigade,” there is the opportunity to build a foundation and a community while “building ties to the city’s comedy scene” (Maxam, 2019, para. 4) gaining more exposure.

In addition to gaining exposure and building a community around comedy when students practice their craft in metropolitan hubs like New York and Chicago, there is the benefit of peer-to-peer feedback as noted at Ithaca College’s Comedy Club. At Ithaca College’s Comedy Club, a

former student noted “IC comedy club is an outlet where students can go to receive some validation and feedback on their comedy acts” (Ferme, 2018, para. 12). Students gain confidence from being in comedy clubs (Ferme, 2018) and they also get the opportunity to support one another’s craft of cultivating and forming the funny. Additionally, there is not one type of student who benefits from practicing comedy. For example, one student studying Computer Science at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland thanked, “the club for helping him develop his own style and learn some secrets of writing good comedy” (Voice of America, 2019, para.16). Another student quoted in the piece said that comedy allowed him to see the benefits of going after his imagination (Voice of America, 2019).

Students do not have to major in Comedy Studies in order to harness and form the funny, even though “humor can be learned” (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2021, para. 12). Developing a sense of humor does not have to be a difficult task (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2021); however, “most comedians spend months or even years writing and rehearsing their bits” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p. 91). With the knowledge that comedians spend a quality amount of time on their work, it makes sense that more researchers are interested in laughter’s benefits. “More psychological experimentation around laughter or the contexts in which it occurs will likely support the importance of laughing throughout your day” (Gibson, 2020, para. 20).

Sketch comedy plays a distinctive role on college campuses and has even been used to explore how students can engage in diversity, equity, and inclusion dialogues (Karson & Goodwin, 2016). Karson and Goodwin (2016) explored how they could attract students to a “diversity event by centering it on a comedy performance” (p. 68). Karson and Goodwin (2016) understood “comedy’s power to include by inducing mutual laughter at the shared, human condition” (p. 68) in addition to the downside of comedy being hazardous or having the potential

to “intentionally alienate” (p. 68). For good reason, Karson and Goodwin (2016) were mindful of the grey areas of comedy because “inappropriate or aggressive humor can weaken relationships rather than strengthen them” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p. 196). Sketch comedy for this purpose allowed the researchers to present on topics often difficult to address. The training presented as a comedy sketch “increased audience members with about 90 people attending each semiannual performance” (Karson & Goodwin, 2016, p. 68).

Comedy on college campuses deserves its place in literature and in studies. The history of sketch comedy is layered with many current comedy greats getting their starts as members of their college improv groups including John Mulaney and Nick Kroll. Mulaney and Kroll met as college students and were members of the The Georgetown Players Improv Group (CBS News, 2017). Comedy can be “transformative” because “comedy isn’t made in a vacuum” (O’Neil, 2016, para. 17). While a bachelor’s degree in Comedy Studies and Comedic Arts are not degrees that all students interested in comedy decide to pursue (O’Neil, 2016), there are elements of comedy that are enhanced by many collegiate environments. Comedy is “the only art we make naturally with our friends and loved ones, on a daily basis” (O’Neil, 2016, para. 17). Additionally, humor is “one of the best outlets for expressing the crisis, itself a result of internal contradictions and divisions that have become unsustainable in their current state” (M. Marder, 2011).

### ***Comedy: The Science Behind Laughing***

The famous poet and cultural icon, Dr. Maya Angelou once said, "Laugh as much as possible, always laugh. It's the sweetest thing one can do for oneself & one's fellow human beings" (Markway, 2013). Active Minds is a non-profit organization supporting mental health awareness for young people with a focus on college students; the entity conducted a survey of

2,806 college students in April 2020 and found that COVID-19 was affecting college students' mental health and that 80% of students reported experiencing loneliness and isolation (Active Minds, 2020). Additionally, Hopelab (2020), a social innovation tool dedicated to enhancing the health and overall wellbeing of young people created an app called "Nod" to help college students combat loneliness. This sense of loneliness permeated a time where most college students are stressed as it relates to the impact of a global pandemic on their lives while in college and after graduation. Active Minds (2020) created an infographic to share the data from their survey. According to the Active Minds (2020) Survey, 63% of students surveyed found it "challenging to stay connected with others." As the *Humor That Works* expert and modern thought leader on humor, Andrew Tarvin noted, "people who use humor are more productive, less stressed, and happier" (Humor That Works, 2019, p. 6) and laughter is a universal form of communication

Laughter, comedy, and humor belong on college campuses, even during difficult times. In November 2020, Vassar University's publication, *Miscellany News* covered Vassar University's comedy troupes Nitrous Oxide and Indecent Exposure and described the troupes as teams who brought joy to campus during COVID-19 (Sweeney, 2020). College students benefited from laughing and being a part of a group that students have previously described as being confidence boosting (Ferme, 2018). Anne Libera, an assistant professor, and director of comedy studies at Columbia College in Chicago wrote a piece on a theory of created comedy. Libera (2020) stated the elements of created comedy include: recognition (or truth), pain, and distance. Libera claimed, "Comedians use these three elements as one could use faders on a mixing board in a sound studio" (p. 604). Libera's model of comedy highlighted the "pedagogy of comedy" (p. 602). The pedagogy of comedy concept has gained more recognition within

academics and researchers who want to understand how comedy can be leveraged as a form of therapy and team building.

It is no surprise that laughter is often a community-forming and bonding component of the human experience. In the piece, "It's funny because we think it's true: laughter is augmented by implicit preferences," Lynch (2010) stated, "people tend to like others who laugh and share their sense of humor" (p. 141). Comedy and laughter are ways to connect socially (Lynch, 2010). And comedy can be a form of helping with symptoms related to anxiety (Toohill, 2015). Vanderbilt University created The Improv Social Skills Group where students can have six 90-minute sessions to help combat anxiety (Toohill, 2015).

There is a Chicago-based group of mental health therapists who were also trained in the art of improvisation. One of the psychologists in the group called 'The Therapy Players', Kristen Krueger, stated, "improv can make a big contribution to making people feel better about themselves, live more collaboratively, and improve their mental health" (O'Hara, 2016, para. 13). In addition to comedy's improvement on mental health, clinical research has proven that laughter and a strong sense of humor can enhance one's survival rate by seven years (Nasr, 2013).

Sharing a joke and understanding the idea of what makes something funny impacted cooperation, coordination, altruism, and friendship (Curry & Dunbar, 2012). As with many other components of the human experience, humor is not a new phenomenon; "humor is an ancient and universal feature of human nature" and the "role of humor in coordinating collaboration is a common theme in theories of its function" (Curry & Dunbar, 2012, p. 126). Laughter, humor, and comedy are all parts of the concept of 'funny' and help relieve anxiety (Toohill, 2015), and laughter helps us break down what we believe to be true (Lynch, 2010). It is no coincidence that

comedians “often start with the standard ‘you ever notice that...’ and then encourage us to identify with their observation” (Lynch, 2010, p. 140). A shared sense of humor can help a team bond and it can lead to “more functional communication and problem-solving behaviors” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p. 170).

Although there is more to be explored in the science behind laughter, Lynch (2010) found that "Our biases and preferences play an important role in our sense of humor" and that the results of his study support the folk psychology and commonly held belief 'it's funny because it's true' (p. 141). Even though Lynch's research was rooted in having participants view stand-up comedy and this study explored content creation and performance, it is important to ground the work in the science and research done on humor, comedy, and what provokes laughter.

### ***Laughter and Wellness***

A key part of this dissertation examined the relationships and bonds formed by women-identified students comedy troupes and of how laughter strengthens those bonds. Laughter and smiling have been researched as a social phenomenon (Platow et al., 2005). In their research, Platow et al. (2005) found that several variables can influence people's sense of humor. In the same way that humor is often seen as “important in mate choice” (Lynch, 2010), it is important to consider how humor impacts platonic relationships and group dynamics of college students especially in times of increased isolation and loneliness. Additionally, the humor hormone cocktail metaphor claimed that laughter “triggers the release of oxytocin” which is known to be the “trust hormone” because of the way “it prompts our brain to create emotional bonds” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p. 53).

Laughter, why we laugh, and the types of laughter that exist continue to be researched across disciplines. In the *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, Louie, Brooks, and Frates

(2014) found that there are five separate types of laughter: genuine (spontaneous); self-induced (stimulated); induced (e.g., via drugs); stimulated; and pathological. Along with humor being “highly valued and desired” (Shammi & Stuss, 1999, p. 657), humor is also something that can be “experienced both individually, for example, while recalling a particular event, watching television, or reading a book, or socially in groups” (Louie et al., 2016, p. 262). Additionally, humor is described as a form of communication because “in telling a joke, we show that we appreciate a particular instance of humor and think our listeners will, too” (Hurley et al., 2013, p. 291).

Research continues to be done on the science and benefits of laughter as a form of therapy (Nasr, 2013). There have been numerous studies to highlight “the value of positive emotions, such as laughter, in the psychological adjustment of individuals experiencing adversity” (Crawford & Caltabiano, 2011, p. 238). Similar to adversity, a study revealed that “the pain threshold is significantly higher after laughter” and that the “pain tolerance is caused by the laughter itself” (Nasr, 2013, p. 22). Laughter’s health benefits are numerous and support the theory that laughter should be done often and beyond the ages of childhood (Gerloff, 2011). Gerloff (2011) noted, “children laugh way more than adults do and that ought to tell us something” (para. 5). The positive effects of humor have revealed that “daily laughter decreased the negative emotions associated with daily stressors” (Crawford & Caltabiano, 2011, p. 238).

### ***Examining COVID-19’s Impact on Loneliness & Isolation***

This section of the literature review offered insight into the current state of loneliness and how the epidemic of loneliness has deepened during the COVID-19 global pandemic (Weissbourd et al., 2021). In this study, examining loneliness provides more context around the environment that undergraduate women-identified students are living and learning in during the

years of 2020 to 2021. The Making Caring Common team's report suggested that there are many types of loneliness, and that loneliness comes at a cost (Weissbourd et al., 2021). Harvard's Making Caring Common research was especially potent because of the insights and statistics specific to young people. Researchers found that "61 percent of young people aged 18-25 reported the miserable degrees of loneliness" (Weissbourd et al., 2021). The 18-25-year-old age group was the target demographic of the participants featured in this study; for example, 37.9% of students at the University of Pennsylvania fell into the 18-21 age bracket (College Factual, 2021).

COVID-19 and the lasting effects on how people interact affected college students in a multitude of ways ranging from delayed graduation, withdrawing from classes, and changing majors (Aucejo et al., 2020). The effects of the coronavirus outbreak revealed symptoms of anxiety and depression in nearly 63% of young adults aged 18–24 (Hoffman, 2020). Studies around the increase in anxiety and depression onset by COVID-19 revealed "nearly 11 percent said they had suicidal thoughts" with the "greatest clusters being among Black and Latino people, essential workers and unpaid caregivers for adults" (Hoffman, 2020, para. 10). With research stating that women report mental health symptoms more than men, college is already a time of high stress (Sreenivasan et al., 2021; Timely MD, 2021) and "combined with an overreliance on technology and social media" today's college students are more anxious than ever before with "COVID isolation" making it worse (Sreenivasan et al., 2021, para. 30). In February 2021, a piece from *Inside Higher Ed* revealed more students are seeking counseling and therapy due to COVID-19. Additionally, students who pointed to COVID-19 as having a negative mental health impact were "more likely to be experiencing depression, anxiety, academic stress and eating concerns" (Anderson, 2021, para. 4) among other symptoms. Even



with more students seeking counseling, the Active Minds (2020) survey found that 55% of students would not know where to go to seek mental health support.

Prior to COVID-19, college students sought counseling and support for mental health. Additionally, prior to the pandemic, women reported higher rates of anxiety than undergraduate men (Timely MD, 2021). However, this dissertation specifically seeks to address how students who lived and learned during one of the most challenging times in world history coped with the stressors of life during a pandemic. Sarah K. Lipson, a researcher at Boston University, focused on the worsened mental health of Americans on a broad level. In an article published in 2021, McAlpine described Lipson's work that revealed the worsened mental health of Americans could be due to multiple factors outside of the pandemic including "the impact of social media and shifting societal values that are becoming more extrinsically motivated rather than intrinsically motivated" (McAlpine, 2021, para. 12). Loneliness specifically has become a more nuanced topic within mental health focused research. Boston University's Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation director of services, Dori Hutchinson said that "loneliness is a huge concern on campus" (Laskowski, 2020, para. 8). More students who lived and studied amidst COVID-19 were living with mental health conditions like depression and anxiety; students have dealt with loneliness and isolation in addition to their symptoms (Laskowski, 2020).

At many institutions of higher education with high-achieving students, the stressors of the pandemic affected the overall wellness of the student population. At Duke University, a survey revealed that loneliness and social isolation were common among students with just under 10 percent of respondents saying they were lonely "most of the time" or "always in various environments" (Zebrack, 2021, para. 10). The heightened sense of loneliness on college campuses during COVID- 19 where students lived with more trauma and traumatic images,

humor played a role as supported by studies conducted by Stanford Psychophysiology Laboratory who found that “in face of stressful imagery, comedy is a more effective coping strategy than solemnity” (McClure, 2011, para. 1).

There is a science to loneliness and early into the pandemic in March 2020, reporters and researchers covered COVID- 19’s effects on loneliness (Wright, 2020). Loneliness is “a biological warning signal to seek out other humans” in the same way that hunger and thirst are rooted in biological human needs (Wright, 2020, para. 6). Levity is needed during this time because it can “help us maintain resilience during COVID-19” (UC Health, 2020). And, levity is what humor experts, have defined as a mindset and “an inherent state of receptiveness to (and active seeking of) joy” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p. 37). By actively seeking joy and levity, there is more of an opportunity to create an environment where laughter is prevalent and ideally creates atmospheres to address symptoms associated with loneliness (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021).

There is no doubt that students need support. With reports like Sontag-Padilla’s (2020) research during the first year of COVID-19, it is clear that “prior to the pandemic, colleges, particularly community colleges, had insufficient resources to meet students’ mental health needs” (para. 5). College students need help and support, and the pandemic highlighted systemic difficulties as institutions were “already struggling to meet the needs of young adults in this country” (Sontag-Padilla, 2020, para. 9). With the knowledge that today’s college students need more mental health support (Sontag-Padilla, 2020), it is important that colleges continue to be aware of how they can enhance wellness and provide the support that students need during this time of heightened loneliness.

In April of 2021, a year into the global pandemic, M. Ezarik’s (2021) report in *Inside Higher Ed* revealed that students are “still reporting COVID-19 mental health challenges,” but

“they are generally not taking advantage of counseling center services” (header). Even though students reportedly did not seek counseling services, research conducted in the Student Voice Survey found that from 2,002 student responses at 116 institutions of higher education, “more than half of respondents reported worrying ‘constantly’ and ‘often’ (Ezarik, 2021, para. 7). Students are feeling more worried; in fact, the researcher found that “nonbinary and female-identifying students” are “most likely to feel constant worries” (para. 7). The survey’s findings revealed that for some students, they may view counseling as only for those in crisis and question if their problem is big enough to warrant a visit to a counseling center. With students being on the fence about visiting a counseling center, it is a prime time to uncover whether humor and practicing comedy in a community focused troupe can be a valid, alternative therapy for undergraduate students. The next section of the literature review covers the troupe that served as the initial troupe that sparked an interest in better understanding undergraduate women in comedy spaces. The study was not limited to University of Pennsylvania’s Bloomers Comedy troupe; however, the literature review includes a section due to their historic nature as the first women-centric collegiate comedy troupe. Additionally, Bloomers Comedy troupe sparked my initial interest to better understand collegiate women in comedy.

### ***University of Pennsylvania's Bloomers Comedy Troupe***

The following section of the literature review focuses on literature written about the University of Pennsylvania’s Bloomers Comedy troupe. The study explored relationships formed by students in multiple troupes; this section of the literature review highlights the oldest historically women’s collegiate comedy troupe because of their trailblazing work for undergraduate women in comedy. Some college students actively involved in comedy troupes have described comedy as “a very collaborative craft” (Keisler & Wee, 2020, para. 8). Comedy is

often sought out because it provides “a creative outlet” and “those who do improv say taking a break from life's scripts is a useful skill anyone can learn” (Flucht, 2012, para. 21). The University of Pennsylvania’s Bloomers website “History” section claimed that the comedy group was founded in 1978 as “the first women’s comedy troupe in the country” (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). Additionally, the website stated that the group is “open to all gender identities underrepresented in comedy” (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). The vision of Bloomers is to present comedy as “original and bold” as the journalist for whom the group was named, Amelia Jenks Bloomer (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). Joan Harrison, a 1981 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania named the group Bloomers because “she knew it was funny, feminist, and metaphorical” (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.).

Bloomers was founded on “feminist principles and has used politics as a basis for its humor since its inception” (Imburgia, 2017, para. 2). Historically, Bloomers Comedy troupe members have not shied away from politics in their comedy; the election of Trump reignited political references in their comedy (Imburgia, 2017). In 2017, Bloomers chair and a UPenn senior at the time, T. Pare said, “In a lot of ways, everybody — regardless of your political bend — likes to laugh” (Imburgia, 2017, para. 22). In 2018, there was a special feature written about the troupe titled, “In Full Bloom” by Caren Lissner. Lissner (2019) celebrated the troupe’s 40-year anniversary honoring their history and work in women’s comedy. Bloomers Comedy is a mainstay in the collegiate comedy community and has “served as the launching pad for alumnae pursuing careers as performers, producers, or in other aspects of the entertainment industry” (p. 34). In addition to serving as a launch pad for careers more evidently tied with comedy in the entertainment industry, participating in Bloomers also helps women who are in a variety of fields from “finance to technology, education, law, or medicine—where one needs to be confident,

sharp, and in command of a boardroom or operating room” (Lissner, 2019, p. 34). Of recent alumni to make it big in the comedy industry, Bloomers Comedy was the training ground for Saturday Night Live veteran, Vanessa Bayer and the group’s competitive edge aligns with the growing visibility of women in comedy (Lissner, 2019). Bayer often referenced her time at Bloomers while she was a Saturday Night Live cast member (Olagun-Samuel, 2017). The culture embedded in Bloomers Comedy allows students to thrive and as Bayer noted, “I didn’t know what it was like to really enjoy and feel like you were excelling at something” until she joined Bloomers Comedy troupe (Olagun-Samuel, 2017, para. 13).

Bloomers Comedy troupe’s history is rooted in empowering undergraduate women at The University of Pennsylvania to carve out their own space in the musical sketch comedy domain. Before Bloomers Comedy originated at the University of Pennsylvania, the collegiate musical sketch comedy arena was deemed a male-only space (DiSanto, 2018). The founding members of Bloomers Comedy were refused entry into The Mask and Wig Club (DiSanto, 2018). The Mask and Wig Club identified themselves as “the nation’s oldest all-male collegiate musical comedy group” (The Mask and Wig Club, n.d.) housed at The University of Pennsylvania. In 2018, Bloomers Comedy held auditions and that year, “only about a quarter of those who auditioned for the group were accepted” (Lissner, 2019, p.34). In addition to being a highly sought-after group to join, Bloomers Comedy troupe hosted sold-out shows and in recent years have moved to larger venues to meet their audience needs (Lissner, 2019).

The members of the University of Pennsylvania's Bloomers Comedy do not shy away from topics unique to women, sexuality, and feminism. The former Chair of Bloomers, Sorantino claimed that the group had “a responsibility to write feminist bits” (DiSanto, 2018, para. 11) and that the group’s “feminism shines through in interesting ways” (para. 11). Bloomers’

commitment to being funny and using humor to take on topics ranging from women in politics to religion has been evident from their first show to present day (Lissner, 2019). The first show “skewered the usual subjects: Penn life, the Ivies, religion (okay, Judaism), pop culture, Broadway, and politics” (Lissner, 2019, p. 36). In more recent shows, Bloomers Comedy troupe skits have “offered social commentary on topics such as catcalling” and other sketches have made fun of Penn’s The Wharton School (Gross, 2020, para. 12). Bloomers Comedy members take on topics like critically examining frat-culture at UPenn (Gross, 2020) because they acknowledge these truths through humor and “truth is the heart of comedy” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p. 199). The members of the troupe can dive into the truth, pain and distance most likely because of trust and “laughter begets more trust” (Asher, 2016, para. 3).

In a featured piece on Bloomers Comedy, the Chair during the 2018 season described members of the troupe as bold, funny, and down to earth (DiSanto, 2018). Comedy may not be an Olympic sport, but there is no lack of competition among students at the University of Pennsylvania when it comes to comedy. Bloomers Comedy is one of “four established comedy groups on campus” where two are sketch, one is stand-up and one is improv (Greenberg, 2016, para. 6). Comedy at the University of Pennsylvania lives in a space of “intense competition and intense intimacy” (Greenberg, 2016, para.6). Bloomers Comedy troupe offers the students an opportunity to develop a sense of who they are as one member of Bloomers noted, “Being in Bloomers was so important during my -formative years” (Lissner, 2019, p.37). During the 40-year anniversary feature on the troupe, one member claimed that being in Bloomers helped her “understand more about the world and [about] learning with a group of people who are different from you” (Lissner, 2019, p. 37) Many students are seeking the kind of community that the Bloomers Comedy troupe is well-known for (Lissner, 2019). In 2016, it was reported that the

former director, Aleah “held auditions for somewhere from 60 to 70 girls” and that “five new performers were added” (Greenberg, 2016, para. 16). Many students are eager to be a part of a community where comedy and laughter are at the core because “laughter changes us” (Gerloff, 2011, para. 7). When we lighten up, “we feel more positive and optimistic, more hopeful and engaged” (Gerloff, 2011, para. 7). Bloomers Comedy troupe participants recognized that with Bloomers, not only are comedy skills being built, but they have “an opportunity to learn and hone valuable skills in communication, leadership and team building” (Leong, 2015, para. 11).

Bloomers Comedy troupe student-comedians have embraced the politics of gender and in 2020, a member of UPenn’s all male comedy troupe, The Mask and Wig Club noted, “In comedy, the majority of famous comedians are men that get most airtime. They’re really trying to push back against those boundaries, and I admire that” (Gross, 2020, para. 8). In addition to pushing back on the boundaries and opening up space for women in comedy, Bloomers Comedy troupe leveraged their power as up-and-coming women in comedy and launched a women-centric comedy festival, LaughtHERFest (Thomas, 2015). In 2015, former senior and member of Bloomers Comedy troupe, Kao said, “We wanted to highlight and celebrate women in comedy and entertainment” and that the festival provides an opportunity to not talk about women being funny, but proving it (Thomas, 2015, para. 4).

UPenn’s Bloomers Comedy troupe members have been a driving force in women in comedy in the collegiate space and their endeavors are often supported financially by their loyal fans and followers. The LaughtHERFest is an example of a program that started as an idea by a Bloomer and after a “30-day Kickstarter”, the troupe received “more than \$9,000 in donations” (Thomas, 2015, para. 5). In a time where more college groups like Harvard University’s musical comedy troupe, Hasty Pudding Theatricals have broken from old traditions of being male-only,

Bloomers Comedy continues to center women as they have since 1981 (Ao, 2018), and most recently in 2020 expanded to include “gender minorities” (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). Gender minority or (GSM) is an inclusive term that includes people who are “gay, queer, bisexual, intersex, pansexual, asexual, lesbians, transgender/trans, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, kink, polyamorous, and more” (Penn State Student Affairs, n.d.).

At UPenn, it was noted in 2018, that The Mask and Wig Club would potentially become open to women. Former executive board member, Sarantino said, “As a member of Bloomers, I worry that they could poach talent, because they do have more money and power” (Ao, 2018, para. 8). As an organization almost 100 years older than Bloomers, Sarantino’s nod to the resources and power that The Mask and Wig Club hold serves as an important insight into the culture of comedy and gender dynamics. Sarantino’s comment in 2018 matters because it reveals an aspect of community and belonging that students at institutions like UPenn must deal with where systems are deeply rooted in money, power, and tradition.

Although comedy is deeper than providing laughter (Bynane, 2008), research has shown that “laughter reduces levels of stress hormones” and can result in “greater relaxation and resistance to disease as well as improved mood and positive outlook” (Gerloff, 2011, para. 6). Throughout COVID-19, stress rates have escalated and when emotions are at all-time highs, “parts of the brain in charge of executive function tend to not communicate as well with the emotional parts of the brain” (Messinger, 2020, para. 4). College students are not immune to levels of stress and potential for burnout escalated throughout COVID-19. Depression, anxiety, and loneliness are peaking in college students throughout COVID-19 (McAlpine, 2021). With more students being at risk for depression, anxiety, and loneliness, creating spaces where humor is palpable, encouraged, and nurtured is important because “humor encourages a kind of mental



gymnastics that reveals connections, patterns, and interpretations we'd previously missed" (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p.131). By actively participating in a collegiate comedy troupe students can fully practice their sense of humor and better understand how humor can build their resilience and potentially improve their emotional well-being (Crawford & Caltabiano, 2011). The next section of the literature review provides insight into the National College Comedy Festival to provide additional context around a key event respected in the collegiate comedy community.

### ***National College Comedy Festival***

In this section of the literature review, I focus on the National College Comedy Festival or "ComFest"; the festival hosted at Skidmore College originated in 1990 and (Karp, 2017). In 2012, The New York Times covered the festival and noted that this festival was often a turning point for student comedians (Angelo, 2012). The festival was listed as helping cultivate a "legion of comedy creators and actors whose names populate the credits of television shows like *The Office* and *Community* (Angelo, 2012, para. 3). The National College Comedy Festival served as an example of a student-focused event that reveals the more competitive side of collegiate comedy (Angelo, 2012). The festival was described as "part comedy-nerd symposium, part comedy gantlet" (Angelo, 2012, para.5). The National College Comedy Fest or ComFest is well known among the collegiate comedy culture (Angelo, 2012; Skidmore College, 2020). In an interview with the 2020 producers of National College Comedy Festival, one of the Skidmore College students said, "The biggest thing to know about ComFest is that it's an instant community" (Skidmore College, 2020, para. 13). The creator of ComFest has gone on to be a well-known writer and creator in comedy outside of Saratoga Springs 'Skidmore College campus. In the 2020 feature on ComFest, one of the student producers highlighted David Milner,

a class of 1991 alum from Skidmore College who was an executive producer on NBC sitcoms, “Parks and Recreation” and “30 Rock” (Skidmore College, 2020, para. 14).

Although competition is a part of the culture at ComFest, the main focus is on the relationships formed with troupe members who travel near and far. In the Skidmore College (2020) interview with the student producers, one student said that “comradery” was the best way to describe the relationships with the troupes (para. 22). The student-leader and ComFest producer elaborated and said, “It really is about the mutual love for this type of performance (para. 22). To better understand how undergraduate students perform and create community in troupes, it is important to investigate the ways that students create spaces to showcase their talents and build community with one another via a festival. The next section of the literature review focuses on student-affairs and practitioners within higher education invested in student’s holistic wellness.

### ***Examining Student Participation in Campus Activities***

In this section of the literature review, I grounded the research and work on the importance of the student community in campus activities research and offered insight into why campus activities matter in the grand scheme of student wellness (Kilgo et al., 2016). This dissertation sought to understand how students in selected campus sponsored troupes interacted with one another and built community. With that in mind, the work could not exist without the fundamental and foundational work of student affairs. “Student affairs is committed to the ideas that student learning does not occur exclusively within the classroom and that college affects students profoundly in many different dimensions” (Long, 2012, p. 7). Today’s undergraduate students should be encouraged to get involved towards a new era of educationally purposeful activities (Komives, 2019). Kilgo et al. (2016) revealed there is a need for more research into

“the positive effect of higher involvement in student organizations” (p.1047). Kilgo et al.’s (2016) study found that “student involvement has a significant, positive link with end-of-fourth year psychological well-being that persists even in the presence of controls for pre-college psychological well-being and a broad array of other potential confounding variables” (p. 1047).

Campus activities have a role to play in higher education because higher education is in a time of flux and change and “one way that campus activities can lead the modern university is to leverage the power of student engagement” (Dungy & Peck, 2019, p. 8). Co-curricular activities deserve their place in higher education research because higher education “will likely have fewer boundaries” in the future (Dungy & Peck, 2019, p. 10). Campus activities and the studies around campus activities add to the growing body of holistic higher education research because “campus activities provide rich experiential opportunities for student learning and development if students take advantage of them and get involved” (Komives, 2019, p. 20). High impact practices “are primarily within academic based experiences and hybrid programs, research has found that these characteristics are present in a number of leadership-based activities and through the engagement offered through campus activities” (Komives, 2019, p. 20).

College students benefit from campus activities and there is a connection between involvement in campus experiences and wellness (Kilgo et al., 2016). The scope of campus activities varies (Komives, 2019) and the institutions of higher education featured in the study have student affairs divisions with mission statements. Table 2 includes key words featured in the mission statement of the student life departments of the universities that house women-focused comedy troupes analyzed in the study. The study was not limited to troupes that were women-centric and the full list of troupes contacted are listed in the outreach log featured in Appendix A.

**Table 2***Examining Mission Statements of Student Affairs Divisions*

College/ University	Office	Mission statement key words
University of Pennsylvania	Office of Student Affairs	Personal development, advising, growth as leaders, builders of a strong community (University of Pennsylvania Office of Student Affairs, n.d.).
New York University	Center for Student Life	Intentional student engagement, empower leadership development, discover their purpose. (NYU Center for Student Life, n.d.).
Vassar College	Vassar Student Association	Promote the interests of and improve the welfare of students. (Vassar Student Association, n.d.)
Emerson College	Student Engagement & Leadership	Find resources, commit to personal growth, active part of campus life. (Emerson College Student Engagement & Leadership, n.d.).
Pennsylvania State University	Division of Student Affairs	Enhance overall educational experience , responsible members of their communities (Penn State Altoona, 2022)
Indiana University	Division of Student Affairs	Enhance experience that enhances success, lifelong learning, and personal growth. (Indiana University Bloomington, n.d.-b)
Yale University	Student Life	Aspire to be the most student-focused research university, prepare and assist students to take full advantage (Yale University Office of the Secretary and Vice President of University Life, n.d.)
Barnard College	Student Experience and Engagement	Enhance the educational mission, foster identity and leadership development, value equity-based models, access to experiences and perspectives to be engaged citizens in a global community. (Barnard College, n.d.)
Bryn Mawr College	Office of Student Engagement and New Student Programs	Vibrant, purposeful community, advocate for students to develop life skills. (Bryn Mawr, n.d.).
The Ohio State University	Student Activities	Facilitates meaningful involvement, community engagement and leadership development, which enable all students to contribute to a global society. (The Ohio State University Office of Student Life, n.d - b.).
Tufts University	Office for Campus Life	Aims to strike a balance between curricular and co-curricular opportunities for all students. Fosters a community of well-rounded, independent thinkers who serve as effective leaders and inclusive individuals in college and beyond. (Tufts University Office for Campus Life, n.d.).

Students benefit from a strong campus activity experience as “engaged students often possess a stronger sense of belonging to their campus” (Komives, 2019, p. 16). Campus activities

educators have a part to play in order to be “scholar practitioners who inform their practice by related theory, models or practice, and research to best accomplish the learning and developmental outcomes that are desired by their campus, division of student affairs, and campus activities office” (Komives, 2019, p.22). The Active Minds survey asked students what the most important things for school leaders to think about in the short and long term for providing mental health support during and after the pandemic (Active Minds, 2020). The responses revealed that students want “more opportunities for social connection” with a note to replace cancelled events with virtual ones (Active Minds, 2021). Undergraduate college students living and learning in the middle of a global pandemic and a time of heightened isolation eagerly desired more connection. Ideally, the time spent better understanding how women-identified students in collegiate comedy troupes developed community, nourished relationships, and fostered their own sense of humor and funny provided scholar practitioners with more insight into how to create opportunities for social connection. In the Making Caring Common report, one of the take-aways and calls to action to improve wellness and mediate loneliness was directed to colleges and universities. The report stated:

Colleges can, for instance, create the expectation that faculty and staff will check in with students regularly, organize a variety of virtual student communities and support students in creating these communities themselves. In our experience, students can be very creative in developing these communities with minimal prompting and support.

Committees of students, staff, and faculty can engage in a continuous improvement process, administering brief student surveys that provide information about what types of students are lonely or feel alienated and that inform community-building activities.

(Weissbourd et al., 2021, p. 10)

The report focused on how to mediate loneliness during the heightened season with COVID-19's effects permeating the culture; however, the suggestions offered by Weissbourd et al. (2021) are evergreen.

### ***Conclusion of the Literature Review***

Throughout the literature review, the topics of laughter and wellness, comedy in the context of collegial participation, and the current climate of loneliness were explored. In addition to these themes, the literature review included a look into the oldest historically women's collegiate comedy troupe, Bloomers Comedy troupe, the National College Comedy Festival, and research on the importance of campus activities in the modern higher education landscape. The literature review provided information and research that roots the study as one that can help student affairs practitioners better understand comedy as a form of community building during and even after a global pandemic when undergraduate students are living and learning in a time of heightened loneliness. The next chapter explains the methods used in the qualitative case study.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

This chapter describes the research methodology, methods, and materials for the study.

The research for the dissertation was guided by the qualitative case study approach as described by Merriam (2009). A case study “is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). L. Smith (1978; as cited in Merriam, 2009) defined the bounded system of a case study as a “single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). The phenomenon needs to be “bounded” for it to be considered a case (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic allowing researchers to illuminate a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). The bounded system or case in this study were collegiate comedy troupes that identify as historically women’s troupes or co-gendered troupes located in 4-year colleges or universities within the United States and active from 2020–2022. The next paragraph unpacks how the study was particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 2009).

Particularistic means that the study focuses on “a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon” (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). The case study focused on women-identified undergraduate students between the ages of 18-25 who were participants in a collegiate comedy troupe either historically women’s or co-gendered; the troupes shared the common thread of being comedy-focused organizations with students who lived and learned amidst a global pandemic and a time of heightened loneliness.

To be descriptive, means that the “end product of a case study is a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). The case study provided a rich, thick

description of the relationships formed by the study's selected troupe members during the bounded time of March 2020 to August 2021. The rich and thick descriptions offered descriptions of the troupe members' experiences as gathered from the individual interviews and a focus group interview. Additionally, the rich and thick descriptions occurred in the observations of the performances and in the data mined from the public facing social media sites of the selected troupes. For a case to be heuristic, the study has to "illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 44). The study offered a close-up look at relationships formed by a few of the nation's collegiate comedy troupes. The qualitative case study is meant to serve as an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 2009, p. 46). By bounding the case to a time of living and learning in COVID-19 and a season of heightened loneliness with the target age group of 18-25 being most at risk (Weissbourd et al., 2021), the study resulted in a "rich and holistic account" of the phenomenon and provided future researchers and higher education professionals with more insight into the lived experiences of undergraduate college students (Merriam, 2009, p. 51).

### **Research Perspective**

I sought to understand how students at selected universities with active comedy troupes find community. The use of a case study was helpful due to the many advantages including its flexibility and how it allows for depth of investigation. According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013), the case study "emphasizes detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships" (p. 163). The case study approach is one focused on the "relationship between people and structures, in which they work, live, and learn" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 168). Merriam (2009) claimed "case study results in a rich and holistic



account of a phenomenon” (p. 51). The phenomenon this dissertation addressed was the community built by the students who participated in selected women’s and co-gendered collegiate comedy troupes during a season of heightened loneliness. Additionally, the study explored collegiate comedic ventures during a time when researchers are increasingly more invested in how humor when used intentionally can shift perspectives (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021).

I pulled from the anthropological study tradition because “anthropologists make observations and pursue perspectives from diverse angles and in diverse ways” (Agency for Health Research and Quality, 2013, p.1). Anthropologists often observe and talk with people “who have varying relationships to the phenomenon under study” (AHRQ, 2013, p.1). I heard from various comedy troupes’ members who have a relationship with one another and with their roles as members of the troupe. In some instances, specifically Bloomers Comedy, the troupe consisted of departments including cast members, writers, business leaders, tech experts, costume designers, and members of the band. The anthropological inquiry “combines information about people’s thoughts gathered through interviews with information collected by observing their behaviors and social interactions” (AHRQ, 2013, p. 1). This study intentionally uncovered how the selected troupes’ members formed relationships with one another and used comedy to fuel their interactions.

The approach taken throughout the in-depth individual interviews and focus-group interviews borrowed from the anthropological inquiry approach (AHRQ, 2013). Anthropological evaluations often include opportunities to “identify the shared cultural meanings between and among different groups of stakeholders” (AHRQ, 2013, p. 2). This study intentionally sought to understand the shared cultural meanings between and among the troupe participants of the

diverse comedy troupes. Participant observation is typically used in anthropological research and that is why I observed troupes in their rehearsals in addition to conducting individual interviews, a focus group interview, and textual analysis (AHRQ, 2013). The study was not exclusive to women-identified troupes regarding interview outreach; however, I limited the document analysis to historically women’s collegiate troupes. The next section of the dissertation highlights more about the study’s selected historically women troupes including: Bechdel Test, Bloomers Comedy, Circular Reasoning Improv, Control Top Improv, The Girlie Project, Indecent Exposure, Ladies Night Comedy, Sphincter Comedy, Spoon-Fed Comedy, and TFL Comedy. The troupes featured in this list were active on Instagram and/or Twitter during the study’s bounded window.

### ***Bechdel Test***

New York University’s comedy troupe, Bechdel Test was founded by a transfer student in 2013 (Bechdel Test NYU, n.d.-a). In an interview with the founder, Sullivan, said that she recognized the power of women’s comedy skills and was “well-aware of the challenges that women face in the industry” (Milavetz, 2015, para. 3). The founder of Bechdel Test was quoted in the Milavetz (2015) article as saying, “I guess I am tired of female humor to become mainstream” (para. 6). Giving the spotlight over to women in comedy mattered to the founder of Bechdel Test and that remains a part of the organization’s mission. Jokes were housed on the troupe’s social media platforms; for example, the Instagram biography line was “an all femme identifying comedy group 🤪👯 so funny you’ll pee yourself (and maybe poop? 🤪) ♡” (Bechdel Test NYU, n.d.-b). For the promotion of an event in November 2021, Bechdel Test was described as “NYU’s only all-femme and non-binary identifying comedy group” that does improv and sketch (Theater Mania, 2021). In a piece written in 2014 covering Bechdel Test’s

first show, the writer claimed that Bechdel Test was “authentic and accessible” (Chang, 2014). Bechdel Test used social media and shared on their public-facing profiles: Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and a Weebly website.

NYU’s Bechdel Test gets their name from a test of gender equity in Hollywood. According to Selvaraj (2020), the Bechdel test “is named after cartoonist Alison Bechdel, who introduced the idea in a comic strip in the year 1985” (para. 1). The test stated that in order to pass it, a story needs to have at least two women who talk to each other and who talk to each other about something other than a man. The test is one of the most well-known metrics “used to expose gender bias and is the only test we have this kind of data on” (Selvaraj, 2020, para. 1).

According to their profile on NYU Engage – the platform where student organizations share information at NYU, Bechdel Test promoted themselves in the following way:

Hey Bechdel Pals! Here at Bechdel everyone is invited to the metaphorical sleepover party, where there will be pillow fights, snacks, and of course, lots of games of MASH. Join our community for fun community events, chill hangouts, as well as shows performed by the Bechdel team! (NYU Engage, n.d.)

The troupe’s Weebly website claimed that the troupe often performs at NYU and at various venues around Manhattan (NYU Engage, n.d.). The next section provides insight into Bloomers Comedy troupe.

### ***Bloomers Comedy***

Bloomers Comedy troupe was founded in 1978 at the University of Pennsylvania as the first women’s comedy troupe in the country (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). As of 2021, Bloomers Comedy troupe is open to all gender identities underrepresented in comedy (Beesam & Yakoob, 2021; Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). Bloomers’ comedy style is self-described as original and bold in

honor of their namesake, Amelia Jenks Bloomers, a social activist journalist, and early suffragist (Norwood, 2017). Amelia Jenks Bloomer came up with the idea of billowy pants for women known as bloomers (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). Bloomers Comedy troupe's founding member, Joan Harrison, a 1981 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania thought that Bloomers was the perfect name for a women-centric musical sketch comedy troupe (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). Harrison created the group to "fill this empty hole for women on campus when it came to women's groups" (Berman, 2015, p. 82) and that space led to creation of a comedy troupe where women could "lampoon the numerous problematic behaviors and attitudes on campus" (Berman, 2015, p. 82). In 2021, Bloomers Comedy troupe was made up of 71 members in six organizational teams known as Cast (16 members), Writing (9 members), Band (8 members), Business (16 members), Tech (13 members), and Costumes (9 members) (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). The executive board of Bloomers Comedy troupe included the following positions: chairwoman, cast director, head writer, costume director, tech director, assistant tech director, band director, and business managers. Bloomers Comedy used a website and actively engaged on public-facing social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In its early years, Bloomers Comedy troupe was known for being a space "for any woman who wanted to take charge of her own extracurricular life on a campus that was still disappointingly male-dominated" (Berman, 2015, p. 82).

In the University of Pennsylvania student club organizational directory, the description of Bloomers is: "Bloomers is Penn's sketch comedy group for people with gender identities that are under-represented in comedy. We write and produce sketch comedy both on stage and in the digital format" (Penn Clubs, n.d.). The Penn Club website stated that Bloomers "shows are composed of completely new material, written by each year's group of Bloomers, and often have

an overarching theme” (para. 2). Bloomers Comedy troupe performed throughout the year, with shows typically held in October and March (Penn Clubs, n.d.). The troupe typically performed on-campus for special events and at “benefits for organizations and non-profit groups in New York, Miami, and all over Philadelphia and has been invited to National Comedy Festivals” (Bloomers Facebook, n.d., para.4). Bloomers Comedy troupe continued to perform in the midst of COVID-19 and at the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester, sketches were translated to a digital format and then the troupe switched to “producing new content about current events, like the coronavirus and life on Zoom” (Shepard, 2020, para. 29). The troupe continued to exist in a digital landscape where they capitalized on technology and tried out “new approaches” (Shepard, 2020, para. 29). Bloomers Comedy are members of the University of Pennsylvania’s Student Activities Council (Berman, 2015). Bloomers Comedy troupe’s humor is often defined as “edgy” (Berman, 2015) and the troupe shared a healthy competition or “friendly rivalry” with the University of Pennsylvania’s Mask and Wig Club (Berman, 2015, p. 83).

In addition to the shows that Bloomers typically conducted in October and March, Bloomers Comedy troupe created a festival called “LaughtHERfest” (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). Bloomers Comedy’s festival, LaughtHERfest was created to celebrate funny women (Yusuf, 2019). The festivals included panels, workshops, activities, and a culminating evening performance (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.; Yusuf, 2019). The LaughtHERfest has featured up and coming Comedy Central artists like Mary Beth Barone and Saturday Night Live cast members, Melissa Villaseñor, and Vanessa Bayer. LaughtHERfest’s attendees and keynotes highlighted on the LaughtHERfest webpage range from writers to improv and stand-up comedy experts, and include Bloomers alumna, Julie Krant, Brooke Wurst, and founding member, Linda Falcao (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.; Yusuf, 2019). LaughtHERFest performances were not observed in the

study; however, the festival serves as a staple event founded and presented by the Bloomers Comedy troupe where the focus is on laughter, comedy, and bringing people together.

Additionally, LaughtHERFest provided an outlet to learn more about the landscape of collegiate women in comedy. The festival has provided a collegiate environment where students from various universities join in and during the second annual event in 2016, student groups from “Dartmouth, Columbia, Swarthmore, Harvard, Penn State, and Brown” (Park, 2016, para. 3) attended. Former Bloomers Comedy troupe head writer, Basha, a member of the class of 2018 noted the most exciting part of the festival was bringing women in comedy together from “so many different ages, experience levels, and backgrounds” (Park, 2016, para. 3).

Although I sought to hear from the women-identified participants in Bloomers Comedy troupe, it is important to note that in 2020, Bloomers Comedy troupe made a shift to become more gender inclusive (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). In an op-ed written by the troupe’s inclusion chairs, the co-chairs claimed to be taking steps to “move away from female-centric language” and “our all-female past” in order to make the group “more inclusive and welcoming for gender non-confirming and transgender communities who shouldn’t be barred from sketch comedy groups at Penn because they don’t fit into the stereotypical cis-male or -female boxes” (Beesam & Yakoob, 2021, para. 3). This call to be more inclusive aligns with Bloomers Comedy troupe’s history as an organization created to make room for women who could not participate in UPenn’s all male musical sketch comedy troupe, The Mask and Wig Club (Lissner, 2019). There was a sense of pride that comes with being a member of Bloomers Comedy troupe. In fact, the finale of all Bloomers shows ended with the chant:

We wear our Bloomers proudly,  
Our wit’s our claim to fame

So come on Pennsylvania,

And cheer the Bloomers name. (Friedman, 2010, para. 19)

The next section explores the study's additional troupes in more detail. As the troupes featured in the study ranged in size, scope, and have been active for fewer years than Bloomers Comedy troupe, I discovered that there is less public information and fewer articles written about various troupes. The next troupe highlighted in the study is the historically women-centric troupe, Circular Reasoning Improv.

### ***Circular Reasoning Improv***

The Ohio State University's women-centric comedy troupe, Circular Reasoning Improv's purpose statement was:

Our purpose is to empower those of marginalized gender identities at Ohio State University and in the greater Columbus area through comedy and service while fostering a supportive and creative environment for members to grow as comedians and community organizers. (The Ohio State University, n.d.-a, para. 8)

Circular Reasoning engaged on social media platforms including Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. In addition to their presence on social media, Circular Reasoning Improv shared a public-facing organization constitution where the comedy troupe's purpose/mission lives along with other policies including their non-discrimination clause. In a piece covering the troupe in 2019 featured in The Ohio State University newspaper, *The Lantern*, the troupe was described as being a "student improv group for marginalized communities" (I. Gray, 2019, p. 4).

Circular Reasoning Improv formed in 2019 as one that focused on service, philanthropy, and performing improv (I. Gray, 2019). One of the troupe's founders said that performing is a way of resisting (I. Gray, 2019). Circular Reasoning Improv hosted a comedy show in the fall of

2019 where the proceeds went to Planned Parenthood (Klein, 2019). During that time, the president of Circular Reasoning said that humor “can act as a way to break down stereotypes concerning sexual health and reproductive health” (Klein, 2019, para. 8). The next section provides an overview of Control Top Improv housed at Barnard College.

### ***Control Top Improv***

Control Top Improv is a performing arts club housed at Barnard College; a women’s institution located in New York City. Control Top Improv is well known among Barnard College and in an article highlighting Barnard College’s student performance scene, Control Top Improv was described as a group that first year students flock to audition for as members “sometimes become campus celebrities” (Juhasz, 2017, para. 11). Control Top Improv’s guiding principle is a “dedication to shamelessness” as mentioned in their mission statement (Juhasz, 2017, para. 11). Control Top Improv’s Instagram profile biography line stated, “From Barnard and Columbia, it’s Control Top: the Pussycat Dolls of improv groups” (Control Top Improv, n.d.). The troupe has a public facing Instagram account and Facebook account along with YouTube where content is shared. The founder of Control Top Improv, Charlie Dinkin graduated from Barnard in 2012 and has thrived within the arts scene upon graduating (Davies, 2016). Before founding Control Top, Dinkin was a member of the troupe, Chowdah, becoming the “president and head writer, then founded a Barnard-only improv troupe called Control Top! her junior year while pursuing a degree in anthropology” (Davies, 2016, para. 2). Control Top Improv’s founders’ roots are in a co-gendered troupe highlighting the importance of understanding undergraduate women’s experiences in both women-centric and co-gendered comedy troupes. The next section provides background information on Derby Comedy, a historically women’s comedy troupe at Pennsylvania State University.



## *Derby Comedy*

Penn State's troupe Derby Comedy celebrated being 3 years old in the spring of 2021. The troupe's Twitter biography stated: "We are a women's comedy troupe at Penn State University. We perform stand-up, sketch, improvised & musical comedy and more!" (DERBY, n.d.) Derby Comedy Troupe has a website housed on Penn State with links to their social media accounts including Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. The troupe's about us section on their webpage stated:

Derby was formed in March 2018 by Kellie Hahn, Julie Larsen, and Karina Ciocca, three students at Penn State University. Our mission is to create a collaborative, creative space for women to write and perform any styles of comedy. Our members have had performances at PSU SOMA Arts Crawl, Full Ammo Improv Festival RAWR VII, and various other shows around campus. We perform improv, sketch, stand-up, music, and other indescribable forms of hilarious comedy. We are also very nice and would love to meet you. Hey, speaking of that, you should check out our contact page! Bye! (Derby: A Women's Comedy Troupe, n.d.)

Derby Comedy troupe' creative and collaboration-focused mission is one that aligns with many of the 11 women-centric troupes that served as the pool of troupes to examine documents from closely. Derby Comedy troupe is active on social media and the troupe posted on their public-facing Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube account with videos of their content.

In an article covering the comedy scene at Pennsylvania State University, Newkumet (2018) wrote, "Comedy can also ensure inclusivity. Derby offers an outlet for Penn State students wishing to hone their comedic chops in an all-female environment." Derby Comedy is not the only comedy troupe active at Pennsylvania State University; the troupe is a part of a

welcoming collegiate environment and one where there is a “supportive attitude at shows” (Newkumet, 2018, para. 17). In an article highlighting a September 2020 show featuring Derby Comedy troupe, journalist, Al-Ahmad (2020) covered the range of topics in the show; the jokes ranged from nursery rhymes to quarantine hairstyles. The article featured a quote from a Penn State student about laughing being the best form of medicine (Al-Ahmad, 2020). Derby Comedy historically has sought to be uplifting and to never put members of marginalized communities down in the name of comedy (Chu, 2017). The next section provides background information on The Girlie Project housed at Emerson College.

### ***The Girlie Project***

Emerson College located in Boston, Massachusetts is a college known for its “exceptional program in comedic arts” (Princeton Review, n.d., para. 1). Emerson College’s comedy troupe, The Girlie Project became a recognized student organization in 2005 (EmConnect, n.d.). The description of The Girlie Project on Emerson College’s EmConnect site was, “The Girlie Project is a sketch comedy troupe that promotes female performers, writers, and directors in the world of comedy. Membership is open to people of all gender identities and majors!” (EmConnect, n.d., para. 1).

The Girlie Project has a public-facing social media presence including accounts on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube (EmConnect, n.d.). Aligned with their identity as comedians and experts in being funny, the bio housed on YouTube alluded to the troupe not taking themselves too seriously and attempting to stay as “funny as possible” (The Girlie Project YouTube, n.d.-a). The Girlie Project’s constitution is housed on the EmConnect website and is available for download. The Girlie Project’s constitution featured the troupe’s mission statement which is “The Girlie Project is Emerson writing and performative troupe that promotes the

advancement of women in the field of comedy. The Girlie Project is open to all undergraduate students of all majors” (LaVergne, 2011, p. 2). In addition to the mission statement, the constitution included the troupe’s statement of purpose, a review of membership requirements, and the duties of officers. The purpose statement of The Girlie Project was included in the troupe’s constitution:

The purpose of this group is to promote female performers, writers, and directors in the world of comedy. However, The Girlie Project is open to all students of all majors who are interested in putting together a comedy show and showcasing to the Emerson community some of the funniest female voices on campus. The Girlie Project offers opportunities for performers, writers, and directors to showcase their comedic talents. The members are to create monologues, sketches, films, dancers, and more in a non-competitive environment, which not only seeks to create a hilarious show each semester, but a sense of confidence and self-assurance in the male-dominated field of comedy. (LaVergne, 2011, p. 2)

The Girlie Project’s constitution claimed the troupe’s commitment to advancing, advocating for, and lifting up the voices of women in comedy with a focus on the voices of Emerson College women-identified students. The Girlie Project’s constitution called for the troupe to have the following officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and an Advisor (LaVergne, 2011). Their governing document included the electing procedure. In addition to the formal duties and tasks assigned to the executive board, responsibilities were assigned to the general members. According to The Girlie Project’s constitution, the duties of all members include:

- All members must create and/or perform comedic material.

- All members must be willing to make complete and total fools out of themselves.
- All members will be predominately responsible for providing their own costume pieces for the show.
- The troupe will always incorporate monologues, videos, movement, song, dance, and sketches among other interesting new forums to present comedy. (LaVergne, 2011)

The Girlie Project at Emerson College exemplified a collegiate comedy troupe committed to creating a familial environment with non-intimidating auditions (Mixon, 2013). In the Mixon (2013) piece published in *The Berkeley Beacon*, one first-year member of The Girlie Project noted that joining the troupe allowed her to find her niche on campus. In the 2016 edition of the Emerson College yearbook, *Emersonian*, The Girlie Project's biography section referred to the troupe as distinctive because of their "dedication to featuring female writers, performers, and comedians" (Emerson College, p. 78). The Girlie Project's reputation on campus is one that comes with a commitment to advocating for women-identified comedians and the weight that comes with that.

In addition to performing at Emerson College, the Girlie Project performed in festivals including the 2019 Bloomers Comedy troupe hosted festival, LaughtHERfest (Yusuf, 2019) National College Comedy Festival or "ComFest" Weekend hosted by Skidmore College (Dana, 2019). In 2019, the 30th rendition of ComFest Weekend brought together students from 14 collegiate troupes and included performances by professional comedians (Dana, 2019). Emerson College's The Girlie Project and Vassar College's Indecent Exposure were spotlighted as participants in ComFest 2019 (Dana, 2019). Undergraduate student-comedians were "eager to do a few more shows without worrying what agent is watching and hungry for a taste of pre-graduation encouragement" (Angelo, 2012, para.17).

Emerson College described their respect for comedy and the institution's "rich history steeped in comedy and entertainment" (Emerson College Center for Comedic Arts, n.d.). Emerson College's comedy troupe roster has included: Chocolate Cake City, Derbyn, Emerson Comedy Workshop (the oldest troupe at Emerson founded in 1976), Flawed, Hyena Comedy, Inside Joke, Jimmy's Traveling All Stars, Police Geese, Stroopwafel, SWOMO, The Big Ugly Show, The Girlie Project, and This is Pathetic. All of the troupes and performers approach comedy in different ways. For example, the troupe, "This is Pathetic" is Emerson College's "only all- long-form improvisational comedy troupe" (Emerson College Center for Comedic Arts, n.d., para. 21). Emerson College was the first school in the United States to offer a specialized Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Comedic Arts with the and the inaugural class arrived in the fall of 2016. Along with a slew of alumni like Jay Leno who have held prominent careers in comedy, Emerson College's Center for Comedic Arts hosts a workshop known as Emerson College's ComEx! - A comedy extravaganza. Improv, stand-up, sketch comedy, and an award competition are tenets of Emerson College's ComEx event. ComEx! also involved student-led production and management (Emerson College Center for Comedic Arts, 2021).

The Girlie Project is not the only troupe at Emerson College whose focus is on women in comedy. The comedy troupe, *Flawed* was created in 2020 as a "new comedy troupe for women and nonbinary people of color" (Currell, 2020, para. 2). Flawed was created as a division of "Flawless Brown" - "a space for students who don't often see themselves represented in the world of comedy" (Currell, 2020, para. 2). As this study included the work from The Girlie Project throughout the 2020–2021 season, it is worth noting that women of color at Emerson College have carved out a space within the vast field of comedic arts at the institution. The next section provides details into Vassar College's troupe, Indecent Exposure.

## ***Indecent Exposure***

Vassar College's troupe Indecent Exposure is known as Vassar College's only "all women and genderqueer comedy group" (Vassar College, 2019). The versatile troupe produced both sketch shows and stand-up comedic content (Westerman, 2016). Troupe members "write and revise sketches, then select them a week before they are staged" (Westerman, 2016, para. 8). For the standup sketches, "each member develops her own routine and after sharing sets the order is then decided upon" (Westerman, 2016, para. 8). Indecent Exposure has a presence on social media including their public-facing Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube accounts.

In the Google Slides presentation titled, "Vassar College Comedy Info Extravaganza," there are various troupes highlighted including The Limit, Indecent Exposure, Comedy Normative, Big Kidz and HEL Sketch Comedy. The slide for Indecent Exposure in the "Vassar College Comedy Info Extravaganza" deck stated that the troupe is the "only affinity space for college comedy on Vassar's campus and that the troupe is made of up of "marginalized genders, included women, non-binary folks, and trans men" (Vassar College Comedy Info Extravaganza, n.d.) In a 2020 write-up in Vassar's college newspaper, *The Miscellany News*, the author described Indecent Exposure's commitment to help the campus community laugh throughout COVID-19. In the *Miscellany News* 2020 feature, Indecent Exposure is described as "Vassar's all women & genderqueer comedy group" (Sweeney, 2020, para. 3). Indecent Exposure troupe met twice a week throughout the Fall 2020 semester with one being on Zoom and one meeting being in-person (Sweeney, 2020). One Indecent Exposure troupe member said that having one in person meeting was a way to have a "real sense of community" (Sweeney, 2020, para. 4). Indecent Exposure's meetings typically started with a quick check-in before diving into "creating characters, show, or bits" (Sweeney, 2020, para. 4). Indecent Exposure comedy troupe's

opportunity to create content and check in with one another strengthened their relationships and positively impacted the greater Vassar College community (Sweeney, 2020).

During the Fall 2020 semester at Vassar College, Indecent Exposure created a series of stand-up videos on Instagram TV, and that format and style of creating became their “new normal” (Sweeney, 2020, para. 4). Instead of producing a live show, Indecent Exposure became more “tech savvy” and created new forms of content for a more internet-friendly audience (Sweeney, 2020, para. 4). The work of Indecent Exposure became more exposed, and one troupe member said that the stakes were higher when creating work for the internet (Sweeney, 2020). Instead of pausing on content creation, the troupe capitalized on technology and remained creative in their endeavors (Sweeney, 2020). The members of Indecent Exposure produced a radio show and in lieu of their annual live event called, “The Buddies Show”, the student-comedians released sketch videos (Sweeney, 2020).

Vassar College’s women and gender minority focused comedy troupe crafted their own space within the Vassar College community. In 2004, Vassar College alum, Heather Trobe created Indecent Exposure as a way to spotlight women in comedy at the institution (Westerman, 2016). Trobe stated that a motivation to create Indecent Exposure was women “were often relegated to wives, mothers, or sex workers” in sketch comedy (Westerman, 2016, para. 2). Trobe noted that Indecent Exposure was created because most comedic roles for women “lacked nuance” (Westerman, 2016, para. 2). By exploring the work of Indecent Exposure’s comedy throughout COVID-19, it expanded the conversation on the work that started at Vassar in 2004 by Trobe and others invested in women’s work in comedy and humor.

Indecent Exposure’s popularity among the Vassar College audience remains strong and one troupe member said that there was a turning point during the 2015 Valentine’s Day show

when “they had to turn people away” (Westerman, 2016, para. 5) due to the venue’s capacity. Indecent Exposure comedy troupe members are on record uplifting one another and supporting one another (Wang, 2015). In a 2015 feature in *The Miscellany News*, reporter, Y. Wang wrote about Indecent Exposure’s reaction to the myth “women are not funny” (para.1). Indecent Exposure’s members disputed the myth and called attention to their ability to practice their craft as student comedians. The next troupe highlighted is Indiana University’s Ladies Night Comedy.

### ***Ladies Night Comedy***

Indiana University’s troupe, Ladies Night has been described by a member as being the “only group at [Indiana University] that focuses on stand-up comedy and offers a space specifically for women and underrepresented voices” (Ovelton, 2021, para. 2). Indiana University’s Ladies Night Comedy is active on social media and has an Instagram account and Twitter account. In an article about the student-comedians known as Ladies Night, one member stated that she felt “more assured” by being in Ladies Night and that she thought the troupe was “more nurturing” (Ovelton, 2021, para. 5). In the featured piece, one of the members said, “I think it’s easier for me to be more confident with my ideas and my jokes in that space” (Ovelton, 2021, para. 6). Ladies Night comedy biography on Twitter stated, “a network of Indiana University feminists who write and perform stand-up and sketch comedy” (Ladies Night Comedy IU, n.d.) The troupe’s Instagram biography claimed: “a space for underrepresented voices in comedy at Indiana University” (Ladies' Night Comedy, n.d.). The women-centric comedy troupe at Indiana University published their constitution on the Indiana University Division of Student Affairs Institutional Memory database. The troupe’s constitution’s preamble stated: “Ladies' Night Comedy is a forum of comediennes with the intention of advancing women in comedy and organizing evenings to showcase group and individual talent in



collaboration with other existing comedy groups” (Indiana University Bloomington, n.d.-a, p. 1). As depicted in the troupe’s constitution, Ladies Night members are committed to advancing women in comedy. One way the student-comediennes showcased their talents included performing at Indiana University sponsored comedy shows (Smalstig, 2019). The next section of the study provides background information on Sphincter Comedy troupe housed at Yale University.

### ***Sphincter Comedy***

Yale University’s Sphincter Comedy troupe described themselves on Instagram as being Yale’s “only oldest Zagat-rated sketch comedy group//comedy for non-cis men pls join us” (Sphincter Troupe, n.d.). When asked about the culture of comedy at Yale University, one member stated, “For a long time, it was a boy’s club” (Badwan, 2019, para. 18). The member featured in the Badwan (2019) piece stated that in recent years more women and people of color joined comedy troupes. Sphincter Comedy used social media including Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. In an article covering the comedy scene at Yale University, one writer described Sphincter Comedy as being a part of a campus where there was a lot of funny people with an abundance of troupes, but not much room for solo comedians (Yale Daily News, 2003). The next section of the study offers background information on Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy, a comedy troupe based at the “distinguished women’s college,” Bryn Mawr (n.d., para. 1).

### ***Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy***

Bryn Mawr College’s Spoon-Fed Comedy troupe’s Instagram biography stated, “Spoon-Fed is a sketch comedy troupe at Bryn Mawr College. We write, act in, direct, and produce shows on campus during the academic year!” (Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy, n.d.). Outside of the content shared via Spoon-Fed Comedy’s social media, there is not an abundance of information

written about the troupe. Bryn Mawr College's Spoon-Fed Comedy has a public facing account on Instagram and Facebook. The next section of the study will highlight Tufts University Funny Ladies comedy troupe.

### ***Tuft Funny Ladies***

Tufts University Funny Ladies (TFL) Comedy members described the troupe as Tuft University's "only group dedicated to amplifying the voices of gender minorities in comedy" (TFL Comedy, n.d., para. 1). In addition to their presence on social media, TFL has a public-facing organization constitution where the comedy troupe's purpose and mission lives along with other policies including their non-discrimination clause. In a March 2022 write up featured in Tuft's student magazine, *Tufts Observer*, the reporter wrote, "It's not SNL. No cisgender white men here" (C. Davis, 2022, para.1). Additionally, C. Davis (2022) wrote, "TFL comedy operates as the only comedy club on campus exclusive for women, nonbinary students, and trans men, opening doors and Zoom rooms for these students in the cis-male dominated world of comedy" (para.1). TFL has become known for their honesty in their comedy (C. Davis, 2022). Unlike many of their peer women-centric collegiate comedy troupes, TFL does not host auditions (TFL Comedy, n.d.; C. Davis, 2022). According to C. Davis (2022), being a non-audition group allows TFL to attract students who do not have prior experience in comedy or acting.

TFL is active on social media and has a public facing Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook account. Additionally, the troupe has a blog housed on WordPress. The bio stated:

TFL began as a space for women\* in comedy because #boyssmell. As #womenwhoalsosmell, we launched our group with the intention of fostering and promoting the best comedy (shoutout to sketch writers and actors, standup comedians,

satirical writers, cartoonists, vid kids, and people who are just naturally hilarious you talented goons) amongst underrepresented demographics. (TFL Comedy, n.d.)

Tufts University's women-centric comedy troupe launched in 2016 and according to an article in *The Tufts Daily*, the troupe was founded to be informal and became a "space both online and at a couple get-togethers, where women felt they could share their experiences in comedy" (Downs, 2016, para. 4). Similar to other campuses represented in the study, Tufts University has a vibrant comedy culture. According to Gillespie (2017), there is a special culture at Tufts for members of "The Zamboni, Major: Undecided, the Stand-up Comedy Collective, TFL Comedy, HYPE! Mimez and The Institute Sketch Comedy" (para. 4). There is a palpable camaraderie among the troupes at TFL with groups representative of diverse interests and populations including a group specializing in miming known as HYPE! Mimez (Gillespie, 2017). The next section provides additional information on the participants of the study.

## **Participants**

African American, European American, Latina, and Asian American undergraduate women-identified students between the ages of 18-25 were asked to volunteer in this study only if they had participated in the study's selected troupes between the years of 2020 to 2022. I aimed to recruit students of all backgrounds and was inclusive of students of all races, religions, creeds, and ethnic backgrounds who were members of the study's selected troupes. Additionally, I aimed to hear from every woman-identifying member of the comedy troupes within the ages of 18-25 without considering academic criteria such as major, minor, or grade point average. The 18-25 demographic was a target age group for this study because it aligned with the group most vulnerable to loneliness according to the Making Caring Common team's research (Weissbourd et al., 2021). To enhance the study, I aimed to hear from undergraduate students living and

learning throughout COVID-19 and that is why participants must have been active in their respective troupe during either, all, or some of 2020, 2021, and/or 2022. I sought to hear from women-identified students to root the study in women's experiences and push back on the "prevalent stereotype" that men are funnier than women (Greengross, 2019, para. 1). The participants intentionally had to identify as members of a student organization where the primary objective was comedy and identify as an 18–25-year-old woman. To understand how the troupes functioned in a more holistic way, the participant criteria were kept relatively open. When asked to describe Bloomers in 2010, a troupe member said:

We're blond, black, Jewish, Christian, Hispanic, Asian, tall, short, lesbian, and straight. Some of us are from big cities, some grew up in small farm towns. We wear sorority letters and tattoos. But we're bonded by a genuine love of comedy. (Friedman, 2010, para. 7)

Similar to Bloomers Comedy, the other troupes included in the study had rosters with comedians from a range of backgrounds and identities. Knowing that the study's selected troupes consisted of diverse undergraduate women-identified students strengthened the decision to keep the participant criteria more open. The next section offers more insight into the individual interview participants.

### ***Individual Interview Participants***

The following data were pulled from the data collected in the Qualtrics pre-individual interview form. From the 15 individual interviews conducted with undergraduate college students who identified as women and participated in collegiate comedy troupes, I interviewed students who were the following ages: 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23 years old. The table featured below includes the demographics of the study's participants including the responses to the

survey questions regarding race and gender. The numbers next to the responses identify the number of participants who noted their age and who self-identified their race and or ethnicity and their gender. The table below features the demographics of the individual interview participants.

**Table 3**

*Demographics of Individual Interview Participants*

<b>Participant Ages</b>	<b>Participant Self-Identified Race</b>	<b>Participant Self-Identified Gender</b>
18 years old (1)	White (10)	Female or female (12)
19 years old (3)	White/Latina (1)	Woman (1)
20 years old (4)	Black (1)	Cisgender female (1)
21 years old (4)	Latin X (1)	Trans-fem (1)
22 years old (2)	Asian-American (1)	
23 years old (1)	Korean and Irish (1)	

The individual interview participants were all undergraduate students at public or private four-year colleges or universities located within the United States. The fifteen individuals interviewed in the study were from various backgrounds and having the text box to self-identified allowed students to use their preferred language. The next section offers insight into the focus group participants.

***Focus Group Interview Participants***

The students who participated in the study’s focus group interview also completed the individual-interview Qualtrics form. The focus group participants for the study both identified as White and Female. They noted their ages as 21 and 22 years old, and both were members of one

collegiate comedy co-gendered improv troupe. The next section provides an overview of the coding methods used to analyze the data.

### **Data Handling: A Brief Overview of Coding**

The following section provides a brief overview of the data handling that occurred in the analysis. The specific approaches and coding methods used in each data collection approach are discussed in more detail throughout Chapter 3. The data were coded using the open coding method of making notations next to data that “strike me as potentially relevant” for answering the research questions (Merriam, 2009, p. 178) and I looked for relationships in the data using the approaches of: Values Coding, Dramaturgical Coding, and Emotion Coding (Saldaña, 2016). A key part of coding is grouping like data together. In more detail, coding is “When researchers engage in an examination of their data, they generally begin to notice things that stand out in the data set, such as behaviors, events, activities, strategies, states of mind, meanings, patterns, relationships, interactions or consequences” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 421).

On a more fundamental level, Creswell (2014) provided researchers with key steps to include while conducting data analysis and coding. According to Creswell (2014), coding “is the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks (or text or image segments) and writing a word representing a category in the margins” (p. 198). Creswell explained that he thinks of codes as falling into three categories. The categories were “codes on topics that readers would expect to find, based on the past literature and common sense”; codes that “are surprising and that were not anticipated at the beginning of the study”; and codes that “are unusual” (p. 199). An issue that often comes up with coding is whether or not the codes should be developed “only on the basis of the emerging information collected from participants,” or if the researcher should “use predetermined codes” or some combination of “emerging and predetermined codes” (p. 199).

The traditional approach for disciplines in the social sciences is “to allow the codes to emerge during the data analysis” (Creswell, 2014, p.199).

I used the traditional approach of allowing the codes to emerge during the data analysis instead of using predetermined codes (Creswell, 2014). As a researcher involved in a qualitative case study incorporating anthropologic elements including individual interviews, focus group interviews, observations of troupes during their rehearsals, analysis of popular culture materials in visual formats and observations of recorded materials, I used the coding process “to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis” (Creswell, 2014, p. 199). According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013), coding is generally done to accomplish “description of analysis” (p. 422). The coding of the data collected from individual interviews, a focus group interview, observations of rehearsals, and document analysis was conducted manually using Microsoft Word’s basic functions where coding was done “directly onto data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 29). The first cycle methods “are those processes that happen during the initial coding of data and are divided into seven subcategories: Grammatical, Elemental, Affective, Literary and Language, Exploratory, Procedural, and a finale profile entitled Theming the Data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 69). The categories of the coding methods used in this research all aligned in the first coding methods (Saldaña, 2016). The next section provides the research questions and brief accounts of how the questions were answered.

### ***Research Question 1***

How do women-identified undergraduate students who participate in collegiate comedy troupes in the U.S. describe their relationship with fellow troupe members? To answer this question, a series of qualitative case study data collection approaches were undertaken including individual interviews, a focus group interview, and observations of troupe rehearsals.

Additionally, I conducted document analysis of social media content housed on the public-facing, troupe-owned and operated accounts from 11 women-centric collegiate comedy troupes.

### ***Research Question 2***

How does being a part of a collegiate comedy troupe in the U.S. help women-identified undergraduate students build community with one another and mitigate loneliness permeating the culture during a global pandemic? To answer this question, a series of qualitative case study data collection approaches were undertaken including individual interviews, a focus group interview, and observations of troupe rehearsals. Additionally, there was document analysis of women-centric troupes' social media content on the public-facing, troupe owned and operated accounts of Instagram and Twitter.

The next section investigates the research design of the study and is separated by the data collection methods. After each data collection method is explored, the data handling and coding for that information is described.

### **Research Design**

The design selected for this investigation was a qualitative case study that involved individual interviews, a focus group interview, observations of rehearsals, and mining data from a variety of documents including popular culture documents and visual documents (Merriam, 2009) including graphics, and social media posts featured on the selected troupes' Instagram and Twitter accounts. This case study aimed to better understand the culture of the communities formed among the study's determined population, 18-25-year-old women-identified students who actively participate in comedy troupes housed at four-year colleges and universities in the United States. The following sections go into detail into the execution of the various data collection methods.



### ***Individual Interviews***

Fourteen individual interviews were conducted with the study's selected troupes' participants via the Zoom web platform. One individual interview was held in person at the National College Comedy Festival at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York. The main purpose of the individual interviews for this research was to collect data "from a large number of people representing a broad range of ideas" (Merriam, 2009, p .88). The data collected from the individual interviews provided insight into how the students view their roles as members of their respective troupes and provided insight into how troupe members view their intentional practice of comedy and humor during the season of heightened loneliness amidst a global pandemic.

Interviews are the "mainstay of qualitative research" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 357). There are various types of interview structures in qualitative research including highly structured/ standardized, semi structured, and unstructured/informal (Merriam, 2009). The interview strategy used throughout the research phase of the dissertation included semi-structured interviews. Given the nature of the topic and the research questions to understand how students explore comedy and practice humor and laughter to foster relationships, this format allowed me to "respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). The semi-structured interview allows researchers to probe discussion and follow ideas (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The questions featured in the individual semi-structured interviews can be found in Appendix A. The questions using the semi-structured approach allowed me to "decide how to best use the limited time available and keep the interaction focused" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 359).

The semi-structured individual interviews consisted of good and clear questions that also

included follow-ups (Merriam, 2009). The types of questions included in the individual interview protocol were similar to the Job Training and Partnership training program case study as detailed by Merriam (2009). The protocol included hypothetical, ideal position, and interpretive questions. The ideal position questions were helpful because they “elicit both information and opinion” (p. 98). Interpretative questions allow the researcher to “provide a check on what you think you are understanding” (p. 98). Using best practices for semi-structured interviews, some of the prompts included “Tell me about a time when...” or “Give me an example of...” (Merriam, 2009, p. 99).

For qualitative studies, the idea is to “purposefully select” participants or sites in order to help understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2014, p. 189). While the goal of the study was to hear from 20 individuals, after 7 months of recruiting and pitching the study to 12 historically women’s comedy troupes and 73 co-gendered comedy troupes, I interviewed 15 individuals. Creswell (2014) stated that for qualitative research, there is no specific answer to the question “how many sites and participants” a researcher should have (p. 189). Creswell (2014) acknowledged one approach to the sample size issue would be for a case study to include about “four to five cases” (p. 189). Recognizing the concepts from Creswell, I heard from diverse women-identified student comedians from a range of comedy troupes including co-gendered and historically women’s troupes.

Saturation occurs in qualitative research when “the researcher stops collecting data because fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties” (Creswell, 2014, p. 248). I used the individual interview best practices and focused on the two key responsibilities of listening and observing (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Due to the pandemic and an increase in Zoom and web-based conferencing for meetings, the semi-structured individual interviews and

the focus group interview were conducted via the web conference platform, Zoom. In addition to the Zoom-led individual interviews, to maximize the number of respondents, I attended the National College Comedy Festival or Com Fest in Spring 2022 where I actively recruited, pitched students in person, and conducted one in person interview.

Ahead of all Zoom interactions including individual interviews and focus-group interviews, participants received an email with interview instructions including the Zoom log-in information. Before the individual interviews occurred, participants received an email with a Qualtrics survey link allowing participants to select a day and time that best fit their schedules. Participants were encouraged to join the individual semi-structured interview with the camera on and in a space conducive for a conversation where the microphone could remain on. The individual semi-structured interviews were recorded via Zoom with recordings saved to my personal laptop and the audio component of the interviews were uploaded to Rev.com for transcription. Ahead of the individual interviews held in person at the National College Comedy Festival, the target population received an email with instructions including what to expect during the individual interview. Attending the festival at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York, resulted in one individual interview.

For the individual interviews and focus-group interview, Zoom was selected because of the benefits of using the platform. Zoom functioned as an ideal platform during COVID-19 in a season of remote learning and increased social distance. According to research done on the benefits of Zoom, the platform is helpful and ideal for conducting virtual interviews because the platform featured “live links” which allowed participants to easily “click to join the meeting” (M. Gray et al., 2020, p. 1294). M. Gray et al. (2020) noted, Zoom can be “edited and augmented to create specificity for the type of interview the researcher is conducting” (p.1294).

Additionally, Zoom's confidential features including password protective features enhanced the security, and Zoom allowed for the recording capacity to enter the host's computer or Zoom's cloud storage (M. Gray et al., 2020). I saved the individual interviews and focus-group interview to my host computer's server and downloaded the recordings. After downloading the interview files from Zoom, I submitted the audio recording of the interviews to Rev.com: a service that provides transcriptions of recordings. The video components of the interviews were not submitted to Rev.com to limit the risk of sharing identities with a third-party provider. With the benefits of using Zoom, it was important to be mindful of external factors that may distract participants during interviews (M. Gray et al., 2020). I attempted to "minimize distractions by choosing a private location" and encouraged participants to do the same (M. Gray et al., 2020, p. 1298). Participants were encouraged to choose a space that was safe and comfortable and to be mindful of the circumstances due to COVID-19 restrictions. The recommendation to participate in the Zoom interview in a room/space that limited distractions was included in the pre-interview message to participants.

The responses from the individual interviews saved using the Zoom recording technology were transcribed using Rev.com software because of the tool's benefits for academic research (Rev, 2019). The Rev.com software tools allowed me to use the transcriptions more effectively and helped me efficiently analyze content. I focused "on the specialized tasks that will actually make an impact" by using Rev. com software for transcriptions (Rev, 2019, para. 8).

Additionally, I used the Rev.com software because of the Zoom endorsement. Zoom described Rev.com as "a leader in on-demand remote services, offering audio transcription, video captions, and document translation" (Zoom Blog, 2021, para. 7). Transcribing the audio component of the individual interviews and focus-group interview via the Rev.com software improved the

efficiency in a key step of organizing and preparing the data for analysis (Creswell, 2014).

The questions featured in the individual interviews aligned with the model of questions as described by Savin-Baden and Major (2013). Choosing the approach of computer conferencing/chat interviews allowed me to “mimic the face-to-face interview and has many of its advantages, such as being able to see facial expressions, read body language and get some insights from the interviewee’s surroundings” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 363). The initial questions posed at the beginning of the individual interview helped me obtain background information and laid a foundation for additional probing further into the conversation (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The questions to gather more in-depth data included contrast questions, evaluative questions, circular questions, and comparative questions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Contrast questions were used to encourage the study participants to think about extreme cases. Evaluative questions were used to enable participants to make a judgment. Circular questions were the most helpful to encourage meta-thinking (big picture) and the comparative questions helped participants put their own experiences in perspective (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Using this practice as outlined by Savin-Baden and Major (2013), I posed questions that yielded usable data. The types of questions I avoided include over-empathetic, manipulative, leading, and why (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). These tropes can be avoided by writing clearly and simply; the questions “should be short, direct, and not contain multiple parts” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 367).

The interview protocol helped the research process and included four parts: the header, the script, the question set, and the closing (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The interview protocol served as a “flexible guide for the interview discussion” (p. 367). The individual interview protocol is labeled Appendix B and is modeled after the Sample Interview Protocol titled “Table

23.5 Sample Interview Protocol” (p. 368). In summary, this dissertation research design implemented individual interviews because it is the “best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals” (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). The next section of the dissertation provides detail into the data handling and coding approach of the individual interview transcriptions.

### ***Data Handling and Coding: Individual Interviews***

For the coding of the data from the individual interviews, I used the method Saldaña (2016) described as “Values Coding”; values coding is “the application of codes to qualitative data that reflect a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs” (p. 131). Values Coding is “appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies” and works well with coding interview transcripts and participant-generated materials (p. 132). For the individual interview transcripts, I used the Values Coding system because it is a prime way to get to the heart of “what someone values, thinks, feels, and believes” (p. 134). In Values Coding, the three key constructs in play are “value, attitude, and belief” (p. 132). In the analysis, “the next step is to categorize them and reflect on their collective meaning, interaction, and interplay, working under the premise that the three constructs are part of an interconnected system” (p. 133). Values Coding required “a paradigm, perspective, and positionality” (p. 135). The Values Coding approach to the individual interview transcripts allowed me to explore the participant’s “personal and unique experiences, development, and self-constructed identities from social interaction” (p. 135). Values Coding worked well in this dissertation because the study’s aim was to better understand the personal beliefs, attitudes, and values of the individual participants in various comedy troupes as it related to humor, comedy, and fostering relationships. Values Coding can “reflect a participant’s needs and wants, and emotions” and are often a part of one’s value system (p. 136). Values Coding

paired with other forms of coding or “complementary methods” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 136) explored further in Chapter 3, will strengthen the analysis of the data collected from the individual interviews. The next section of the dissertation includes information on the data collection approach known as focus-group interviews.

### ***Focus Group Interview***

In addition to facilitating individual interviews, the study included focus group interviews which pull characteristics from group interviews and focus groups (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). A focus group interview is defined as a “qualitative data collection method” that researchers employ where the “interaction of the group members is encouraged” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 375). Because I sought to better understand how members of a comedy troupe interact with one another during isolating times, the focus group interviews were implemented to provide additional context and understanding adding depth to the research.

Throughout the last 4 months of the recruiting phase, I invited troupes to participate in both individual interviews and focus-group interviews. To enhance validity, reliability, and to strengthen the credibility of the study, the study was designed to host individual interviews with as many eligible participants as possible with the goal being to conduct 20 individual interviews. The focus groups interview occurred in the last two weeks of conducting individual interviews. I pitched the study and conducted outreach to 12 historically women’s troupes and 73 co-gendered comedy troupes with the invitation to participate in a focus group interview, and I held one focus group interview.

The focus-group interviews were added to the study to gain more insight into interactions among the troupe participants including their relationships and humor style similarities and differences. For focus group interviews, “most writers suggest somewhere between six and ten

participants” but there are “no hard and fast rules about how many to include in a group” (Merriam, 2009, p. 94) Participants were asked to provide their age in the Qualtrics form: <https://go.wm.edu/k3lYht>; the form was included in the same email as the required consent form to ensure participants fell into the targeted demographic. Focus group interviews were open to troupe members who participated in individual interviews and to troupe members who opted out of participating in individual interviews. In summary, the study involved one focus-group interview with members of one troupe housed at Davidson College.

Using Savin-Baden and Major (2013)’s descriptions of focus groups, the style used in this research was phenomenological. A phenomenological focus group seeks to understand through group interaction the “essence of someone’s experience” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 377). “To get at the essence or basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience, the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection” (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). The phenomenological approach to focus-group interviews allowed me to have a clearer view of the troupe members’ human experiences (Merriam, 2009). The phenomenological focus-group interview approach paired well with the anthropological approach to the case study as it allowed me to uncover how the participants’ “conscious views of the situation under study whilst also recognizing the influence of their preconscious, their background and experiences on the research” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 61). Because this case study aspired to understand the relationships between troupe members, the focus-group interview provided a deeper insight into the ways troupe members behave when together and not “performing” or producing a show.

The focus group interview conducted in this study was modeled after Krueger’s (2002) focus-group strategic outline which included tips on the strategy, flow of questioning, and what researchers should have prepared for focus group interviews. Because the focus group interview



was held virtually, some of the notes from Krueger's best practices (2002) were less potent and applicable for this study. According to Breen (2006), certain obstacles can be overcome for common ethical issues in focus-group interviews including "put your interviewee at ease, assure confidentiality, establish a rapport, explain the interview format and sequence of topics, and if necessary to make notes, explain why, avoid bias, and avoid piling questions on top of each other" (p. 469). The pacing, timing, and being prepared with further advice if needed are additional practices recommended by Breen (2006) that I used ahead of the focus-group interview. Elements from the nominal technique were embedded in the focus-group interview because the nominal technique consists of "structured small-group discussion" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 378). Additionally, the nominal group technique encourages researchers to focus on all participants so that there is not a "domination of discussion by a single person" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 378).

The focus group interview questions followed a similar flow as the individual interview questions and included probes, "short comments or questions to further stimulate discussion" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 380). In focus group interviews, the researcher must determine what role to play (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). I incorporated the "researcher/moderator" role in order to "ask questions or prompt the group discussion" throughout the focus group interview (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 378). As a researcher/moderator, I was responsible for handling all of the Zoom web conference call logistics and including details about the flow of the session in the moderator's guide. The moderator's guide for the focus group interviews is featured in the appendices and titled Appendix B. Additionally, the focus group moderator's guide is featured in Appendix C and the focus group interview participant ground rules are featured in Appendix D.

The flow for the focus group interview moved from general to specific questions and

followed the format that Savin-Baden and Major (2013) recommended where behavior questions come before attitude questions, positive questions are asked before negative questions, and unaided questions are asked prior to aided questions. The specific questions in the focus group interview helped “set a positive tone for the interview, which may in turn leave participants feeling more positive about their participation and thus, more willing to participate” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 381). The most important questions or “key questions” which are the “drivers of the study” (University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health, 2019) occurred further into the interview and this was done intentionally. The key questions are the ones that need the most thought (University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health, 2019). All key questions in the protocol were “open ended” and questions were “stripped of jargon” (University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health, 2019). The questions in the focus-group interview were framed in a way that led to casual responses. The moderator’s guide included a timeline to help guide the interview (i.e., a 5-minute question or a 15-minute question; University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health, 2019). The ending question served as a wrap-up question and all questions were focused to retrieve data aligning with the study’s research questions (University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health, 2019).

In addition to a moderator’s guide, I established ground rules for the focus group interview using the model prescribed by Savin-Baden and Major (2013). The ground rules were shared with the participants during the focus group interview to maximize transparency (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The ground rules of the focus-group interviews included asking participants to not talk over one another which helped with the transcription (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The ground rules for the focus group interview aligned with Zoom interview best practices. The ground rules can be found in Appendix B and are also included below.

- Focus group participants should log into Zoom at the allotted time and use the password-protected link included 48 hours before the focus-group interview via email.
- Only one person can talk at a time to help with transcription
- Confidentiality will be featured in the study's findings
- Keep the conversation focused on the questions presented by the moderator to maximize time
- All participants are encouraged to speak during the focus-group interview conversation

Participants are encouraged to find quiet spaces that will allow for their microphones to remain on that will allow for some elements of “cross talk” (Santhosh et al., 2021).

- Participants are encouraged to be on video because audio-only can create additional barriers in Zoom videos (Santhosh et al., 2021).

Participants knew why they were invited, and the knowledge laid the foundation of the conversation. The focus-group participants were made aware why they were invited and as a moderator, I discussed that the focus group interview will be more interesting if it was more conversational (University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health, 2019). As Krueger and Casey noted in their training video, “often people who are quiet are reflective”, so allowing for everyone in the focus-group to participate is vital (University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health, 2019). For the logistics and timing, the participants for all focus-group interviews were invited to a 1-hour conversation to ensure all participants could engage in the conversation. The sample focus group interview invitation message that included the Qualtrics survey link is included in the appendices as Appendix E and Appendix F is the informed consent form for the

interview participants.

Being a moderator required more than asking questions, it required skills rooted in leadership best practices (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). To maximize the focus group interview session, I used the guided points in how to curb undesired behavior that included opportunities to pivot if “a question appears to fall flat” or if anyone from the focus group veers “too far from the topic” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 385). The moderator’s guide offered a map for best practices to keep the focus group interview effective and efficient. Additionally, the moderator’s guide featured information on the following: logistics, research goals, respondent profile, topics, timing guide, purpose of the session, disclosure, an introduction, questions and activities, and closing (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

As a moderator, one of the most important points Krueger and Casey described was having “eye contact” and offering signals when participants talk. The focus-group interview held via Zoom presented challenges not found during in-person interviews like being able to read body language and be limited to one room to limit distractions. However, there was the opportunity to use tools to maximize the time spent together including the “pause and the probe” approach (University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health, 2019). The pause can often give a signal that participants should “say more” (University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health, 2019). As a moderator, I did not “share my own experiences” (University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health, 2019) because I was there to listen to what the participants said. It is important in the focus group interview that no one participant’s voice is dominating the conversation and that all parties participate (University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health, 2019). The focus group interview allowed “participants to engage in many different forms of everyday communication, including jokes, teasing and arguing” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 389). Additionally, the

focus group interview provided insight into the group dynamics and how the group experiences shared laughter (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021) outside of rehearsals or scheduled shows.

Participants received a Qualtrics poll link with day and time options to schedule the respective focus group interview. Similar to individual interviews, the focus group interview transcript was conducted via Zoom and the transcript was downloaded and saved to the host computer's server. The audio recording was transcribed using the Rev.com online software. Transcriptions were helpful because they allowed me to better analyze the data from the focus group (University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health, 2019). The next section details the data handling and coding of the focus group interview.

#### ***Data Handling and Coding: Focus Group Interview***

Similar to individual interview transcripts, the focus-group interview transcript was coded using the method Saldaña (2016) described as “Values Coding” (p. 131) because values coding is “the application of codes to qualitative data that reflect a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs” (p. 131). Values Coding is “appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies” (p. 132) and works well with coding interview transcripts and participant-generated materials. For the focus group interview transcripts, I used the Values Coding system because it is a prime way to get to the heart of “what someone values, thinks, feels, and believes” (p. 134). In Values Coding, three key constructs in play were “value, attitude, and belief” (p. 132) and in the analysis, “the next step is to categorize them and reflect on their collective meaning, interaction, and interplay, working under the premise that the three constructs are part of an interconnected system” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 133). The individual interviews and focus-group interview involved the same pool of applicable students. Therefore, it made sense that the data collected from individual and focus group interviews were coded using the same approach. The next section of the dissertation

highlights the pilot study used to test run the interviews.

### ***Piloting Individual Interviews***

In addition to using an interview protocol, I tested the interview questions with undergraduate students who were in the 18-25-year-old target demographic and who attended a 4-year university. The piloted individual interviews took place with students outside of the institutions that I pitched the formal interviews. The piloted questions served as an ideal practice and strengthened the research instrument of the interview protocol. Additionally, practice helped me become “more relaxed” and strengthened my probing skills (Merriam, 2009, p. 102). I hosted two piloted interviews with undergraduate students to strengthen the individual interview protocol before hosting formal individual interviews with the study’s participants. The notes collected from the piloted interviews helped shape and strengthen the interview protocol. Hosting a pilot of the individual interview strengthened my skill set as a qualitative researcher, strengthened the interview protocol, and I was able to “pursue potentially fruitful lines of inquiry” (Merriam, 2009, p. 102). While I sought to host a piloted focus-group interview, I was unsuccessful in my endeavors to test with a group of three to five undergraduate students who were within the 18-25-year-old demographic. I aimed to test the focus-group interview to strengthen the study and “get a realistic sense of how long the interview takes and whether participants indeed are able to answer questions” (Castillo-Montoya, 2016, p. 827). A call was sent out to undergraduate students at William & Mary, my home institution, to attract students to participate in the pilot focus group interview. For the piloted interviews, my goal was to communicate with undergraduate students, specifically college women who participated in some form of performance-focused student run campus organization. The next section describes observations as a data collection method.

## *Observations*

In addition to the individual interviews and focus group interview, I conducted observations. Observation is a practice often used in qualitative research because it involves “investigation within a natural rather than a controlled setting” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 391). Observation varies in type and there are different ways to categorize qualitative observation methods. I proceeded with the passive participation observer role (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). As a passive observer, the “researcher attempts to be as unobtrusive as possible to avoid potentially biasing the observation” (p. 396). I held three observations of three troupe rehearsals after conducted outreach to 85 troupes. The field notes from the observations of the troupe rehearsals can be found in Appendix G. The troupes observed and the dates that I observed are featured below:

- The Girlie Project: Monday, March 28, 2022
- Vertigo-go Improv: Tuesday, April 5, 2022
- Derby Comedy Troupe: Monday, April 11, 2022

In addition to the observations of the troupe rehearsals to gain more insight into how the participants interacted with one another, I observed content that had been recorded and previously performed. This study included retroactive observation of shows conducted in fall 2020 of the oldest historically women’s collegiate comedy troupe, Bloomers. I intentionally chose to examine pre-recorded content of Bloomers Comedy troupe because of their pivotal role as groundbreakers in the collegiate comedy space for women. If not for the work of Bloomers Comedy troupe, it is likely that I would have not conducted this study.

As a part of the observations, I watched all of the shows from Bloomers Comedy troupe’s Fall 2020 show; however, I choose to only closely examine and code the sketch, “Goodbye to

2020.” Each sketch observed from Fall 2020 show housed on YouTube ranged in length and had a Bloomers Comedy troupe designated title. The full list of sketches can be found in Appendix H. The study was limited to reviewing sketches featured in the fall of 2020 because it aligned with the research questions and case study limitations to better understand the Bloomers Comedy troupe’s interactions during COVID-19. To help strengthen the confidentiality of the study, all data collected from observing the sketches did not include participant names. The individual interview and focus-group interview participants received pseudonyms. Troupe members in the cast and band featured in the observed sketches were not referred to by name or by pseudonym to ensure more confidentiality of participant’s identities. Because the names of the troupes are included in the study, omitting names of the participants in the data from observations offered more privacy to the participants. With this careful and intentional omission, it is still possible that participants may be able to decipher identities because of the size of the troupes and the size of the sample study. Participants were made aware that the study included observations of their previously performed and recorded content and document analysis of their public-facing social media content on Twitter and Instagram to make the process more transparent.

Even though the observations of previously performed content were conducted retroactively, I was mindful of how and when observations occur. A specific time was carved out for observation, and I watched each sketch approximately 5 times to gather adequate details with rich, thick descriptions of the sketches. The transcript of the “Goodbye 2020” sketch can be found in Appendix H. By storing the script/dialogue of the sketch, I coded the content more efficiently and this approach strengthened the rich, thick descriptions of the study. The observation notes were recorded in a researcher’s log to strengthen the reliability of the study (Merriam, 2009).



The study included observations as a qualitative data collection approach that added more depth and validity to the study. Creswell (2014) noted, “a qualitative observation is when the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site” (p. 190). Qualitative observations often allow observers to engage in roles “varying from a nonparticipant to a complete participant” (Creswell, 2014, p. 190). The observation notes were taken in a fieldwork journal (Merriam, 2009) and the observations of all sketches occurred before the individual interviews and the focus-group interviews are conducted. Observing the sketches critically and taking field notes on the sketches ahead of facilitating interviews allowed me to enter the interviews as a more informed researcher. Even though the observations occurred retroactively, and I did not attend any “live shows” featuring Bloomers Comedy troupe, this data collection type provided an opportunity to notice “unusual aspects” and better engage with the participants by knowing more about their art and comedic style as an observer and outsider looking in (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

As a careful observer, I practiced the steps that Merriam (2009) outlined work best for recording observations. I was attentive and I looked “for keywords in people’s remarks that will stand out later” (Merriam, 2009, p. 129). In observing the comedy sketches housed on YouTube, I looked for themes and humor styles that appeared in the sketches listed in Appendix G. Throughout the observations, I took field notes in a format that allowed me to find the desired information easily (Merriam, 2009). The field notes were designed to include highly descriptive reflections and notes to allow for as much detail to help readers feel as if they were attending the show. In addition to being highly descriptive the field notes were reflective with information about the descriptions of the sketches (Merriam, 2009). The comments from the sketches and direct quotations of jokes were included in the field notes. I examined and reflected on the

physical setting, the participants, the activities of the sketches, the interactions of the troupe cast members, and the delivery of the humor and jokes (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The reflections also included reflective comments with my “feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, and speculations” (Merriam, 2009, p. 131). I was mindful of positionality, place, view, presence, and ethics during the retroactive observations of the Bloomers Comedy troupe content. And I was mindful of those components while observing the troupes’ rehearsals via Zoom as a passive observer (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). However, as an observer of materials that have been recorded and featured publicly there was less concern that my presence “might have an effect on the situation” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 400). There are advantages and challenges to using observation in qualitative studies. A close-up look at full-length sketch performances provided insight into the themes, topics, and humor styles explored by the respective troupes. Examining the troupe’s “natural environment, which could not be derived from another data collection approach” provided a depth and richness to the case study (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 400).

For best research practices, I conducted observations using an observational protocol which was used “for recording information while observing” (Creswell, 2014, p. 193). The observations in this study involved the observations of troupes as they actively rehearsed and the observations of previously recorded materials. “The researcher can decide ahead of time to concentrate on observing certain events, behaviors, or persons” (Merriam, 2009, p. 120). The observational protocol for this study is modeled after questions posed by Merriam (2009) in the “Being a Careful Observer” chapter of the *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* text. The observational protocol can be found in Appendix I. The observation protocol featured questions that guided the observation about the physical setting, the

participants, activities and interactions, conversation, subtle factors, and behaviors (Merriam, 2009). The next section explores the coding methods of the data collected from observations.

### ***Data Handling and Coding: Observation***

The coding method for reviewing the transcribed script from the sketch “Goodbye 2020” performed by Bloomers Comedy troupe was the literary and language coding method of “Dramaturgical Coding” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 145). Dramaturgical Coding “approaches naturalistic observations and interview narratives as ‘social drama’ in its broadest sense” and applies the “terms and conventions of character, play script, and production analysis to qualitative data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 145). Due to the nature of the content, it made sense that coding the sketch was different from the Values Coding used to code interview transcripts. Saldaña (2016) noted dramaturgical codes that researchers can use include:

1. OBJ: participant-actor objectives, motives in the form of action verbs
2. CON: conflicts of obstacles confronted by the participant-actor which prevent him or her from achieving his or her objectives
3. TAC: participant-actor tactics or strategies to deal with conflicts or obstacles and achieve his or her objectives
4. ATT: participant-actor attitudes toward the setting, others, and the conflict
5. EMO: emotions perceived by the participant-actor
6. SUB: subtext, the participant-actor’s unspoken thoughts or impression management, usually in the form of gerunds. (Saldaña, 2016, p. 146)

The codes highlighted above and included in the Saldaña (2016) text were used to code the “theatrical performance” written, performed and produced by study participants (p. 146). I used the captions feature on YouTube to transcribe the lyrics to the sketch “Goodbye 2020” to a

Microsoft Word document and proceeded with the dramaturgical coding method. In addition to the codes highlighted above, I coded for the “participant-actor’s performative features” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 149). The codes for the participant actor’s performative elements include: “PHY: participant-actor physical actions, the body’s movements, gestures, appearance, conditioning, clothing, use of space” and “VER: verbal aspects of the participant-actor’s voice: tone, articulation, fluency, volume, vocabulary” (p. 149). The “PHY” and “VER” codes aided in the understanding the elements of the sketch, “Goodbye 2020.” The Dramaturgical Coding method can “reflect a participant’s needs and wants” which is also an element of “Values Coding” that were used in the individual interviews and focus group interview data analysis. These two methods paired well as complementary codes (Saldaña, 2016). The next section of the dissertation highlights the data collection method of document analysis.

### ***Document Analysis***

In addition to individual interviews and focus group interview, the observations of the selected content housed on YouTube, and the live observations of three troupes’ rehearsals, the study incorporated document analysis. Mining data from documents allowed me to engage with “public records and personal documents” (Merriam, 2009, p. 140). Documents for qualitative research vary and include pieces like “official records, letters, newspaper accounts, poems, songs, corporate records” (Merriam, 2009, p. 140). The documents analyzed in this study were pulled from public facing social media accounts of 11 historically women’s collegiate comedy troupe’s social media profiles including Twitter and Instagram. The documents analyzed in the study were featured on 11 Instagram accounts and five Twitter accounts. All of the study’s troupes had various social media profiles with different levels of interaction, posts, and

followers. Table 4 below includes the name of the troupe and whether they used Instagram, Twitter, or both platforms.

**Table 4***Historically Women’s Collegiate Troupe Social Media Accounts*

<b>College/University</b>	<b>Name of Troupe</b>	<b>Instagram</b>	<b>Twitter</b>
New York University	Bechdel Test	X	
University of Pennsylvania	Bloomers Comedy	X	X
The Ohio State University	Circular Reasoning Improv	X	X
Barnard College	Control Top Improv	X	
Penn State University	Derby Comedy	X	X
Emerson College	The Girlie Project	X	X
Vassar College	Indecent Exposure	X	
Indiana University	IU Ladies Night	X	
Yale University	Sphincter Comedy	X	X
Bryn Mawr College	Spoon-Fed Comedy	X	
Tufts University	TFL Comedy	X	

The popular culture documents were extracted from the Instagram posts and tweets published between March 2020, the determined bookmark start of COVID-19 being declared a global pandemic, to August 2021. Because documents are not “produced for research purposes, the information they offer may not be in a form that is useful (or understandable) to the investigator” (Merriam, 2009, p. 154). The data found in visual materials including the graphics strengthened my understanding of the troupes because “unlike interviewing and observation, the presence of the investigator does not alter what is being studied” (Merriam, 2009, p. 155).

Additionally, the pros of using artistic elements including graphics designed by the members of the troupes was less obtrusive than other forms of data collection. Examining the public facing data on social media allowed me to better understand the reality and lived experiences of the troupe members (Creswell, 2014).

To protect the confidentiality of the participants, the photos analyzed in the study were not photos of individual troupe members. The addition of mining data from the internet is vital because of the use of social media among the target study demographic of 18-25-year-old in 2020 and 2021 (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). Additionally, document analysis in this study enhanced the slide deck with graphics pulled from study's designated troupes Instagram accounts. All of the graphics analyzed in the study included designed pieces and I did not analyze photographs of individual troupe members. In order to focus on two of the most frequently used social media platforms, I analyzed content on Instagram and Twitter and did not analyze content on Facebook.

### ***Instagram***

For the document analysis of all of the Bloomers Comedy troupe's Instagram content, I reviewed, copied, and pasted all of the selected troupes' Instagram posts including the captions aligning with the posts and the graphics/photographs that were shared between March 2020 to August 2021 to a Google Sheet. To bolster the anonymity of the participants featured in the study and to help with the ethics of analyzing content on the public facing accounts, this study only reviewed Instagram posts that were published on the selected troupe's official and public-facing Instagram accounts. The study did not analyze Instagram posts featured by individual members of the selected troupes. The focus on the analyzed Instagram posts was on the post itself including the caption, the aligned photo or graphic, and analyzing the themes associated

with the posts including emojis in the caption and the topics of the posts. The comments featured in the posts were not analyzed in order to maximize anonymity and limit risk for potential harm of participants.

### ***Twitter***

For the troupes with active Twitter accounts, I reviewed, copied, and pasted all of the tweets from March 2020 to August 2021 into a Google Sheet. The analysis of content posted on Twitter included the content of the tweet and any aligning photos or graphics. The Google Sheet with tweets from the troupe's selected accounts included the full text of the tweets and the hyperlink to access the tweet. Similar to the document analysis of the Instagram content, the tweets and aligning graphics were pulled from the selected troupe's Twitter accounts. The tweets and the aligning graphics and images analyzed in the study were pulled from the troupe's public facing account and not from individual members of the troupe. The next section offers insight into the value of analyzing social media content as documents.

I sought to understand the social media presence of the selected troupes because analyzing social media content is a growing trend within qualitative research (Hand, 2017). Hand (2017) claimed, "social media researchers need to ask how visual objects are generated and used, and how people make sense of the visual in using social media. Pulling these dimensions apart and then together is difficult" (p. 215). The document analysis of the social media posts on Instagram and Twitter is a task that Hand described as one that is still gaining traction in the field and comes with its own complexities. "Digital images uploaded to social media have several characteristics that make their interpretation arguably more complex than the printed photograph" (p. 220). The analysis of the visuals featured on Instagram and Twitter were analyzed cautiously and the analysis of the photos and graphics were used to answer the study's



research questions. Photos and themes collected through sorting through the photos on Instagram and Twitter enriched the data and contributed to the running themes found by other aspects of the study including interviews and observations.

According to Merriam (2009), when “collecting data from the Internet, the researcher is no longer the primary instrument for data collection; a variety of software tools must be used to locate, select, and process information” (p. 160). Throughout the research process, I used these tools and acknowledged that like the researcher, the tools have “inherent biases that may affect the study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 160). The external-facing public social media accounts owned, managed, and maintained by the study’s selected troupes served as the catalyst to provide information “about the image the individuals or members of an environment or organization actively seek to convey to others” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 404).

The use of the visual documents for the research was anchored by skills including “a high level of attention to detail as well as a high level of organizational skills to deal with the vast amount of content and visual information” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 406). To maximize the visual documents, I ensured that the documents were credible, representative, and I included vivid and clear descriptions of the graphics included in the popular culture documents (Merriam, 2009; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The document analysis of content from Instagram and Twitter focused on the posts from the selected troupes and did not focus on the comments from individual members and users of the various social media platforms. In the data collection and organization of the data, the popular culture documents pulled from Instagram and Twitter were analyzed using the following questions:

- What date was the content published?
- Did the Instagram post include a caption?

- Were there any hashtags included in the caption of the post?
  - If yes, what were the hashtags?
- Did the Instagram/Twitter post also include a photo or graphic and if yes, what does it look like?
  - Was the post a picture that appears to be a stock image or a designed graphic? Describe.
  - Was the aligning image a photo that appears to be organically taken from a camera/ camera phone? Describe.
- What was the author of the post trying to accomplish? For whom was the post intended?
- What can someone learn about the troupe from the post?
- What was or is the content creator's bias?
- What were the themes pulled from the post?

These questions enhanced the analysis of the popular culture documents and provide additional understanding into the study's designated troupes. As highlighted by a practical document published by The Ohio State University's Office of Student Life (2021), social media when used "effectively" can "benefit your organization in a variety of ways" (p. 2). In the guidelines offered by The Ohio State University, the practitioners who created the guidelines claimed social media can help student organizations recruit, communicate, advertise, share information about causes important to the group and spread general awareness.

The content reviewed on the study's selected troupes Instagram and Twitter accounts was reviewed through the lens of understanding if the content seeks to recruit, communicate with current members, advertise programs and events, share information about a cause the various

comedy troupe members are passionate about, or spread general awareness of the troupe (The Ohio State University, 2021). Additionally, research revealed that online behaviors can “perhaps unknowingly, leak aspects about our personality” (Whitty et al., 2018, p. 113). Analyzing the content within this framework enhanced the understanding of the selected troupes’ interactions with each other and provided additional insight into how the troupes navigated relationships online.

In the context of this research where the study aimed to unpack undergraduate student’s wellness and community-forming skills, I sought to understand how the students used or did not use social media as an extension of their virtual and socially distant communities. The exploration of the various troupe members living and learning in the time of COVID-19 would lack validity and credibility if the study omitted understanding some of their social media footprint. The study intentionally examined content on Instagram and Twitter because of the way these mediums serve as platforms for community-building. The next section provides insight into the social media document analysis protocol.

### ***Social Media Protocol***

I reviewed and analyzed content from two social media platforms: Instagram and Twitter from 11 selected historically women’s collegiate troupes. Not all of the troupes selected for the study had the same social media platforms. For the document analysis Google Sheet, I noted which platform each post was on and included descriptions of the copy and accompanying graphics and pictures where applicable. Due to the general differences between Instagram and Twitter, I aimed to see how the various troupes used both platforms. Twitter has been described as a “micro-blogging site rather than a social network site” because of its focus on information sharing (Shane-Simpson et al., 2018, p. 277). I selected Instagram instead of Facebook because

of Instagram’s “ability to engage audiences with its focus on images, its simplicity, and the combination of large audiences and tight (relative to Twitter) personal networks it provides” (Shane-Simpson et al., 2018, p. 278). Additionally, in a study to better understand why college students were more drawn to various social media sites, Instagram was “overwhelmingly the favored [social media platform] particularly among women” (Shane-Simpson et al., 2018, p. 283). Knowing that undergraduate college students, particularly, women favor Instagram, helped me narrow down the choice. The next section will go into more detail on how the social media content was handled and coded.

### ***Data Handling and Coding: Document Analysis***

In this section of the dissertation, I explore the coding process that was used to analyze data collected from analyzing posts on Instagram and Twitter. Social media content often uses emojis and emoticons (Grannan, 2022). I used the coding method known as “Emotion Coding” when coding data from the troupes’ social media accounts (Saldaña, 2016, p. 124). “Emotion Coding and Values Coding tap into the inner cognitive systems of participants. Emotion Coding, quite simply, labels the feelings participants may have experienced” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 124). I used the Emotion Coding approach for coding the data from the troupes’ social media accounts because of the natural fit between the use of emojis in social media and the way these creative, visual, artistic symbols function as their own language (Grannan, 2022).

By tapping into the way emotions “a universal human experience” are explored in the selected troupes’ social media content, I provided richer, thicker descriptions of the content (Saldaña, 2016, p. 125). The coding for the social media content mirrored the “MAXQDA Mac emoticodes” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 131). Additionally, the codes utilized the emojis and emoticons which are two popular, “new-age hieroglyphic languages” (Grannan, 2022). The emojis and

emoticons that are prevalent in social media (Grannan, 2022) were useful in coding the data found in the social media content. While I did not utilize the MAXQDA emoticons software, I used the template of emoticons defined as “visual coding tags based on popular emoticons that display a range of faces and other generic icons” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 130). Using the Unicode emoji list under the “Apple” branding (UNICODE, n.d.) as the basis for the coding, contributed to the growing body of work around the use of emojis and emoticons as a form of language and communication in the field of computer-mediated communication (L. Cheng, 2017). Each post pulled from Instagram and Twitter was coded utilizing the Unicode Full Emoji List. In the next section of the dissertation, I discussed the elements of trustworthiness, validity, and reliability which are all vital to the health and ethics of the study.

### **Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability**

For the research to be valid and reliable, the investigation must be done in an “ethical manner” (Merriam, 2009, p. 209). This section of the dissertation provides information on how the study was trustworthy, valid, and reliable. Qualitative validity means “that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Qualitative reliability means that there is consistency “across different researcher’s approaches” and that there is consistency “across different researchers and different projects” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). In the foundational research design text, Creswell (2014) highlighted eight strategies “organized from those most frequently used and easy to implement to those occasionally used and more difficult to implement” (p. 201). Throughout the study, I implemented the following strategies to ensure validity: triangulation, reflexivity, and rich and thick descriptions. The next section offers details on how each strategy was implemented.

### ***Triangulation***

I incorporated various methods to ensure validity, and I used triangulation as a strategy. To triangulate data sources of information, researchers must “examine evidence from the sources” and use it “to build a coherent justification for themes” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). When themes are “established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding to the validity of the study” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Triangulation is a “well known strategy to shore up the internal validity of a study” and can be done well when there are “three methods of data collection” (Merriam, 2009, p. 216). The strategy of triangulation was used because the study incorporated individual interviews, a focus group interview, observations, and document analysis (Merriam, 2009). The data collected from the individual interviews, focus-group interview, observations of rehearsals, observations of previously recorded performances, and the document analysis ensured that the data came from a variety of sources. This approach strengthened the triangulation strategy to enhance the study’s validity (Merriam, 2009).

### ***Reflection and Reflexivity***

In addition to triangulation, another validity strategy incorporated into the study was reflexivity. Reflexivity strengthens validity because “investigators need to explain their biases” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). Reflexivity allowed me to explore biases that I brought to the research. This approach is also known as “self-reflection” (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). Qualitative research is good when it “contains comments by the researchers about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background, such as their gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin” (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). As a Black woman researcher with a background studying higher education, working in higher education and consulting, and having experience within

diverse departments housed in student affairs, I acknowledged that my background personally and professionally influenced my approach to the data and the methods used to collect data. The various aspects of my identity that influenced my approach and biases to the research are featured in the Researcher as Instrument statement. The Researcher as Instrument statement found further in Chapter 3 seeks to communicate “the level to which the research was undertaken honestly, plausibly and effectively” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 73).

There are strengths to reflection; however, “qualitative researchers not only should engage in reflection, but also move beyond reflection to reflexivity” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 75). Reflexivity is “a process that helps researchers to consider their position and influence during the study” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 75). Additionally, reflexivity “has become a common and almost expected practice” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 80). There are various reflexivity approaches, and “many authors have attempted to categorize” the types of reflexivity (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p.77). The reflexivity type used in this study was personal reflexivity—a form of reflexivity detailed by Willig. According to Willig (2008), personal reflexivity “involves reflecting upon the way in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research” (p.10). Personal reflexivity involves “thinking about how the research may have affected and possibly changed” the researcher (Willig, 2008, p. 10).

By incorporating reflexivity, my “personal stance” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 80) became clearer to the readers. In addition to bolstering my personal stance, reflexivity provided student affairs practitioners and other stakeholders invested in the wellness of undergraduate students to consider how comedy and humor embedded in community building can benefit students. In summary, reflexivity is a practice that goes beyond acknowledging personal biases

because it invites researchers to think “about how our reactions” to data influences “insights and understandings” (Willig, 2008, p. 18).

### ***Rich and Thick Descriptions***

In addition to reflexivity and triangulation, I incorporated the strategy that Creswell (2014) referenced as using a “rich, thick description to convey the findings” (p. 202). A strength of qualitative inquiry is that it should be “richly descriptive” with words, pictures, quotes from documents, field notes, and interviews (Merriam, 2009, p. 16). With this validity strategy, I provided “detailed descriptions of the setting” and offered “many perspectives about a theme” so that the results were the most vibrant (Creswell, 2014, p. 202).

In Chapter 4, the rich and thick descriptions offered readers more details about the observations and document analysis. In the individual interviews and the focus group interview, the transcription method and pulling data from the carefully crafted questions enhanced the rich, thick descriptions of the data. The rich, thick descriptions offered the reader insight into the study so that “readers will be able to determine the extent to which their situations match the research context, and, hence, whether findings can be transferred” (Merriam, 2009, p. 229). Additionally, rich and thick descriptions appeared with the use of direct quotes from participants in the individual interviews and focus group interview. The rich and thick descriptions of content embedded in the study increased validity and reliability. In summary and as highlighted above, the research was conducted in a way that prioritized internal validity while keeping in mind that validity is “a goal rather than a product” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 105). The strategies of triangulation, thick and rich description, and reflexivity or self-reflection allowed the research to be more valid and more credible (Merriam, 2009).



## **Reliability**

In addition to validity, the study was set up to maximize reliability. Reliability in qualitative studies comes with its own challenges. Reliability is “problematic in the social sciences simply because human behavior is never static” (Merriam, 2009, p. 220). There is a connection between reliability and internal validity as most researchers root reliability in the ability to replicate a study (Merriam, 2009). A key strategy often used by researchers to “ensure for consistency and dependability or reliability” (Merriam, 2009, p. 222) is triangulation. As noted in the section on validity, triangulation of the methods to collect data strengthens the study.

Lastly, the strategy of an “audit trail” enhances the reliability of a study because “independent readers can authenticate the findings of a study by following the trail of the researcher” (Merriam, 2009, p. 222). I used the audit trail approach to provide readers with a detailed account “of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the study.” The audit trail or sometimes called a log will be featured in a research journal with notes on the “process of conducting the research as it is being undertaken” (p. 223). The audit trail included reflections, questions, and decisions made about “problems, issues, or ideas” encountered in the data collection (p. 223). One of the most important parts of the audit trail was the log/word document of all of the outreach efforts conducted to the study’s targeted troupes. The outreach log is featured in Appendix A.

## **Researcher as Instrument Statement**

One strategy of dealing with validity and credibility is often called a “researcher’s position” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). A characteristic of qualitative research is “that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis” (p. 15). Researcher positionality is “more narrowly defined than the researcher stance in that it reflects the

position the researcher has chosen to adopt within a given research study” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 71). While it can be a challenge, positionality “means acknowledging and allowing a researcher to have a place in the work” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 71). The following positionality or researcher as an instrument statement positioned me as a researcher in relation to the “subject, participants, and research context and process” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p.71).

As a researcher and investigator, it was important that I explained my biases for the reader “to better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). I acknowledged that my perceptions of higher education, student affairs, student development theory, wellness, and laughter have all been shaped by my personal experiences. From the fall of 2013 to the spring of 2016, I was the program coordinator for a peer mentoring program at William & Mary’s Center for Student Diversity. I believe that experience played a critical role in shaping my understanding of student development and student organization community-building. In addition to the experience coordinating a peer mentor program, I worked with culturally diverse student leaders in the Center for Student Diversity and the Office of Student Leadership Development at William & Mary as a Graduate Assistant. With these experiences in mind, I also acknowledge that it has been five years since working directly within a higher education setting and 6 years since working within the realm of student affairs. This distance in professional day to day operations affected how I approached the topics addressed by undergraduate students.

Due to previous experiences working closely with undergraduate students in an advising capacity, I brought certain biases to the study. Although every effort was made to ensure as much objectivity as possible, the biases shaped the way that I interpreted my experiences and how I viewed the data from the various methods taken to help maximize validity and

reliability in this research study. Due to the nature of the study focused on wellness and laughter, comedy, and humor's impact on wellness, I brought my own biases including my own humor style and understanding of what I find funny to the study as well.

Reflexive researchers are more aware of biases and can step back to examine those biases and the goal "of being reflexive in this sense has to do with improving the quality and validity of the research" (Guillemin & Gilliam, 2004, p. 275). Practicing reflexivity in the research strengthened the ethics of the study and being reflexive in an ethical sense "means acknowledging and being sensitized to the micro ethical dimensions of research practice" (Guillemin & Gilliam, 2004, p. 278). The next section of the dissertation details ethical considerations of the study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

An ethics review board is "most commonly in charge of reviewing studies both in social sciences, including anthropology, sociology and psychology, and also in applied professional fields, such as health, education and business" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 322). The ethics board plays multiple roles with a primary function being to "protect human participants" from various types of harm including "psychological, physical, social, or economic" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 322). I submitted my study's proposal including the interview protocols and informed consent forms to the College of William & Mary's Education Institution Review Committee (EDIRC). The EDIRC at William & Mary was responsible for "assessing the risks and benefits" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 323) of the proposed study, determining whether participants have given informed consent, and ensuring the appropriate selection of participants. In the review of research, there are "three primary types" including: "full or high risk, expedited or medium risk and exempt or low risk" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 326).

Due to the nature of the study and considering the questions posed in the decision tree

created by Savin-Baden and Major (2013), I submitted the proposal as an expedited or medium-risk review. The medium risk review meant that the study posed “no more than minimal risks that involve specific procedures determined by the ethics review board” (p. 326). The research posed medium-risk because the study was conducted with individual interviews, focus-group interview, passive observations of rehearsals, retroactive observations of content, and document observations of public-facing social media content housed on Instagram and Twitter.

As I proceeded with the EDIRC process, I ensured that participants were protected and had access to information including ground rules for focus-group interviews, and consent forms for participating in individual interviews and focus-group interviews. Beyond the ethical review, I used the practices recommended by Guillemin and Gilliam (2004) directly and cited in the Savin-Baden and Major (2013) text. Guillemin and Gilliam (2004) declared that there are three ways to assist researchers in their processes of reflexivity which strengthen the ethics of the study. They encouraged researchers to “acknowledge microethics,” to be sensitive to ethically important moments in research practice, and to respond to ethical concerns if and when they arise (p. 276). Microethics are “ethical dimensions of ordinary, everyday research practice” (p. 276). I was mindful of the ethical dimensions of the various layers of the study and I was mindful of the tensions involved in doing research that involved human subjects (Guillemin & Gilliam, 2004).

I ensured that there was respect for people and excellent treatment of the study’s targeted demographic of undergraduate students at the selected institutions of higher education (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Savin-Baden and Major (2013) emphasized the point of ethics going beyond what is simply required and moving researchers to question whether they are being excellent to one another. The three guiding points emphasized to reach excellent treatment of the

participants were “respect for persons, beneficence and equal treatment or justice” (p. 333). To help meet the respect for persons, I ensured that participants received quality communication and information ahead of all interviews. Participants in the study were made aware of why they were invited, what to expect during the interviews, and provided with Zoom interview best practices to help manage the virtual interview settings. Participants for this study were required to sign a consent sheet before participating in an individual interview or a focus-group interview. The informed consent sheet (Appendix J), the informed consent sheet for focus group interviews (Appendix K), and the recruitment emails for individual interviews (Appendix L) are included in the appendices section of the document. The informative consent sheets and recruitment messages helped in the effort to protect the study’s participants. The messages helped participants understand the risk and my intention to limit potential harms associated with participating in the study.

Due to the nature of the questions involved in the individual interviews and the focus-group interviews, I assumed that the associated risks were low. I strove to be transparent in the process and “situated” myself in relation to the data (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Additionally, I took a “critical stance toward research, acknowledging the philosophical stance and the efforts toward criticality” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 335) to help maximize the transparency of the process. I attempted to have a “clear view of what participants mean while simultaneously seeking and acknowledging co-created meaning” (p. 335).

I made the following decisions around transparency and ensuring wellbeing of participants: protected identities and use confidentiality, shared the research interests with participants. Additionally, I did not record/observe without consent. I used consent form ahead of individual interviews and focus-group interviews as found in Appendix I and Appendix J (Savin-

Baden & Major, 2013). In the individual interviews and focus-group interviews, participants were assigned pseudonyms to help with the confidentiality of the study. Additionally, because some of the data including documents were retrieved online (including Instagram and Twitter posts) featured on the selected troupes' social media accounts, I made sure that the ethics in online settings were practiced (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). As mentioned in the Document Analysis section of Chapter 3, the social media posts that were analyzed in the study belonged to the troupes' public facing accounts and I did not analyze the posts of individual members of the troupes. Some of the posts cited in the study featured individual names and social profile handles. In an attempt to help protect individuals, I highlighted names and individual profile handles in black. In addition to not analyzing the posts of individual members of the respective comedy troupes, I did not include the names of any commenters or those that engaged with any selected post or tweet.

## **Summary**

This chapter first situated my study within the framework of a qualitative case study with anthropologic elements. I further presented all of the methods used in this study and the approach to analyzing and coding data. After addressing the methods, I focused on the validity and reliability of the study. The chapter ended with an examination of the ethical considerations to the study. Chapter 4 features the results of the study. These results reflect the data collected throughout the study including the interviews, observations, and document analysis.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

Chapter 4 presents the results from this study. Results are presented in three sections. The first contains details with regards to the sample population including data pulled from the Qualtrics survey completed by every interview participant. The second section contains results that relate to the methods discussed in chapter three with the two themes and the five subthemes from the data collected. The third section serves as a summary and transition to the dissertation's final chapter. The complete data included the field notes from the observations of sketches and observations of rehearsals, the document analysis chart of the social media content can be found in the appendices. The next section will provide a summary of the methodology.

This study began in July 2021 after defending the proposal in May 2021 and submitting the protocol to the William and Mary Protection of Human Subjects Committee. The study intentionally sought to better understand how undergraduate college students between the ages of 18-25 who identified as women and participated in collegiate comedy troupes created community with one another. Qualitative data was obtained via individual interviews, a focus group interview, observations of previously recorded content, observations of troupe rehearsals, and document analysis of social media content housed on two platforms of 11 historically women's collegiate comedy troupes. To answer the study's research questions, I used various methods explored in Chapter 3. The tips to enhance laughter as suggested by Provine (2000) provided a framework to analyze the findings. The process included outreach to 11 historically women's collegiate troupes and 73 co-gendered collegiate troupes housed at 4-year colleges and

universities within the United States in order to hear from as many undergraduate students who identified as women and participated in a collegiate comedy troupe.

### **Population, Sample, and Participants**

The study involved facilitating 15 individual interviews with students from 13 troupes. The individual interviews were held over Zoom with one being held in person at the National College Comedy Festival at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York. The individual interviews were recorded and the audio of recordings were transcribed using the Rev.com software. The transcripts from the individual interviews were analyzed using the Values based coding method described by Saldaña (2016). Ahead of the individual interviews, participants were asked to complete a Qualtrics form survey with questions to better understand the demographic and social identifiers of the study's participants and to learn more about the participant's roles within their respective troupe. The following section provides details into the individual interview participants represented in the study.

### **Qualtrics Form**

The data featured below included responses to the pre-interview Qualtrics form emailed to the troupes as a part of the recruitment strategy. The Qualtrics form included various questions for interested participants to complete: first name, last name, age, email address. Additionally, the Qualtrics form included the question: "If your comedy troupe has teams or specialty areas, which team are you a part of? (Note: This may not apply to your troupe)." The options aligned with the comedy troupe teams featured in Bloomers Comedy: executive, cast, writing, business, band, tech, and costumes (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.-a). The form also asked participants to describe how they identified their race and how they identified their gender with open ended text boxes. The form ended with more logistics-focused questions to gauge if the target audience



were interested in participating in an individual interview, a focus group interview, or both. The final question on the form included a list of dates and times to choose from in order to ease the logistics of scheduling and confirming interview appointments. The pre-individual interview Qualtrics form was emailed to all of the troupes that I contacted, and I used the tool in order to set up interviews with interested participants. The Qualtrics form was completed by 32 individuals, but in the outreach to set up interviews, some of the respondents did not follow up or were not able to schedule an interview due to timing and conflicting schedules. As noted in Chapter 3, the individual interview participants ranged in ages from 18–23 years old. Additionally, the individual interview participants identified as White, LatinX, Black, biracial, and Asian American. The next section provides themes that were apparent from all of the study’s data collection methods including individual interviews, a focus group interview, observations, and document analysis.

### **Introduction to Themes**

The goal of the study was to answer the following research questions:

- How do women-identified undergraduate students who participate in collegiate comedy troupes housed in colleges and universities in the U.S. describe their relationship with fellow troupe members?
- How does being a part of a collegiate comedy troupe in the U.S. help women-identified undergraduate students build community with one another and mitigate loneliness permeating the culture during a global pandemic?

In answering these questions, using the data collection methods featured above and explained in Chapter 3, the two key themes extracted from the data were community building skills and laughter and play skills. Both of the key themes have sub-themes that fall under the

categories and are explored.

The first theme, community-building, had the following subthemes: creative outlets for creating community, a space for workshopping and delivering feedback, and mentoring through jokes. The subtheme of creative outlets for creating community explored how students described their comedy troupes as places of finding kindred spirits and like-minds. The subtheme of a space for workshopping and delivering feedback provided insight into how the troupes explore their craft and were committed to sharing ideas constructively on how to improve individually and collectively. The sub-theme of mentoring through jokes explored the ability of teaching, sharing, and ensuring a legacy of future student-comedians through informal or joke-based mentoring. Each of the subthemes are discussed in the section on community building skills.

In the laughter and play skills theme, the subthemes included: the benefits of games and play, and the benefits of various humor styles. The power of games and play subtheme explored how students encouraged one another to find the joy in casual atmospheres and increased their interpersonal contact through games and play. The benefits of various humor styles subtheme explored how participants make connections through their styles of humor and joke delivery along with being able to recognize where their strengths add to team dynamics. Both subthemes are discussed in more detail in the section on laughter and play skills. The next section goes in depth into the first theme: community-building skills.

### **Community-Building Skills: Introduction**

As highlighted in the first chapter of the study, according to Provine (2000), one way to increase laughter is to find a friend or personable stranger. The communities built throughout undergraduate college campuses vary in size and scope; regardless, all of the communities formed matter. There are benefits to building community with one another throughout one's

undergraduate years. One of the seven reasons deemed by The College of St. Scholastica on the importance of getting involved as a college student is that it “helps you become more collaborative” (College of St. Scholastica, 2022, para. 11). The concept of collaboration appeared throughout the study’s data.

Participants in the study often highlighted what it meant for them to be a part of a community rooted in laughter, comedy, and levity. The ways that the communities are built and continue to evolve were analyzed using the data collection methods of interviews, document analysis, and observations. The next section includes a table with definitions of the subthemes found in the community building skills theme and the aligned tips from Provine (2000). Provine’s tips are listed below and the aligning codes that I determined to match each suggestion are featured below. I did not use Provine’s 10th tip of “tickling” (2000, p. 215) for various reasons including the risks associated with tickling and its more intimate nature:

- Find a friend or a personable stranger: Friend/1
- The more the merrier: Merrier/2
- Increase interpersonal contact: Contact/3
- Create a casual atmosphere: Casual/4
- Adopt a laugh-ready attitude: Laugh/5
- Exploit the contagious laugh effect: Contagious/6
- Provide humorous materials: Materials/7
- Remove social inhibitions: Remove/8
- Stage social events: Events/9

**Table 5**

*Aligning Community Building Skills with Provine's Tips to Enhance Laughter*

Subtheme	Definition	Provine Tips
Creative outlet for creating community	A creative outlet for creating community is any space where creativity, humor, and levity serve as the key pillars of the community.	friend/1; merrier/2; contact/3; casual/4; laugh/5;
Space for workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback	Comedy, improv, sketch, stand-up, and any form of performance rooted in comedy and laugh generation can serve as a medium for students to workshop ideas, explore concepts, and gain skills in giving and receiving feedback	casual/4; remove/8
Mentoring through jokes	Mentoring through jokes relates to the trusted relationships formed between student-comedians and the all in this together-ness of the troupes.	contact/3; laugh/5

*Note.* The table highlights the three sub-themes from the community building skills theme and the Provine tips that best aligned with the subtheme.

The subthemes found in the community building skills larger theme showed up in the data cover the three subthemes from the larger theme of community building skills.

**Creative Outlet for Creating Community Subtheme: Introduction**

The creative outlets for creating community subtheme related to the creative expression that students described in their outlook and perceptions of being in a comedy troupe. In the 15 individual interviews conducted, I asked a range of questions about personality, humor style, and the benefits of being in a comedy troupe. In coding the individual interview responses and the focus group interview responses, I used the values, attitudes, and beliefs coding system outlined by Saldaña (2016). Values coding is appropriate for qualitative studies especially those that

“explore cultural values and belief systems, identity, intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions in case studies” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 132).

As summarized in an article by Delve (2022), values-based coding examines values, a participant’s judgment of what is important (para. 2). Additionally, values-based coding examines attitudes, the way a participant thinks or feels about something, and beliefs, an acceptance that something is true based off a participant’s values, attitudes, personal experience, opinions and morals” (para. 2). As described in Chapter 3, I did not use a coding software tool in this study; I manually coded documents using the comments feature in the Google Document of the interview transcripts. The comments were copied and pasted into a Google Document with headings of “Values,” “Attitudes,” and “Beliefs.” After I coded all of the values, attitudes, and beliefs, I hand wrote out the findings on color coded post it notes (green: values; red: attitudes; blue: beliefs). Those post it notes were mapped to align within the themes that are discussed in this chapter. Appendix M features a picture of the poster board with the post-it notes mapped to all of the values, attitudes, and beliefs. The values, attitudes, and beliefs discovered from the analysis of the 15 individual interviews that best fit the “creative outlets for creating community” subtheme can be found below:

### ***Values***

- Word of mouth to recruit new members
- Opportunities to take a break from academic /STEM work
- Archives protect the legacy of the troupe
- Welcoming others and including others (especially new members)
- Leaders and leadership within the troupe
- Balance and being understood
- Traditions and participating in retreats with fellow members

- Prior experiences in high school before joining a collegiate troupe
- Recognition and a sense of being “seen” and recognized on campus

### *Attitudes*

- Inside jokes spark joy
- Every year is different in terms of team dynamics
- COVID-19 has changed the way we interact, being with a group who understands your sense of humor helps
- Practice is joyful and stress relieving
- There is a sense of comfort in knowing you may not be the only person nervous to perform
- A group of gals hanging out and sometimes performing
- Support from campus is helpful and genuinely felt among troupes

### *Beliefs*

- Women can be funny
- People participate in comedy for different reasons
- There is a price associated with comedy and participating in comedy; there’s also a sadness to comedy

The values, attitudes, and beliefs above were all extracted from the individual interviews and the focus group interview. The individual interviews revealed that student comedians value being a part of a community rooted in inclusion and welcoming others. The attitudes shared by women-identified student comedians acknowledged the joy associated with being in a comedy troupe. In an individual interview with a student from Davidson College’s improv troupe, Oops, Ginni, said:

Sometimes it's hard to find the quirkiest people here and I think it's nice...like when I do weird things. We used to...have practices two times a week and now we only have one time a week and I thought, I could have improv practice every day...I just really love everyone who does it with me and just, it's really fun.

Ginni was not the only participant who expressed the joy of practice and the community built by being a part of a collegiate comedy troupe. Another student from Cornell University's improv comedy troupe, The Whistling Shrimp said:

I value the practices much more than I do our shows and I value the people way more than the fact that we do it improv. And it's just nice to have a group of [like] seven people who are looking out for me.

As revealed by the quotes from Ginni, a member of Oops Improv and the member from The Whistling Shrimp, student comedians value their time with one another and are grateful for the communities being built within their troupes.

The concept that comedy allows for those engaged in the art to process sadness was revealed in interviews with the study's participants. In the interview with Grace from Whistling Shrimp Improv, she noted that people in her troupe have "struggled with different, pretty serious situations." Additionally, Grace mentioned that being in her troupe allowed her to see that "a lot of people who are very funny and grew up and have humor as a trait. And then there's also people who use humor as like a coping mechanism." Grace's comments about humor as a form of a coping mechanism is supported by research. "Psychologists have observed, though, that comedic ability is often developed as a coping mechanism in adolescence" (Dean, 2020, para. 8).

In addition to the interview data, the study's participants from the various troupes used their social media presence as platforms to explore a range of heavy, weighted topics including

social justice and activism. The study's target participants, undergraduate students between the ages of 18–25 years old were within the population that experienced the “highest levels of anxiety and depression” (Klass, 2020, para. 4) during COVID-19. Data revealed that the pandemic-related stress affected young adults with “62.9 percent” reporting symptoms connected with anxiety and depression (Klass, 2020, para. 4). In addition to heightened symptoms of depression and anxiety due to pandemic stress, the study's target population falls within Gen Z, a generation known for using humor as a “coping mechanism” and using humor as a “method to destigmatize topics previously associated with negative connotations” (Xu, 2020, para. 7).

By participating in comedy, the troupe members open themselves up to experience more emotions as alluded to by Aaker and Bagdonas (2021). According to Aaker and Bagdonas (2021), the “outsized emotions can be stellar entry points for humor” (p. 76). Being a part of a comedy troupe provided a space to explore emotions; therefore, it makes sense that the target population would be more open to experiencing sadness along with other emotions in their comedic pursuits.

Creative outlets for creating community are a key subtheme of the larger theme community building skills because it described a specific kind of community built while being a part of a comedy troupe. Annie, a student from Wake Forest University's troupe, *Lilting Banshees*, described how being a part of the community shifted her perceptions of who she was. When asked about how being a part of the troupe impacted her outlook in general, Annie said:

I can tell a shift in myself from the way I was before I was in the troupe. I'm definitely a lot surer of myself and a lot more confident when giving presentations, like when I'm in a group of people just in general. I've realized it's made me more aware of the limitations of being a female in comedy...I wasn't even aware of that before I joined, like how difficult



it can be. It just made me a lot more aware of that, but yeah, I'm definitely more confident, more outgoing. It's brought out the better parts of myself... Just by giving me a creative outlet like that.

Annie's point regarding sensing a shift in herself and being more confident supported the fact that students who participated in collegiate comedy troupes were a part of a community. In addition to the values, attitudes, and beliefs discovered from individual interviews that aligned with this theme; the findings from document analysis supported the subtheme of creative outlets for creating community. In the coding of documents from 11 historically women's collegiate comedy troupes, 118 emojis were used to code 297 pieces of content featured on Instagram and Twitter. The chart featured in Appendix N represented all of the emojis used to code the social media content. In the analysis of the emoji codes housed in the Unicode database to code the documents, the range of emojis connects to the study's larger themes of community building skills and laughter and play skills. The following section highlights a few tweets and Instagram posts that aligned with the community-building skills subtheme, creative outlets for creating community. The full database of emoji codes used to tweet content can be found in Appendix N.

### ***Creative Outlet for Creating Community Subtheme on Twitter***

The following tweets best aligned with the subtheme creative outlets for creating community. To help organize this section, the tweets are analyzed by troupe; the troupes are listed in alphabetical order.

#### ***Bloomers Comedy Tweets***

In the designated time period of examining tweets from March 2020 to August 2021, Bloomers Comedy tweeted 22 times. On Twitter, Bloomers often highlighted topics related to social justice and racial justice. Some of the Twitter content that Bloomers shared focused on

Black Lives Matter and included a retweet from *NBC10* Philadelphia. In addition to the tweets that focused on social justice, including racial justice and Black Lives Matter, Bloomers Comedy troupe shared tweets that read as jokes. The bio of the Bloomers Comedy troupe's Twitter page was "little nuggets of coal from the Bloomers writing room" (Bloomers, n.d.). In coding the tweets that read as jokes, I used the description "a comic original tweet." An example of a tweet that the Bloomers Comedy Troupe posted that I coded as a "comic original tweets" was the following: "hamburger helper but he's actually going through a mental breakdown: hamburger help me" posted on September 29, 2020 (Bloomers, 2020a).

### ***Circular Reasoning Improv Tweets***

The Ohio State University's historically women's troupe, Circular Reasoning Improv used their public-facing Twitter account during the study's designated period of examining content from March 2020 to August 2021; the troupe tweeted four times in that window. The tweets for Circular Reasoning Improv were mostly focused on the troupe and one tweet was focused on social justice. The two tweets that most aligned under the subtheme of "creating outlets for creative community" are listed below:

- Sappy admin tweet: It is the 1year anniversary of this account and what a year it's been! I could never have imagined the amazing friendships I've made or the wonderful things I've gotten to do as part of CRI. I'm so grateful to this org I love you all 🍷🥰 (Circular Reasoning Improv, 2020a)
- Happy first day of classes! In case you lost our flyer from the involvement fair, here it is. DM us for any questions of if you have trouble finding the room. Hope to see you there! (Circular Reasoning Improv, 2021)

In both tweets, the emoji codes from the Unicode full emoji list used were the green heart

and purple heart emojis to signify the colors found in the Circular Reasoning Improv branding. Both tweets signified the improv troupe's connection to one another with words including "friendships" and "grateful." The second tweet about the involvement fair highlighted the troupe's ability to conduct effective outreach. The next section of the study pulls out themes from the content found in Derby Comedy's tweets.

### ***Derby Comedy Tweets***

On Twitter, Penn State's historically women's comedy troupe, Derby Comedy had a series of tweets from March 2020 to August 2021. The tweets that aligned the closest with the creative outlet to create community subtheme are included in Table 6:

**Table 6**

*Derby Comedy Tweets Connected to Creative Community*

Date	Tweet
April 9, 2020	Tbt! I guess you could say Derby has really grown up this year! We hope everyone is safe & well as we will continue making comedy, even if we're not at PSU! WE ARE... #derby💕 (DERBY, 2020a).
April 24, 2020	wow oh wow, Derby has taken over the interweb! we will be hosting a live virtual comedy show this Saturday at 7 PM EST! you'll be able to find the stream on our YouTube page- Derby: A Women's Comedy Troupe. Don't forget to comment "haha" and "XD" on the stream's chat. (DERBY, 2020b).
April 30, 2020	Check out some of our Derby members' newest sketch! Video out now! (DERBY, 2020c).
May 7, 2020	OHH NO! what is derby gonna do?? are they gonna have to perform comedy bits to escape this cyber hell? I guess you'll have to find out this Friday at 7 PM EST! Streaming live on our YouTube channel (DERBY, 2020d).
September 13, 2020	Penn State's comedy groups Derby and Second Floor Stand-Up joked about nursery rhymes, saltine crackers and Robert Pattinson during a live show for students (The Daily Collegian, 2020).
October 28, 2020	Join Derby this Friday at 7:15, October 30th for a terrifyingly fun time on our YouTube Live for a variety comedy show. Fill your last few hours before Hallows Eve with stand-up, improv, and sketch comedy! (DERBY, 2020e).
February 1, 2021	@DERBYtroupe seeks to create an inclusive environment for women to write and perform comedy (The Daily Collegian, 2021).

*Note.* These seven tweets from Derby Comedy focused on sharing more about Derby Comedy's community and the ways in which the troupe celebrated being funny.

In particular the tweet that included the language "We are..DERBY" highlighted the importance of being in community and the value of having pride in being in a troupe. The next section of the study highlights tweets from The Girlie Project that best aligned with the creative community subtheme.

***The Girlie Project Tweets***

On Twitter, Emerson College's troupe, The Girlie Project had a series of tweets in September 2021 that I described, "TGP humor"; those tweets are listed below:

- there is a theory that everyone is either a mouse or a rat. every member of the girlie

- project is a rat (The Girlie Project, 2021a).
- the boy project 😂😂 (The Girlie Project, 2021b).
  - ██████████ has been hoarding (The Girlie Project, 2021c).
  - like this if u think ██████ is gonna bomb on friday (The Girlie Project, 2021d).
  - You wouldn't believe it by looking at her, but ██████ isn't too bad at singing (The Girlie Project, 2021e).
  - This is our mascot. She's telling you to come watch the comedy troupe showcase tomorrow at 8 pm in the SPC theatre in the basement of LB. Trust me, you should really listen to her (The Girlie Project, 2021f).
  - ██████ just farted during rehearsal it literally smells so bad everyone's gagging (The Girlie Project, 2021g).

The Girlie Project's tweets were coded with a range of emojis to represent the various sentiments expressed via Twitter. The content shared by The Girlie Project on Twitter mostly functioned as humorous content, jokes that represented the troupe's humor style. On September 3, 2021, The Girlie Project tweeted, "there is a theory that everyone is either a mouse or a rat. every member of the girlie project is a rat." With most of the content on Twitter being jokes, some of the jokes functioned as "inside jokes" that speak the language of The Girlie Project. One of the themes that I used in coding the content from The Girlie Project was "TGP humor." As Buonaccorsi (2015) highlighted, Twitter functions well to "showcase classic philosophical theories of humor in action" (para. 3). The jokes most often found on The Girlie Project's Twitter fit with the comedy troupe's style of humor. Buonaccorsi (2015) claimed that all three theories of humor are at play on Twitter. The Girlie Project, a comedy troupe that used Twitter mostly for sharing humorous content recognized that Twitter can function as a way to test out

theories of humor because the way “humor is experienced on Twitter is up to the person scrolling through tweets” (Buonaccorsi, 2015, para.15). The next section highlights tweets that most align with the creative community subtheme post crafted and shared by The Sphincter Troupe, a historically women’s comedy troupe at Yale University.

### ***Sphincter Comedy Tweets***

Sphincter Comedy tweeted with the handle @sphinctertroupe and throughout the study’s designated window of reviewing content (March 2020–August 2021), the troupe was active on Twitter. Throughout the content shared on Twitter by Sphincter troupe, the student-comedians used the platform mostly for comedic tweets to show their range and style of humor. From March 2020 to August 2021, the troupe tweeted 11 times. A common theme in the Sphincter troupe social media was commentary on modern dating and dating apps. The comedic tweets revealed that Sphincter Troupe could create a community that honored comedy and their community as undergraduate college women living and learning throughout a time where 48% of today’s population within the ages of 18 to 29 have said they used a dating app (Vogels, 2020). The troupe’s jokes shared on Twitter depicted a community and was representative of their peers lived experiences especially around the use of dating apps.

### ***Summary of Creative Outlets for Creating Community Related Tweets***

Twitter holds various functions and is used in different ways for those that engage actively or passively on the platform. In addition to being a source of entertainment and news, Twitter served as a space for comedy troupes to test out jokes. By testing out jokes, the troupe members had a platform to cultivate a creative community. The retired NBC sitcom, *Parks and Recreation* writer, Megan Amran shared tips on how to tweet in a hilarious way (Berkowitz, 2013). Twitter often works for jokes because the platform allows for wordplay (Berkowitz,

2013). “While the platform has created new subtextual categories for communicating, Twitter often showcase classic philosophical theories of humor in action” (Buonaccorisi, 2015, para. 3). Twitter’s capacity to allow humor to shine makes it an ideal platform for the comedy troupes included in the study to share their talents and ability to be humorous with jokes, wit, and wordplay. The next section highlights posts shared on Instagram from troupes and how certain posts aligned with the creative outlets for creating community subtheme.

### ***Creative Outlets for Creating Community: Examining Instagram Posts***

The following Instagram posts best aligned with the subtheme, creative outlets for creating community. Many of these posts focused on the troupes and the dynamics of how they interacted with one another. Similar to the tweets, the posts on Instagram were coded using emojis from the Unicode full database list.

### ***Bechdel Test Instagram Posts***

New York University’s historically women’s comedy troupe, Bechdel Test used Instagram throughout the March 2020 to August 2021 time period. Bechdel Test recognized that their time spent together on Zoom could be used to strengthen their bonds as a community. In one post from early in the pandemic on March 15, 2020, the troupe posted on Instagram with the caption, “ZOOMPROV” (Bechdel Test NYU, 2020a). The student-comedians used Instagram and other platforms like Zoom to continue building a community focused on comedy, humor, and levity. In addition to sharing photos of the troupe gathered on Zoom, the troupe shared that they would host a movie night on September 15, 2020. By hosting events like movie nights, Bechdel Test strengthened their bond and community with one another. The next section offers insight into the Instagram posts from Bloomers Comedy troupe that best align with the creative outlets for creating community subtheme.

### ***Bloomers Comedy Instagram Posts***

In addition to analyzing tweets from Bloomers Comedy troupe, I examined Instagram posts from the troupe published between March 2020 to August 2021. The comedy focused content revealed Bloomers Comedy troupe's commitment to creating a space rooted in humor and community. In the coding of content featured on Bloomers Comedy's Instagram account, the cherry blossom emoji appeared in 37 posts (UNICODE, n.d.). The cherry blossom emoji was used to signify the troupe and is used in the troupe's captions to represent the blooming of a cherry blossom.

The cherry blossom emoji (🌸), Unicode # U+1F338, was symbolic of the community built by Bloomers Comedy and the way they shared details about their community with the public via Instagram. The creative expression of an emoji in the captions further supported why emoji coding was important for this study to better understand the communities formed by the study's target population. The next section covers Instagram posts by The Ohio State University's troupe, Circular Reasoning Improv that best aligned with the creating community subtheme.

### ***Circular Reasoning Improv Instagram Posts***

Circular Reasoning Improv used a public-facing Instagram; though the troupe was not notably active on the platform between March 2020 to August 2021. Two of the three posts were coded as "troupe promo" posts and exemplified the troupe's ability to create community with one another. The captions from the posts were featured below:

- Join us at the virtual Student Involvement Fair today from 4-7! If our computers don't all crash, there will be a Zoom call and a chat feature where you can talk to us or if that's not your thing you can just find some information about the group! We can't



wait to meet new people and we're excited to roll with the punches of this new year!  
(circularreasoningimprov, 2020c).

- Happy first day of classes! In case you lost our flyer from the involvement fair, here it is. DM us for any questions of if you have trouble finding the room. Hope to see you there! (circularreasoningimprov, 2021).

Both of the posts shared on Instagram were coded with the purple heart (💜) and the green heart (💚) from the Unicode emoji database. Purple and green were consistently used by the troupe; similar to the cherry blossom emoji for Bloomers Comedy troupe, and the roller skate emoji for the Derby Comedy troupe, the purple heart and the green heart emoji represented the troupe's digital brand and identity. The next section will cover Instagram posts from Control Top comedy troupe that best aligned with the creative outlet for creating community subtheme.

### ***Control Top Improv Instagram Posts***

Barnard College's troupe, Control Top posted twice during the study's designated time period: March 2020 to August 2021. The two posts from the troupe analyzed in this study are featured below and both revealed the troupe's commitment to building a community.

- Hi angelz! We loved seeing our fellow toplets' beautiful shining faces via Zoom tonight and we can't wait to see each other in person soon to make you all laugh. Take care of yourselves and each other everyone and stay cute you cuties!! 🥰  
(Control Top Improv, 2020a)
- EDIT: We exceeded our match goal literally overnight. That being said Malika still has extreme financial burdens as a young Black woman also battling bereavement, this pandemic, and racial injustice. Please show support by sharing her story or donating directly to her Give Butter crowdfunding page linked in the shared post.

Thank you. 💖 You can find Malika's story and donations in the GiveButter link in our bio. We are matching funds up to \$800, please help us reach our goal of \$1,600! Control Top stands with #Justice4Malika and will continue to fight for racial justice. We strongly urge fellow Barnard/Columbia students and alums to donate and share this post to support a member of our community. #blacklivesmatter #barnard (Control Top Improv, 2020b)

In the second post from Control Top improv troupe posted on Instagram on June 22, 2020, the troupe posted about racial injustice revealing that comedy is one element of their community, and not the only tie that binds them together. The next section of the dissertation highlights Derby Comedy's Instagram posts that aligned with the creative outlet for creating community subtheme.

### *Derby Comedy Instagram Posts*

Derby Comedy posted on their Instagram account 20 times during the months of March 2020–August 2021. The captions to the Instagram posts that most aligned with the subtheme, creative outlets for creating community are featured below. To help protect individual names, the names and individual members' Instagram handles are highlighted in black.

- Derby is happy to announce the new executives for the upcoming year! We are so thankful for all of the ladies who ran for a position. It warms our heart seeing so many girls want to be leaders of the club. We are so thankful to have an active and comedy driven group of ladies. 💖 (Derby: A Women's Comedy Troupe, 2020a)
- Derby LOVEs performing so much, we will be doing a show through Zoom on April 25 at 7pm! (Derby: A Women's Comedy Troupe, 2020b)
- As we yet full steam ahead into the semester, Derby wants to introduce our beautiful exec

board members leading up to our \*GASP\* next show on Oct 30!! Stay tuned for deets (details 😊) Pc: ██████████ Derby's president ██████████ is a senior psych major, minoring in WGSS. A word from Madame President: "The first thing you have to know is I'm a Cancer so I LOVE crying all day long. Another thing is, I listen to the Glee covers of songs unironically. And lastly, the first thing I bought with my own money that cost over \$100 was RockBand for the Wii." ██████████ is a Junior Musical Theatre Major with a Derby Studies Minor "I am a writer, director, singer, actress, comedian. I have trypophobia (look it up). I'm an astrology enthusiast and I'm obsessed with the avatar the last air bender franchise if you couldn't already tell." — from the desk of François (Derby: A Women's Comedy Troupe, 2020c)

- Continuing our Derby exec introductions!! Also... VIRTUAL SHOW ON OCT

30!! 🐾 🐾 we're thrilled to be back and can't wait to see you there!! Pc: ██████████ Derby's treasurer ██████████ is a junior telecommunications major, double minoring in recreation & parks and Spanish. Something our treasurer wants the public to know: "I <3 women and thoroughly enjoy barking!! I'm also a big fan of mushrooms and I'm allergic to cats >:(“ ██████████ is a senior double majoring in telecommunications and Political science and with a minor in Gender & sexuality studies and is Derby's Secretary this semester! ██████████ wants you to know that: "My whole personality is being from Boston and I'm not afraid to pull out my accent. My favorite fun fact to whip out during an ice breaker is that I met Adam Sandler at a Chinese Restaurant." (Derby: A Women's Comedy Troupe, 2020e)

All of the posts featured above shared by Derby Comedy revealed the student comedians' commitment to create a space focused on community and uplifting one another. The series of

posts that highlighted the troupe's leaders stood out because the content shined a light on individual members and how much the individuals are celebrated and recognized. The next section offers insight into the Instagram posts from Indiana University's comedy troupe, Ladies Night.

### ***Ladies Night Instagram Posts***

The stand-up centric troupe, Ladies Night at Indiana University posted once on Instagram in March 2020. Ladies Night Comedy members posted the following:

- do you like cracking jokes? the rush of adrenaline you get speaking into a microphone? making mems and forging friendships that last a lifetime? well, well, well, it's your lucky day, my friend! ladies night' comedy wants YOU at our zoom callouts! monday and tuesday at 7pm. and you only have to attend ONE day of our epic two-day callouts. the time has come to be a part of something bigger than yourself. zoom ID: 882 4074 3828. one of these tiny hats could belong to you.

(Ladies' Night Comedy, 2021b)

The post above focused on the troupe's outreach to recruit new members. The callouts as described by Ladies Night are their auditions and similar to other troupes, this troupe used Zoom throughout 2020 due to COVID-19. This post aligns with the theme of creative outlets for creating communities. The next section of the study will highlight Instagram posts by Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy.

### ***Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy Instagram Posts***

Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy made up of women-identified comedians at Bryn Mawr College posted once during the study's allocated months of reviewing. The post from September 22, 2020, is featured below and is a concise post that highlighted the audition process. The

caption of the post claimed:

- Auditions this Sunday!! No prep necessary. Link in bio. (Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy, 2020)

This post served to spotlight the troupe and their outreach capabilities. Across the board with the 12 historically women's troupes with social documents analyzed, using platforms of Instagram and Twitter served as ideal spaces for auditions. For Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy and other troupes featured in the study, auditions served as one way to continuously engage members of the campus community and remind prospects of the benefits of creative exploration via comedy. The next section of the dissertation describes the Instagram posts from Tuft University Funny Ladies.

### ***TFL Instagram Posts***

TFL posted 25 times on Instagram during the months of March 2020 to August 2021. From the 25 posts, the one that I deemed as most relevant to the creative outlets for creating community subtheme is featured below:

- We ❤️ our seniors 😊 Thank you to everyone in the class of '21 who was involved in TFL during their time at Tufts for sharing your brilliant, funny, beautiful light with us! (TFL Comedy, 2021h).

The post shared by TFL revealed the troupe's commitment to sharing behind the veil and more intimate details into how the troupe functions. Tufts University's TFL used Instagram to shine a light on their creative community and used the platform to share a note of gratitude to the troupe's seniors. It was evident that TFL wanted to honor their community members and share their approach to comedy by using Instagram and spotlighting one another. The next section provides insight into data collected from observations and how the data aligned with the creative

outlets for creating community subtheme.

### ***Observations: Creative Outlets for Creating Community***

Elements from the creative outlets for creating community theme were apparent throughout the observations of rehearsals of three different collegiate comedy troupes. The following section highlights components from observing The Girlie Project, Vertigo-go Improv, and Derby Comedy and how those themes related to the subtheme, creative outlets for creating community. The full notes from the troupe observations can be found in Appendix G.

### ***Cultivating a Creative Community Through Pitching***

In observing The Girlie Project, a historically women's comedy troupe at Emerson College, a few recurring interactions aligned with the subtheme of creative outlets for creating community. They are listed below:

- The abundance of laughter in the two hours. The troupe members not only laughed at each other's jokes and sketch ideas, but there was an ease to their communication and what I will refer to as 'impromptu laughter' throughout the rehearsal.
- One of the over 10 sketches pitched during the rehearsal focused on "the girlies" while the rest were pitched as fictional. The sketch based on the troupe members known as "Girlies" revealed that members found the humor in their own identities and within the troupe's dynamics.

Throughout the observations of live rehearsals, the participants appeared to honor their commitment to engage, listen, participate, contribute, and be willing to shift when needed. The rehearsals provided an ideal space for practice, fostering relationships and deepening their understandings of individual contributions to the collective. While there were other aspects of the rehearsal/writer's session that I observed in March 2022, the key components of the rehearsal

that most aligned with the creative outlets for creating community subtheme are featured above. The next section focuses on what I observed during a rehearsal led by Swarthmore College's improv troupe known as Vertigo-go.

### ***Cultivating a Creative Community Through Improv Games***

In observing Swarthmore College's improv troupe, Vertigo-go, a few moments in the rehearsal aligned with aspects of the creative outlets for creating community subtheme. The rehearsal that I observed held on Tuesday, April 5, 2022, was mostly comprised of the troupe members playing improv warm up games. According to a study conducted by Rajeev and Kalpathi (2016), improv strengthens participation, self-redirection, builds on initial ideas, challenges assumptions, and elevates trust, support, and collaboration. Throughout Vertigo Go's rehearsal, the troupe focused on improv games with one that focused on clapping and mirroring each other's clapping. In the rehearsal, members of Vertigo-go played a game called "Clap Focus." According to the website [learnimprov.com](http://learnimprov.com), "Clap Focus" involves players in a circle choosing other players at random, and clapping at them ([learnimprov.com](http://learnimprov.com), n.d.). The game required focus, paying attention, and as noted on the improv website, "ideally there will be a constant clapping noise. Eventually the players will be so attentive and so quick to respond it sounds like one person clapping rapidly" ([learnimprov.com](http://learnimprov.com), n.d.). The Vertigo-go troupe participated in a round of "Clap Focus" and their interactions mirrored the description of the game featured on [learnimprov.com](http://learnimprov.com). In an op-ed published by *Inside Higher Ed*, Boettcher (2021) claimed that improv is more "about putting less of you out there and more of you into the group you are working with" (para. 5). Boettcher (2021) stated improv was less about the self and more about community; this claim supported the subtheme of creative outlets for creating community. Vertigo-go's rehearsal focused on the team's ability to use improv to build a community. In

addition to the improv games, a key observation from the Vertigo-go rehearsal was the casual, fun, playful, and intimate bond between the players. There were five students present in the rehearsal and all five of the students interacted and participated in the improv games. During the lulls of the rehearsal, the troupe members seemed to get along well and casually talk amongst each other. The next section of the study focuses on the creative community built throughout the organized rehearsals of the observed troupes.

### ***Cultivating a Creative Community Through Organized Rehearsals***

In the observations of the interactions among members of The Girlie Project, Vertigo-go Improv, and Derby Comedy, the organization of the rehearsals and the flow provided insight into why creative does not mean disorganized or chaotic. All of the troupe observation interactions revealed that people can “train” their brains to “see and experience humor often” (Hyken, 2021, para. 7). In addition to the observations of the rehearsals, I analyzed the transcript of “Goodbye 2020,” a sketch performed by Bloomers Comedy troupe and featured on the troupe’s YouTube site. The sketch provided a humorous take on the less comedic aspects of 2020 and provided insight into the creative outlets for creating community subtheme.

### ***Cultivating a Creative Community Through Humorous Vignettes***

Bloomers Comedy troupe performed twelve sketches in their fall 2020 show; however, I focused on and coded “Goodbye 2020” because of the vignette’s themes. “Goodbye 2020” was a musical number, and it attempted to summarize the year with humor and honesty. In the sketch, “Goodbye 2020,” the objectives, conflicts, tactics, attitudes, emotions, and subtext pulled from using the dramaturgical coding method revealed that the troupe can use tactics like “reflection” and reveal emotions including being frustrated and frazzled by everything that occurred in 2020. In the sketch, “Goodbye 2020,” the Bloomers Comedy troupe members performed a musical



number about 2020 ranging from movie producer, Harvey Weinstein going to jail to describing “Tiger King” as a popular culture phenomenon. The song ends with the troupe members singing the following:

Welcome to 2020. Since the year got started we’ve been broken hearted. No escape from 2020. It got worse & worse. We’ve lived on hell on earth. Say goodbye to 2020. It was full of drama. Now we all have trauma. F you to 2020. It’s finally done. Here’s to ’21.

(Bloomers Comedy, n.d.-b).

The troupe members used the sketch “Goodbye 2020” to reflect on the historic year, call out aspects that frustrated them about popular culture, and deemed 2020 as a year that felt like “hell on earth.” In the voice of the Bloomers Comedy troupe, the student comedians attempted to turn the “drama” and “trauma” of 2020 into a song and dance number that featured various numbers of their community. The sketch stood out among others featured in their Fall 2020 performances because of the storyline and the approach to summarize the year. Bloomers Comedy troupe used the sketch to highlight the aspects of 2020 that uprooted them and made them feel as though it was the worst year. In the vignette, they sing the line, “everyone is doomed.” Similar to the *TIME* piece on why 2020 was a year that tested people beyond measure, Bloomers Comedy troupe examined the year through a critical lens. This sketch embodied both of the larger themes of the study: community building skills and laughter and play skills. The climate in 2020 was describe in the following way:

We spent countless hours stuck at home and connected to the untrustworthy hive mind of social media, wringing our hands and pointing out injustices, only to end up feeling even more paralyzed by the very people who are meant to protect us. The enemy sought to divide us, and succeeded. (Zacharek, 2020, para. 4)

Bloomers Comedy troupe took on the difficulties associated with 2020 and used their skillset as humorists to make the year more comprehensible. The next section uncovers data collected via the study's designated methods that best support the comedy as a space for workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback subtheme.

### **Space for Workshopping, Delivering, and Receiving Feedback: Introduction**

Various elements of the 10 tips for increased laughter from Provine (2000) aligned with the community-building skills theme. As detailed in the chart, the space for workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback subtheme best aligned with Provine's tips: (a) casual/4, and (b) remove/8. Engaging in a comedy troupe provided participants with an outlet for workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback. This was its own subtheme because of the common recurring theme of feedback and workshopping found throughout the data collection methods: interviews, document analysis, and observations.

By actively engaging in comedic troupes, the study's participants strengthened their ability to receive feedback and offer guidance to their peers in constructive, healthy ways. The study's participants recognized that they became better comedians and more engaged troupe members when they listened to one another's ideas for refining ideas and finessing jokes in sketches. One of the values extracted from coding interview transcripts was that being a part of a comedy troupe allowed for honest reactions. The honest reactions that the participants value helped the study's participants become more comfortable with critique and genuine ideas on how to improve performance and skills like listening which is vital to being an effective improv performer. The next section details the values, attitudes, and beliefs discovered from coding transcripts of 15 individual interviews and one focus group interview. The values, attitudes, and beliefs discovered from the analysis of the interviews that best fit subtheme two "space for

workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback” are listed below.

### *Values*

- Workshop, dedication, and offering advice are a part of the environment to maximize productivity
- Progress and getting better is more rewarding than receiving laughs from the audience
- Honest reactions in comedy
- Collaboration and sharing notes with another
- Respect and work ethic/amount of time and energy into something that will last 12 minutes

### *Attitudes*

- Self-critique and self-reflections come with the territory of improv
- It’s fun to collaborate and join forces on a project

### *Beliefs*

- There’s a lot of work involved in comedy that people do not realize
- You have to bring your ego and listening skills to improv

The values, attitudes, and beliefs extracted from coding the interview transcripts revealed that women-identified participants in collegiate comedy troupes join comedy troupes for more than laughs. The interviews revealed that being in a comedy troupe allowed student-comedians to practice honest reactions and to have a sense of pride in the work involved in comedy. Feedback and honest-self-reflection with constructive notes are an important part of the collegiate comedy community fabric.

One individual interview participant, Penny, of The Girlie Project said, “Being a part of my troupe has made me feel smarter and more accomplished than ever before. I also have a new

sense of respect for myself with my creativeness and productivity.” Penny’s note on feeling “smarter” and “more accomplished” is a part of why it mattered that the troupe members practiced the art of smart, constructive feedback. In an article from Baskin covering how comedy helped one Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate in her career, the alum stated:

It helps to get feedback. In the corporate world, it can take a while to see a project to fruition. There’s no place better than a stage to get immediate feedback. There’s something beautifully cathartic and tangible about that. It creates self-awareness from a professional standpoint. You realize that it’s not just what you say, it’s how you say it.

You learn to be authentic to yourself and your voice. (Baskin, 2017, para. 7)

The feedback that the MIT alum alluded to is similar to the feedback fostered in the community of the troupes included in the study. The feedback comes from external audience members and how they react to sketches and improv performances; internal feedback matters as well. However, the feedback offered internally and from one member to another is not always easily digested.

Penny of The Girlie Project said that “If there’s a sketch someone wrote that you do not like, any that you don’t think is funny...it is hard to give those constructive notes because you don’t want them to take it personally, you know?” The constructive notes that Penny referenced are important and enhance the importance of the space for workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback subtheme. It is worth noting that comedy is not a judge-free zone. In the interview with Penny, she also referenced that doing comedy can be judgmental. Penny said, “People don’t think you’re funny. They think what you’re doing is a waste of time.” In addition to the point on experiencing various reactions, Penny said, “I think what matters the most about creating comedy and working with a group of people is not about how someone’s going to view

what you're making, but how you guys feel about it." Given the subjective nature of comedy, feedback and constructive notes offered the collegiate comedians a pathway to explore self-discovery, to build a community, and to discern whose opinions truly matter.

In addition to collegiate comedy troupes providing an ideal space to practice the art of giving and receiving feedback, the troupes also offered students an outlet for workshopping. In an interview with a member of Indiana University's Ladies Night comedy troupe, Cecilia said,

We typically all will write either idea of even a full set before we get to our meeting. And then, we'll kind of take turns, going over them, seeing what works, what doesn't [work]; people will suggest jokes or live even it just helps to work it out, aloud. So, it's really a collaborative environment.

The collaborative environment that Cecilia highlighted supports the concept that comedians benefit from a space that allows them to "work it out" and brainstorm ideas without the fear of hearing 'no' right away. The next section of the dissertation provides an analysis of documents pulled from social media content that best aligned with the space for workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback subtheme.

In analyzing documents, various posts on Twitter and Instagram, there was content that aligned with the comedy troupes as creating a space for workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback subtheme. To organize this section, the tweets are listed by troupes in alphabetical order.

### ***Bloomers Comedy Tweets***

In the tweets shared by Bloomers Comedy, I did not code any of the troupe's content with a clear alignment to space for workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback subtheme. However, overall, the tweets allowed the Bloomers Comedy troupe writers the opportunity to

workshop jokes and write comedic content. Twitter as a media platform is more ideal for comedians to test their jokes and writing. In a piece featured on GOLD Comedy on ways to be funny on Twitter, Russi (2017) claimed that it is important to review the “stylistic conventions that funny people use on Twitter” (para. 8). Twitter serves as a public-facing digital journal where comedians can workshop, craft, and test their best or worse materials. Bloomers Comedy used Twitter to workshop jokes and test out the platform’s capability to function as a test lab for jokes.

### ***Circular Reasoning Improv Tweets***

Ohio State’s Circular Reasoning Improv tweeted four times during the study’s bounded window. The tweet that best represented the troupe’s ability to provide a space that is rooted in feedback is the retweet of *The Sundial*’s content. According to the publication’s biography on Twitter, *The Sundial* functions as “Ohio State’s humor magazine. The humorous voice of OSU since 1911” (The Sundial, n.d.). By retweeting content from *The Sundial*, Circular Reasoning Improv engaged in a conversation with fellow comedic-minded students at The Ohio State University. In an article that dissects why Twitter users retweet, researchers created a scale highlighting why others retweet. The 19 reasons for a retweet varied; number five on the list was “to share a funny joke” with number nine being “to say that I agree with the tweet” (Majmundar et al., 2018). The why we retweet scale developed by Majmundar et al. (2018) revealed that there are deeper connections to Twitter and how people use the platform to cosign or even “entertain.” The next section dissects tweets posted by Derby Comedy troupe.

### ***Derby Comedy Tweets***

Derby Comedy, the historically women’s collegiate troupe at Pennsylvania State University tweeted throughout the study’s designated window of reviewing content. The tweets

that best fit within subtheme two are below:

- Penn State's comedy groups Derby and Second Floor Stand-Up joked about nursery rhymes, saltine crackers and Robert Pattinson during a live show for students (The Daily Collegian, 2020).
- Tune in to PSU's annual hackathon brought to you by @HackPSU tonight at 7pm for some good old-fashioned PSU comedy! (Second Floor Standup, 2020).

Both examples are retweets from other accounts deemed worth retweeting by Derby Comedy. I chose these examples because both of the tweets revealed the troupe's commitment to sharing the stage and being a part of a community where workshoping is involved. In the tweet that notes Derby and Second Floor comedy's performance, Derby Comedy retweeted *The Daily Collegian* whose Twitter profile states, "Independent student news outlet bringing you the latest from the Penn State community since 1887. Got news? Tweet at us" (The Daily Collegian, n.d.). *The Daily Collegian's* mission statement is: "The dual mission of Collegian Inc. is to publish quality media products for the Penn State community and to provide a rewarding educational experience for the student staff members" (The Daily Collegian, 2013). According to a study conducted on Twitter behavior trends, there were 19 reasons why people retweet content (Majmundar et al., 2018). Derby Comedy retweeted content from *The Daily Collegian*, a well-respected publication for the Penn State community. Derby Comedy retweeted content and their retweet best aligns with Majmundar et al. (2018)'s rationale that people retweet to "spread knowledge" and to show that they saw the tweet (p. 5). The next section of the dissertation will highlight tweets from The Girlie Project.

### ***The Girlie Project Tweets***

The common theme found in the tweets posted by The Girlie Project analyzed in this

study were that the troupe used Twitter as a way to share jokes and comedic material. There were not any specific tweets from The Girlie Project that directly aligned with the space for workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback subtheme. The Girlie Project did not retweet any content between March 2020 to August 2021; all of the Girlie Project's posts featured original content. The next section highlights tweets from Sphincter Comedy that best fit subtheme two under the community building skills theme.

### ***Sphincter Comedy Troupe Tweets***

The Sphincter Comedy troupe only posted original comedic tweets throughout the study's designated window. The original comedic tweets analyzed in the study were mostly comedic tweets that exemplified the troupe's ability to craft jokes and reveal their sense of humor. There were not any examples of tweets directly applicable to the space for workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback subtheme. The next section provides a summary of the tweets that best fit the subtheme focused on workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback.

### ***Workshopping & Feedback Subtheme: Summary of Tweets***

Overall, the tweets shared by the troupes active on Twitter revealed that the troupes used the platform in ways that do not best fit the workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback subtheme. The tweets that most clearly aligned with this subtheme were retweets and those were less common than original posts. In the 71 tweets analyzed by the five troupes, the majority were original tweets and 11 of the 71 tweets were retweets. The troupes more frequently shared their original content. The next section highlights the posts on Instagram that best fit the community building skills subtheme: workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback.

### ***Workshopping & Feedback Subtheme: Examining Instagram Posts***



The next section highlights Instagram posts aligned the most with the subtheme: a space for workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback. Many of these posts focused on the troupes and the dynamics of how participants interacted with one another. The posts were organized by troupe in alphabetical order; the Instagram posts are not listed in any hierarchical order.

### ***Bechdel Test Instagram Posts***

New York University's troupe, Bechdel Test used Instagram to host a live event on the platform. The Instagram live was open to the greater NYU community and the troupe shared an invite on Instagram with the caption, "hang out w us tonight @ 6 (EST) on ig live !!" (Bechdel Test NYU, 2020b). By hosting the Instagram live, the troupe opened up their platform and revealed their ability to workshop and try new things. Using Instagram to host a live event is one way to stay on the radar of followers (Christison, 2022). Bechdel Test's use of Instagram Live stands out among their peer organizations and connects to the value of using tools like Instagram to build community and share laughter online. The next section focuses on the Instagram posts from Bloomers Comedy troupe that best aligned with the workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback subtheme.

### ***Bloomers Comedy Instagram Posts***

The Instagram posts shared by Bloomers Comedy troupe during the study's allocated window that best fit subtheme two under the community building skills were the holiday inspired posts. Throughout December 2020, Bloomers Comedy troupe shared a series of 12 posts; the troupe intentionally created a community around the posts with similar hashtags of #holiday and #funny. The 12 posts included:

- Day 1 Bringing you the best present of this holiday season: THE 12 DAYS OF

- BLOOMERS! Stay tuned for more (Bloomers Comedy, 2020i)
- Day 2 Use this Bloomers gift guide for those special people in your life. It will definitely keep everyone satisfied ;) (Bloomers Comedy, 2020j)
  - In Memoriam| Day 3 Gone but never forgotten 🤍😭 (Bloomers Comedy, 2020k)
  - Day 4 WE INTERRUPT YOUR FINALS STUDY FOR THESE ESSENTIAL RECIPES: the ultimate holiday pick me ups 🍸#cocktails #drinks #yummy #drunk (Bloomers Comedy, 2020l)
  - Day 6 Your Christmas gift came early: Our holly jolly chairwoman [REDACTED] Rockin 'around the locust walk #holiday #funny #tree #christmas #12daysofbloomers (Bloomers Comedy, 2020m)
  - Day 7 Celebrating the Festival of Lights in linguistic fashion! What spelling do you use? #hannukah #channukah #jewish #funny #you (Bloomers Comedy, 2020n)
  - Day 8 Featuring the lovely [REDACTED]. TAG YOUR FAVORITE WHORE IN THE COMMENTS (Bloomers Comedy, 2020o)
  - Day 10 MEET THE PARENTS: HOLIDAY EDITION - Because you KNOW you'll need it 🙈😱 #parents #guide #holiday #meettheparents #scary #comedy (Bloomers Comedy, 2020p)
  - Day 12 Merry Christmas! Our gift to you this year is this cover of Underneath the Tree by the amazing Bloomers Band! (Bloomers Comedy, 2020q)

The holiday inspired posts published between December 14–25, 2020 exemplified the distinctive Bloomers Comedy troupe voice; these posts aligned with the concept of workshopping and being receptive to feedback. The holiday-themed posts offered Bloomers Comedy troupe and their Instagram followers the opportunity to rally around a common theme

and invited others to engage with the content. As highlighted in a *New York Times* published piece on college campuses and social media, college students use social media to feel less alone (Pappano, 2020). The posts shared by Bloomers Comedy troupe in late 2020 offered a unique opportunity for the troupe members to engage in humorous content on a platform that serves as an extension of their work and community. The next section offers insight into the Instagram posts shared by Circular Reasoning Improv that best aligned with the workshopping/feedback subtheme.

### ***Circular Reasoning Improv Instagram Posts***

Circular Reasoning Improv was not notably active on the platform between March 2020 to August 2021. There were not any posts that clearly aligned with the second subtheme in the community building skills. However, Circular Reasoning Improv and other troupes that infrequently posted to Instagram may have had reasons for their lack of engagement. In particular, research studies have been conducted on the impact of social media and the effect of Instagram versus reality on women's social comparison and body image (Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2020). The lack of social media from Circular Reasoning Improv may not be related to the Instagram versus reality research on women's social comparison and body image; however, it does highlight that a lack of posts on Instagram does not equate to a lack of interactions in the off-line world known as reality. The next section of the chapter highlights Instagram posts from Control Top Improv.

### ***Control Top Improv Instagram Posts***

Barnard College's troupe, Control Top Improv only posted twice during the study's designated window of March 2020 to August 2021. The two posts from the troupe analyzed in this study have been previously referenced. The posts from Control Top Improv revealed the

troupe's ability to encourage others to move to action and to provide feedback – in the form of laughs with the first post caption reading, “we can't wait to see each other in person soon to make you all laugh” (Control Top Improv, 2020a). The troupe members recognized that laughter is a form of providing feedback. Additionally, research revealed that in professional situations, a moment of laughter “allows us to think more clearly and creatively and raises relatedness with our colleagues” (Berezin & Liss, 2020, para.7); the laughter that Berezin and Liss referenced as sense of relief and establishing common ground is also a form of feedback and co-signing. The next section of the study showcases Instagram posts shared by Derby Comedy troupe that modeled the workshopping/feedback subtheme.

### ***Derby Comedy Instagram Posts***

Derby Comedy posted on their Instagram account 20 times during the months of March 2020–August 2021. One post that represented the concept of a community that encouraged feedback was. “To help get into the Halloween spirit before our spooky comedy show tomorrow, check out these helpful festive tips by [REDACTED]!” (Derby: A Women's Comedy Troupe, 2020d). This post represented Derby Comedy troupe using their voice to share their comedic take on Halloween festivities. By sharing the post, the troupe opened themselves up for others to share the ways that they indulged in festivity and celebrated Halloween. The next section highlights Instagram posts by Indiana University's stand-up focused comedy organization, Ladies Night.

### ***Ladies Night Instagram Posts***

Indiana University's comedy troupe, Ladies Night's Instagram posts during the study's designated window included a post that stated:

- do you like cracking jokes? the rush of adrenaline you get speaking into a

microphone? making mems and forging friendships that last a lifetime? well, well, well, it's your lucky day, my friend! ladies' night comedy wants YOU at our zoom callouts! monday and tuesday at 7pm. and you only have to attend ONE day of our epic two-day callouts. the time has come to be a part of something bigger than yourself. zoom ID: 882 4074 3828. one of these tiny hats could belong to you.

(Ladies' Night Comedy, 2021b)

The Instagram post from Ladies Night revealed that members of the organization were interested in recruiting new members and enhancing the environment where they can “be a part of something bigger” (Ladies' Night Comedy, 2021b). Recruiting and using the social media platform as a recruitment tactic revealed the organization’s commitment to offer feedback and their commitment to attract new perspectives and voices. Additionally, the commitment to recruit exemplified the tactics needed to “make memories” and “forge friendships.” The next section offers insight into the Instagram posts from Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy troupe.

### ***Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy Instagram Posts***

As highlighted in the section focused on the first subtheme of the community building theme, Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy were not regular posters throughout March 2020 to August 2021. Auditions and expanding the universe of who will join troupes highlighted in the study revealed a common theme that current and active participants want to do three things: ensure a legacy of future troupe rosters, widen the scope of the troupe by encouraging new and current students to audition, and foster a community that encourages growth and does not remain stagnant or dormant. The next section of the study offers a perspective on the Instagram posts from TFL housed at Tufts University.

### *TFL Instagram Posts*

Throughout a series of posts in the study's bounded period of time, TFL launched a comedy podcast. The posts that promoted TFL podcast were coded with the studio microphone emoji- 🎙️ (UNICODE, n.d.); the studio microphone emoji best represented the podcast series. There were 13 posts coded as being podcast promos with the studio microphone emoji. TFL's comedy expression on Instagram focused on highlighting their work, specifically their shows and podcasts. In November 2020, the troupe posted a graphic with the following caption, "TFL's first podcast with **Alex and Gia** is live! Take a listen using the link in our bio! 🎧💎🎙️❤️" (TFL Comedy, 2020b). The podcast-exemplified how TFL used Instagram to showcase their creative strategies; the full list of promotional posts for the podcast are featured in the chart below. TFL experimented in a way that the other troupes featured in the study did not. One of the five benefits of hosting a podcast is that "you build personal connections with your audience" (Hall, 2017, para. 8). Hall (2017) claimed, "much like video, podcasts are one of the quickest ways to build personal connections and trust between a host and an audience" (para. 8). The 13 posts below shared by TFL were all connected to the troupe's podcast promotions. The posts have some text highlighted in black to protect the names of the troupe members and their Instagram handles featured in the posts.

- TFL's first podcast with **██████████** is live! Take a listen using the link in our bio! 🎧💎🎙️❤️ (TFL Comedy, 2020b).
- A new episode of our podcast is out! Now on 🎧💎 Spotify 🎧💎 Link in bio! Listen to **██████████** **██████████** talk about being the main character, philosophical memes, and ask, "Are they funny or are they just white?" (TFL Comedy, 2020c, December).
- 🎧💎 New podcast episode is out! 🎧💎 Listen to **██████████** talk about Christmas porn,

private school trauma, and give relationship advice to fake people. Link in bio! Also, we're gonna try to have a new episode every Wednesday! So follow us on Spotify! (TFL Comedy, 2020d, December).

- 📢 New podcast episode alert 📢 Kicking off their careers as media moguls, ██████████ ██████████ talk about awkward Zoom calls, their favorite spots to cry, and make niche predictions for 2021! Link in bio! Now on Spotify and Apple Podcasts! Next Wednesday, the podcast will be hosted by ██████████ and ██████████! Exciting stuff. (TFL Comedy, 2021a).
- Our new podcast episode features two complete strangers: ██████████! Listen to them talk about hooking up on the Joey 🙄 🚗, terrible tattoos 🧑 🧑 🧑, and owning up to bullying 🙄 🗨️ ✨ Link in bio! Next Wednesday, the podcast will be hosted by ██████████ ██████████! (TFL Comedy, 2021b, January).
- In this week's podcast, ██████████ discover what percent gay ██████████ is 🍀 📖 🍀, reckon with ██████████ broken promises to God 🙏 🗨️ 🍷, and find out if they would be good 1950's homemakers (spoiler: they would not) 🧑 📦 Link in bio! Next Friday, the podcast will be hosted by ██████████! Yes, we are moving to every Friday, sorry to all our Wednesday fans 😊 (TFL Comedy, 2021c, January).
- On this week's episode of the podcast, listen to ██████████ get cancelled by Tufts' comedy, neoliberals, and Greek life all in one episode! 🙄 🙄 🙄 Link in bio! Next week's episode will feature ██████████! (TFL Comedy, 2021d, January).
- On this episode, listen to ██████████ talk about spiritual experiences in ██████████ 🙏 🙄 😊, dating app horror stories 🙄 🚩 📖, and suburban shenanigans 📖 🗨️ 😊! Link in bio! Next episode will feature ██████████ 😊 😊 (TFL Comedy, 2021e, February).
- ██████████ (she doesn't even go here!) talk about forbidden intercourse ✕ 🙄 🗨️,

- r/im14andthisisdeep 🏠💔📄, and analyze ██████ tinder profile 😎👉👈 on this episode of the TFL podcast! Link in bio! Next week's episode will be hosted once again by the mean girls of comedy, ██████ !! (TFL Comedy, 2021f, February).
- On this week's podcast, listen to ██████ talk about their dads' different approaches to parenting 🤪🚗🤪, play a spicy game of "would you bang?" ✨👉👈, and reveal Bota's BIG secret 🤪📄🤪. Link in bio!! Next week's episode will feature ██████ and ██████. Also this is our 10th episode!! Can you believe it. I can't. (TFL Comedy, 2021g, February).
  - On this episode of the podcast, two mullet-rocking central Floridians, Nuria and Harper, bond over their hatred of airplanes ✈️😞👤, their love for rats 🐭👉👈, and years of religious school trauma 🙏🚫📄. Link in bio! Next week's episode will feature @alex\_soo5, @giallach, and @margaret\_parish 🤪🤪🤪 (TFL Comedy, 2021h, February).
  - It's ██████ birthday episode! Listen to ██████ celebrate by reminiscing about their firsts 🚫👉👈, debuting the TFL diss track (thanks ██████ 🤪👉👈), and playing an ~exciting~ game of truth or dare 🤪👉👈 Link in bio! Next week's episode will be hosted by ██████ 😊😊 (TFL Comedy, 2021i, March).
  - Listen to ██████ and ██████ reflect on the panniversary 🤪🤪👉👈, their love for hyperspecific memes 🤪👉👈, and how they will never understand, but stand with normal people 🤪📄👉👈! Link in bio! (TFL Comedy, 2021j, March).

The 13 posts above created and published by Tufts University's Funny Ladies included 57 emojis from the Unicode list. The Instagram posts from TFL revealed that the troupe is creative, spirited, and open to fostering a community open to workshopping and open to feedback. The type of feedback and comments you received from a podcast are inherently different than



feedback delivered in a stand-up set, a comedy sketch, or an improv performance. The next section provides a summary of the Instagram posts that best fit within the workshopping/feedback subtheme.

### ***Workshopping/Feedback Subtheme: Summary of Instagram Content***

On Instagram, many of the troupes used the platform as an extension of their personalities and used the platform to recruit. Some troupes like TFL at Tufts University used Instagram to promote a new venture into podcasting. Other troupes like Bechdel Test at NYU invited others to join an Instagram live event. The workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback subtheme best aligned with Provine’s (2000) suggestions to “increase interpersonal contact” and to “adopt a laugh ready attitude” (pp. 211–212). Provine stated “Increasing face-to-face, eye-to-eye contact between group members maximizes laughter” (p. 211). During this study’s bounded time period, maximizing face-to-face contact was more difficult due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions; however, student-comedians still used platforms like Twitter and Instagram to workshop and practice the art of delivering and receiving feedback. The next section provides insight into the observations from three troupes: The Girlie Project, Vertigo-go, and Derby Comedy and how the activities observed connect to the workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback subtheme.

### ***Workshopping & Feedback Subtheme Observations***

Throughout the observations of rehearsals from The Girlie Project, Vertigo-go, and Derby Comedy, all three troupes engaged in various elements of Provine’s 10 tips for increasing laughter. In particular, The Girlie Project’s rehearsal connected the most with the subtheme: workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback. In The Girlie Project’s rehearsal and writer’s room session, they focused on Tips 5, 6, 7, and 8 from Provine (2000) especially with the ability

to “provide humorous materials” (p. 212). In Provine’s text, *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation*, he stated that “laughter is more often a consequence of relationships than of jokes” (p. 212).

The Girlie Project’s rehearsal/writer’s room session focused on the troupe’s ability to workshop and test out ideas. During the round-robin of pitching ideas, one member pitched an idea for a sketch about Jack and the Beanstalk where no one in the family knew they were giants. At another point, one member pitched an idea for a sketch about “Scrouge Paul’s drag show.” During the read through of the sketch, one of the members said, “No, that’s my joke” and the team laughed it off. The concept of sharing ideas and having a space where every idea is worth exploring helped answer both of the study’s research questions and led to the subtheme: workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback.

In addition to The Girlie Project’s rehearsal observed in March 2022, I observed Vertigo-go, an improv troupe at Swarthmore College. As mentioned in the section covering the creative outlets for building community subtheme, the Vertigo-go troupe rehearsal focused on the troupe’s warm up and improv games. The circle clapping and the leapfrog style game created a light, fun, silly atmosphere. Everyone in the rehearsal appeared to have fun and participants were receptive to each other’s ideas about their senior show. During the improv games including the “under water” game, there was a sense of trust and understanding of one another’s skills. The concept of workshopping and honing the craft of improv was apparent during the rehearsal.

Similar to the Swarthmore College’s Vertigo-go, the student comedians in Derby Comedy at Penn State were open and receptive to ideas during their spring rehearsal that I observed on April 11, 2022. Throughout the Derby Comedy rehearsal, the troupe members created a casual atmosphere and spent most of the rehearsal in a game they called “mind-meld.” The section below features a description of “Mind Meld” as defined by Hoopla! (n.d.) :

The goal is for two people to say things together until they reach the same word. It begins by one person saying “one,” the second person saying “two,” and then both people counting to three together. They then say anything at all – a person, place, idea, concept, phrase: anything. Then we think what the common thing between those two things or associated with those two things would be. We repeat the one, two, three and try to use the two previously stated things to arrive at a third, common one. We keep trying each time until we say the same word. When we finally arrive at the same word we sing and dance to “It was a mind meld, it was a mind meld, it happens all the time, it was a mind meld.” Sometimes it is played with the same pair of people all the way through until they connect on a word. Sometimes the group can opt in and out and it is played between the team. (para. 1-5)

Derby Comedy troupe played “mind meld” in the way that Hoopla! (n.d.), a team of Improv performers and experts based in the United Kingdom described the exercise. The improvisational, think of your feet game exemplified why comedy troupes and participating in a comedy troupe like Derby Comedy is an ideal space for workshopping, delivering, and receiving feedback. It was apparent during the observations of the rehearsals that the student-comedians and performers wanted to be in a community open to feedback and committed to strengthening skills. In addition to the observations of the rehearsal, the sketch “Goodbye 2020” revealed the troupe’s ability to produce a polished piece of work that revealed their comedic talents and most likely allowed the troupe to brainstorm ideas. In conclusion, all of the troupe observations conducted revealed that student-performers value one another’s ideas and are open to workshopping and feedback.

### **Mentoring Through Jokes Subtheme: Introduction**

The following section provides an overview of the subtheme: mentoring through jokes. Similar to the other subthemes within the community building theme, this section offers insight into data collected from interviews, document analysis, and observations. Mentoring through jokes is the third subtheme in the larger theme of community-building skills. In conducting interviews, observing troupe materials and rehearsals, and analyzing social media from Instagram and Twitter, in order to answer the study's research questions, I found that mentoring via the art of comedy and jokes was one way that women-identified student comedians created a community with one another. Ashman and Colvin (2012) defined peer mentors in five roles: connected links, peer leaders, learning coaches, student advocates, and trusted friends. The type of peer mentoring that most closely aligned with the students in the comedy troupes central to the study was as a student advocate. The role of the student advocate related to the "peer mentor being a helper, mostly in helping to mediate the relationship between the student and the instructor" (p. 50). For this study, the student advocate is better framed as student-comedians being "comedy-advocates." Students in comedy troupes showed up for each other and supported each other in distinctive ways; they recognized that support was needed for the troupe or comedy entity to be successful. The next section highlights the themes pulled from the individual interviews: values, attitudes, and beliefs that aligned with the mentoring through jokes subtheme.

In the 15 individual interviews and one focus group interview conducted in this study, the values, attitudes, and beliefs that most aligned with the subtheme, mentoring through jokes are listed below. Unlike the first two subthemes in the larger theme, community building, this subtheme only had values and attitudes and no aligning beliefs.

### ***Values***

- Listening and the importance of listening to one another

- Perpetual and consistent communication
- Harmonious relationships
- Routine and checking in with one another
- Supporting and being supported

### *Attitudes*

- Comedy carries into relationships and conversations outside of practice
- Being in a comedy troupe is a big support system

The values and attitudes outlined above revealed that student comedians value the importance of supporting one another. One of the benefits of values coding is that it provides insight into the participant's worldview (Crosley & Jansen, 2020). According to Saldaña (2016), a value is the importance we attribute to oneself, another person, thing, or idea and an attitude aligns with the way we think and feel about ourselves, another person, thing, or idea. Throughout the interviews, a recurring theme was the importance of listening and feeling heard. The values extracted from the interviews revealed that the student-comedians value the relationships formed in the troupe and the support that comes from being a part of their comedy-focused organizations. In the interviews, the study's participants highlighted that they found support in one another. Communication is key to the support and one element of mentoring that is vital (Kupersmidt et al., 2020). In an interview with a member of Liling Banshees, Annie said, "We meet up to just talk a lot and get to know each other....We all interact constantly on different social media platforms and have different group chats." The communication and being in touch with one another across platforms underscored the importance of communication as a part of the mentoring via jokes.

According to an article from University of Toronto magazine, improv is an equalizer and

rooted in the “yes and” principle (Easton, 2022, para. 2). Easton (2022) claimed that the participants in the improv workshops said that the activities “created new social connections and provided a much-needed injection of fun and humor in their lives” (para. 4). In an interview with Iris from Vassar College’s troupe, Indecent Exposure, she stated she joined the troupe after having a “very rough first year.” Iris said, “I feel like it really changed. I feel like I met so many cool people through it...It’s just like a confidence boost honestly. It’s given me really good friendships and bonds.” Iris’s connections formed through the community of the troupe revealed the importance of finding people especially after a “rough first year.” Iris was not the only student to highlight that being a part of a comedy troupe prompted a shift in her collegiate experiences and offered “really good friendships and bonds.”

The next section highlights the social media posts that aligned most with the mentoring through jokes subtheme. Similar to subthemes one and two under the larger theme, “Community Building Skills”, this section will highlight the tweets from Bloomers Comedy troupe, Circular Reasoning Improv troupe, Derby Comedy troupe, The Girlie Project, and Sphincter Comedy troupe. The next section analyzes the tweets from Bloomers Comedy troupe. The posts shared on Instagram that align with the mentoring via jokes subtheme will be discussed after the section covering the tweets.

### ***Bloomers Comedy Tweets***

The bio of Bloomers Comedy featured on Twitter is “little nuggets of coal from the Bloomers writing room” (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). The troupe’s use of Twitter within the designated window revealed their ability to share “little nuggets” or jokes in a public-facing social media platform. As Berkowitz (2013) stated in the article, “How to be Hilarious on Twitter”, the platform lends itself well for comedians who want to test-drive jokes and as

Bloomers Comedy troupe did, share the nuggets from their comedic-minded writers. The themes pulled out from the Bloomers Comedy tweets were *social justice, food humor/dinner jokes, Philadelphia politics and culture, political humor, and movie and pop-culture humor*. The themes from the Bloomers Comedy troupe's tweets revealed the troupe's ability to explore various topics that they found humor in.

According to a study focused on peer mentoring, one of the benefits of peer mentoring relationships is that peers feel more connected and accepted (Kupersmidt et al., 2020). The peer mentoring via a comedy troupe allowed students to explore their identities and build relationships with one another using comedy. Additionally, the tweets shared by the Bloomers Comedy troupe writers highlighted the troupe members willingness to help others in the troupe speak the same language (the language of being a student at UPenn) and feel more connected to the community.

An example of a tweet that highlighted the connectedness of speaking the language of UPenn is: "career services: view our online resources for planning your post-grad future!" (Bloomers, 2020b). The tweet included a designed graphic of M.A.S.H., a childhood game that one researcher claimed, "serves as a fundamental function for adolescents by helping them address life's uncertainty" (Bess, 2016). The underlying joke of the tweet referencing "M.A.S.H" aligns with the concept of college humor and the type of humor that other students at the University of Pennsylvania would see and understand; therefore, helping others feel more connected and accepted. The next section analyzes the tweets published by Circular Reasoning Improv.

### ***Circular Reasoning Improv Tweets***

Circular Reasoning Improv, a historically women's comedy improv troupe at The Ohio

State University posted a flyer on Twitter promoting their auditions . The flyer stated, “No experience necessary!” (Circular Reasoning Improv, 2021b). As a part of the troupe’s commitment to growth, recruiting and helping others learn more about Circular Reasoning - the women-identified comedians built a network of support and mentors. The Ohio State University based troupe’s Twitter bio claims that the troupe has a “focus on serving the community” (Circular Reasoning Improv, n.d.-b). Two of the four tweets from Circular Reasoning Improv were labeled as “troupe spotlight” posts representative of the troupe’s commitment to recruitment and bringing in new members to join them as student-comediennes focused on serving the community. The next section covers tweets from Penn State’s troupe, Derby Comedy that aligned with subtheme: mentoring through jokes.

### ***Derby Comedy Tweets***

Derby Comedy’s Twitter handle stated that the troupe is a “women’s comedy troupe” that performs “stand-up, sketch, improv & musical comedy” (DERBY, n.d.). The troupe’s interest in a range of comedy styles revealed their commitment to trying new things and being leaders on their campus. A few of the themes that I extracted from the Derby Comedy’s tweets posted between March 2020 to August 2021 were: COVID, safety, public health, troupe spotlights, troupe member photos, and troupe show promotions. Derby Comedy was one of the most active troupes on Twitter of all of the 11 historically women’s troupes whose social media content was analyzed in the study. In addition to the troupe being active on Twitter, the troupe was founded in 2018 and has a mission to “create a collaborative, creative space for women to write and perform” (Derby: A Women’s Comedy Troupe, n.d.-a, para. 1). The creative space formed by Derby Comedy troupe served as a way for women-identified comedians to find a home in comedy and share ideas with one another. The troupe’s commitment to creating a collaborative



space revealed their willingness to support and mentor one another. The next section analyzes themes from the tweets shared by Emerson College's historically women sketch troupe, The Girlie Project.

### ***The Girlie Project Tweets***

The troupe's Twitter biography line stated, "Emerson College's ladylike sketch comedy troupe. Giggles, gawks, and guffaws" (The Girlie Project, n.d.-b). In this section covering tweets that best align with the mentoring through jokes subtheme, it is worth noting that their comedy/joke filled Twitter handle has a photo of the cast of the show, *The Golden Girls*. In a piece on *The Golden Girls*, Haider (2020) alluded to the show's long-lasting appeal across generations and the way the show "embodied inclusivity along with comedy gems" (para. 9). *The Golden Girls* is not a show about college students in a comedy troupe; however, by choosing a photo of the show's women-comedian stars, The Girlie Project aligned their culture and mission to provide "giggles, gawks, and guffaws" with a show known as a "pop culture goodie" (Haider, 2020, para. 10). The Girlie Project's place as a women-led comedy troupe at Emerson College matters and their relationship or 'fandom' with *The Golden Girls* matters. Emerson College is the alma mater of comedy legends including Jennifer Coolidge (Westervelt, 2021). In an article focused on Emerson College's comedy troupes, Coolidge, a performing arts major at Emerson did not join a comedy troupe on campus. The article revealed that Coolidge said, "Comedy was very much a man's thing back then" (Westervelt, 2021, para. 35). The Girlie Project formed in 2005 (Westervelt, 2021), years after Coolidge was a student. The creation of The Girlie Project represented progress at Emerson College. The troupe's ability to recognize that they are a part of a comedic collegiate hub matters as they build a community rooted in making "each other laugh" (Westervelt, 2021, para. 42). In addition to their "giggles, gawks, and guffaws" (The Girlie

Project, n.d.-b), the troupe and their allegiance to women comedy greats like the cast of *The Golden Girls* reveals their ability to mentor one another with jokes. The next section covers the tweets posted by Sphincter Comedy troupe and ways that the tweets connect with the mentoring through jokes subtheme.

### ***Sphincter Comedy Tweets***

Sphincter Comedy troupe – the historically women’s comedy troupe’s Twitter profile is a bold proclamation: “Yale's funniest sketch comedy troupe” (Sphincter Troupe, n.d.). Sphincter Comedy troupe’s profile highlights the troupe’s ability to be their bold, funny selves. According to Drexel University, “College freshmen who are mentored by older students tend to become more motivated, improve their study skills, stay in school and succeed” (Drexel University LeBow College of Business, 2020, para. 1). For the members of Sphincter Comedy troupe, the content shared on Twitter revealed the way the student-comedians share their talents as funny women who speak the language of humor. In September 2020, the troupe tweeted, “am I shadow-banned on tinder or am I just ugly” (Sphincter Troupe, 2020). The self-deprecating humor style of Sphincter Comedy revealed the troupe’s ability to not take themselves too seriously and attract other comedians drawn to that brand of humor. The next section analyzes the content on Instagram and how certain posts best fit with the mentoring through jokes subtheme.

### ***Bechdel Test Instagram Posts***

New York University’s Bechdel Test used Instagram to encourage new members to submit their sketches. In the post shared on November 20, 2020, they encouraged NYU students interested in joining to “submit your sketch to Bechdel Test!” (Bechdel Test NYU, 2020c). In the post, they also shared that the troupe would read five of the selected sketches during a Zoom

show in December. In a similar way, the subtheme of comedy as providing a space to offer feedback, the troupe offered to provide a “lil feedback” to those that submit sketches (Bechdel Test NYU, 2020c). The NYU students innovatively used their Instagram profile to recruit and provide a space for prospective members to write, share, and be mentored from current members. The next section provides an overview of Instagram posts shared by Bloomers Comedy troupe that best aligned with the mentoring through jokes subtheme.

### ***Bloomers Comedy Instagram Posts***

The subtheme of mentoring via jokes appears in the Instagram posts as well as the Twitter posts shared by Bloomers Comedy troupe. As Shane-Simpson et al. (2018) alluded to in their study, Instagram was more commonly used by undergraduate college women than Twitter or Facebook. One way that the troupe used Instagram was to spotlight individual members of the troupe. In a way, the individual spotlights served as an opportunity to highlight the range of students and range of mentors that new members would be exposed to. Throughout the Bloomers Comedy troupe’s Instagram content, there was a recurring sense of pride in being a part of the troupe and in being engaged citizens. For example, on National Coming Out Day, the troupe posted “October 11 is National Coming Out Day! Here are 5 Philly-based organizations that you can donate to in order to support the LGBTQ + community” (Bloomers Comedy, 2020d) The troupe members used their social media platform to highlight causes and provide prospective members with outlets to support members of diverse communities. The next section covers Instagram posts from Circular Reasoning Improv that best aligned with the mentoring through jokes subtheme.

### ***Circular Reasoning Improv Instagram Posts***

Circular Reasoning Improv posted three times during the designated window of March

2020 to August 2021. The troupe's posts on Instagram included one post focused on social justice, one audition promo post, and one post that was more focused on the troupe. With the post promoting auditions, the troupe used the phrase, "No experience necessary" (Circular Reasoning, 2021); that post revealed the troupe's commitment to bringing in others and growing their community. As alluded to in the section covering Circular Reasoning Improv's tweets, Circular Reasoning Improv's dedication to one another and the community expands beyond the realm of comedy. The next section focuses on Instagram posts from Control Top Improv.

### ***Control Top Improv Instagram Posts***

The content shared on Instagram for Control Top and the other troupes featured in the study represent one look into the culture of the troupe. Control Top Improv's Instagram account did not include a lot of posts throughout the study's designated window. In the months of March 2020 to April 2021, the student-comedians posted twice. The post that best represented the troupe's connection to mentoring and building a community referenced meeting on Zoom and encouraging one another to take care. The post stated, "Hi angelz! We loved seeing our fellow toplets 'beautiful shining faces via Zoom tonight and we can't wait to see each other in person soon to make you all laugh. Take care of yourselves and each other everyone and stay cute you cuties!! 🥰" (Control Top Improv, 2020a). The communities being built across the comedy troupes were dynamic even in a period of life when the troupes had to meet on Zoom. The next section covers an analysis of the posts that best align with the mentoring through jokes subtheme posted by Derby Comedy troupe on Instagram.

### ***Derby Comedy Instagram Posts***

Derby Comedy troupe's Instagram content was focused on sharing, uplifting, and creating a community that supported one another. A post that exemplified Derby Comedy's

ability to use social media as a tool for good was: “Derby is happy to announce the new executives for the upcoming year! We are so thankful for all of the ladies who ran for a position. It warms our heart seeing so many girls want to be leaders of the club. We are so thankful to have an active and comedy driven group of ladies. 💖” (Derby: A Women’s Comedy Troupe, 2020a). Along with the sparkling heart emoji (UNICODE, n.d.), the Derby Comedy troupe tapped into their emotions with this post. Emojis “can be the difference between a message being understood as sarcastic or not” (Correia, 2021, para.12). The sparkly heart emoji featured in the post connects to the power of emojis and their ability to do certain things that English words often cannot (Correia, 2021).

According to Aaker and Bagdonas (2021), “comedians play close attention to emotion. What makes them feel embarrassed, happy, sad, proud, uncomfortable, or anything else” (p. 76). Aaker and Bagdonas (2021) stated that emotions and noticing what you feel are connected to humor and laughter. The relationships and the mentoring component of being in an “active and comedy driven group of ladies” represented the power of tapping into the emotions associated with comedy and tapping into humor (Derby: A Women’s Comedy Troupe, 2020a). The next section provides an analysis of the Instagram posts shared by Ladies Night, Indiana University’s historically women’s troupe with a focus on stand-up comedy.

### ***Ladies Night Instagram Posts***

Ladies Night posted twice throughout the study’s bounded time period. Both posts focused on recruiting new members and the troupe’s humorous content also included a call to have new members join their “ONE day of epic two-day callouts” (Ladies’ Night Comedy, 2021). The full text of the post from March 2021 is featured below:

do you like cracking jokes? the rush of adrenaline you get speaking into a microphone?

making mems and forging friendships that last a lifetime? well, well, well, it's your lucky day, my friend! ladies 'night comedy wants YOU at our zoom callouts! monday and tuesday at 7pm. and you only have to attend ONE day of our epic two-day callouts. the time has come to be a part of something bigger than yourself. zoom ID: 882 4074 3828. one of these tiny hats could belong to you.



In the post, the troupe used their platform on Instagram to attract new members interested in being mentored by fellow comedians seeking friendships and the “rush of adrenaline” from speaking into a microphone. This post applies to the mentoring via jokes subtheme where troupe members wanted to encourage one another to be a part of something “bigger than yourself” (Ladies' Night Comedy, 2021). The community members of Ladies' Night comedy did not use Instagram often throughout the first few months of the global pandemic, COVID-19. Although, the troupe did not use Instagram often during the March 2020 to August 2021, it was apparent that the troupe was invested in connecting and inviting others to be a part of “something bigger” than the self. The next section analyzes the posts from Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy's Instagram account that best aligned with the mentoring through jokes subtheme.

### ***Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy Instagram Posts***

Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy, a comedy troupe at Barnard College did not actively use Instagram throughout the study's designated window. As highlighted in previous sections, the only posts from the troupe during the bound period highlighted auditions. One post claimed, “Auditions this Sunday!! No prep necessary. Link in bio” (Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy, 2020). In a similar way to other troupes highlighted in the study, Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy used their platform to highlight auditions and recognized their ability to recruit students interested in performing and being mentored from current members. The next section offers insight into the

Instagram posts from Tufts University's women-led comedy troupe, TFL.

### ***TFL Instagram Posts***

Tufts University's TFL used their Instagram account to share content about the troupe, and the troupe's ability to try new things like launching a podcast. The post that stood out as a way to highlight TFL's commitment to celebrating one another and creating a community rooted in mentoring was the post that recognized the TFL seniors. The post read: "We  our seniors  Thank you to everyone in the class of '21 who was involved in TFL during their time at Tufts for sharing your brilliant, funny, beautiful light with us!" (TFL Comedy, 2021h, April). The post highlighted TFL's ability to honor their community and the class of 2021 that shared their talents and in the words of TFL, share their "brilliant, funny, beautiful light" (TFL Comedy, 2021h, April). The troupe's expressive post with the red heart emoji and the smiling face with tear emoji represented an important part of the culture of emoji-filled communications shared by TFL. According to Emojipedia (n.d.-c), the smiling face with tear emoji "can be used to express a wide range of emotions and expressions including gratitude, tender happiness, an attempt to look happy when actually sad, or smiling through pain" (para. 1). Emojipedia (n.d.-c) stated that the smiling face with tear emoji "can also be a response to something that is bittersweet" (para. 1). The emojis featured in the posts and featured in the coding of content as listed in Appendix N made the online content analyzed "richer and more nuanced" (Correia, 2021, para. 18). In addition to the posts shared on Twitter and Instagram, throughout the observations of three comedy troupes, it was evident that troupe members engaged in practices that mirrored peer mentoring. The next section covers themes from the observations that revealed the selected troupes' ability to mentor via jokes and comedy.

### *Mentoring Through Jokes Subtheme: Troupe Observations*

In the article, “Social Distancing Does Not Have to Disrupt Mentorship” published by D.G. Smith and Johnson (2020), the authors stated that in mentoring relationships, it is important to “take a break from the news” and work to engage in “selfcare” (para. 6). D.G. Smith and Johnson (2020) claimed that “A bit of humor can break the tension” (para. 6). Throughout the rehearsals observed during the spring of 2022 for The Girlie Project, Vertigo-go Improv, and Derby Comedy, all of the participants appeared to have an attitude of willingness to engage in “selfcare” (Smith, D.G. & Johnson, 2020, para. 6).

According to the peer mentor handbook designed similarly to a report by The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania, the nine tips for establishing trust include: be a friend, mutual respect, listen, take a step back, be consistent, be supportive, have fun, be yourself, and be realistic (The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania, n.d., p. 8). The tips from the list of nine that aligned the best with the troupes observed were mutual respect, listen, be supportive, have fun, and be yourself. During The Girlie Project rehearsal, the troupe’s ability to pitch ideas revealed their commitment to mentor one another and build one another up. The community mantra that all ideas are valid aligns with the tip to be supportive. Under the “have fun” tip to establish trust, the mentoring partnership wrote, “Resist the urge to be totally focused on goals” (p. 8). Throughout the rehearsals, the troupes discussed the business of the organization and show logistics. However, they resisted the “urge to be totally focused on goals” (The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania, n.d., p. 8). Additionally, the troupe members enjoyed spending time with one another and strengthened their relationships with one another. The next section provides an overview of the community building skills theme outlining a few takeaways from the subthemes discussed earlier in the chapter.



### *Community Building Skills Theme Summary*

According to GOLD Comedy, an online community dedicated to advancing women in comedy, on the webpage, “Why Comedy?”, the writers claimed comedy serves multiple functions. The writers of GOLD Comedy stated comedy is:

power, helps you be you, smashes perfectionism, boosts confidence, is good for your brain, makes you a better writer, makes you a better speaker, makes you better at your job, is perfect for shy people, helps tackle tricky topics, and helps you deal with tough stuff. (GOLD Comedy, n.d., para. 1)

The 18- to 25-year-old women-identified college students who were the primary audience for the study were all members of diverse collegiate comedy troupes. In addition to being funny and comedy-minded, they engaged in comedy as intellectuals in academic pursuit of knowledge and degrees. Comedy and humor play a role in how intellectual topics are publicly consumed (Garber, 2015). Garber (2015) claimed, “Humor has moral purpose. Humor has intellectual heft. Humor can change the world” (para.13). The participants in the study engaged in building community with one another through creative outlets. Additionally, the study’s participants created a community by workshopping creative materials including jokes, sketches, show ideas, and offered one another feedback. The feedback received in a comedy setting allowed undergraduate students the space to craft thoughtful feedback, share their opinions, strengthen their voice as comedians, and share ideas on their peer’s jokes, creative ideas, and performances. Lastly, the study’s participants built a community via mentoring through jokes. The mentoring through jokes included practicing some of the elements described by peer mentor experts including the commitment to “maintain close emotional and relation proximity” (Smith, D.G. & Johnson, 2020, p. 5) during a pandemic.

A common thread throughout the data from the individual interviews, focus group interview, analysis of tweets and Instagram posts, and observations of rehearsals was that women-identified students active in collegiate comedy troupes want to be in a community with one another that values comedy, humor, feedback, and mentoring. This study pulls from the concepts of community outlined by Chavis and Lee (2015) who claimed that “community is both a feeling and a set of relationships among people” (para. 4). The communities being built by the undergraduate students featured in the study are all stronger because of the creative outlets, workshopping and feedback, and mentoring through jokes. Chavis and Lee (2015) stated that community comes with a “treasured feeling” and that feeling is sparked by “shared experiences and a sense of—not necessarily the actual experience of—shared history” (para. 5).

The second key theme extracted from the interviews, social content, and observations was laughter and play skills. The next section provides an overview of the laughter and play skills theme and further dissects the theme’s two subthemes: the benefits of games and play and the benefits of various humor styles.

### **Laughter and Play Skills Theme: Introduction**

Similar to the first theme, “Community Building Skills,” the table below maps out the subthemes of the “Laughter and Play Skills” and maps the subthemes to the tips suggested by Provine (2000) on how to enhance laughter. As a reminder, the tips offered by Provine (2000) are featured below.

- Find a friend or a personable stranger: Friend/1
- The more the merrier: Merrier/2
- Increase interpersonal contact: Contact/3
- Create a casual atmosphere: Casual/4

- Adopt a laugh-ready attitude: Laugh/5
- Exploit the contagious laugh effect: Contagious/6
- Provide humorous materials: Materials/7
- Remove social inhibitions: Remove/8

The table below aligns the laughter and play skills with tips from Provine on ways to enhance laughter. The two subthemes from the laughter and play skills theme, benefits of games and play and the benefits of various humor styles aligned the most clearly with the concept to adopt a laugh-ready attitude.

**Table 7**

*Aligning Laughter and Play Skills with Provine's Tips to Enhance Laughter*

Theme	Subtheme	Definition	Aligned Provine's Tips
Laughter and Play Skills	Benefits of games and play	Games and play are not only meant for youth and childhood. College students- specifically the 18- to 25-year-old community benefit from engaging in games and play. Participating in a comedy troupe is one proactive way to infuse games and play into the collegiate experience.	Laugh/5; Contagious/6; Materials/7
Laughter and Play Skills	Benefits of various humor styles	The recognition that laughter and humor varied and that there is no one correct sense of humor.	Laugh/5; Contagious/6; Materials/7

The second theme extracted from the data was labeled as laughter and play skills. The laughter and play skills theme revealed that the study's participants utilized the power of laughter and play as they navigated their collegiate experiences. In the article, "The Importance of Play: What Universities Can Learn from Preschools," Whitton (2017) explored the concept of play within university settings. The article focused on academics more than co-curricular activities; however, the element of play in the university setting connected to the concepts featured in the

data. To better understand why laughter and play skills are vital parts of the undergraduate student comedian experience, the two subthemes that emerged were benefits of games and play and benefits of various humor styles. The next section focuses on the benefits of games and play subtheme under the larger theme, laughter and play skills.

### **Benefits of Games and Play Subtheme: Introduction**

Adults benefit from play and according to Ajiboye (2018), adults need recess. Ajiboye's (2018) article on the importance of play for adults and their mental health aligned with the study's theme of the benefits of games and play. Throughout the individual interviews, a focus group interview, analysis of documents, and observations of content and rehearsals, a recurring theme of playing, laughter, jokes, and the pros of experiencing joyful moments appeared. Ajiboye (2018) declared that play is an aspect of an "active form of mindfulness" (para. 18). Some of the individual interviewees directly revealed how much they enjoyed the play and silliness of joking and riffing with their fellow student comedians. The next section covers the values, attitudes, and beliefs from the individual interviews that most related to the benefits of game and play subtheme.

In the 15 individual interviews conducted as a part of the study, various participants alluded to the importance of silliness, games and play in their troupe dynamics. As noted in the section on the first theme, community building skills, the individual interviews were conducted throughout Fall 2021 and Spring 2022. Fourteen of the 15 individual interviews were held via Zoom; the one in person individual interview occurred at the National Collegiate Comedy Festival at Skidmore College in April 2022. The following section includes the values, attitudes, and beliefs coded from the individual interviews that best aligned with the benefits of games and play subtheme.

### *Values*

- Warm ups serve as a part of building trust with one another
- The opportunity to focus on the team in rehearsal and forget the outside world

### *Attitudes*

- Feeling energized is part of the troupe's culture
- I feel more myself when giving presentations

### *Beliefs*

- Improv impacts the way one views the world
- Doing something that for the most part is relaxing is good and a form of self-care

As noted in values, attitudes, and beliefs listed above, the students discussed a variety of topics related to the benefits of play. According to Saldaña (2016), “what a participant states are his or her values, attitudes, and beliefs may not always be truthful or harmonize with his or her observed actions and interactions” (p. 132). Saldaña’s point about values, attitudes, and beliefs is important. However, in this study, the values, attitudes, and beliefs that participants shared strongly aligned with their troupes’ mission and visions. Within the benefits of games and play subtheme, the values associated with trust and the opportunity to create a space that honors laughter and play. Throughout the interviews, a common theme was that warmups and rehearsals are a sacred time for troupe members to play, enjoy a game, and build trust. The beliefs that align with the benefits of games and play subtheme are that improv affects one’s worldview and that “doing” comedy is a form of self-care.

The next section highlights the ways that the benefits of games and play subtheme appeared in the analysis of content published by the study’s selected 11 historically women’s collegiate troupes. As discussed in the community building skills theme section, the documents

analyzed in the study were coded using emojis. Although emojis are not words, emojis offer a way to enhance text and have “cognitive advantages” (Weissman, 2021, para. 7). From the 11 historically women’s comedy troupes that I analyzed, there were five with the benefits of games and play subtheme.

The tweets discussed in the next section were posted from the study’s selected troupes during the designated window of review and the content discussed most aligned with the benefits of games and play subtheme. The benefits of games and play subtheme was an arm of the laughter and play theme.

### ***Bloomers Comedy Tweets***

In Bloomers Comedy troupe’s tweets, the content was written with comedy in mind and an eye for the Bloomers flair of funny represented the importance of playfulness. A tweet that stands out is “getting stuck doing the limbo call that stuck in limbo” (Bloomers, 2020c). In this tweet and throughout the tweets shared by Bloomers Comedy troupe, wordplay is essential. According to Ann Wylie (2018), wordplay has the power to grab your attention and to change minds. Wylie (2018) claimed that puns and other wordplay can put people in a more “agreeable mood” (para. 17). Bloomers Comedy troupe’s tweets provided insight into the way that the troupe played with language and humor. Throughout all of the tweets posted by Bloomers Comedy troupe from March 2020 to August 2021, the troupe used Twitter as a platform to explore their writers’ creativity and ability to master wordplay. Researchers have examined what happens to the brain upon reading funny puns and as explained by Hughes (2011), researchers found that “the left [IFG] lights up more during funny puns than regular jokes” (para. 12). The next section provides an overview of the tweets from Circular Reasoning Improv that best aligned with the benefits of games and play subtheme.

### ***Circular Reasoning Improv Tweets***

Circular Reasoning, the historically women's comedy troupe at The Ohio State University did not use Twitter in a way to highlight their wordplay skills. The four tweets that Circular Reasoning Improv posted do not fully align with the benefits of games and play subtheme. Circular Reasoning Improv used Twitter to promote the troupe and encourage others to audition so that they could enjoy the benefits of being in a community together. Paul Osincup, the head researcher at Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor, claimed that developing humor habits can help others build up their humor toolkit. One of the five humor habits Osincup (2020) highlighted was "Follow funny" (p. 589). Osincup stated that it helps to "like and follow funny pages on social pages on social media" (p. 589). The idea is that the more that you see humor on your social media feed, it will increase "your exposure to humorous triggers" (p. 589). This idea is worth highlighting because Circular Reasoning Improv retweeted content from *The Sundial Humor Magazine* at The Ohio State University. According to *The Sundial Humor Magazine*, an OSU student can submit to the magazine via email (The Sundial Humor Magazine, n.d.). Circular Reasoning Improv recognized that they were one troupe contributing to social media as humorists and student-comedians at a university that values humor and have outlets like *The Sundial*. The next section highlights tweets from The Girlie Project that best aligned with the benefits of games and play subtheme.

### ***The Girlie Project Tweets***

The Girlie Project comedy troupe, one of several troupes housed at Emerson College tweeted comedic material. One tweet that stood out and connected with the benefits of games and play subtheme was: "there is a theory that everyone is either a mouse or a rat. every member of the girlie project is a rat" (The Girlie Project, 2021a). The Girlie Project's humorous takes in

their tweets revealed their ability to be humorous and silly. The next section will highlight tweets from Sphincter Comedy that most aligned with the benefits of games and play subtheme.

### ***Sphincter Comedy Tweets***

Sphincter Comedy troupe tweeted eleven times throughout the March 2020 to August 2021 window of time. Similar to the other troupes featured in the study that tweeted, Sphincter Comedy troupe members recognized that the humor and the silliness associated with their troupe could be translated to Twitter. The next section analyzes Instagram posts from the selected troupes that best aligned with the benefits of games and play subtheme.

### ***Bechdel Test Instagram Posts***

The Instagram posts that Bechdel Test posted throughout the designated window mostly focused on the troupe's commitment to sharing funny content, recruiting new members, and opening up the troupe with others via events like an Instagram live in the fall of 2020. The posts that best displayed Bechdel Test's playful approach to comedy celebrated the troupe's events including shows and rehearsals. In February 2021, Bechdel Test posted about their excitement to rehearse with new members of the troupe that they called their "NEW BABIES!" (Bechdel Test NYU, 2021). The endearing and charismatic language used throughout the content revealed that Bechdel Test did not take themselves too seriously and enjoyed being playful. The next section covers the Instagram posts from Bloomers Comedy troupe that most aligned with the benefits of games and play subtheme.

### ***Bloomers Comedy Instagram Posts***

Social media has shifted during the pandemic (Molla, 2021). According to Molla (2021), social media impacted the way people dealt with the layers of life in 2020, in particular during the beginning months of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Social justice slideshows dominated



Instagram Stories, as people sought to take social justice reactions online or at least learn about everything from defunding the police to mail in voting to combating racism” (Molla, 2021, para. 38). Bloomers Comedy troupe recognized that social media can serve as a platform that educates and informs (Molla, 2021). This type of content was included in the section on the benefits of games and play to reveal that the student-comedians willingly took on heavier, more social justice topics. By taking on heavier, social justice topics, it was apparent to me that their work justified the balance of incorporating play.

In addition to their comedy-focused posts, Bloomers used Instagram to share posts that promoted social justice and spaces to raise funds for marginalized community members in need. In addition to their more playful, comedy focused posts that shared highlights of their content, video sketches, and executive board spotlights, the troupes showcased their more serious side with posts highlighting the importance of voting, Indigenous People’s Day, and National Coming Out Day (Bloomers Comedy, n.d.). Bloomers Comedy troupe was not alone in their pursuit of activism and social justice. In 2020, Chattoo and Feldman’s text about comedy and activism highlighted that comedy and activism can work hand in hand. “Both the activism and cultural expression empowered by digital media converge to position comedy as a source of influence on today’s social justice issues” (Chattoo & Feldman, 2020, para. 2). The next section analyzes the posts shared by Circular Reasoning Improv that best aligned with the benefits of games and play subtheme.

### ***Circular Reasoning Improv Instagram Posts***

Circular Reasoning troupe is one of four troupes from the study that utilized Twitter and Instagram. On Instagram, the troupe was not heavily active; Circular Reasoning Improv posted three times during the March 2020 to August 2021 bounded time period. On Instagram, the

historically women’s comedy troupe from The Ohio State University shared one social justice post and two posts focused on community. Circular Reasoning Improv troupe’s post rooted in social justice called out the injustices and the troupes “support and stand” with protestors across the United States who support racial justice and justice for the LGBTQIA community (Circular Reasoning Improv, 2020b).

The post revealed that Circular Reasoning troupe was invested in using their platform to share more information about how social media can help others learn (Molla, 2021). In a similar way to other troupes like Bloomers Comedy troupe, Circular Reasoning Improv used their social media platform to benefit and support marginalized communities. This type of post was shared here to underscore why the young-adults in this troupe benefitted from a recess (Ajiboye, 2018). Circular Reasoning Improv claimed to produce comedy and comedic materials on their social media platform; the improv troupe’s content revealed their ability to balance work and play. The next section analyzes Instagram posts from Control Top Improv troupe that best align with the benefits of games and play subtheme.

### ***Control Top Improv Instagram Posts***

Control Top Improv troupe only posted twice during the study’s designated window. Control Top’s posts during the bounded time period included one troupe spotlight and one troupe social activism focused post. Throughout the study’s designated window, Control Top Improv’s content shared was minimal; however, similar to more active troupes, they used their voices to uplift social justice and racial justice. The hashtags used in the social justice post included: #Justice4Malika, #blacklivesmatter #barnard. According to Summerville (2018), hashtags can help other find community online and hashtags have “evolved into ways of building strong and weak ties with others, signifying a desire to be part of and belong to the community” (para. 1).

Control Top Improv comedy troupe used a hashtag that was deemed one of 2020's most memorable hashtags according to Media Update (2020). The most memorable hashtags in 2020 included #BlackLivesMatter and the increased use of the hashtag came after George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis, Minnesota on March 25, 2020 (Media Update, 2020). Control Top Improv's post on Instagram focused on another individual, but their use of the hashtag #blacklivesmatter underscores the troupe's commitment to weighty conversations. Today's college students including Barnard College students who make up the Control Top Improv troupe benefit from games and play and should acknowledge the weight of a culture where in one year, multiple most memorable hashtags dealt with injustices and a pandemic (Media Update, 2020). The next section analyzes the Instagram posts from Derby Comedy troupe that most aligned with the benefits of games and play subtheme.

### ***Derby Comedy Instagram Posts***

The Derby Comedy troupe, Penn State's historically women-led comedy troupe used Instagram and Twitter throughout the study's bounded months. Derby Comedy troupe's presence on Instagram centered on celebratory troupe posts, and posts that recognized individual members of Derby Comedy. Their ability to be playful on Instagram serves as an example of why student comedians benefit from using social media. In an article written by Joshua Chu (2021) for Penn State's *The Daily Collegian*, Derby Comedy's shows were created using a "collaborative process" (para 9). This collaborative process highlighted Derby's skills as community builders, but also as laughter and play enthusiasts. The next section analyzes Ladies Night Comedy's posts on Instagram that best aligned with the benefits of games and play subtheme.

### ***Ladies Night Comedy Instagram Posts***

Ladies Night comedy at Indiana University claimed that they created a "space for

underrepresented voices in comedy at Indiana University” (Ladies’ Night Comedy, n.d.). The troupe’s Instagram presence throughout the study’s designated window was not robust; there was one post between March 2020 to August 2021. According to Indiana University Bloomington (n.d.-a), “Indiana University and the Bloomington community are rich in cultural opportunities” with platforms to engage, volunteer, and perform. Ladies Night comedy is one example of a troupe at the university committed to creating a space for students to express themselves in various mediums. On the Indiana University Bloomington website, the following question is raised, “Why just sit there when comedy can be such a powerful cathartic outlet?” (n.d.-a, para. 5). For members of Ladies Night Comedy and other troupes, comedy is a powerful cathartic outlet and the troupe appeared to understand the benefits of games and play as seen in the following Instagram post:

do you like cracking jokes? the rush of adrenaline you get speaking into a microphone?  
making mems and forging friendships that last a lifetime? well, well, well, it’s your lucky  
day, my friend! ladies ’night comedy wants YOU at our zoom callouts! monday and  
tuesday at 7pm. and you only have to attend ONE day of our epic two-day callouts. the  
time has come to be a part of something bigger than yourself. zoom ID: 882 4074 3828.  
one of these tiny hats could belong to you. (Ladies’ Night Comedy, 2021b)

The next section provides insight into the Instagram posts from Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy troupe that best aligned with the benefits games and play subtheme.

### ***Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy Instagram Posts***

Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy housed at Bryn Mawr College, posted once during the study’s designated window. The post from Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy was: “Auditions this Sunday!! No prep necessary. Link in bio” (Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy, 2020). The troupe did

not use Instagram often throughout March 2020 to August 2021; however, the one post featured above referencing auditions offered insight into the benefits of play and how much it matters that the stories, games, and play continued with new members. The next section highlights components from the benefits of games and play subtheme that were apparent during the observations of three comedy troupes: The Girlie Project, Vertigo-go Improv, and Derby Comedy troupe.

### ***Benefits of Games and Play: Observations***

The troupe rehearsals observed during the Spring 2022 semester of three troupes at diverse institutions of higher education: Emerson College, Swarthmore College, and Penn State University all revealed that student-comedians benefitted from engaging in play and games. As highlighted in the social media content from various troupes, today's undergraduate students are living and learning during a time of heightened awareness around social justice amidst a global pandemic. According to a Centers for Disease Control survey conducted in 2020, 63% of young people "are suffering significant symptoms of anxiety or depression" (Haseltine, 2021, para.3). In the survey, "nearly a quarter of respondents reported that they had started or increased their abuse of substances" (Haseltine, 2021, para.3). The students observed in the study: 18-25-year-old undergraduate college students are within the population more vulnerable and at risk to experience loneliness (Haseltine, 2021). In the midst of a society where 18-25-year-old undergraduate students were more at risk for loneliness, the student-comedians benefitted from spending time with one another and actively pursuing fun. Below, are a few examples of the ways the student-participants had fun in their rehearsals.

Throughout most of the 2-hour session led by The Girlie Project that I observed, most of the time was spent pitching sketch ideas, testing jokes with one another, and laughing. The Girlie

Project treated pitching their comedy sketch ideas like a game where laughter was currency. In all of the rehearsals observed, it was evident that there was “a trusting environment where people didn’t have to worry about being good or bad or right or wrong” (Drinko, 2020, para.4). The student comedians observed during the spring 2022 semester benefitted from playing games like “mind meld” and pitching new and creative ideas for sketches as The Girlie Project did.

As Drinko (2020) stated, “playing well with others may make you feel better about yourself” (para. 4). The improv experts of Vertigo-go: Swarthmore College’s improv troupe understood that play and fun were required parts of improv. In a 2015 piece featured in Swarthmore College’s *The Phoenix*, one member said that Vertigo-go Improv sometimes called “attention to the weirdness of the world” and sometimes they ended up “adding to it” (Bloch, 2015, para. 4). Throughout the rehearsal it was evident that Vertigo-go members enjoyed taking the ordinary and making it “something intricate, layered, and truly bizarre” (Bloch, 2015, para .4). In the article, the Vertigo-go member stated, “If you leave one of our shows feeling a little sillier, or maybe a little more open minded, we’ve done our job” (Bloch, 2015, para. 4). Embracing the silly and playing improv games like Space Builder positively contribute to the mental health and wellbeing of participants (Bloch, 2015; Drinko, 2020).

In all three troupes observed, it was evident that humor and levity were key components to the success of their rehearsals; “levity and humor are essential tools for forging more human connections and improving performance, strengthening bonds in the good times, and fostering resilience for the bad times” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p. 134). The next section provides an introduction of the benefits of various humor styles subtheme within the laughter and play skills theme.

## **Benefits of Various Humor Styles Subtheme Introduction**

The second subtheme within the larger theme, laughter and play skills, is the benefits of various humor styles. Betty, a member of Emerson College's The Girlie Project, stated "We have a lot of extremely different humors. Like a lot of people have very different styles of comedy. Yes. Yeah. And I think not having men in the space helps create an environment where everyone is comfortable." Betty's reference to the different humor alluded to why the benefits of various styles is a subtheme of the larger theme.

In the book, *Humor Seriously: Why Humor is a Secret Weapon in Business and Life*, Aaker and Bagdonas (2021) described four primary humor styles that they deem as "the Stand-up, the Sweetheart, the Magnet, and the Sniper" (p. 32). Each of the humor styles add value to the understanding of humor, and levity and each of the humor styles has a distinctive way of viewing the world (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021). Additionally, the four distinctive styles of humor came from their research involving interviews, facilitating workshops, and analyzing the culture of high-profile organizations. The next section highlights ideas and data from the individual interviews that most aligned with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme.

In the study's 15 individual interviews, the various student-comedian participants highlighted reasons why they enjoyed being a part of a collegiate comedy troupe. As mentioned, the interviews were open to 18-25-year-old women-identified college students who were members of collegiate comedy troupes. The troupes ranged in style, some were more sketch focused like Bloomers Comedy troupe and The Girlie Project; other troupes included were more focused on improv like Davidson College's Oops! and Cornell University's The Whistling Shrimp. Throughout the individual interviews there were values, attitudes, and beliefs that appeared in dissecting the transcripts. The list below includes the values, attitudes, and beliefs

that most aligned with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme.

### *Values*

- Laughter does not always have to be communal
- Solo laughter matters
- The opportunity to audition for more than one troupe
- Diversity among performers and representation in comedy matters (specifically seeing Asian American women in comedy)
- Humor that does not make being “funny” into a big deal
- Being a bold scene partner; bringing boldness to comedy
- Humor in the everyday; laughing at regular/normal parts of life
- Inclusive humor and humor that does not put others down
- Keeping sketches short and sweet

### *Attitudes*

- Satire/satirical comedy is a way to describe comedy
- Finding your sweet spot in comedy is something to cherish
- Risk taking is one element of humor/comedy
- If we have fun; they [our audience] will have fun
- The comedy styles associated with what you consume plays a role in your delivery
- Having a comedic voice that is a bit overstated can stand out when others have dry humor
- Seeing a range of humor builds your voice in comedy
- Appreciate the intellect associated with certain types of humor
- Confidence as a way to describe your humor style



- The audience impacts the way comedy is utilized and depicted

### *Beliefs*

- Not everyone has to catch all elements of a joke
- There is humor in everything
- Humor is nuanced
- A comedic voice is something you can tap into for a performance

The values, attitudes, and belief within the benefits of various humor styles support the reasoning behind interviewing a diverse set of student-comedians. The individual interviews captured between October 2021 to April 2022 revealed that the target population, 18-25-year-old college students who identified as women, were invested in finding their humor voice and many recognized that humor is not a one-size-fits-all aspect of life. In an interview with a member of Indiana University's Ladies Night Troupe, the interviewee said that her voice was "a little more overstated." The Indiana University student, Cecilia said:

We have a lot drier humor type voices in the group. And, I think that mine, it's like a little more overstated. It's a little more energetic. I think it just adds variety to a show.

You don't want to watch a show of like six comedians who have the same voice.

Cecilia's understanding about her distinctive comedy voice represented the power of spending time practicing and honing your craft.

"The manner in which humor is delivered is widely accepted as disposition and therefore a certain style of humor" (Leist & Müller, 2012, p. 552). Using the work of Martin et al. (2003), Leist and Müller (2012) builds on the importance of understanding humor styles and how they are related to "self-regulatory strategies, quality of life, and well-being" (p. 552). Gigi from The Whistling Shrimp of Cornell University said that she found humor in transparency. Gigi

referenced the shows, *It's Always Sunny in Paradise*, *Parks and Recreation*, and *The Office*, and said:

I think those shows are great and funny, but I find that the bloopers when the actors break and are themselves is much more enjoyable. And, so that's what I like watching in my improv group too...when everyone starts laughing, when they're talking. I find that way funnier than the content.

In an insightful way, Gigi acknowledged that humor and laughter is not always scripted or formulaic. Gigi's insight revealed that authentic humor is often more appealing than polished and scripted humor.

A running theme throughout the individual interviews was that humor can look different and that laughs do not always have to be communal; sometimes laughing at your own joke is not a bad thing. Though no interviewees offered a standardized definition of a "good sense of humor", there was a sense that certain humor and humor styles resonate more. In an interview with Carol from The Sketchies at Skidmore College, Carol said "I'm a big fan of sarcasm in terms of my writing. I like goofiness and sarcasm.... I really love smart, witty humor and cleverness in terms of writing. In terms of writing, I'm working towards that." In an article focused on the science of sarcasm, the author stated that "studies have shown that exposure to sarcasm enhances creative problem solving" (Chin, 2011, para. 2).

As supported by the analysis of the interviews, women-identified college students ages 18 to 25 who participated in collegiate comedy troupes understood that humor comes in different shapes and sizes. According to M. Davis (2019), "There's no such thing as a completely humorless individual" (para.17). M. Davis (2019) acknowledged that no culture is devoid of humor. Throughout the interviews, it was evident that the student comedian environments were not devoid of humor or opportunities to joke and infuse comedy. The next section analyzes the

documents via social media including tweets and Instagram posts from the study's selected historically women's collegiate comedy troupes.

The tweets and Instagram posts analyzed in the study represented a key aspect of the student-comedian's lives. In addition to the words and graphics, the over 118 emojis from the Unicode system coded in the study represented the diverse range of content that the student-comedians shared via social media. The next section will cover the tweets that best fit with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme posted by the selected troupes between March 2020 to August 2021.

### ***Bloomers Comedy Tweets***

Bloomers Comedy Troupe was one of the most active of all of the troupes on Twitter between March 2020 to August 2021. The UPenn women-identified comedians utilized the platform to share their wit, humor, and strengthen their comedy muscles. The range in the types of jokes shared on the troupe's profile alluded to Bloomers Comedy troupe's recognition that individuals benefit from various humor styles. A tweet that stood out that I deemed as "feminist humor" was the tweet that read, "gender reveal party but it's either a dollar or 75¢ and some pepper spray" (Bloomers, 2021a). As highlighted in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, Bloomers Comedy troupe members have become known for not shying away from approaching politics in their humor. The next section analyzes tweets from Circular Reasoning Improv.

### ***Circular Reasoning Improv Tweets***

The engagement on Twitter by Circular Reasoning Improv during March 2020 to August 2021 involved the troupe tweeting four times. Their humor and sense of humor came through the most with the tweet:

Sappy admin tweet: It is the 1 year anniversary of this account and what a year it's been!

I could never have imagined the amazing friendships I've made or the wonderful things I've gotten to do as part of CRI. I'm so grateful to this org I love you all 🤍🙏"

(Circular Reasoning Improv, 2020a)

Circular Reasoning Improv, a part of The Ohio State University community, celebrated that their troupe had been on the social media platform for exactly one year. Their tweeting style of humor and brand included the use of various emojis including the red heart and the pleading face emojis. According to Emojipedia (n.d.-b), the pleading face emoji (🙏) at its peak was “the third most popular emoji on Twitter” (para. 2) and was most often used along with heart emojis. By engaging on Twitter and using emojis, Circular Reasoning Improv established a part of their digital footprint and strengthened their online voice by using a popular tool to communicate. In 2022, *Bustle* updated an article originally published in 2015 titled, “Here's What The Face Emojis Actually Mean.” In the article, *Bustle* Editors (2022) dissected the various meanings of the diverse face emojis. According to the *Bustle* editorial team:

When it comes to IRL facial expressions, most people can do a pretty good job deciphering the message someone is conveying by their beaming smile or disappointed frown. But, in the world of emojis, things can get a tad confusing. (para. 1)

Circular Reasoning Improv displayed their varied senses of humor and tone that incorporated emojis on Twitter. The next section analyzes tweets shared by Derby Comedy that best aligned with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme.

### ***Derby Comedy Tweets***

The members of Derby Comedy troupe engaged on their Twitter platform 25 times between March 2020 to August 2021. The tweets drafted and posted by members of Derby Comedy troupe ranged in themes and comedic takes. McAndrew (2018) stated, “humor can be a

device for connecting people who are operating on the same wavelength” (para. 16). Derby Comedy troupe, made up of women identified student comedians at Penn State University, used the retweet function six times during the study’s designated months. The tweets below were all retweets and all represented a variety of humor types:

- Stay safe out there PSU Comedy (Second Floor Standup, 2020).
- Heartwarming! Penn State Administration Bravely Carries on Long-Standing University Tradition of Not Doing Anything of Any Particular Importance About Anything That Actually Matters (Phroth Humor Magazine, 2020).
- Penn State's comedy groups Derby and Second Floor Stand-Up joked about nursery rhymes, saltine crackers and Robert Pattinson during a live show for students  
"@DERBYtroupe seeks to create an inclusive environment for women to write and perform comedy" (The Daily Collegian, 2020).

The retweets shared by Derby Comedy that were from Penn State entities included Second Floor Standup, Phroth Humor Magazine, and The Daily Collegian. The bios housed on Twitter from the three entities are featured below:

- Second Floor Stand Up known as “Penn State's best and only stand-up comedy club!” (Second Floor Standup, n.d.)
- Phroth Humor Magazine™ known as Penn State University's oldest Comedy Publication (Phroth Humor Magazine, n.d.)
- *The Daily Collegian* known as an “Independent student news outlet bringing you the latest from the Penn State community since 1887” (The Daily Collegian, n.d.)

The three Pennsylvania State University entities retweeted by Derby Comedy all have their voice and brand of humor. The next section analyzes tweets from The Girlie Project that

most aligned with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme.

### ***The Girlie Project Tweets***

The Girlie Project used their Twitter profile to share humorous content and showcase their diverse brands of style of humor. In a tweet from September 2020, The Girlie Project shared, “the boy project 😂😂.” The humorous tweet from The Girlie Project included two of the “face with tears of joy” emoji that is the most used on Twitter according to Emojipedia (n.d.-a). The “face with tears of joy” emoji is “widely used to show something is funny or pleasing” (Emojipedia, n.d.-a, para. 2). According to Broni (2022), the “face with tears of joy” emoji held the top position on Twitter for years; “since March 2012 when Apple first began using the Unicode Standard’s recommended emoji codepoints within iOS 5.1” (para. 8). The “face with tears of joy” emoji, a popular symbol, has become associated with laughter. In 2015, the Oxford Dictionary crowned the cry-laughing emoji “Word of the Year” because the emoji reflected “the ethos, mood, and preoccupations” of the year (Jones, 2021, para. 4). The Girlie Project understood the value of using the well understood, yet divisive emoji in their social content (Jones, 2021). The next section provides insight into the tweets from Sphincter Comedy that most aligned with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme.

### ***Sphincter Comedy Tweets***

Sphincter Comedy troupe posted 11 times on Twitter between March 2020 to August 2021. The Yale University historically women’s collegiate comedy troupe had a specific brand of humor that they shared on Twitter. Sphincter Comedy is one of six sketch/satire comedy troupes at Yale University where Fifth Humour is the oldest sketch comedy troupe on campus (Yale College Arts, 2018; Yale Daily News, 2014). Sphincter Comedy’s risk-taking humor and their appreciation for various humor styles was highlighted in their content. Examples of some of

the riskier jokes included:

- “I’m like a bull... I see a red flag and I run towards it” (Sphincter Troupe, 2021a)
- “some people got a co-dependent relationship with their momma. it’s me. be easy y’all.” (Sphincter Troupe, 2021b)

The willingness to be bold in the comedy style showcased the troupe’s commitment to push the envelope on what’s deemed appropriate humor. The next section offers a summary of the Twitter content that most aligned with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme.

### ***Benefits of Various Humor Styles Subtheme: Twitter Summary***

As depicted in the tweets from Bloomers Comedy, Circular Reasoning Improv, Derby Comedy, The Girlie Project, and Sphincter Comedy, the troupes understood that Twitter was one vessel to share more about their humor voices and they used their profiles to showcase the variety of humor types. The next section analyzes the posts from the study’s selected seven troupes that used Instagram between March 2020 to August 2021. According to Martin et al. (2003), the four distinguished humor styles are: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating. All of the Twitter content from the study’s respective troupes reveal that one entity can take on humor that aligns within the four categories established by Martin et al. (2003). The tweets from the designated troupes highlighted that sense of humor can come across well through jokes on a social media platform and further supports the concept that “a sense of humor is an important part of psychological functioning” (Martin et al., 2003, p. 50). The next section highlights the Instagram posts that aligned with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme.

### ***Bechdel Test Instagram Posts***

Bechdel Test used Instagram to spotlight individual members and throughout the first months of 2021, the troupe posted links with audition videos from their various members.

Throughout January 2021, the troupe members shared five audition-focused posts on Instagram. Each post was focused on encouraging new members to audition and work with the current troupe members. Each audition-focused post highlighted the troupe members' sense of humor. All of the videos posted on The Bechdel Test's audition-focused "countdown to audition" posts revealed the range of humor styles and the troupe's commitment to recruit members with similar and new ranges of humor. The next section provides insight into the Bloomers Comedy troupe's posts on Instagram that most aligned with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme.

### ***Bloomers Comedy Instagram Posts***

There are various humor styles within the Bloomers Comedy Instagram content. Bloomers Comedy troupe's Instagram account served as an important look into the country's oldest historically women's collegiate comedy troupe. The posts shared on Instagram from Bloomers Comedy troupe support the concept that humor works well on social media. According to Negrean (2021), "the main explanation of why humor works on social media" is because "it draws empathy to the surface" (para. 26). The members of Bloomers Comedy troupe that contributed to Instagram between March 2020 to August 2021 willingly shared aspects of their personality on the platform. The humor styles of the troupe shined through in the performances. In addition to performing and sharing their content on YouTube, Bloomers Comedy troupe used Instagram to post promos for various sketches during the study's designated window. A few examples of Bloomers Comedy troupe's posts that focused on their content and how they used Instagram as a way to engage with their primary audience, fellow comedians and fans at UPenn, alumni, and those invested in comedy, especially women-identified comedians in college are listed below:

- As we dive deep into our first day of BLOOMERS AUDITIONS, enjoy a rendition of



how best to b.s. answers to questions you're not quite sure about, brought to you by our favorite native Londoners. To sign up for auditions for the next 2 days! fill out our form at <https://tinyurl.com/bloomersauditions> linked in bio ;) (Bloomers Comedy, 2020a)

- Get ready to eat your heart out. Friday 10 am. (Bloomers Comedy, 2020b).
- Video games feel like real life nowadays, especially for Joey. Find out why in Call of Daddy this Friday. (Bloomers Comedy, 2020c).
- TAKING OFF ON FRIDAY 10.16! Come shake it with Bloomers on the tarmac, we know you wanna ;) (Bloomers Comedy, 2020e).
- What is Bloomers Chair @reagan.bracknell trying to say??! Find out FRIDAY at 10 am! (Bloomers Comedy, 2020g).
- PARTICIPATION CREDIT PEEK-A-BOO? MORE LIKE PEEK-A-ZOOM! GET HYPE FOR BABY REAGAN! (Bloomers Comedy, 2020h).

The next section highlights Instagram posts from Circular Reasoning Improv and how their posts revealed the benefits of various humor styles.

### ***Circular Reasoning Improv Instagram Posts***

Circular Reasoning Improv at The Ohio State University posted three times on Instagram between March 2020 to August 2021. The improv troupe did not frequently engage on Instagram during the study's designated window; however, their use of the platform and their ability to be a sustained improv troupe revealed their commitment to express various humor styles. Solomon (2016) claimed sarcasm enhances creativity and interpreting sarcasm requires creative thinking. The troupe embodied creative thinking and their Instagram was one avenue to express their creativity, and ability to showcase the skills required to be successful in improv. According to an article on the MasterClass website focused on the skills needed to thrive in improv, improv

performers should “be honest.” “Great comedy embraces truth, and audiences invest when they see human characters with honest emotions” (MasterClass Staff, 2022, para. 19). Circular Reasoning Improv shared their thoughts and sense of humor with emotion and embraced the truth. The next section analyzes Instagram posts shared by Control Top Improv that aligned with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme.

### ***Control Top Improv Instagram Posts***

Control Top Improv posted twice on Instagram between March 2020 to August 2021. The post that most revealed the troupe’s commitment to valuing one another and valuing the individual member’s ability to make one another laugh was:

Hi angelz! We loved seeing our fellow toplets’ beautiful shining faces via Zoom tonight and we can’t wait to see each other in person soon to make you all laugh. Take care of yourselves and each other everyone and stay cute you cuties! (Control Top Improv, 2020a).

The troupe members recognized the importance of connecting, practicing self-care, and enjoying time with one another to engage and learn from one another’s views on comedy. During the pandemic where there was limited interaction with one another, the troupe used Zoom to stay connected, to learn from one another, and enjoy their various senses of humor. Zoom did not limit the troupe’s ability to express their diverse senses of humor; instead, it became an outlet to share laughter and comedic expression. In an article focused on combating Zoom fatigue, a contributor to *ISE Magazine* wrote that humor can be the vessel to make any meeting including a virtual one more fun (Human Network Contributor, 2021). The next section highlights the Instagram posts from Derby Comedy that best aligned with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme.

### ***Derby Comedy Instagram Posts***

Derby Comedy troupe used Instagram throughout the study's designated months. One of the posts that best revealed the types of humor that represented Derby Comedy was posted on November 5, 2020. In the post, the troupe offered a spotlight on one of the members and listed out the things that the Derby Comedy troupe member found humorous. The list featured below offered an insider's look into the range of humor.

- Favorite type of comedy I like to perform is character bits
- I have a night light in my room
- Avid Roblox Troller
- I have a designated box for costumes and props in my room
- If a party doesn't have dancing, I'll either dance by myself or leave
- I think clowns are really funny
- I love leaving voice memos to people of me making random noises (Derby: A Women's Comedy Troupe, 2020e).

The next section will highlight the Instagram posts from Ladies Night that best aligned with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme.

### ***Ladies Night Comedy Instagram Posts***

Ladies Night Comedy housed at Indiana University posted about their auditions on Instagram throughout March 2020 to August 2021. Auditions are important when referencing the benefits of various humor styles. Historically, women-identified comedians have had to petition to audition for historically men's troupes like the women at Harvard who petitioned to join Hasty Pudding Theatricals (Memmolo, 2015). The posts shared by Ladies Night Comedy that focused on recruiting and auditions revealed the troupe's interest in gaining more members and

expanding their view and humor styles. The next section offers insight into Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy.

### ***Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy Instagram Posts***

As previously mentioned, Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy did not use Instagram often during the study's window. The one post from September 2021 focused on auditions. In an article written to help comedians prepare for auditions, one of the suggestions is to dial up the energy because comedy is a "high-energy craft" (Lindsay, 2016, para. 7). The art and craft associated with the audition process provides one platform to show off your sense of humor and show your ability to commit and lose yourself in a character (Lindsay, 2016). Auditions allowed individuals to express a side of their comedic voice and sense of humor. The next section offers insight into how TFL's posts shared on Instagram aligned with the benefits of various humor styles subtheme.

### ***TFL Instagram Posts***

TFL Comedy is a troupe that practiced the art of collaboration. In an Instagram post shared in 2020, the Tufts University student comedians declared that they were partnering with their "very funny friends" (TFL Comedy, 2020a). The funny friends included the members of Tufts Cheap Sox!, Tufts Institute Sketch Comedy, Tufts Majors, Tufts Traveling Treasure Trunk, and Hype Mime Troupe (TFL Comedy, 2020a). All of the troupes and comedic organizations featured in the post were a part of the Tufts "COMEDY O-SHOW" held on September 4, 2020 (TFL Comedy, 2020a). The collaborative efforts of TFL supports the benefits of various humor styles subtheme. TFL engaged with other troupes and recognized that they were a part of a larger unit of collegiate comedians at Tufts University. Similar to the other historically women troupes featured in the study, TFL's comedic range and diversity allowed them to engage with other

troupes on campus and widen the troupe's collective understanding and development of humor and levity. The next section provides insight into the benefits of various humor styles as shown through observations.

***Benefits of Various Humor Styles Subtheme: Observations***

In the observations of the three troupes: Emerson College's The Girlie Project, Swarthmore College's Vertigo go Improv, and Penn State's Derby Comedy troupe, there were moments that revealed a range of style of humors aligned with the four humor styles (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021). I intentionally did not have the eligible participants take the humor quiz created by Aaker and Bagdonas (2021); however, in the observations it was evident that the study's participants have senses of humor that connect with the humor brands. The Girlie Project troupe's rehearsal served as an ideal example to better understand the benefits of various humor styles because of the range of sketches pitched during the rehearsal. Within the writer's room session, The Girlie Project posed ideas for sketches on a myriad of topics including a sketch about the actual troupe, a sketch about a house party at actor, Chris Pratt's home, and a host of other comedic ideas. Within the 2 hours, more than 10 sketch ideas were posed. According to Aaker and Bagdonas (2021), you not only "can shift styles, but you should" (p. 35). Throughout the sketch pitch round-robin led by The Girlie Project troupe members, the magnet style- people who "keep things positive, warm, and uplifting" helped keep the environment open and receptive to funny, creative ideas (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p. 34).

The Vertigo-go troupe's rehearsal was mostly the troupe members playing improv games. Throughout the rehearsal that I observed, the humor styles that stood out the most were the sweetheart style and the magnet (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021). The sweetheart style tends to be more "earnest and honest," and the magnet has the ability to keep things uplifting and "radiate

charisma” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p.34). The troupe’s commitment to cheerful play and creating an atmosphere where laughs and humor were encouraged aligned the most with those four primary humor styles.

While observing Derby Comedy troupe, the majority of the rehearsal was spent playing an improv game called “mind-meld” after the members discussed business points. The mind meld game centers around having participants get to one conclusion and is “good for forming a group mind and to help people focus on what their scene partner wants and how they think” (Hoopla!, n.d., para. 7). The improv skills required to play mind meld are skills that support student-comedians and allow for individuals to appreciate the various humor styles. Additionally, playing mind meld supports the idea that humor styles “can vary depending on our mood, the situation, and the audience” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p. 35). In summary, all three of the troupes that I observed had participants with a range of humor styles and understanding of comedy and humor. The next section provides a summary of the laughter and play skills theme extracted from the data collected.

### ***Summary of Laughter and Play Skills Theme***

In the laughter and play skills theme, the tip that Provine (2000) titled, “adopt a laugh-ready attitude” (p. 212) is exemplified in the benefits of games and play and the benefits of various humor styles subthemes. Provine (2000) claimed, “Although you probably can’t produce convincing voluntary laughter, you can voluntarily choose to laugh more by lowering your threshold for laughter” (p. 212). In answering the study’s research questions featured below, the tips from Provine (2000) were emboldened and aligned in distinct ways.

1. How do women-identified undergraduate students who participate in collegiate comedy troupes housed in the United States describe their relationship with fellow

- troupe members?
2. How does being a part of a collegiate comedy troupe in the United States help women-identified undergraduate students build community with one another and mitigate loneliness permeating the culture during a global pandemic?

Many students are living, learning, and building communities in high-stress times with campuses that “require decompression” (Bloch, 2015, para. 4). The interactions with the student-comedians via interviews, analyzing social media content, and observing the rehearsals and writer’s room sessions of three troupes revealed that women-identified student comedians willingly built spaces that welcome and encourage play. Additionally, student comedians have built communities that value diverse sense of humor styles. According to Dowthwaite (2017), “not only do funny people make others laugh, they also laugh more themselves” (para. 8). Throughout the study, it was evident that student comedians laughed more often when they made their peers laugh.

It is worth noting that the study’s participants - undergraduate college students age 18 to 25 are a part of Generation Z born between 1997 to 2012; Generation Z have become known for a distinctive brand of comedy with “jokes no other era of people have even had the opportunity to create” (Ehlich, 2020, para. 1). The participants in the study belong to a generation that has developed a sense of humor unlike previous generations. According to Ehlich (2020), “Millennials were the first group to really be brought up with computers and the internet, but Gen Z was the first generation raised on the fully developed web” (para. 19).

### **Summary of Results**

In summary, this chapter described some of the study participants’ insights when asked questions in individual interviews as well as analysis of the social media content on Twitter and

Instagram. The analysis provided insight into how the observations of rehearsals and writer's room sessions provided details into how troupe members interact with one another and actively build community through their comedic practices. The questions that guided the study were:

1. How do women-identified undergraduate students who participate in collegiate comedy troupes housed in the United States describe their relationships with fellow troupe members?
2. How does being a part of a collegiate comedy troupe in the United States help women-identified undergraduate students build community with one another and mitigate loneliness permeating the culture during a global pandemic?

The final chapter of the dissertation offers an understanding of how the data collection methods assisted in answering the study's questions. The chapter speaks to insights constructed from the literature review, as well as contributions to the study and possible future research needs based on the findings of the study or information not found within the study.



## CHAPTER 5

### INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final chapter, I pull together a few conclusions, provide implications for future research and cover the limitations of the study. Additionally, I include a section on the implications for practitioners. I start with the purpose of the study before unpacking the three conclusions derived from the study that include:

1. Student-comedians who identify as women and participate in collegiate comedy troupes use comedy, humor, and levity to create an open and playful environment despite the circumstances of society at large.
2. Higher education communities benefit from creating more spaces where comedy, humor, and levity function as key components in interactions and engagements with undergraduate college students.
3. Provide students with more opportunities to activate the tips posed by Provine (2000) and infuse elements from improv, sketch, and stand-up comedy in various aspects of the collegiate student-affairs ethos.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the study was to better understand how undergraduate college students who identify as women that participated in collegiate comedy troupes build a community and use comedy to mitigate loneliness permeating the culture during a global pandemic known as COVID-19. I interviewed 18-25-year-old college students, a population more prone to be impacted by increase in loneliness according to research done by Weissbourd et al. (2021). The

study incorporated multiple data collection methods aligned with a qualitative case study including individual interviews, focus group interviews, document analysis, and observations. The next section of the chapter provides further insight into the research questions that guided the study and insight into the conclusions.

### **Summary of Results**

As described in Chapter 4 of the dissertation, I aimed to better understand the relationship dynamics of 18-25-year-old undergraduate women-identified college students in collegiate comedy troupes offered two key themes: student participants in the troupes are learning and practicing community-building skills as well as laughter and play skills. Both of the larger themes had subthemes that offer insight into what these skills mean within the context of a comedy troupe and more generally.

### ***Results From Question 1***

The first question that led the study was: How do women-identified undergraduate students who participate in collegiate comedy troupes housed in the United States describe their relationship with fellow troupe members? In an attempt to answer this question, the study involved individual interviews, a focus group interview, analysis of social media documents, tweets and Instagram posts, and observations of live rehearsals and writer's room sessions. One of the results from answering this question was that women-identified student comedians are experts at intentionally infusing comedy, humor, and levity into their comedy practices and their comedy-community.

In the individual interviews, the values, attitudes, and beliefs extracted from coding the transcripts revealed that women-identified students who participated in collegiate comedy troupes within four-year universities in the United States are invested in the power of comedy,

humor, and levity in how their communities are built. Some of the interviewees discussed the values of being in a troupe that was collaborative, supportive, and that the relationship and dynamic of being in a troupe allowed them to focus on the team and forget the outside world especially during rehearsals.

The troupe members managed to create a space where laughter and play were welcomed and encouraged. The individual interviews especially illuminated that the women-identified student comedians in collegiate troupes recognize that they are doing something, silly, fun, and yet still culture-shifting because they are women in comedy, an area of society that has historically been deemed a male-centric space. Additionally, the students recognized that participating in a comedy troupe allowed them to practice skills in public speaking, writing, performing, brainstorming, event-planning, hone leadership skills, and collaborate with their peers and other creatives.

In analyzing the documents, social media posts from Twitter and Instagram, it was evident that the troupes active on the profiles during the window of March 2020 to August 2021 utilized their profiles in four primary ways. The four primary ways that the social media outlets were used included: (a) a way to spotlight one another and the work, (b), a social justice platform, (c) a testing lab for comedic material, creative concepts, and jokes, and (d) a way to recruit future members into the troupes and continue the legacy of the troupe.

In analyzing the social media documents from the 11 historically women collegiate troupes, it was evident that students care about their current roster and building a legacy of future student comedians. The observations held to support answering question one offered more insight into why student comedians benefit from creative exploration in sketches, in rehearsals, and in the art

of pitching ideas and offering one another feedback. The next section offers insight into the results from the study's second guiding question.

### ***Results from Question 2***

The second question that guided the qualitative case study was, "How does being a part of a collegiate comedy troupe in the United States help women-identified undergraduate students build community with one another and mitigate loneliness permeating the culture during a global pandemic?" This question was inspired in part due to the research conducted by the Harvard University Making Caring Common team's research on how the pandemic deepened the more silent epidemic of loneliness within the United States (Weissbourd et al., 2021). According to Weissbourd et al. (2021), "we urgently need strategies for preventing and mitigating loneliness" (p. 8). The study's target population intentionally fostered relationships with one another and created vibrant communities where comedy, humor, and levity were parts of the lifelines of the communities.

The responses from question two of the study support the concept that more students would benefit from being in spaces where comedy, humor, and levity serve as a central guiding principle. It is not realistic that all 18-25-year-old women-identified college students will be drawn to joining a comedy troupe or interested in practicing one of the many forms of comedy including short-form improv and long-form improv (MasterClass Staff, 2022). However, the skills that come along with comedy, in particular improv comedy done without a script (MasterClass Staff, 2022) benefit undergraduate college students in today's environment where loneliness is a silent epidemic (Weissbourd et al., 2021). As the MasterClass staff wrote in a piece on improv, there are components of improv that involve worrying less about being funny and "focus instead on staying present in the scene" (para. 20). Improv is one form of comedic

arts where it less about the concern that you are funny and more about “listening to your partner, trusting your instincts, and reacting honestly” (MasterClass Staff, 2022, para. 20). These elements of improv are all components that can help strengthen bonds with one another. Weissbourd et al. (2021) noted that in their study, “About half of lonely young people in our survey reported that no one in the past few weeks had “taken more than just a few minutes” to ask how they are doing in a way that made them feel like the person “genuinely cared” (p. 7). The elements of improv push back on this because to be a part of an improv performance and be fully engaged means that you are listening and connecting (MasterClass Staff, 2022). The next section provides a summary statement of the results.

### ***Summary Statement***

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study that deserves considerations from various elements of higher education including how institutions can better serve students who are living and learning throughout global pandemics and more silent pandemics like loneliness. Additionally, this study raises questions that warrant further investigations. Future research is needed to deepen the understanding of the community-building skills and laughter and play skills that comedy troupes provide undergraduate students especially who are invested in comedic arts. The next section provides insight into the implications for future research.

### **Implications for Future Research**

In this section of the conclusion, I focus on what I would do to improve this study, what needs to be studied next in relation to the topic, and how I could conduct the same research in a better way. The first section answers the prompt regarding improvements to the study. To improve the study, I would conduct more in person interviews with undergraduate students if possible and spend more time with students across troupes at one or two universities. Because

many colleges and universities have more than one collegiate comedy troupe on their campus, future research could take a deeper dive and examine the collaborations and efforts across one or two campuses. Future research could also focus on competition and troupe members who travel for tournaments and shows in addition to performing on their home campus and in local venues.

To continue the research and better understand women-identified students who participate in collegiate comedy troupes, I encourage researchers to take a closer look at the writing involved in the comedy. The sketches in particular provide one avenue to understand the creativity and intelligent humor that the college students are bringing to their craft. This study provides an avenue to better understand how alumni of the troupes give back and connect with current students fostering a deeper bond to the troupe and expanding the community far beyond the campus or college/university grounds.

As a qualitative researcher, I could have conducted the same research in a better way. Given the study's window and as COVID-19 restrictions were shifting during the bulk of the interviewing, I could have traveled to more troupes in person within a limited region and conducted deeper dives into one or two troupes. Further research could also allow for a deeper understanding of the humor styles and how people who identify within the four primary styles according to Aaker and Bagdonas (2021) work together within various collegiate spaces. As more researchers continue to understand and dissect the benefits of laughter for holistic health, there are more opportunities to expand on these topics and to craft practical, theory-backed suggestions for diverse stakeholder groups within higher education. The next section will cover implications for practitioners in particular student-affairs practitioners who engage closely with college students in comedy organizations across universities in the United States.

## **Implications for Practitioners**

This section provides insight into the implications for practitioners – in particular student-affairs practitioners who are intrinsically connected with the holistic welfare of undergraduate college students and who have their pulse on student led organizations sponsored and recognized by colleges and universities. Given the results and overarching themes pulled from the data, I expect that student-affairs practitioners will have more targeted guidance on how to interact with collegiate comedians.

Beyond the connection with students who are active members of collegiate comedy troupes, the findings of this study elevate the importance of activating the tips to enhance laughter crafted by Provine (2000). Provine's tips for enhancing laughter showed up in the ways that the study's participants communicated with one another and built their communities within their respective troupes. The tips provided a framework to the study and one way to think about laughter; however, the tips also provide guidance for student-affairs practitioners who are looking for ways to foster community where laughter, comedy, humor, and levity are encouraged. Provine's tips are important and should be used; additionally, this study provides researchers with the opportunity to expand on the suggestions, alter them, and add to the list of ways to enhance laughter.

Practitioners can use the learnings from this study to help guide engagement with 18-25-year-old undergraduate students who are living during a time of heightened loneliness (Weissbourd et al., 2021). There are practical implications from the community-building skills theme from the data collected in the case study. Student affairs practitioners can use elements from comedy to help their student population engage in creative communities and implement some of the practices from improv into their interactions with students. One practical way that

student affairs leaders can engage with students is to use the Humor Styles Quiz created by Aaker and Bagdonas (2021) and featured in Appendix O. Additionally, student affairs practitioners who work with student leaders and student organizations can examine some of the tactics used by the study's participants to cultivate communities using web-based platforms like Zoom to hold "Zoomprov" sessions.

Practitioners would benefit from engaging in practices that explore creativity in community-building efforts. The elements from improv comedy including "listening closely to one another" and being honest in interactions are elements that can help strengthen all interactions within members of diverse higher education communities (MasterClass, 2022, para.18). The creativity found in the performances, communication, and interactions between the collegiate comedians can help guide practitioners in their efforts to strategically design programs for undergraduate students who are dealing with stressors from the pandemic and living in an age of loneliness (Klass, 2020; Weissbourd et al, 2021). Creativity can serve as a fundamental piece in how student affairs practitioners listen to students and better understand what type of community students want to be a part. This work will add on to the work and research conducted by researchers like David Cheng (2014) who sought to better understand why students and faculty were dissatisfied with the community-building efforts at one institution of higher education.

The data from the study revealed that women-identified student comedians are strengthening their capacity and ability to offer and receive constructive criticism and feedback from their peers and audiences. Student affairs practitioners and faculty members engaging with undergraduate students benefit from knowing that certain practices can help college students strengthen their skills in receiving constructive criticism. Engaging in comedy provides a safe



space for students to engage in feedback and public critique, something that is often difficult for higher achieving students to accept (Harvard Office of the Vice Provost for Advances in Learning, 2022). By practicing comedy, undergraduate students create a space rooted in listening, workshopping, and receiving constructive feedback so that skills are enhanced, comedic voice is sharpened, and performances are more polished for diverse internal and external audiences.

The data from this qualitative study support research focused on the benefits of campus-sponsored activities and providing students with resources like access to rooms and stages for rehearsals and performances. The communities built by the student-run comedy troupes featured in this study highlight the importance of higher education institutions providing resources for recognized student organizations. As mentioned in the report on loneliness, students are skilled at creating communities with “minimal prompting and support” (Weissbourd et al., 2021, p. 10).

Higher education practitioners who are seeking new ways to strengthen peer mentoring programs can learn from the ways that student-comedians build communities rooted in mentoring through jokes and comedic material. Additionally, practitioners who are coordinating events and programming would benefit from incorporating improv games and techniques into icebreakers and other community-strengthening workshops. Based on the study’s findings and answers to the research questions focused on how undergraduate college students build community with one another, there are three practical things that higher education leaders can do:

- Conduct an analysis of the student population’s understanding of what they find funny. Consider the humor analysis presented by Aaker and Bagdonas (2021) and use it as a platform for freshmen/first year students. Encouraging students to better define

their humor style and voice may prompt more students to engage in comedic outlets and find humor as an outlet to combat loneliness and other mental health struggles (Weissbourd et al., 2021).

- Survey and interview undergraduate students to see what types of comedic voices they are interested in bringing to campus. Eliciting feedback from undergraduate student-comedians who are practicing their craft gives students more agency and strengthens the relationships between administrators and students who are budding comedic-experts.
- Find ways to appropriately infuse humor into communications from student affairs practitioners. The more humor and levity appear in communications and outreach efforts, the more students will engage with humor and find elements of their personalities in the communities that they belong to.

The next section provides insight into the relationship of results to theory followed by a section on the limitations.

### **Relationship of Results to Theory**

The conceptual framework that grounded this study was the tips to enhance laughter listed by Provine (2000). The tips offered the study a lens to consider how communities rooted in comedy, humor, and levity can use the pointers suggested by Provine (2000), someone who investigated laughter and sought to better understand how and why humans laugh. Consistent with Provine's findings, laughter is "generally associated with good times, good performance, improved attitude, and desirable outcomes" (p. 209); the student comedians who served as the primary and target audience for the study exemplified and practiced the various principles in particular settings. The strategy and thoughtful ways to enhance laughter explored by Provine in

2000 were activated by college students throughout a global health crisis and a more silent health crisis associated with rampant loneliness (Weissbourd et al., 2020).

### **Limitations**

The study is limited in scope in part due to the bounding of the study. The study initially sought to hear from women-identified students who were members of the oldest historically women's comedy group, Bloomers Comedy troupe. Given the need to reach more eligible participants, the study expanded to women-identified students in 11 historically women's troupes between the ages of 18–25 years old. After needing to reach more students, the study transitioned to hear from undergraduate college students who identified as women, were between the ages of 18–25, and were members of co-gender and historically women comedy troupes. A limitation was that the study intentionally only examined Instagram and Twitter content from historically women troupes posted during the first year and six months of the COVID-19 pandemic, March 2020 to August 2021. The individual interviews were conducted between the months of October 2021 to April 2022, limiting the number of interviews available. Another limitation was that the observations of rehearsals and writer's room sessions took place via Zoom which shifted some of the elements of an observation that would have been more seamless if the observations had been done in person. Additionally, a limitation was the outreach given the nature of my relationships to various institutions of higher education; most of the outreach were "cold calls" and that played a role in the lack of interviews held. Most of the outreach occurred via email and later in the process, I engaged on social media by creating an account on Instagram (@qualresearcher21)

where I shared approved graphics and copy to recruit individual and focus-group interview participants. The next and final section of Chapter 5 provides a conclusion of the study.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Comedy, humor, and levity perform various functions. “Over the years, researchers have built a substantial body of evidence that some types of comedy including sophisticated satire, which is growing in popularity perform a potent social function, from breaking taboos to holding those in power to account” (O’Hara, 2016, para. 14). There are multiple reasons why even in a global pandemic when many aspects of life in 2020 paused or completely shut down, students were still eager to meet with their comedic cohorts and practice the art of comedy, bond with each other over jokes, and build community with one another. The qualitative case study helped strengthen the understanding of how comedy benefits college students, specifically women-identified college students between the ages of 18 to 25. In addition to the communities built and the ways the participants explored their creativity with laughter and play, the troupes explored the complexities of life amidst a global pandemic with grace and humor. Ideally, this study added to the general understanding of how college students living and learning in a global pandemic known as COVID-19 and a more silent one of loneliness showed up for one another via their collegiate comedy troupes.

## References

- Aaker, J., & Bagdonas, N. (2021). *Humor, seriously. Why humor is a secret weapon in business and life*. Penguin Random House.
- Active Minds. (2021). *COVID-19 impact on college student mental health* [Infographic]. Active Minds Student Survey. <https://www.activeminds.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Student-Survey-Infographic.pdf>
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. (2013). *Anthropological approaches: Uncovering unexpected insights about the implementation and outcomes of patient-centered medical home models*. <https://pcmh.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/anthropological-approaches-brief.pdf>
- Ajiboye, T. (2018, July 7.) Adults need recess too. Here's why you should make time to play. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/better/health/adults-need-recess-too-here-s-why-you-should-make-ncna887396>
- Al-Ahmad, N. (2020, September 13). Derby, Second Floor Stand-Up perform live on HUB lawn. *The Daily Collegian*. [https://www.collegian.psu.edu/news/campus/derby-second-floor-stand-up-perform-live-on-hub-lawn/article\\_c67cec32-f61a-11ea-a397-933d1655d6c3.html](https://www.collegian.psu.edu/news/campus/derby-second-floor-stand-up-perform-live-on-hub-lawn/article_c67cec32-f61a-11ea-a397-933d1655d6c3.html)
- Anderson, G. (2021, February 3). One-third of students seek counseling for pandemic effects. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2021/02/03/one-third-students-seek-counseling-pandemic-effects>
- Angelo, M. (2012, February 3). Sophomoric humor? Bring it on! *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/05/arts/national-college-comedy-festival-at->

skidmore.html?adxnnl=1&pagewanted=all&adxnnlx=1328295678-  
+6+rzeZISnShcADSspr6/g

Ao, B. (2018, October 19). Penn's pioneering all female comedy troupe launched an SNL star.

What's next? *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

<https://www.inquirer.com/philly/entertainment/bloomers-penn-womens-comedy-troupe-20181019.html>

Asher, M. (2016, May 10). *The surprising link between laughter and learning*. Fast Company.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3059651/the-surprising-link-between-laughter-and-learning>

Ashman, M. & Colvin, J. (2011). Peer mentoring roles. *NADE Digest*, 5(2), 45-53.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1097559.pdf>

Aucejo, E., French, J., Uganda, M., & Zafar, B. (2020, February 14). *The impact of COVID-19 on student experiences and expectations: Evidence from a survey*. National Bureau of

Economic Research. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w27392>

Auxier, B. & Anderson, M. (2021, April 7). *Social media use in 2021*. Pew Research Center.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021/>

Badwan, B. (2019, August 2). Yale comedy finds new life in New Haven. *Yale News*.

<https://news.yale.edu/2019/08/02/yale-comedy-finds-new-life-new-haven>

Barnard College. (n.d.). *Barnard College Student Experience & Engagement*.

<https://barnard.edu/student-experience-engagement>

Baskin, K. (2017, May 13). *How stand-up comedy helps MIT grad work out her work life*. MIT

Management Sloan School. <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/how-stand-comedy-helps-mit-grad-work-out-her-work-life>

Bechdel Test NYU. (n.d.-a). *Bechdel Test NYU: NYU's only all-female sketch & improv group.*

<https://bechdeltestnyu.weebly.com/>

Bechdel Test NYU [@bechdeltestnyu]. (n.d.-b). *Posts* [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved

August 13, 2022, from <https://www.instagram.com/bechdeltestnyu/>

Bechdel Test NYU [@bechdeltestnyu]. (2020a, March 15). *ZOOMPROV w some of our bechdel*

*ladies we* 🤍 *YOU wash your hands stay sexy luv bechdel* [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/B9xibd\\_BZTQ/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/B9xibd_BZTQ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bechdel Test NYU [@bechdeltestnyu]. (2020b, April 10). *hang out w us tonight @ 6 (EST) on ig*

*live !! don't worry we took this pic a long time ago* [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/B-zYmc4hTcU/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/B-zYmc4hTcU/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bechdel Test NYU [@bechdeltestnyu]. (2020c, November 20). *Submit Your Sketch to Bechdel*

*Test! For the next two weeks, Bechdel will be accepting sketch submissions to our email*

[Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CH1ZWpeBcqm/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CH1ZWpeBcqm/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bechdel Test NYU [@bechdeltestnyu]. (2021, February 18). *1ST REHEARSAL WITH OUR*

*NEW BABIES!! BECHDEL BABES (& sweet little sugarfish 🥰 😊) AAAAA! we're SO*

*excited* [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CLdaXO8huDZ/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CLdaXO8huDZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Berkowitz, J. (2013, December 12). How to be hilarious on twitter, from a writer who tweeted

her way to TV. *Fast Company*. [https://www.fastcompany.com/1682943/how-to-be-](https://www.fastcompany.com/1682943/how-to-be-hilarious-on-twitter-from-a-writer-who-tweeted-her-way-to-tv)

[hilarious-on-twitter-from-a-writer-who-tweeted-her-way-to-tv](https://www.fastcompany.com/1682943/how-to-be-hilarious-on-twitter-from-a-writer-who-tweeted-her-way-to-tv)

Beesam, S. & Yakoob, A. (2021, January 28). Why gendered clubs should be a thing of the past.

*The Daily Pennsylvanian*. <https://www.thedp.com/article/2021/01/upenn-bloomers-gendered-clubs>

Berezin, G. & Liss, M. (2020, September, 17). *The neuroscience of laughter, and how to inspire*

*more of it at work*. Your Brain At Work. <https://neuroleadership.com/your-brain-at-work/neuroscience-laughter-at-work/>

Berman, J. (2015). *A history of student theater at the University of Pennsylvania*. [Unpublished thesis]. University of Pennsylvania.

[https://pennplayersalumniclub.weebly.com/uploads/4/7/7/8/47786805/a\\_history\\_of\\_student\\_theatre\\_at\\_the\\_university\\_of\\_pennsylvania.pdf](https://pennplayersalumniclub.weebly.com/uploads/4/7/7/8/47786805/a_history_of_student_theatre_at_the_university_of_pennsylvania.pdf)

Bess, G. (2016, September 27). Please not the shack: How M.A.S.H. came to predict our

uncertain futures. *Vice*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/a3wvdp/please-not-the-shack-how-mash-came-to-predict-our-uncertain-futures>

Blatchford, E. (2017, July 19). There are nine different types of humour. Which one are you?

*The Huffington Post*. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/07/19/there-are-nine-different-types-of-humour-which-one-are-you\\_a\\_23036626/](https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/07/19/there-are-nine-different-types-of-humour-which-one-are-you_a_23036626/)

Bloch, S. (2015). Vertigo-go improv: Growth through the absurd. *The Phoenix*.

<https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2015/09/03/vertigo-go-improv-growth-through-the-absurd/>

Bloomers [@bloomerscomedy]. (n.d.). Tweets [Twitter profile]. Twitter. Retrieved January 9,

2023, from <https://twitter.com/bloomerscomedy>

Bloomers [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020a, September 29). *hamburger helper but he's actually*

*going through a mental breakdown: hamburger help me* [Tweet]. Twitter.



<https://twitter.com/BloomersComedy/status/1310995438145806337>

Bloomers [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020b, November 22). *career services: view our online resources for planning your post-grad future! the resources in question.* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/BloomersComedy/status/1330556612633825282?s=20>

Bloomers [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020c, December 16). *getting stuck doing the limbo call that stuck in limbo* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/BloomersComedy/status/1339351464347578372>

Bloomers [@bloomerscomedy]. (2021a, January 29). *gender reveal party but it's either a dollar or 75¢ and some pepper spray.* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/BloomersComedy/status/1355285748501663749>

Bloomers Comedy. (n.d.-a). *Bloomers comedy.* <https://www.bloomerscomedy.org/>

Bloomers Comedy. (n.d.-b). *Home* [YouTube Channel].

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNr\\_gis-pz8sW3yvSrsrEHw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNr_gis-pz8sW3yvSrsrEHw)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020a, September 7). *As we dive deep into our first day of BLOOMERS AUDITIONS, enjoy a rendition of how best to b.s. answers* [Video]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/tv/CE2dRPYDB6e/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/tv/CE2dRPYDB6e/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020b, September 30). *Get ready to eat your heart out. Friday 10 am.* [Photograph]. Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/p/CFxm-ywD3DG/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CFxm-ywD3DG/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020c, October 7). *Video games feel like real life nowadays, especially for Joey. Find out why in Call of Daddy this Friday* [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CGDn4XgjuSI/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CGDn4XgjuSI/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020d, October 11). *October 11 is National Coming Out Day! Here are 5 Philly-based organizations that you can donate to in order* [Graphic]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CGOHPHwDoGd/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CGOHPHwDoGd/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020e, October 14). *TAKING OFF ON FRIDAY 10.16! Come shake it with Bloomers on the tarmac, we know you wanna* [Video]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CGVtLjBDERV/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CGVtLjBDERV/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020f, October 16). *How to Park a Plane / Bloomers wants to take the time today to show our viewers the most important life* [Video]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/tv/CGaHldDDcMa/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/tv/CGaHldDDcMa/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020g, October 21). *What is Bloomers Chair @reagan.bracknell trying to say??! Find out FRIDAY at 10 am!* [Video]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CGnrRBmjMTJ/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CGnrRBmjMTJ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020h, October 23). *PARTICIPATION CREDIT PEEK-A-BOO? MORE LIKE PEEK-A-ZOOM! GET HYPE FOR BABY REAGAN!* [Video]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/tv/CGsGV16jvRx/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/tv/CGsGV16jvRx/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020i, December 14). *Day 1 Bringing you the best present of this holiday season: THE 12 DAYS OF BLOOMERS! Stay tuned for more* [Graphic]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CIydE0cDZdO/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CIydE0cDZdO/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020j, December 15). *Day 2 Use this Bloomers gift guide for those special people in your life. It will definitely keep everyone satisfied* [Graphic]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CI1h\\_ZBDZUh/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CI1h_ZBDZUh/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020k, December 16). *In Memoriam Day 3 Gone but never forgotten* 🍷 😔 [Video]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/tv/CI4YRVdDjIj/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/tv/CI4YRVdDjIj/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020l, December 17). *Day 4 WE INTERRUPT YOUR FINALS STUDY FOR THESE ESSENTIAL RECIPES: the ultimate holiday pick me ups* 🍸 #cocktails #drinks [Graphic]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CI6ucpsjFjJ/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CI6ucpsjFjJ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020m, December 19). *Day 6 Your Christmas gift came early: Our holly jolly chairwoman @reagan.bracknell Rockin' around the locust walk #holiday #funny #tree* [Video]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/tv/CI\\_0KNjj1V1/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/tv/CI_0KNjj1V1/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020n, December 20). *Day 7 Celebrating the Festival of Lights in linguistic fashion! What spelling do you use? #hannukah #channukah #jewish #funny #you* [Graphic]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CJCQEzOjfN8/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CJCQEzOjfN8/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020o, December 21). *Day 8 Featuring the lovely @shriyabeesam. TAG YOUR FAVORITE WHORE IN THE COMMENTS* [Photograph]. Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/p/CJFSkgcDRIJ/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CJFSkgcDRIJ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020p, December 23). *Day 10 MEET THE PARENTS:*

*HOLIDAY EDITION - Because you KNOW you 'll need it 🙌 🤩 #parents #guide*

*#holiday #meettheparents #scary* [Graphic]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CJK19rQj7Vw/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CJK19rQj7Vw/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Bloomers Comedy [@bloomerscomedy]. (2020q, December 25). *Underneath the Tree Day 12*

*Merry Christmas! Our gift to you this year is this cover of Underneath the Tree* [Video].

Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/tv/CJOu2U-](https://www.instagram.com/tv/CJOu2U-jRKZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

[jRKZ/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/tv/CJOu2U-jRKZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Boettcher, M. (2021, December 10). So I took this improv class. *Inside Higher Ed*.

[https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2021/12/10/how-improv-can-transform-life-](https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2021/12/10/how-improv-can-transform-life-classroom-and-beyond-it-opinion)

[classroom-and-beyond-it-opinion](https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2021/12/10/how-improv-can-transform-life-classroom-and-beyond-it-opinion)

Breazeale, R. (2019, April 17). Humor and self-care. *Psychology Today*.

[https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-the-face-adversity/201904/humor-and-self-](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-the-face-adversity/201904/humor-and-self-care)

[care](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-the-face-adversity/201904/humor-and-self-care)

Breen, R. (2006). A practical guide to focus group research. *Journal of Geography in Higher*

*Education*, 30(3), 463-475. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260600927575>

Broni, K. (2022, February 8). Tears of joy (just about) returns to Twitter's top emoji. *Emojipedia*

*Blog*. <https://blog.emojipedia.org/tears-of-joy-just-about-returns-as-twitters-top-emoji/>

Bryn Mawr. (n.d.). *Student engagement and new student programs*.

[https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/student-engagement-new-student-](https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/student-engagement-new-student-programs)

[programs](https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/student-engagement-new-student-programs)

- Buonaccorsi, G. (2015, January 27). Twitter jokes and the philosophical origins of humor. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/01/twitter-jokes-and-the-philosophical-origins-of-humor/384810/>
- Bustle Editors. (2022, May 11). Here's what the face emojis actually mean. *Bustle*. <https://www.bustle.com/life/96635-what-do-all-the-face-emoji-mean-your-guide-to-10-of-the-most-common-ones>
- Bynane, P. (2008). A method to the madness: Laughter research, comedy training, and improv. *Theatre Symposium*, 16, 31-39. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tsy.2008.0010>
- Calabrese, R. (2006). *The elements of an effective dissertation & thesis*. Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Campus Explorer. (2021, April). *Comedy on campus*. Retrieved May 20, 2021, from <https://www.campusexplorer.com/college-advice-tips/64CC5381/Comedy-on-Campus/>
- Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement Framework. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(5), 811-831. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2337>
- CBS News. (2017, August 19). Comedian John Mulaney reflects on his start in stand-up and “Oh Hello” success. *CBS News*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/comedian-john-mulaney-oh-hello-broadway/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Small and large gatherings*. Retrieved December 9, 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/widgets/micrositeCollectionViewerMed/index.html>
- Chang, A. (2014, September 14). All-female group livens NYU comedy community. *Washington Square News*. <https://nyunews.com/2014/09/14/bechdel/>

Chattoo, C. & Feldman, L. (2020, November 24). The role of comedy in social justice. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

[https://ssir.org/books/excerpts/entry/the\\_role\\_of\\_comedy\\_in\\_social\\_justice#](https://ssir.org/books/excerpts/entry/the_role_of_comedy_in_social_justice#)

Chavis, D. & Lee, K. (2015, May 12). What is community anyway? *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/what\\_is\\_community\\_anyway](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/what_is_community_anyway)

Cheng, D. X. (2004). Students' sense of campus community: What it means, and what to do about it. *NASPA Journal*, 41(2), 216-234. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.1331>

Cheng, L. (2017). Do I mean what I say and say what I mean? A cross cultural approach to the use of emoticons & emojis in CMC messages. *Fonseca Journal of Communication*, 15, 199–217. <https://doi.org/10.14201/fjc201715199217>

Chin, R. (2011, November 14). The science of sarcasm? Yeah, right. *Smithsonian Magazine*. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-science-of-sarcasm-yeah-right-25038/>

Chu, J. (2021, February 1). Derby creates inclusive community for women in comedy at Penn State. *The Daily Collegian*. [https://www.collegian.psu.edu/culture\\_lifestyle/derby-creates-inclusive-community-for-women-in-comedy-at-penn-state/article\\_b483f1d2-6425-11eb-ba31-771233eff257.html](https://www.collegian.psu.edu/culture_lifestyle/derby-creates-inclusive-community-for-women-in-comedy-at-penn-state/article_b483f1d2-6425-11eb-ba31-771233eff257.html)

Christison, C. (2022, May 19). How to use Instagram live (No sweating or crying). *Hootsuite*. <https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-live-tips/>

Circular Reasoning Improv [@circularreasoningimprov]. (n.d.- a) *Posts* [Instagram profile].

Instagram. Retrieved August 7, 2022 from

<https://www.instagram.com/circularreasoningimprov/192138101346306>

Circular Reasoning Improv [@circularimprov]. (n.d.-b). *Tweets* [Twitter profile.] Twitter.

Retrieved August 7, 2022, from <https://twitter.com/circularimprov>

Circular Reasoning Improv [@circularimprov]. (2020a, April 22). *Sappy admin tweet: It is the*

*1year anniversary of this account and what a year it's been! I could* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/circularimprov/status/1253109232599281666>

Circular Reasoning Improv [@circularreasoningimprov]. (2020b, June 1). *As an organization dedicated to supporting marginalized groups, Circular Reasoning supports and stands in solidarity with protesters across the United* [Graphic]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CA5SFWVjuA9/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CA5SFWVjuA9/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Circular Reasoning Improv [@circularreasoningimprov]. (2020c, August 23). *Join us at the virtual Student Involvement Fair today from 4-7! If our computers don't all crash, there will* [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CEPlq6jB56G/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CEPlq6jB56G/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Circular Reasoning Improv [@circularimprov]. (2021, August 24). *Happy first day of classes! In case you lost our flyer from the involvement fair, here it is. DM us* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/circularimprov/status/1430192138101346306>

College Factual. (n.d.). *University of Pennsylvania*.

<https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/university-of-pennsylvania/student-life/diversity/>

College of St. Scholastica. (2022). The importance of community participation: Why college clubs & organizations matter. *The College of St. Scholastica*.

<https://www.css.edu/about/blog/the-importance-of-community-participation-why-college-clubs-organizations-matter/>

- Control Top Improv [@controltopimprov]. (n.d.). *Posts* [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved December 9, 2022, from <https://www.instagram.com/controltopimprov/>
- Control Top Improv [@controltopimprov]. (2020a, April 12). *Hi angelz! We loved seeing our fellow toplets' beautiful shining faces via Zoom tonight and we can't wait* [Photograph]. Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/p/B-59sa5lINQ/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/B-59sa5lINQ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)
- Control Top Improv [@controltopimprov]. (2020b, June 22). *EDIT: We exceeded our match goal literally overnight. That being said Malika still has extreme financial burdens as a young* [Graphic]. Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/p/CBvxxbNFb7Z/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CBvxxbNFb7Z/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)
- Correia, S. (2021, June 11). How emojis have Changed the Way We Communicate. *Make Use Of*. <https://www.makeuseof.com/how-emojis-have-changed-the-way-we-communicate/>
- Crawford, S. & Caltabiano, N. (2011). Promoting emotional well-being through the use of humour. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 6(3), 237-252. <https://10.1080/1743960.2011.577087>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Crosley, J. & Jansen, D. (2020). Qualitative Data Coding 101. *GradCoach*. <https://gradcoach.com/qualitative-data-coding-101/>
- Currell, A. (2020, June 4). Flawed in the system: Troupe a comedic platform for women of color. *Emerson Today*. <https://today.emerson.edu/2020/06/04/flawed-in-the-system-troupe-a-comedy-platform-for-women-of-color/>



- Curry, O., & Dunbar, R. (2012). Sharing a joke: The effects of a similar sense of humor on affiliation and altruism. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 34, 125-129.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2012.11.003>
- The Daily Collegian. [@DailyCollegian]. (n.d.). *Tweets* [Twitter profile.] Twitter. Retrieved August 6, 2022 from <https://twitter.com/DailyCollegian>
- The Daily Collegian. (2013, July 1.) About the Collegian.  
[https://www.collegian.psu.edu/collegian\\_inc/article\\_913a2b54-f9f9-11e2-ab10-0019bb30f31a.html](https://www.collegian.psu.edu/collegian_inc/article_913a2b54-f9f9-11e2-ab10-0019bb30f31a.html)
- The Daily Collegian [@DailyCollegian]. (2020, September 13). *Penn State's comedy groups Derby and Second Floor Stand-Up joked about nursery rhymes, saltine crackers and Robert Pattinson during a live show for students* [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/DailyCollegian/status/1305321297249959939>
- The Daily Collegian [@DailyCollegian]. (2021, February 1). *@DERBYtroupe seeks to create an inclusive environment for women to write and perform comedy* [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/DERBYtroupe/status/1322262739188928513>
- Dana, K. (2019, February 13). Comfest weekend 2019: 30 years of funny! *Skidmore College*.  
<https://theater.skidmore.edu/2019/02/comfest-weekend-2019-30-years-of-funny/>
- Davies, A. (2016). Sketching a career in comedy. *Barnard Magazine*.  
<https://barnard.edu/magazine/winter-2016/sketching-career-comedy>
- Davis, C. (2022, March 14). Try not to laugh at TFL comedy. *Tufts Observer*.  
<https://tuftsoobserver.org/try-not-to-laugh-at-tfl-comedy/>
- Davis, M. (2019, April 13). Why having a good sense of humor is essential in life. *Big Think*.  
<https://bigthink.com/neuropsych/humor-life-skill/>

Dean, N. (2020, December 4). Coping with comedy: The relationship between humor and sadness. *Brain World Magazine*. <https://brainworldmagazine.com/coping-with-comedy-the-relationship-between-humor-and-sadness/>

Delve. (2022). How to do values coding? *Delve Blog*. <https://delvetool.com/blog/valuescoding>

DERBY [@DERBYtroupe] (n.d.). *Tweets* [Twitter profile]. Twitter. Retrieved August 28, 2022 from <https://twitter.com/derbytroupe>

DERBY [@DERBYtroupe]. (2020a, April 9). *Tbt! I guess you could say Derby has really grown up this year! We hope everyone is safe & well* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/DERBYtroupe/status/1248366461359403015>

DERBY [@DERBYtroupe]. (2020b, April 24). *wow oh wow, Derby has taken over the interweb! we will be hosting a live virtual comedy show this Saturday* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/DERBYtroupe/status/1253838032664395778>

DERBY [@DERBYtroupe]. (2020c, April 30). *Check out some of our Derby members' newest sketch! Video out now!* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/DERBYtroupe/status/1255985756478353408>

DERBY [@DERBYtroupe]. (2020d, May 7). *OHH NO! what is derby gonna do?? are they gonna have to perform comedy bits to escape this cyber hell* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/DERBYtroupe/status/1258561834631692289>

DERBY [@DERBYtroupe]. (2020e, October 28). *Join Derby this Friday at 7:15, October 30th for a terrifyingly fun time on our YouTube Live for a variety* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/DERBYtroupe/status/1322262739188928513>

Derby: A Women's Comedy Troupe. (n.d.). *About us*. <https://sites.psu.edu/derby/about/>

Derby: A Women's Comedy Troupe [@derbytroupe]. (2020a, March 26). *"Derby is happy to*

*announce the new executives for the upcoming year! We are so thankful for all”*

[Photograph]. Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/p/B-](https://www.instagram.com/p/B-N0MnEpB6t/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

[N0MnEpB6t/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/B-N0MnEpB6t/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Derby: A Women’s Comedy Troupe [@derbytroupe]. (2020b, April 17). *Derby LOVEs performing so much, we will be doing a show through Zoom on April 25 at 7pm!* [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/B\\_GdmWEp78I/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/B_GdmWEp78I/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Derby: A Women’s Comedy Troupe [@derbytroupe]. (2020c, October 22). *As we yeet full steam ahead into the semester, Derby wants to introduce our beautiful exec board members leading up* [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CGp6UjHpPRz/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CGp6UjHpPRz/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Derby: A Women’s Comedy Troupe [@derbytroupe]. (2020d, October 29). *To help get into the Halloween spirit before our spooky comedy show tomorrow, check out these helpful festive tips* [Video]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CG8MyfeD0ob/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CG8MyfeD0ob/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Derby: A Women’s Comedy Troupe [@derbytroupe]. (2020e, November 5). *“Thank you to all who watched our Friday night show!! On FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH (ooh scary) we will have a”* [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CHOLt43jTEm/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CHOLt43jTEm/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

DiSanto, J. (2018, October 22). Bloomers marks 40 years of edgy comedy. *PENN Today*.

<https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/bloomers-mark-40-years-edgy-comedy-penn>

Downs, L. (2016, March 3). Newly established Tufts Funny Ladies strives to build creative safe space for women in comedy. *The Tufts Daily*.

<https://tuftsdaily.com/arts/2016/03/03/newsly-established-tufts-funny-ladies-strives-to-build-creative-safe-space/>

Dowthwaite, L. (2017, October 16). Funny people are more intelligent than their po-faced peers.

*The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/funny-people-are-more-intelligent-than-their-po-faced-peers-84709>

Drexel University LeBow College of Business. (2020). *Being a peer mentor has career advantages*. Drexel University.

[https://www.lebow.drexel.edu/news/%5Bfield\\_lb\\_story\\_stype-term%5D/being-peer-mentor-has-career-advantages](https://www.lebow.drexel.edu/news/%5Bfield_lb_story_stype-term%5D/being-peer-mentor-has-career-advantages)

Drinko, C. (2020, May 18). Improv boosts creativity and psychological well-being. *Psychology Today*.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/play-your-ay-sane/202005/improv-boosts-creativity-and-psychological-well-being>

Dungy, G. & Peck, A. (2019). How campus activities can lead the modern university: Five imperatives. *The Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship*, 1(1), 6-13.

<https://doi.org/10.52499/2019002>

Easton, M. (2022, April 10). Doing improv can boost your confidence. *University of Toronto Magazine*.

<https://magazine.utoronto.ca/research-ideas/culture-society/doing-improv-can-boost-your-confidence/>

Ehlich, H. (2020, June 30). The isolation & absurdity of gen z humor. *Affinity Magazine*.

<https://culture.affinitymagazine.us/the-isolation-absurdity-of-gen-z-humor/>

EmConnect. (n.d.). *The Girlie Project*. <https://emconnect.emerson.edu/organization/girlieproject>

Emerson College. (2016). *Emersonian 2016*. Retrieved January 9, 2023, from

[https://digitalcollections.emerson.edu/uncategorized/IO\\_708b9544-1733-4c06-9179-](https://digitalcollections.emerson.edu/uncategorized/IO_708b9544-1733-4c06-9179-)

a39272b974b3/

Emerson College Center for Comedic Arts. (n.d.). *Center for Comedic Arts*. Retrieved January 9,

2023, from <https://emerson.edu/academics/schools-labs-and-centers/center-comedic-arts>

Emerson College Student Engagement & Leadership. (n.d.). *Student Engagement & Leadership*.

Retrieved December 13, 2022, from <https://emerson.edu/departments/seal>

Ezarik, M. (2021, April 14). Students struggle but don't seek colleges' help. *Inside Higher Ed*.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/04/14/students-struggling-not-seeking-campus-mental-health-support>

Emojipedia. (n.d.-a). *Face with tears of joy*. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from

<https://emojipedia.org/face-with-tears-of-joy/>

Emojipedia. (n.d.-b). *Pleading face*. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from

<https://emojipedia.org/pleading-face/>

Emojipedia. (n.d.-c). *Smiling face with tear*. Retrieved December 8, 2022, from

<https://emojipedia.org/smiling-face-with-tear/>

The F-Word Magazine. (2018, October 18). It's a bloomers birthday! *The F-Word Magazine*.

<https://upennfword.com/2018/10/18/its-a-bloomers-birthday/>

Ferme, A. (2018, October 9.) Students gain confidence through stand-up and sketch comedy. *The*

*Ithacan*. <https://theithacan.org/life-culture/students-gain-confidence-through-stand-up-and-sketch-comedy/>

Flucht, J. (2012, October 11). Everyone's a comedian? Not at improv school. *NPR*.

<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=162824968?storyId=162824968>

Friedman, S. (2010, March 19). Funny females. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Retrieved September

1, 2022, from [https://www.inquirer.com/philly/gallery/20100319\\_Funny\\_females.html](https://www.inquirer.com/philly/gallery/20100319_Funny_females.html)

Garber, M. (2015, May 28). From Amy Schumer to John Oliver, how comedians became public intellectuals. *The Atlantic*.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/05/how-comedians-became-public-intellectuals/394277/>

Gerloff, P. (2011, September 25). Are you meeting your laugh quota? Why you should laugh like a 5-year-old. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-possibility-paradigm/201109/are-you-meeting-your-laugh-quota-why-you-should-laugh-5-year>

Gibson, J. (2020, November 27). Laughter is important for our bodies and minds – Here’s what the research says. *Science Alert*. <https://www.sciencealert.com/laughter-can-improve-your-mood-and-relieve-your-body-and-mind-of-stress>

Gillespie, T. (2017, November 17). Campus comedy groups creatively approach Tufts political climate. *The Tufts Daily*. <https://tuftsdaily.com/arts/2017/11/17/campus-comedy-groups-creatively-approach-tufts-political-climate/>

The Girlie Project. (n.d.-a). *Home* [YouTube channel]. Retrieved August 8, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/user/GirlieProject>

The Girlie Project [@GirlieTweets]. (n.d.- b) Tweets [Twitter profile]. Twitter. Retrieved August 7, 2022, from <https://twitter.com/GirlieTweets/>

The Girlie Project [@GirlieTweets]. (2021a, September 3). *there is a theory that everyone is either a mouse or a rat. every member of the girlie project is.* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/GirlieTweets/status/1433973991648206852>

The Girlie Project [@GirlieTweets]. (2021b, September 5). *the boy project* 🤪🤪 [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/GirlieTweets/status/1434687698430738436?s=20>

The Girlie Project [@GirlieTweetz]. (2021c, September 5). *Tori (Vice President and Head Writer) has been hoarding* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/GirlieTweetz/status/1434727610496561153?s=20>

The Girlie Project [@GirlieTweetz]. (2021d, September 16). *This is our mascot. She's telling you to come watch the comedy troupe showcase tomorrow at 8 pm in the* [Tweet].

Twitter. <https://twitter.com/GirlieTweetz/status/1438575647358656514?s=20>

The Girlie Project [@GirlieTweetz]. (2021, September 16). *lily just farted during rehearsal it literally smells so bad everyone's gagging* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/GirlieTweetz/status/1438666033519382529?s=20>

The Girlie Project [@GirlieTweetz]. (2021e, September 15). *You wouldn't believe it by looking at her, but maddie isnt too bad at singing* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/GirlieTweetz/status/1438011368226103297?s=20>

GOLD Comedy. (n.d.). *About gold*. Retrieved April 10, 2021, from

<https://goldcomedy.com/about/>

Grannan, C. (2022, August 25). What's the difference between emojis and emoticons?

*Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/story/whats-the-difference-between-emoji-and-emoticons>

Gray, I. (2019, May 7). Student improv group for marginalized communities combines comedy and service. *The Lantern*. <https://www.thelantern.com/2019/05/student-improv-group-for-marginalized-communities-combines-comedy-and-service/>

<https://www.thelantern.com/2019/05/student-improv-group-for-marginalized-communities-combines-comedy-and-service/>

Gray, M., Wong-Wyle, G., Rempel, G., & Cook, K. (2020). Expanding qualitative research interviewing strategies: Zoom video communications. *TQR*, 25 (5), 1-12.

<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol25/iss5/9/>

- Greenberg, O. (2016, April 14). Make ‘em laugh. Striking a balance between intimacy and competitiveness in comedy. *34th Street*. <https://www.34st.com/article/2016/04/make-em-laugh>
- Greengross, G. (2019, October 25). Are men really funnier than women? *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/humor-sapiens/201910/are-men-really-funnier-women>
- Greengross, G. & Miller, G. (2009). The big five personality traits of professional comedians compared to amateur comedians, comedy writers, and college students. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 47(2), 79-83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2009.01.045>
- Greengross, G., Silvia, P. J., & Nusbaum, E. C. (2020). Sex differences in humor production ability: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 84, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2019.103886>
- Gross, H. (2020, March 10). Bloomers members reflect on stereotypes against women in comedy amid spring show. *The Daily Pennsylvanian*. <https://www.thedp.com/article/2020/03/bloomers-women-comedy-mask-wig>
- Guillemin, M. & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and “ethically important moments in research.” *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), 261–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403262360>
- Haider, A. (2020, April 1). The Golden Girls: The most treasured TV show ever. *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200401-the-golden-girls-the-most-treasured-tv-show-ever>
- Hall, T. (2017, August 10). 5 reasons you should start a podcast. *Inc.* <https://www.inc.com/tanya-hall/5-reasons-it-might-be-time-to-start-a-podcast.html>



- Hand, M. (2017). "Visuality in social media: Researching images, circulations, and practices" in Sloan, L., & Quan-Haase, A. (Eds.), *The sage handbook of social media research methods*, ProQuest Ebook Central, 215-231.
- Harvard Office of the Vice Provost for Advances in Learning. (2022). *Giving students practice with constructive criticism*. Retrieved January 9, 2023, from [https://vpal.harvard.edu/constructive\\_criticism](https://vpal.harvard.edu/constructive_criticism)
- Haseltine, W. (2021, April 13). Young people hit hardest by loneliness and depression during Covid-19. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/williamhaseltine/2021/04/13/young-people-hit-hardest-by-loneliness-and-depression-during-covid-19/?sh=752248645f0b>
- Hoffman, J. (2020, August 13). Young adults report rising levels of anxiety and depression in pandemic. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/13/health/Covid-mental-health-anxiety.html>
- Hoopla! (n.d.). *Mind Meld*. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from <https://www.hooplainpro.com/mind-meld>
- Hopelab. (n.d.). *Hopelab: What we do*. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from <https://hopelab.org/what-we-do/>
- Hughes, V. (2011, October 19). What makes a pun funny? *National Geographic*. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/what-makes-a-pun-funny?loggedin=tru>
- Human Network Contributor. (2021, May 1). How to use humor to conquer Zoom fatigue. *ICT Solutions & Education*. <https://www.isemag.com/professional-development-leadership/article/14266777/how-to-use-humor-to-conquer-zoom-fatigue>
- Humor That Works. (n.d.). *Humor that works: There's a better way to work*. Retrieved

- November 21, 2022, from <https://www.humorthatworks.com/>
- Humor That Works. (2019). *Humor that works: Better results. More fun information packet*.  
[https://www.humorthatworks.com/files/HTW\\_Information\\_Packet\\_2019.pdf](https://www.humorthatworks.com/files/HTW_Information_Packet_2019.pdf)
- Hurley, M., Dennett, D., and Adams, R. (2013). *Inside jokes: Using humor to reverse-engineer the mind*. MIT Press.
- Hyken, S. (2021, September 5). A little laughter decreases stress and improves productivity.  
*Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/shephyken/2021/09/05/a-little-laughter-decreases-stress-and-improves-productivity/?sh=263cc8ad36d6>
- Imburgia, S. (2017, February 28). Bloomers and Mask and Whig grapple with political comedy in the age of Trump. *The Daily Pennsylvanian*.  
<https://www.thedp.com/article/2017/03/how-comedy-groups-approach-trump-penn>
- Indiana University Bloomington. (n.d.-a). *Department of theatre, drama, and contemporary dance: About Bloomington*. <https://theatre.indiana.edu/about/about-bloomington.html>
- Indiana University Bloomington. (n.d.-b). *Division of student affairs*. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from <https://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/>
- Indecent Exposure [@vcindecentexposure]. (n.d.) *Posts* [Instagram profile]. Instagram.  
Retrieved August 7, 2022 from <https://www.instagram.com/vcindecentexposure/>
- Jones, D. (2021, July 2). How the cry-laughing face became the most divisive emoji in history.  
*Vice*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/7kvezb/laughing-crying-emoji-divisive-gen-z-mums>
- Juhasz, A. (2017). Lights, Camera, Barnard! *Barnard College Magazine*.  
<https://barnard.edu/magazine/winter-2017/lights-camera-barnard>
- Karp, R. (2017, February 15). The beautiful chaos of the national college comedy festival.

- Skidmore Theater Living Newsletter*. <https://theater.skidmore.edu/2017/02/the-beautiful-chaos-of-the-national-college-comedy-festival/>
- Karson, M. & Goodwin, J. (2016). Making the invisible risible: Sketch comedy as a basis for difficult dialogues. *Practice Innovations*, 1(1), 67-81. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pri0000013>
- Keisler, S. & Wee, M. (2020, February 14). Comedy groups on campus offer fresh voices, Community. *The HOYA*. <https://thehoya.com/comedy-groups-on-campus-offer-fresh-voices-community/>
- Kilgo, C., Mollet, A., & Pascarella, E. (2016). The estimated effects of college student involvement on psychological well-being. *Journal of College Student Development*, 57(8), 1043-1049. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0098>
- Klass, P. (2020, August 24). Young adults' pandemic mental health risks. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/24/well/family/young-adults-mental-health-pandemic.html>
- Klein, J. (2019, September 16). Comedy show lends support to Planned Parenthood. *The Lantern*. <https://www.thelantern.com/2019/09/comedy-show-lends-support-to-planned-parenthood/>
- Komives, S. (2019). Engagement with campus activities matters: Toward a new era of educationally purposeful activities. *The Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship*, 1(1), 14-25. <https://doi.org/10.52499/2019003>
- Krueger, R. (2015, July 28). *Moderating focus groups* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjHZsEcSqwo>
- Krueger, R. (2002, October). *Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews*. University of Minnesota. <https://www.eiu.edu/ihec/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf>

- Kupersmidt, J., Stelter, R., Karcher, M., Garringer, M., & Shane, J. (2020). Peer Mentoring: Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring. *MENTOR*.  
<https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Peer-Mentoring-Supplement-to-the-EEP.pdf>
- Ladies' Night Comedy. (n.d.- a). Constitution of Ladies' Night Comedy. *Indiana University Institutional Memory*.  
<https://institutionalmemory.iu.edu/aim/bitstream/handle/10333/11290/Ladies%27%20Night%20Comedy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Ladies' Night Comedy [@ladiesnightcomedy]. (n.d.- b). *Posts* [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved August 7, 2022 from <https://www.instagram.com/ladiesnightcomedyiu/>
- Ladies Night Comedy IU [@LNCindianau]. (n.d.). *Tweets* [Twitter profile]. Twitter. Retrieved August 7, 2022, from <https://twitter.com/LNCindianau>
- Ladies' Night Comedy [@ladiesnightcomedy]. (2021a, March 10). *Interested in writing stand-up and/or sketch comedy? Come join Ladies' Night Comedy! With live shows on pause, Ladies' Night is now focused* [Photograph]. Instagram.  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CMPj0nLnoWl/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y>
- Ladies' Night Comedy [@ladiesnightcomedy]. (2021b, March 21). *do you like cracking jokes? the rush of adrenaline you get speaking into a microphone? making mems and forging.* [Photograph]. Instagram.  
[https://www.instagram.com/p/CMtF7F\\_nu1V/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CMtF7F_nu1V/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)
- LaVergne, C. (2011). *The Girlie Project Constitution*. EmConnect.  
<https://emconnect.emerson.edu/organization/girlieproject>
- Laskowski, A. (2020, October 16). Dealing with loneliness in college during a pandemic. *Boston*

- University. <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2020/loneliness-in-college-during-pandemic/>
- Learnimprov.com. (n.d.). *Clap focus*. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from <https://www.learnimprov.com/clap-focus/>
- Leist, A. K., & Müller, D. (2012). Humor types show different patterns of self-regulation, self-esteem, and well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-Being*, 14(2), 551-569. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-012-9342-6>
- Leong, J. (2015, January 5). Comedy and learning can go hand in hand at Penn. *Penn Today*. <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/comedy-and-learning-can-go-hand-hand-penn>
- Libera, A. (2020, July). State of the art and science: The science of comedy (Sort of). *AMA Journal of Ethics*, 22(7), 602-607. <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/sites/journalofethics.ama-assn.org/files/2020-06/stas1-2007.pdf>
- Lindsay, B. (2016, May 24). How to nail a comedy audition. *Backstage*. <https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/nail-comedy-audition-7575/>
- Lissner, C. (2019). In full bloom. *The Penn Gazette*. [https://thepenngazette.com/pdfs/PennGaz0119\\_feature1.pdf](https://thepenngazette.com/pdfs/PennGaz0119_feature1.pdf)
- Long, D. (2012). The foundations of student affairs: A guide to the profession. In L. J. Hinchliffe & M. A. Wong (Eds.), *Environments for student growth and development: Librarians and student affairs in collaboration* (pp. 1-39). Association of College & Research Libraries.
- Louie, D., Brook, K., & Frates, K. (2016). The laughter prescription: A tool for lifestyle medicine. *Analytic Review*, 10(4), 262- 267. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1559827614550279>
- Lynch, R. (2010). It's funny because we think it's true: Laughter is augmented by implicit preferences. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 31, 141-148.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2009.07.003>

Majmundar, A., Allem, J., Boley Cruz, T. & Unger, J. (2018) The why we retweet scale. *PLoS One*, 13(10), 1-12.

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0206076>

Marder, J. (2020, July 13). The case against tickling. *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/13/parenting/kids-tickling.html>

Marder, M. (2011, October 16). Jokes and their relation to crisis. *The New York Times*.

<https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/16/jokes-and-their-relation-to-crisis/>

Markway, B. (2013, March 28). 20 quotes about laughter. *Psychology Today*.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/living-the-questions/201303/20-quotes-about-laughter>

Martin, R., Puhlik-Doris, P., Larsen, G., Gray, J., & Weir, K. (2003). Individual differences in uses of humor and their relation to psychological well-being: Development of the Humor Styles Questionnaire. *Journal of Research in Personality* (37), 48-75.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566\(02\)00534-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566(02)00534-2)

The Mask and Wig Club. (n.d.). *About Mask and Wig*. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from

<https://www.maskandwig.com/>

MasterClass Staff (2022, February 25). Improv comedy explained: 5 tips for doing improv

comedy. *MasterClass*. <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/improv-comedy-explained>

Maxam, N. (2019, July 11). Top 10 colleges for aspiring comedians in 2019. *College Magazine*.

<https://www.collegemagazine.com/top-10-colleges-for-aspiring-comedians-2019/>

Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Mayo Clinic Staff. (2021, July 29). Stress relief from laughter? It's no joke. *Mayo Clinic*.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-relief/art-20044456>

McAlpine, K. (2021, February 17). Depression, anxiety, loneliness are peaking in college students. *Boston University*. <http://www.bu.edu/articles/2021/depression-anxiety-loneliness-are-peaking-in-college-students/>

McAndrew, F. (2018, April 28.) Your sense of humor can serve as “social radar.” *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/out-the-ooze/201804/your-sense-humor-can-serve-social-radar>

McClure, M. (2011, August 1). Stanford psychologists find that jokes help us cope with horrifying images. *Stanford News*. <https://news.stanford.edu/news/2011/august/humor-coping-horror-080111.html>

Media Update. (2020, December 11). The 10 most memorable hashtags on social media in 2020. *Media Update*. <https://www.mediaupdate.co.za/social/149904/the-10-most-memorable-hashtags-on-social-media-in-2020>

Memolo, J. (2015, September 10). Harvard women rally to audition for hasty pudding this weekend. *Glamour*. <https://www.glamour.com/story/women-hasty-pudding>

The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania. (n.d.). *Mentor guide*. [https://www.mentoringpittsburgh.org/media/W1siZiIsIjIwMTcvMDcvMDUvNWZoZ3I5bmNrY19UTVBfTWVudG9yX0d1aWR1X0ZJTkFMLnBkZiJdXQ/TMP\\_Mentor\\_Guide\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.mentoringpittsburgh.org/media/W1siZiIsIjIwMTcvMDcvMDUvNWZoZ3I5bmNrY19UTVBfTWVudG9yX0d1aWR1X0ZJTkFMLnBkZiJdXQ/TMP_Mentor_Guide_FINAL.pdf)

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey Bass.

Messinger, H. (2020, June 18). Coping with COVID stress: From pandemic brain fog to building (and studying) resilience. *Penn Medicine News*.

- <https://www.pennmedicine.org/news/news-blog/2020/june/coping-with-covid-stress>
- Meyers, E. (2019, August 21). 5 benefits of transcription in academic research. *Rev.com*  
<https://www.rev.com/blog/benefits-of-transcription-in-academic-research>
- Milavetz, T. (2015, April 21). All-female improv troupe passes Bechdel Test. *Washington Square News*. <https://nyunews.com/2015/04/21/all-female-improv-troupe-passes-bechdel-test/>
- Mixon, E. (2013, October 10). Girlie Project stands out with stand up. *The Berkeley Beacon*.  
<http://www.berkeleybeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2013-10-10-web.pdf>
- Molla, R. (2021, March 1). Posting less, posting more, and tired of it all. How the pandemic has changed social media. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/recode/22295131/social-media-use-pandemic-covid-19-instagram-tiktok>
- Nasr, S. (2013, August). No laughing matter: Laughter is good psychiatric medicine. *Current Psychiatry*, 12(8), 20-25. [https://cdn.mdedge.com/files/s3fs-public/Document/September-2017/020\\_0813CP\\_Nasr\\_FINAL.pdf](https://cdn.mdedge.com/files/s3fs-public/Document/September-2017/020_0813CP_Nasr_FINAL.pdf)
- Negrean, O. (2021, April 2). 4 Reasons why humor works on social media [How to use it right]. *Social Animal*. <https://socialanimal.com/social-media-management/4-reasons-why-humor-works-on-social-media-how-to-use-it-right/>
- Newkumet, P. (2018, July 26). For budding comedians, a small yet strong community can be found in State College. *The Daily Collegian*.  
[https://www.collegian.psu.edu/news/borough/for-budding-comedians-a-small-yet-strong-community-can-be-found-in-state-college/article\\_d1f26d0e-904f-11e8-bd63-f349e679d851.html](https://www.collegian.psu.edu/news/borough/for-budding-comedians-a-small-yet-strong-community-can-be-found-in-state-college/article_d1f26d0e-904f-11e8-bd63-f349e679d851.html)
- Norwood, A. (2017). Amelia Bloomer. *National Women's History Museum*.



<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/amelia-bloomer>

NYU Center for Student Life. (n.d.). Retrieved December 13, 2022, from

<https://www.nyu.edu/about/leadership-university-administration/office-of-the-president/office-of-the-provost/university-life/office-of-studentaffairs/center-for-student-life.html>

NYU Engage. (n.d.). *Bechdel Test comedy*. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from

<https://engage.nyu.edu/organization/bechdeltest>

O'Hara, D. (2016, October 16). Kristin Krueger introduces improv to therapy. *American*

*Psychological Association*. <https://www.apa.org/members/content/krueger-improv-therapy>

The Ohio State University Office of Student Life. (n.d.-a). *Find a student organization*.

Retrieved December 13, 2022, from

[https://activities.osu.edu/involvement/student\\_organizations/find\\_a\\_student\\_org?i=13a2f1a6-55c9-4da8-a624-f49ce7977b3b&l=C&c=Columbus&page=4](https://activities.osu.edu/involvement/student_organizations/find_a_student_org?i=13a2f1a6-55c9-4da8-a624-f49ce7977b3b&l=C&c=Columbus&page=4)

The Ohio State University Office of Student Life. (n.d.-b). *Student life strategic plan*. Retrieved

December 13, 2022, from <https://studentlife.osu.edu/about/student-life-strategic-plan#:~:text=MISSION,citizens%20in%20a%20global%20society>

The Ohio State University Office of Student Life. (2021). *Social media tips for student*

*organizations*. <https://activities.osu.edu/posts/documents/social-media-guidelines-for-student-orgs.pdf>

Olagun-Samuel, C. (2017, May 17). At SNL, Penn graduate Vanessa Bayer talked frequently

about her comedic roots in bloomers. *The Daily Pennsylvanian*.

<https://www.thedp.com/article/2017/05/vanessa-bayer-leaving-snl>

- O'Neil, L. (2016, June 13). Could a college degree in comedy be anything other than a joke. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/13/magazine/could-a-college-degree-in-comedy-be-anything-other-than-a-joke.html>
- Osincup, P. (2020, October 25). How to use humor to care for your health and cope with hard times. *Sunday Paper*. <https://mariashriver.com/how-to-use-humor-to-care-for-your-health-and-cope-with-hard-times/>
- Ovelton, C. (2021, March 10). 'Really empowering': Ladies 'night comedy provides safe space for students to explore stand-up. *Indiana Daily Student*.  
<https://www.idsnews.com/article/2021/03/iu-ladies-night-comedy-stand-up>
- Pappano, L. (2020, February 20). On college campuses, social media provides private spaces for thousands. *The New York Times*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/20/education/learning/social-media-college.html>
- Park, C. (2016, September 15). Laugh with her. *34th Street*.  
<https://www.34st.com/article/2016/09/laugh-with-her>
- Penn Clubs. (n.d.). *Bloomers comedy*. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from  
<https://pennclubs.com/club/bloomers>
- Penn State Altoona. (n.d.). *Student affairs*. Retrieved December 13, 2022, from  
<https://altoona.psu.edu/offices-divisions/student-affairs>
- Penn State Student Affairs. (n.d.). *Gender diversity terminology*. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/campus-community-diversity/lgbtq-community/explore-lgbtq-resources/identity-based-resources/gender-terms>
- Phroth Humor Magazine [@phroth]. (n.d.). Tweets [Twitter profile]. Twitter. Retrieved December 12, 2022, from <https://twitter.com/phroth>

Phroth Humor Magazine [@phroth]. (2020, June 3). *Heartwarming! Penn State Administration Bravely Carries on Long-Standing University Tradition of Not Doing Anything of Any Particular Importance About* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/phroth/status/1268178773347913729>

Platow, M. J., Haslam, S. A., Both, A., Chew, I., Cuddon, M., Goharpey, N., Maurer, J., Rosini, S., Tsekouras, A., & Grace, D. M. (2005). "It's not funny if they're laughing": Self-categorization, social influence, and responses to canned laughter. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 41*(5), 542–550.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2004.09.005>

The Princeton Review. (n.d.). *Emerson College About*. Retrieved December 6, 2022, from

<https://www.princetonreview.com/college/emerson-college-1022990>

Provine, R. (2000). *Laughter: A scientific investigation*. Penguin Books.

Rajeev, P.N. & Kalpathi, S. (2016). Let's play: The use of improv games in change management training: A case study. *Industry and Higher Education, 30*(2), 149–154.

<https://doi.10.5367/ihe.2016.0299>

Russi, L. (2017, October 4). How to be funny on Twitter. *GOLD Comedy*.

<https://goldcomedy.com/resources/how-to-be-a-funny-comedian-on-twitter/>

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.

Santhosh, L., Rojas, J. C., & Lyons, P. G. (2021). Zooming into focus groups: Strategies for qualitative research in the era of social distancing. *ATS Scholar, 2*(2), 176–184.

<https://doi.org/10.34197/ats-scholar.2020-0127PS>

Savin-Baden, M. & Major, C. (2013). *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Second Floor Standup [@SecondFloorPSU]. (n.d.). *Tweets* [Twitter profile]. Twitter. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from <https://twitter.com/SecondFloorPSU/>

Second Floor Standup [@SecondFloorPSU]. (2020, March 11). *Stay safe out there PSU Comedy*. [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/SecondFloorPSU/status/1237775406469545984>

Selvaraj, N. (2020, June 4). The Bechdel test: analyzing gender disparity in Hollywood. *Towards Data Science*. <https://towardsdatascience.com/the-bechdel-test-analyzing-gender-disparity-in-hollywood-263cd4bcd9d>

Shammi, P. & Stuss, D.T. (1999). Humour appreciation: a role of the right frontal lobe. *Brain*, 122, 657-666. <https://doi.org/10.1093/brain/122.4.657>

Shane-Simpson, C., Manago, A., Gaggi, N., & Gillespie-Lynch, K. (2018). Why do college students prefer Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram? Site affordances, tensions between privacy and self-expression, and implications for social capital. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 86, 276-288. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.04.041>

Shepard, L. (2020, December 22). The show must go on, even amid a pandemic. *Penn Today*. <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/penn-student-performing-arts-amid-pandemic>

Skidmore College. (2020, February 6). What makes Skidmore so funny? A q&a with comfest producers. *Skidmore College Admissions & Aid*. <https://www.skidmore.edu/admissions/student-stories/2020/0206-comfest-qa.php>

Smalstig, M. (2019, April 3). Comedy hour to showcase IU troupe Ladies' Night Comedy. *Indiana Daily Student*. <https://www.idsnews.com/article/2019/04/hoosier-hour-crimson-comedy-to-host-iu-comedy-troupe-ladies-night-comedy>

Smith, C. (2017, June 9). Best college campuses for women in comedy. *GOLD Comedy*. <https://goldcomedy.com/resources/best-college-campuses-women-comedy/>

Smith, D. G. & Johnson, W.B. (2020, April 6). Social distancing does not have to disrupt mentorship. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2020/04/social-distancing-doesnt-have-to-disrupt-mentorship>

Solomon, Y. (2016, April 12). Humor and sarcasm can make you creative, science says. *INC*. <https://www.inc.com/yoram-solomon/humor-and-sarcasm-can-make-you-creative-science-says.html>

Sontag-Padilla, L. (2020, October 12). College students need mental health support. *The Rand Blog*. <https://www.rand.org/blog/2020/10/college-students-need-mental-health-support.html>

Sphincter Troupe [@sphinctertroupe]. (n.d.) *Tweets* [Twitter profile] Twitter. Retrieved August 7, 2022, from <https://twitter.com/sphinctertroupe>

Sphincter Troupe [@sphinctertroupe]. (2020, September 8). *am I shadow-banned on tinder or am I just ugly*. [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sphinctertroupe/status/1303531160094543872>

Sphincter Troupe [@sphinctertroupe]. (2021a, February 8). *I'm like a bull... I see a red flag and I run towards it*. [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sphinctertroupe/status/1358953059301392388>

Sphincter Troupe [@sphinctertroupe]. (2021b, February 16). *Some people got a co-dependent relationship with their momma. it's me. be easy y'all* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sphinctertroupe/status/1361866684198486016>

Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy [@bmc\_spoons]. (n.d.). *Posts* [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved December 12, 2022, from [https://www.instagram.com/bmc\\_spoons/](https://www.instagram.com/bmc_spoons/)

Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy [@bmc\_spoons]. (2020, September 22). *Auditions this Sunday!! No*

- prep necessary. Link in bio* [Graphic]. Instagram.  
[https://www.instagram.com/p/CFc5AAyHCal/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CFc5AAyHCal/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)
- Sreenivasan, H., Kane, J., & Thoet, A. (2021, January 9). How the pandemic is impacting college students' mental health. *PBS News*. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-the-pandemic-is-impacting-college-students-mental-health>
- Stewart, C. (2016). *Effects of improv comedy on college students* [Doctoral dissertation, Illinois State University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.  
<https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1601&context=etd>
- Summerville, M. (2018). *#community: Hashtags generate a sense of belonging*. Debating Communities and Social Networks.  
<https://networkconference.netstudies.org/2018OUA/2018/04/23/community-hashtags-generate-a-sense-of-belonging/>
- The Sundial [@TheSundialOSU]. (n.d.). *Tweets* [Twitter profile] Twitter. Retrieved August 7, 2022, from <https://twitter.com/thesundialosu>
- The Sundial Humor Magazine. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved on November 21, 2022, from <http://org.osu.edu/sundial/>
- Sweeney, M. (2020, November 11). Comedy groups bring laughter, foster community amid COVID-19. *The Miscellany News*.  
<https://miscellanynews.org/2020/11/11/features/comedy-groups-bring-laughter-foster-community-amid-covid-19/>
- Sweet, J. (2021, January-February). The Loneliness Pandemic. *Harvard Magazine*.  
<https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2021/01/feature-the-loneliness-pandemic>
- Theater Mania. (2021, November 17). *2021 Bechdel Test Presents: Holiday Confusion*.

[https://www.theatermania.com/shows/new-york-theater/2021-bechdel-test-presents-holiday-confusion\\_358051](https://www.theatermania.com/shows/new-york-theater/2021-bechdel-test-presents-holiday-confusion_358051)

TFL Comedy. (n.d.). *About TFL*. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from

<https://tflcomedy.wordpress.com/about/>

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2020a, September 1). *COMEDY O-SHOW is FRIDAY, SEPT 4 at 9 PM EST. The Best Place to Be will be at the* [Graphic]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CEnFQ5tIVjH/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CEnFQ5tIVjH/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2020b, November 16). TFL's first podcast with Alex and Gia is live! Take a listen using the link in our bio! 🎧 📷 [Photo]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CHqPVxTFWgi/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CHqPVxTFWgi/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2020c, December 27). A new episode of our podcast is out! Now on 🎧 Spotify 🎧 Link in bio! Listen to Tess and [Photo]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CJUFuQdlVsV/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CJUFuQdlVsV/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2020d, December 30). 🎧 *New podcast episode is out!* 🎧 *Listen to Yaqara and Alex talk about Christmas porn, private school trauma, and* [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CJblDwxFcXo/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CJblDwxFcXo/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2021a, January 6). 🎧 *New podcast episode alert* 🎧 *Kicking off their careers as media moguls, Amanda and Mona talk about awkward Zoom* [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CJtu4a\\_FzK9/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CJtu4a_FzK9/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2021b, January 13). *Our new podcast episode features two complete strangers: Bota and Sana! Listen to them talk about hooking up on the*

[Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CJ\\_ujmRlknL/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CJ_ujmRlknL/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2021c, January 22). *In this week's podcast, Grace and Rosa discover what percent gay Grace is 🍀 🍀 🍀, reckon with Rosa's broken* [Photograph].

Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/p/CKpIJIUINda/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CKpIJIUINda/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2021d, January 29). *On this week's episode of the podcast, listen to Ananya and Alex get cancelled by Tufts' comedy, neoliberals, and Greek* [Photograph].

Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/p/CKpIJIUINda/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CKpIJIUINda/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2021e, February 5). *On this episode, listen to Anne and Caroline talk about spiritual experiences in Gantcher 🙏 🙏 🙏, dating app horror* [Photograph].

Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CK7EWERlipV/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CK7EWERlipV/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2021f, February 13). *Tess and Chaney (she doesn't even go here!) talk about forbidden intercourse ✕ 🙄 🏠, r/im14andthisisdeep 🙈 🖤 📱, and*

[Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CLPee7ul3MN/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CLPee7ul3MN/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2021g, February 19). *On this week's podcast, listen to Bota and Sana talk about their dads' different approaches to parenting 🙈 🚗 🙄* [Photograph].

Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/p/CLfb36bls6o/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CLfb36bls6o/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2021h, February 28). *On this episode of the podcast, two mullet-rocking central Floridians, Nuria and Harper, bond over their hatred of airplanes ✈️*

[Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CL2SRziFnPU/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CL2SRziFnPU/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)



TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2021i, March 7). *It's Margaret's birthday episode! Listen to Gia, Margaret, and Alex celebrate by reminiscing about their firsts 🎉 🎂*, debuting the [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CMluNq7lusT/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CMluNq7lusT/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2021j, March 13). *Listen to Sam and Ananya reflect on the anniversary 🎉 🎂 🎁, their love for hyperspecific memes 📺 🤝 🍷* [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CMXsiYCFwQ5/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CMXsiYCFwQ5/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

TFL Comedy [@tflcomedy]. (2021h, April 25). *We ❤️ our seniors 😊 Thank you to everyone in the class of '21 who was involved in TFL* [Photograph]. Instagram.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/COGU8qEFhhh/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/COGU8qEFhhh/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Thomas, E. (2015, September 29). Setting the stage for female comedians. *The Temple News*.

<https://temple-news.com/setting-the-stage-for-female-comedians/>

Tiggemann, M. & Anderberg, I. (2020). Social media is not real: the effect of Instagram vs reality images on women's social comparison and body image. *New media and society*, 22 (12), 2183-2199. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1461444819888720>

Timely MD. (2021, April 1). Women's mental health in college. *Timely MD*.

<https://timely.md/blog/womens-mental-health-in-college/#:~:text=Women%20college%20students%20are%20more,the%20rate%20they%20affect%20men>

Toohill, K. (2015, September 11). So funny, it doesn't hurt. *The Atlantic*.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/09/comedy-improv-anxiety/403933/>

Tufts University Office for Campus Life. (n.d.). *Office for Campus Life*. Retrieved December 13,

2022, from <https://students.tufts.edu/office-campus-life>

University of Cincinnati Health. (2020, April 29). Laugh yourself healthy: Creating levity during COVID-19. UC Health. <https://www.uchealth.com/en/media-room/covid-19/laugh-yourself-healthy>

University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health. (2019, July 15). *Focus group session 1* [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpaPRTtKwbs&list=PLC0p0gB0GhHlmfSeNPW-mpyxOsjrj0HBY&index=3&t=13s>

University of Minnesota Maternal Child Health. (2019, July 15). *Focus group session 2- developing questions*. [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISOgLWdm5B8&list=PLC0p0gB0GhHlmfSeNPW-mpyxOsjrj0HBY&index=2>

UNICODE. (n.d.). *Full emoji list, v.15.0*. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from

<https://unicode.org/emoji/charts/full-emoji-list.html>

University of Pennsylvania. (n.d.). *Academic calendar*. Catalog UPenn. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from <https://catalog.upenn.edu/undergraduate/academic-resources/calendar/#text>

University of Pennsylvania Office of Student Affairs. (n.d.). *Let us help you get involved at*

*Penn*. Retrieved December 13, 2022, from <https://osa.universitylife.upenn.edu/>

Vassar College [@Vassar]. (2019, February 10). *We love a good laugh! Indecent Exposure,*

*Vassar's only all women & genderqueer comedy group presented "KINK, a galentine's day standup*. [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Vassar/status/1098371834385494017>

Vassar College Comedy Info Extravaganza. (n.d.). Vassar College Comedy Info Extravaganza

[Google Slides]. [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1hNVBnD1vev3U\\_dvnePGv1-](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1hNVBnD1vev3U_dvnePGv1-)

1eFcrq1A4WUZtIO6tayWM/edit#slide=id.p

Vassar Student Association. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved December 13, 2022, from

<https://vsa.vassar.edu/>

Voice of America. (2019, June 25). For college student comedians, laughter comes with learning.

VOA. <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/for-college-student-comedians-laughter-comes-with-learning/4954888.html>

Vogels, E. (2020, February 6). *10 facts about Americans and online dating*. Pew Research

Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/02/06/10-facts-about-americans-and-online-dating/>

Voss, E. (2012, August 27). 12 colleges with great improv groups. *Vulture*.

<https://www.vulture.com/2012/08/12-colleges-with-great-improv-groups.html>

Walsh, C. (2021, February 17). Young adults hardest hit by loneliness during pandemic. *The*

*Harvard Gazette*. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/02/young-adults-teens-loneliness-mental-health-coronavirus-covid-pandemic/>

Wang, Y. (2015, September 23). Indecent Exposure to introduce its new members. *The*

*Miscellany News*. <https://miscellanynews.org/2015/09/23/arts/indecent-exposure-to-introduce-its-new-members/>

Weissbourd, R., Batanova, M., Lovison, V., & Torres, E. (2021, February). Loneliness in

America: How the pandemic has deepened an epidemic of loneliness and what we can do about it. *Harvard Graduate School of Education*.

<https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/reports/loneliness-in-america>

Weissman, B. (2021, August 10). Emojis aren't debasing language – they're enriching it. *The*

*Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/aug/10/emojis-debasing->

language-symbols-communication

- Westerman, A. (2016, October 5.) Indecent Exposure show burns bridges, jokes are ‘fire.’ *The Miscellany News*. <https://miscellanynews.org/2016/10/05/arts/indecent-exposure-show-burns-bridges-jokes-are-fire/>
- Westervelt, C. (2021, May 22). It’s a funny story: How Emerson became the epicenter of American comedy. *Expression*. <https://expression.emerson.edu/2021/its-a-funny-story/>
- Whitton, N. (2017, March 17). The importance of play: what universities can learn from preschools. *The Edvocate*. <https://www.theedadvocate.org/importance-play-universities-can-learn-preschools/>
- Whitty, M.T., Doodson, J., Creese, S., & Hodges, D. (2018). A picture tells a thousand words: What Facebook and Twitter images convey about our personality. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 133,109-114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.12.050>
- Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology second edition*. Open University Press.
- Wright, R. (2020, March 23). How loneliness from coronavirus isolation takes its own toll. *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/how-loneliness-from-coronavirus-isolation-takes-its-own-toll>
- Wylie, A. (2018). The science behind why wordplay is an effective communications tool. *PRQ*. <https://prsay.prsa.org/2018/12/04/the-science-behind-why-wordplay-is-an-effective-communications-tool/>
- Xu, J. (2020, November 30). Gen Z’s coping mechanism is humor. *34<sup>th</sup> Street*. <https://www.34st.com/article/2020/12/generation-z-tik-tok-humor-mental-health-politics-society-teenager>

Yale College Arts. (2018). Comedy Groups. *Yale Drama Coalition*.

<https://collegearts.yale.edu/organizations/yale-drama-coalition/performance-groups/comedy-groups>

Yale Daily News. (2003, October 24). Clash of the comedians. *Yale Daily News*.

<https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2003/10/24/clash-of-the-comedians/>

Yale Daily News. (2014, November 14). Funny Girls. *Yale Daily News*.

<https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2014/11/14/funny-girls/>

Yale University Office of the Secretary and Vice President for Student Life. (n.d.). *Student life*.

Retrieved December 13, 2022, from <https://secretary.yale.edu/student-life>

Yusuf, H. (2019, September 12). Bloomers' LaughtHERFest is fighting for inclusive comedy.

*34<sup>th</sup> Street*. <https://www.34st.com/article/2019/09/women-in-comedy-stand-up-comedians-shows-bits-bloomers-upenn-ivy-league-club>

Zacharek, S. (2020, December 5). 2020 tested us beyond measure: Where do we go from here?

*TIME*. [https://time.com/5917394/2020-in-review/?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=editorial&utm\\_term=ideas\\_society&linkId=106354210](https://time.com/5917394/2020-in-review/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=editorial&utm_term=ideas_society&linkId=106354210)

Zebrack, J. (2021, February 8). Students faced heightened stress, loneliness and mental health

concerns in fall, Duke survey finds. *Duke Chronicle*.

<https://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2021/02/duke-university-mental-health-stress-loneliness-covid-pandemic>

Zoom Blog. (2021, May 4). So you've made a zoom recording...now what?

<https://blog.zoom.us/so-youve-made-a-zoom-recordingnow-what/>

## Appendix A

### Troupe Outreach Log

The following document serves as a log of outreach efforts to the study's selected troupes. As the initial outreach was to historically women's collegiate comedy troupes, I listed out those interactions in more detail. Most of the outreach tactics included emailing the troupes via their public-facing email accounts. Additionally, I set up a research-facing Instagram account where I featured marketing materials and used the platform to pitch the study to collegiate troupes.

- Bechdel Test: New York University
- Bloomers Comedy: University of Pennsylvania
- Control Top Improv: Barnard College
- Circular Reasoning Improv: Ohio State University
- Dead Serious: Wellesley College (*\*Not active on social media.*)
- Derby Comedy Troupe: Penn State University
- Indecent Exposure: Vassar College
- The Girlie Project: Emerson College
- Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy Troupe: Bryn Mawr College
- Sphincter Comedy Troupe: Yale University
- TFL: Tufts University

#### **Bechdel Test | NYU**

*The following highlights the outreach NYU's troupe - Bechdel Test.*

**Email: [bechdeltestnyu@gmail.com](mailto:bechdeltestnyu@gmail.com)**

- Introductory email on January 29, 2022 to troupe email account - [bechdeltestnyu@gmail.com](mailto:bechdeltestnyu@gmail.com)
  - Email with approved media/marketing 'comedy microphone' poster to troupe email account on February 2, 2022
  - Email with approved media/marketing including FAQs on February 8, 2022
  - Email with approved media/marketing materials on February 12, 2022
  - Email to NYU Tisch Student Affairs - ([tisch.student.affairs@nyu.edu](mailto:tisch.student.affairs@nyu.edu)) on February 14, 2022
- Email to NYU with approved Women's History month focused materials on Monday, March 21, 2022

Instagram outreach: Messaged troupe on the following days:

- February 2nd - message with post-share
- February 4th - message with post-share
- February 7<sup>th</sup> - message with post-share

#### **Bloomers Comedy Troupe | University of Pennsylvania**

*The following highlights the outreach to UPenn's troupe - Bloomers Comedy*

**Email: [bloomers.biz@gmail.com](mailto:bloomers.biz@gmail.com)**

- Introductory email with a flier: August 2, 2021
- Follow Up to Introductory Email: August 6, 2021
- Email outreach to UPenn Student Affairs Leaders: Tuesday, August 3, 2021
- Follow up: August 6, 2021
- Note from Katie Bonner: August 10, 2021
- Email to troupe: August 10, 2021
- Email to troupe: August 30, 2021
- Response from troupe member to set up time to chat: August 30, 2021
- Followed up via email with phone number to schedule chat: August 30, 2021
- Called number but did not receive response/ not able to leave a voicemail.
- Followed up via email on September 2, 2021
- Email to troupe on Monday, September 20, 2021 with request to attend an upcoming meeting; introduced the study
- Follow up via email on Wednesday, September 22, 2021
- Received email from troupe to pitch the study during a scheduled meeting on October 3, 2021
- Bloomers Comedy troupe needed to spend Exec Board meeting discussing pressing matter and left the invitation open to reschedule
- Followed up on October 3rd with list of days & windows of time via email
- Bloomers followed up to confirm Wednesday, October 6, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.
- Followed up via email with the Zoom link for the meeting on October 6, 2021.
- Met with Bloomers team members - 4 Exec board on October 6, 2021 via Zoom for 30 minutes. This meeting was not recorded. I walked through the study protocol and shared the rationale of individual interviews
- Emailed a post-meeting recap with a 'brief 'promo to share with the entire troupe on October 6, 2021
- Follow up with consent form and pitch promo language on October 13, 2021.
- Emailed troupe on December 23, 2021 with information - follow up | reminder of study
- Emailed troupe on February 5, 2022 and included an approved marketing piece "Circles" flier

#### Instagram Outreach:

- Messaged troupe on the following days:
  - February 2nd - message with post-share
  - February 4th - message with post-share
  - February 7th - message with post-share

#### **Control Top Improv – Barnard College**

*The following highlights outreach to Barnard College's troupe Control Top Improv.*

[controltopimprov@gmail.com](mailto:controltopimprov@gmail.com)

- Emailed troupe on February 17, 2022 with approved materials
- Emailed troupe on February 23, 2022 with follow up and approved materials

### **Circular Reasoning Improv – Ohio State University**

*The following highlights outreach to Barnard College’s troupe Control Top Improv.*  
[circularreasoningimprov@gmail.com](mailto:circularreasoningimprov@gmail.com)

- Emailed troupe on March 6, 2022 with approved materials
- Emailed troupe on March 12, 2022 with approved materials
- Emailed troupe on March 20, 2022 as a follow up to the note on March 12
- Emailed troupe on March 29, 2022 with approved materials to see if the troupe would be at the National Collegiate Comedy Festival

### **Dead Serious Comedy Troupe – Wellesley College**

*The following highlights outreach to Wellesley College’s troupe Dead Serious.*

- Introductory email to email account - molmsted@wellesley.edu on February 2, 2022
- Emailed troupe email contact - molmsted@wellesley.edu with details regarding study and included
- Provided the FAQs on February 10, 2022
- Emailed contact I had at Wellesley College (Dean Lori Tenser - ltenser@wellesley.edu) to share details about study and see if she would be willing to do a ‘warm introduction and share details on February 5, 2022
- Dean Lori Tenser followed up via email on February 8, 2022
- Responded to Dean Tenser via email to share additional information on February 8, 2022
- Instagram outreach | messaged troupe on the following days:
  - February 2<sup>nd</sup>: message with post-share
  - February 4<sup>th</sup>: message with post-share
  - February 7<sup>th</sup>: message with post-share

### **Derby Comedy | Penn State University**

*The following highlights the outreach to Penn State’s troupe-Derby Comedy.*

Email contacts: [studentorg@psu.edu](mailto:studentorg@psu.edu)

- Emailed Penn State student org account on February 18, 2022
- Emailed Derby troupe to schedule the rehearsal observation on March 19, 2022
- Followed up with Derby troupe on March 20, 2022
- Emailed the troupe with approved marketing materials on the following:
  - February 17
  - February 24
  - March 13
  - March 31
- Emailed to see if the troupe would be at the National College Comedy Festival on March 29, 2022
- Followed up on the note to see if the troupe would be at the National College Comedy Festival on April 2, 2022
- Emailed to thank the troupe for the opportunity to observe a rehearsal on April 12, 2022

### **Indecent Exposure | Vassar College**

*The following highlights the outreach to Vassar College’s troupe - Indecent Exposure.*



**Email contact: [indecentexposurevc@gmail.com](mailto:indecentexposurevc@gmail.com)**

- Emailed introduction on Thursday, September 30, 2021
  - Attachments: Flier and Consent Form
- Emailed Dean Luis Inoa on October 4, 2021 to see if he could share outreach to Indecent Exposure troupe
- Dean Inoa forwarded to William Rush, Associate Director of Campus Activities on October 5, 2021
- William Rush forwarded to president of Indecent Exposure on October 5, 2021
- President of Indecent Exposure contacted me via email to learn more about the study on October 6, 2021
- Followed up with President of Indecent Exposure on October 6th to share information about the study and included consent form & pitch deck
- President of Indecent Exposure followed up via email to confirm day of meeting on October 6<sup>th</sup>
- Emailed back to confirm the day and provide the Zoom link to meet on October 8<sup>th</sup>
- Met on October 8th to share information about the study with the President of Indecent Exposure via Zoom/The meeting was not recorded
- Provided a recap of the conversation with a pitch to share with the entire troupe including the consent form and link to schedule interviews via email on October 8, 2021
- President of Indecent Exposure emailed back to note that she would forward to fellow troupe members and ask a clarifying question about the form on October 9, 2021
- Followed up to address the concern/answer the question about the pre-interview form on October 9, 2021.
- Emailed the President of Indecent Exposure a link to confirm interview and include the Zoom link on October 26, 2021
- Followed up with email to include the Zoom details on October 27, 2021- day of interview
- Emailed troupe account & president's of troupe's account on December 22, 2021 to share information about study and send a reminder of study and how to get involved
- Emailed troupe on February 10, 2022 with details on how to get involved and included FAQs about the study
- Instagram Outreach:
  - Messaged troupe on the following days:
    - February 2<sup>nd</sup>: message with post-share
    - February 4<sup>th</sup>: message with post-share
    - February 7<sup>th</sup>: message with post-share

**Emerson College | The Girlie Project**

*The following highlights the current outreach to Emerson College's troupe - The Girlie Project.*

- Emailed The Girlie Project - troupe email account on September 30, 2021
- Received a bounce-back on the email (thegirlieprojectemerson@gmail.com)
- Emailed Dean Chris Daly at Emerson College to see if he would be willing to share outreach with members of The Girlie Project on October 4, 2021
- Emailed The Girlie Project troupe email account on October 6, 2021
  - Received a bounce-back on the email
- Emailed student directly with information about the study after getting a 2nd bounce back to the troupe email account on October 6, 2021 | Attached flier & consent form
- Emailed Dean of Campus Life (deanofcampuslife@emerson.edu) at Emerson College on October 26, 2021 to request information be shared | Attached flier
- Emailed Student-Contact to request time to pitch study and share details on interviews on October 11, 2021
- Emailed troupe to share details of study on December 22, 2021 | Included links, pre-interview form and attached flier
- Instagram outreach: Messaged troupe on the following days:
  - October 6th due to email not working
  - Received a message back to get an active student email
  - Followed up to say thank you and that I would email from [jcthomas01@email.wm.edu](mailto:jcthomas01@email.wm.edu)
    - February 2nd - message with post-share
    - February 4th - message with post-share
    - February 7th - message with post-share

**Spoon-Fed Sketch Comedy | Bryn Mawr College**

Email contacts: [studentengagement@brynmawr.edu](mailto:studentengagement@brynmawr.edu)

- Emailed the troupe as an introduction with approved marketing materials on February 24, 2022
- Emailed two student -leaders at Bryn Mawr College with approved marketing materials on February 18, 2022
- Emailed as a follow up on March 3, 2022
- Emailed as a follow up on March 7, 2022

**Sphincter Comedy | Yale University**

Email contact: [sphinctertroupeyale@gmail.com](mailto:sphinctertroupeyale@gmail.com)

- Emailed the troupe as an introduction with approved marketing materials on February 25, 2022

- Emailed the troupe as a follow up on March 1, 2022
- Emailed as a follow up on March 7, 2022
- Emailed the troupe with approved Women’s History Month focused marketing materials on March 21, 2022
- Emailed as a follow up on April 2, 2022

**Tufts Funny Ladies (TFL) | Tufts University**

**Email contact: [tuftsfunnyladies@gmail.com](mailto:tuftsfunnyladies@gmail.com)**

- Emailed the troupe as an introduction with approved marketing materials on March 6, 2022
- Followed up with the troupe via email on March 12, 2022
- Followed up with the troupe via email on March 15, 2022

The table featured on the next page includes all of the cogender collegiate comedy troupes that I contacted throughout the spring 2022 semester.

<b>Name of University</b>	<b>Troupe Name</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Contact (Yes or No)</b>
Stanford University	Robber Barons Comedy	robberbaronscomedy@gmail.com	Yes 4/5
Duke University	Inside Joke	sjv8@duke.edu	Yes 4/5
John Hopkins University	John Hopkins Stand Up Comedy Club	standupjhu@gmail.com	Yes 4/5
Rice University	Spontaneous Combustion	sc@rice.edu	Yes 4/5
MIT	Roadkill Buffet	rkb@mit.edu	Yes 4/5
Princeton University	Quipfire	quipfire@princeton.edu	Yes 4/5
University of Virginia	Amuse Bouche Improv	sp3fb@virginia.edu	Yes 4/5
University of Chicago	Off-Off Campus	offoffcampus@gmail.com	Yes 4/6
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	ComCo	uaceboard@umich.edu	Yes 4/6
UC Berkeley	TBD Comedy	tbdcomedy@gmail.com	Yes 4/6
Boston College	My Mother's Fleabag	mymothersfleabag@gmail.com	Yes 4/6
UCLA	UCLA Rapid Fire	uclarapidfireimprov@gmail.com	Yes 4/6
UNC Chapel Hill	Chapel Hill Players	chapelhillplayers@gmail.com	Yes 4/7
Washington University St. Louis	K.A.R.L. Improv!	washukarlimprov@gmail.com	Yes 4/7
Vanderbilt University	TNC Improv	tncimprov@gmail.com	Yes 4/7
Northwestern University	Mee-Ow Comedy Improv and	meeowcomedy@u.northwestern.edu	Yes 4/7
Emory University	Rathskellar Improv	<a href="mailto:emoryrathskellarimprov@gmail.com">emoryrathskellarimprov@gmail.com</a>	Yes 4/9

Carnegie Mellon University	No Parking Players	<a href="mailto:sid@andrew.cmu.edu">sid@andrew.cmu.edu</a>	Yes 4/9
University of Southern California	Commedus Interruptus	*Link	Yes 4/9
UC Santa Barbara	Improvability	<a href="mailto:akjensen@ihc.ucsb.edu">akjensen@ihc.ucsb.edu</a>	Yes 4/9
University of Florida	Theatre Strike Force	<a href="mailto:theatrestrikeforce@gmail.com">theatrestrikeforce@gmail.com</a>	Yes 4/9
Wake Forest University	The Lilting Banshees	<a href="mailto:shaulk18@wfu.edu">shaulk18@wfu.edu</a>	Yes 4/9
UC San Diego	Foosh Improv	<a href="mailto:fooshimprov@gmail.com">fooshimprov@gmail.com</a>	Yes 4/9
University of Rochester	In Between the Lines (IBTL)	<a href="mailto:inbetweenthelines@gmail.com">inbetweenthelines@gmail.com</a>	Yes 4/9
UC Irvine	Improv Revolution	<a href="mailto:artsinfo@uci.edu">artsinfo@uci.edu</a>	Yes 4/9
Georgia Institute of Technology	Let's Try This Improv!	<a href="mailto:info@dramatech.org">info@dramatech.org</a> ; <a href="mailto:ltt@dramatech.org">ltt@dramatech.org</a>	Yes 4/11
UC Davis	Birdstrike Theatre Improv	N/A	Yes 4/9 (via Instagram)
UT Austin	Gigglepants Improv	<a href="mailto:gigglepants.improv@gmail.com">gigglepants.improv@gmail.com</a>	Yes 4/10
Boston University	The Callbacks	<a href="mailto:callback@bu.edu">callback@bu.edu</a>	Yes 4/10
Brandeis	Boris' Kitchen	*Portal	Yes 4/9
Case Western Reserve	IMPROVment	<a href="mailto:improvment@gmail.com">improvment@gmail.com</a>	Yes 4/11
Tulane University	Office Hours Sketch Comedy	<a href="mailto:officehourscomedytu@gmail.com">officehourscomedytu@gmail.com</a>	Yes 4/11
University of Wisconsin-Madison	Manhole Sketch Comedy	<a href="mailto:mallgood@wisc.edu">mallgood@wisc.edu</a>	Yes 4/11

University of Illinois	Spicy Clamato Improv	spicyclamatoUIUC@gmail.com	Yes 4/11
University of Georgia	Sharkwing Sketch Comedy	sharkwing2015@gmail.com	Yes 4/11
Lehigh University	The Hobo Army Improv Comedy Club	hoboarmyimprov@gmail.com	Yes 4/11
Northeastern University	NU & Improv'd	nuimprov@gmail.com	Yes 4/11
Pepperdine University	Pepperdine Improv Troupe	peppimprov@gmail.com	Yes 4/11
Purdue University	The Crazy Monkeys	thecrazymonkeyscomedy@gmail.com	Yes 4/11
Villanova University	Ridiculum Improv	kevin.esmond@villanova.edu; ohsoyouthinkyourefunny@gmail.com	Yes 4/11
Florida State University	30in60 Sketch Comedy	kgc18@my.fsu.edu	Yes 4/11
University of Pittsburgh	Ruckus	usruck@gmail.com	Yes 4/10
University of Washington	The Collective Improv	improv@uw.edu	Yes 4/11
Rutgers University	Improv Technicians	itimprovtechnicians@gmail.com	Yes 4/11
University of Connecticut	Reckless Gents	cameron.lucca@uconn.edu	Yes 4/11
Fordham University	Stove's Cabin Crew	<a href="mailto:usgopslc@fordham.edu">usgopslc@fordham.edu</a>	Yes 4/11
Miami University (Ohio)	Sketched Out	sketchedout@miamioh.edu	Yes 4/11
Amherst College	Mr. Gad's House of Improv	llamer22@amherst.edu	Yes 4/16

Pomona College	Without a Box Improv	withoutaboximprov@gmail.com	Yes 4/16
Bowdoin College	The Improvabilities	nsinger@bowdoin.edu; kirving2@bowdoin.edu	Yes 4/16
Carleton College	Cujokra Improv Comedy	Director of Student Life: lfclark@carleton.edu	Yes 4/18
Middlebury College	Middlebury Comedy	Discount <a href="mailto:mdcomedy@middlebury.edu">mdcomedy@middlebury.edu</a>	Yes 4/18
Davidson College	Oops Improv Comedy	Asst Director of Student Life - camulherin@ davidson.edu	Yes 4/18
Grinnell College	Infinite Coincidence	<a href="mailto:lfimprov@grinnell.edu">lfimprov@grinnell.edu</a>	Yes 4/18
Haverford College	The Lighted Fools	mzules@haverford.edu	Yes 4/18
Colby College	Colby Improv	Tnbech23@colby.edu	Yes 4/18
Colgate University	Charred Goosebeak	acurtin@colgate.edu	Yes 4/18
University of Richmond	Subject to Change Improv	StudentDevelopment@richmond.edu	Yes 4/18
Bates College	Strange Bedfellows	mreidy@bates.edu	Yes 4/18
Colorado College	Theatre Workshop Improv Troupe (TWIT)	campusactivities@coloradocollege.edu	Yes 4/18
Macalester College	Fresh Concepts	freshconcepts@macalester.edu	Yes 4/18
Harvey Mudd	Harvey Mudd's DUCK Improv	jrosenbloom@hmc.edu	Yes 4/18

Bucknell University	We Brake for Nobody	rtn012@bucknell.edu	Yes 4/18
Clemson University	Clemson Improv	mtsimprovclemson@gmail.com	Yes 4/25
Virginia Tech	Deep Fried Improv	deepfriedimprov@gmail.com	Yes 4/26
North Carolina State University	CIA	theciawantsyou@gmail.com	Yes 4/25
Michigan State	Second Stage Theatre (SSM)	secondstagemt@gmail.com	Yes 4/27



## Appendix B

### Individual Interview Protocol

#### Interview Protocol

Project: An investigation into women-centered collegiate comedy troupe participants that were active in 2020 - 2021, identify as women, and are between the ages of 18- 25.

Time of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: (Zoom)

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interview procedure

You are being asked to participate in a research study investigating how women-identified students in undergraduate comedy troupes incorporate comedy into their sense of self and community-building. During this interview, you will be asked to respond to several open-ended questions. You may choose not to answer any or all the questions. The procedure will involve the audio and video recording of the Zoom interview. The recording will be saved to my host computer and downloaded for the interview to be transcribed using the Rev.com software. The recording of the video will not be shared. The verbatim transcript will be analyzed, coded, and provided in the dissertation. Your results will be featured in the study. Your name will not be featured in the study as you will receive a pseudonym. While your name will not be featured in the study, the name of the comedy troupe and the name of the college/university are included throughout the study.

#### Informed consent

This is to note that I have received your signed informed consent form signaling your willingness to participate.

#### Questions

1. How long have you been a part of your respective comedy troupe?
2. How did you first learn about your respective comedy troupe?
3. What were your comedy troupe experiences before the troupe that you're actively engaged in, if any?
4. How would you define your sense of humor in a few adjectives?
  - a. When saying something humorous, how do you typically deliver your jokes?
  - b. How has being in your comedy troupe impacted your outlook on humor and what is funny?

- c. What style of humor do you typically enjoy more (i.e. more understated and modest or bolder and roasting?) Explain more about your preferred humor and what type of jokes you find yourself more drawn to.
5. What are ways that you interact with your fellow student-comedians and participants in the troupe?
6. What does a typical comedy troupe internal gathering look like?
7. What are the interactions with other members of the troupe outside of your respective team like?
8. How do you typically feel during a meeting or rehearsal?
9. What words would you use to describe how you view being a part of your respective comedy troupe?
10. What do you think other fellow members typically think about your attributes and what you bring to the comedy troupe?
11. How has being a part of your respective comedy troupe influenced the way you view yourself as a student at your college/university?

**Closing:**

Thank you for participating in this interview. I appreciate you taking the time to do this and share your experiences. I may contact you in the future for the purposes of the follow-up interview. Again, let me assure you of the confidentiality of your responses. If you are one of the first 15 participants in an individual interview, you will receive a \$10.00 electronic Visa gift card emailed to your email address of choice. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by telephone at 757-604-9797 and via email at [jcthomas01@email.wm.edu](mailto:jcthomas01@email.wm.edu)

## Appendix C

### Focus Group Moderator's Guide

#### Logistics

- Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_
- Location of interview: \_\_\_\_\_
- Potential participants for the session: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Research goals

- Determine participant attitudes toward the respective troupe
- Determine the educational value of student participation in their respective troupe
- Learn about the benefits of student participation

#### Respondent profile

- Women-identified students who are members and were/are active participants in a women-centered comedy troupe throughout the 2020- 2021 academic year.

#### Topics to cover

- Student participant experience in the respective troupe included in the bounded study
- Group dynamics of participating in the respective comedy troupe
- Understanding of how [insert team/executive board] interact with one another and build community with one another.

#### Timing guide

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| ● Introduction  | 5 minutes  |
| ● Getting to know the group                           | 15 minutes |
| ● Understanding of group dynamics                     | 15 minutes |
| ● How sense of humor impacts feelings toward COVID-19 | 20 minutes |
| ● Value of being a part of respective troupe          | 20 minutes |
| ● Close   | 10 minutes |
| ● Total   | 85 minutes |

#### Purpose of the session

- Thank you for joining our focus group discussion. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I will be facilitating our discussion today. Have any of you ever participated in a focus group? We're going to be talking about your respective troupe and the relationships that you all have with one another in the [insert name of organizational team/ executive board] within the troupe. It's a way to see how you all interact with one another. Right now, I want to let you know a few things that we're doing today.

#### Disclosure

- Recording of Zoom conversation
- Consent forms
- Plans for reporting
- Pseudonyms to help protect participants and enhance the confidentiality

## **Ground Rules**

- There are no right or wrong answers; I want to hear your personal perspectives. I want to hear from everyone -- so don't be shy; on the other hand, be considerate of others if you notice that only a few people are participating.
- Focus group participants should log into Zoom at the allotted time and use the password protected link included 48 hours in advance of the focus-group interview via email.
- Only one person can talk at a time to help with transcription
- Confidentiality will be featured in the study's findings as participants will receive pseudonyms
- Keep the conversation focused on the questions presented by the moderator in order to maximize time
- All participants are encouraged to speak during the focus-group interview conversation
- Participants are encouraged to find quiet spaces that will allow for their microphones to remain on that will allow for some elements of "cross talk" (Santhosh, Rojas, and & Lyons, 2021).
- Participants are encouraged to be on video because audio-only can create additional barriers in Zoom videos (Santhosh et al., 2021).

## **Participant introductions**

- Year in college/studies
- Hometown
- Major
- Amount of time participating in the respective troupe

## **Question Guide**

### *Process of joining the troupe*

1. Describe why you joined your respective troupe
2. How did the audition process go for you?
3. What prompted you to join the (insert organizational team)?

### *Process of comedy - how are the sketches created?*

4. What has the process of being in your respective troupe in a remote environment been like?
5. How are the sketches created in this landscape?
6. Describe how you collaborate with each other within your (insert organizational team: cast, writing, costumes, tech, business, band) and with other teams?
7. What kind of feedback do you provide each other in the process of creating content?

### *Building community in your comedy troupe*

8. How do you define the relationships that you have with fellow troupe members?
9. How does comedy and the shared sense of humor impact your relationship with fellow troupe members?
10. Tell me about your relationships with one another?
11. Tell me about the impact COVID-19 has had on your relationships?

*Participant impact on leadership*

12. How do you define leadership?
13. Tell me about your views on leadership
14. Tell me about your views on feminism
15. How was being a member of your college's women-centered comedy troupe influenced the way you think about comedy, your sense of humor?
16. Are there any moments since you've been a part of your troupe that you felt tension or conflict? (After COVID-19 restrictions were in place?)

**Conclusion:** Does anyone have anything else they want to add to our discussion today? Thank you for your help today. This session was informative. If you have any questions after the session, you may reach me by phone at 757-604-9797.

## Appendix D

### Focus Group Interview Participant Ground Rules

To: Study Participants

Thank you for your participation in the study's focus group interview. The following guidelines seek to enhance the study and provide some guidance for the focus group interview. Please review these ahead of the session.

- Focus group participants should log into Zoom at the allotted time and use the password-protected link included 48 hours in advance of the focus-group interview via email.
- Before logging into the Zoom room, you will be asked to wait in the Zoom waiting room and the moderator will grant you permission into the room.
- Only one person can talk at a time to help with transcription
- Confidentiality will be featured in the study's findings as you will be given a pseudonym
- Keep the conversation focused on the questions presented by the moderator in order to maximize time
- All participants are encouraged to speak during the focus-group interview conversation.
- Participants are encouraged to find a safe and quiet space that will allow for their microphones to remain on that will allow for some elements of "cross talk" (Santhosh, Rojas, & Lyons, 2021).
- Participants are encouraged to be on video because audio-only can create additional barriers in Zoom videos (Santhosh et al., 2021).

## Appendix E

### Focus Group Interview: Participant Recruitment Email

**Subject Line:** Fostering the Funny: Call to Participate in A Qualitative Research Case Study Focus-Group Interview

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ [Insert Name]:

Hello, my name is Jaymi Thomas. I am a graduate student (EdD candidate) at William & Mary's School of Education located in Williamsburg, Virginia. I am conducting a case study on women-identified college students who participate in collegiate comedy troupes. I am inviting you to participate because you are a valued member of one of the study's designated troupes and you are between the ages of 18-25.

Participation in this research includes participating in a focus-group interview with fellow members of your respective organizational team and/or leadership board. The focus group interview will last approximately 2 hours. You are eligible to participate in a focus group interview if you did or did not participate in an individual interview. You are invited to participate in one focus group interview that aligns with your troupe's team and/or leadership board.

Before participating in a focus-group interview, I request that you complete a consent form with your electronic signature and return via email. **The consent form can be found attached to this email.**

Additionally, if you are interested in participating in the focus-group interview, please complete the survey linked here: [https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_56XkLyG9L6Gq76C](https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_56XkLyG9L6Gq76C)

As a focus-group interview participant, your name will be entered into a raffle. A winner selected at random will receive a curated "prize package". The "prize package" will be shipped directly to your preferred address. If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, I can be reached at (757) 604.9797 or via email at [jcthomas01@email.wm.edu](mailto:jcthomas01@email.wm.edu)

Sincerely,  
Jaymi Thomas  
William & Mary School of Education | EdD Candidate

## Appendix F

### Informed Consent Form: Focus Group Interview

Jaymi C. Thomas,  
EdD Candidate, Education Policy, Planning & Leadership  
William & Mary School of Education  
Williamsburg, VA 23187  
(757) 604.9797 (phone)  
[jcthomas01@email.wm.edu](mailto:jcthomas01@email.wm.edu) (email)

---

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This study is called Fostering the Funny: A Case Study of Undergraduate Women in Collegiate Comedy Troupes. The study is being conducted by Jaymi Thomas, an EdD candidate at William & Mary's School of Education.

#### **What is this study about?**

The study is being conducted as a case study of women-identified college students who participate in collegiate comedy troupes. The research will employ a qualitative design approach and will include individual interviews and focus-group interviews. You are being asked to participate in the study because of your current status as an 18-25-year-old member of a collegiate comedy troupe who was active in the troupe in 2020 - 2021.

#### **What you will be asked to do**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following

- Participate in a recorded focus group interview via Zoom

#### **Risk and benefits**

Risks for participating in this study are minimal. There may be no direct benefits to you as a participant for this study. Participants will be provided pseudonyms to help with confidentiality. While your name will not be included in the study, your respective comedy troupe's name will be included throughout the study. All participants from the focus group interviews will be put into a lottery where one participant will be selected at random to win a "Prize Pack." The "prize pack" will include a curated package and be shipped directly to the winner's address. The information you provide may be beneficial to the understanding of your participation in your respective comedy troupe and how you build relationships with other members throughout a time of heightened loneliness. This information will be helpful for higher education leaders in particular student affairs practitioners who are actively seeking to help students build community and work toward wellness in the midst of COVID-19 and beyond. This information will help other practitioners who are interested in fusing humor and comedy into their programming. Ultimately, students and others within higher education may benefit if the information uncovered helps provide rich data around wellness, community, and how laughter and comedy impact both.

#### **Your participation is voluntary**



Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. You may refuse to answer any of the questions. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. Not participating or choosing to leave the study will not result in any penalty or loss of any benefits you would otherwise receive.

**Your answers to questions will be confidential**

The researcher will maintain the confidentiality of study participants as far as possible. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom and the recordings of the interviews will be saved on my host computer. The recording of the interview will be transcribed and analyzed. The date and times for the focus group interviews will be chosen after participants complete a Qualtrics generated survey with the various date and time offerings. The College of William & Mary Education Review Board is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The Ethics Review Board may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly. Due to the nature of this interview being a focus group, I cannot control how others choose to share information from the group after leaving the session. However, I ask that all participants keep information from the focus group confidential.

The following links provide insight into the terms of service and privacy statements for Zoom, Rev., and Qualtrics:

- Zoom terms of service can be found here: <https://zoom.us/terms>
- Zoom privacy statement can be found here: <https://zoom.us/privacy>
- Rev terms of service can be found here: <https://www.rev.com/about/terms>
- Rev privacy policy can be found here: <https://www.rev.com/about/privacy>
- Qualtrics term of service can be found here: <https://www.qualtrics.com/terms-of-service/>
- Qualtrics privacy policy can be found here: <https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>

**Contact Information**

If you have questions about the study right now, please ask them. If you have any questions about the study later on, please call the investigator Jaymi Thomas at the contact information listed above. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Dr. Jennifer Stevens, PHSC Chair, William & Mary Institutional Review Board (Ethics Committee) at [jastev@wm.edu](mailto:jastev@wm.edu) or via phone at 757.221.3862.

I have read this consent form. The study has been explained to me. I understand what I will be asked to do. I freely agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix G

### Troupe Observation Log Notes

*The following provides notes from the three observations conducted during the study. Throughout the study, I observed one rehearsal from The Girlie Project in March, one rehearsal from Vertigo-go Improv in April, and one rehearsal from Derby Comedy in April.*

#### **The Girlie Project rehearsal: March 28, 2022 rehearsal**

The following are my notes from observing a writer's room session of The Girlie Project on Monday, March 28, 2022. The team went through the introduction to determine the pitches and discussed the themes and pitch ideas. They determined the best steps should be: 1. Casting; 2. Name the show; 3. Rehearsal. The leader said that 17 sketches per show did not go as well – determined that 14-15 was ideal. Having a shorter, tighter show would be a better call. The last show “Cake Boss” was an hour and a half. One Girlie said that they had an idea: casting, name the show, rehearsal. Monday: 7:00 p.m. – Pitch anything that has not been pitched. Sketch vote. Pick sketches and choose the rest of the time to do a read-through. Cast, read through sketches.

Determine table read. Expressed concern when people's feelings when they get results in real-time. There was concern on what sketches did not get selected. Discussed Monday morning class schedule to determine the volume of the day. Discussed that they have casting from 7 – 8 p.m. Determined that the troupe is good at casting and it was good to know. If everyone comes in with what they need for the sketches (all details) – casting can be quickly. Read through sketches.. Determine that everyone's good from 7 p.m. – 10 p.m. One Girlie said, “I can bring snacks.”

1. Pitch
2. Read
3. Vote
4. Read though
5. Name- show
6. Cast

#### **Video Sketch:**

- Just because we have sketch vote – there's always a time to do a ‘video sketch’
- If we want to think of something
- Team wants to do an introduction video
- Film intro video before rehearsal
- Leader – announced that there is an ‘all-team 'kickball game
- Determined “For Pop”
- Scheduled a meeting for Sunday.
- If you have completed sketches -send before the meeting
- Determined that they needed certain props – particular

Description of space: Everyone's sitting at a conference table and has laptop/ notebook

Logistics and play by play:

- The troupe leader sent out folder for the troupe for the sketches to go into.
- One member said, “I want to do a Toy Story troupe so bad...” Leader put in the google drive link in the group chat.
- The leader opened the sketch “Play Date” and said, “Oh my God, what font is this in?”. One member said, “It looks like a play...” “Everyone have Katie’s play pulled up?” One person said, “I will read it...”. The troupe read through the sketches.
- “Play Date”:
  - Mom /Couple (The team)
  - Connection/ Collaboration
  - Ran through sketch and asked, “Do we want to do short notes?”
  - Do we want to do a black-out --- we could potentially do a shorter?
  - If we get to the 37 second punchline a little shorter.
  - Someone said – If you’re cutting, we could take out the “ –I know you are but what am I?”
  - Someone said – One character said that you could add more here about the mom- feature
  - Smart move to get the other mom involves

“**Retail**”: The writer shared a bit more about the details; offered more about the sketch. The concept of the sketch was a condescending/rule retail employee. Crazy comments about how you are a ‘failure...’ Over-exaggerate the Randi employee situation. The angle is “she’s not as accomplished as me...” Writer said they she was going to start with the look... the mom be like ‘You two are like peas in the pod...’ Someone said, the mom could tap on the shoulder, “I thought you were Rachel?”

“**Chris Pratt’s House Party...**”: has to come in as Ana Farris ...Determine what the goody-bag would be of the Chris Pratt party. Someone said the guest list would include Robert Downey Jr, Ellen, Scarlett Johanssen, a priest, and Mark Ruffalo. At one point, someone made a reference to Will Smith and another Girlie said, “What if there’s a bouncer?”

“**Office Party**”: Office party sketch that highlights all of the things that could possibly go ‘wrong in an employee’. Writer said they wanted it to be a little “Fleabag-esque” – with some voice over; want the female colleague to be the bosses ’daughter?

“**Casino**” sketch: One Girlie said, “I love this character...”. One girlie said, “Why do you think the people will not take Charlie seriously..? “Will they be playing poker? One girlie said, “It’s be so funny to have be playing poker throughout...The main character wins big on the first one and then everyone’s like...WTH?. There should be a big-reveal...The troupe discussed what main character should be wearing? | Someone said, “Can we put his glasses on and look at the cards?” An idea for the commercial – “It Follows” – but it’s the Chef Boyardee can. There’s a sketch with someone being chased by a Chef Boyardee can; another Girlie mentioned that this sketch had already been done. One member said, “It’s only 2 words: leprechaun bitcoin.” Someone said, “What if the leprechaun was a hacker?”

“**Jack & The Beanstalk**” - They are a normal family and they don’t know that they’re giants. Son says something like, I don’t know I actually made a new friend...Have Jack kill the dad and then go to the most dramatic monologue

**“Scrouge Paul’s Drag Show”:** During the read-through, one of the members says, “noooo...oh that’s my joke...” and the team laughs it off and said, “Oh respect...” The level of jokes -ranges in the type of humor. This sketch is a bit lengthy and there were various amounts... Someone said, “I loved everything happening in this...?” One girlie said, “Do you want to do a bit about TV?”

**“Dua Lipa Choreography Sketch”:** Brings in real people/celebrities into the sketch – Dua Lipa, Charlie XCX has to come in.

**Turn Off the Dark:** The sketch isn’t the show but it’s the ‘talk back. Can the talk-back be interrupted? One of the jokes is that it’s only one mic – and they have to pass it down

**“IT Help Desk”:** IT Help Desk – background that we’ve gotten some ‘crazy calls ’Someone said that it could have a “Riddler theme?” Idea of your boss coming out and in the height of it...being like “All good???” Someone said, “Do we think it’s funny to be the Riddler???” Safe and potentially funny route – if the threat is something strange...

**“Outro Sketch focused on The Girlie Project.”:** Throughout this reading – there was an abundance of laughter making it actually difficult to hear the sketch being read clearly. Reactions – it’s important to know that the troupe members have the sketches in front of them throughout the read through. One troupe member said they had never ended on a ‘video.’ Another member said it should end on something dramatic

**We can talk Ellen & Waldo...:** “Where’s Waldo?” sketch – focuses on Waldo’s girlfriend is pregnant | Someone said, the idea of him wearing normal clothes. Then as he’s wearing certain clothes | concept for a “runner” or a sketch

**Picture this: Ellen and Dakota Johnson (bringing in pop-culture knowledge)**

**“Script Notes”:** This sketch focuses on the elements of getting script notes on an extremely written. Understanding of where the script is going. Commentary as a creator; it’s quick.

**Key takeaways throughout the read-throughs of the sketches:**

- Lots of laughs
- Positive feedback to the sketches
- talked through ideas
- Understood each other and were receptive to hearing ideas
- Focused on getting feedback
- Tested out different voices for the various roles.
- There was a range of themes in sketches.
- The troupe members asked each other smart questions.
- Jack in the box game inspiration for a sketch
- Participants that pitched ideas were open to exploring concepts further.
- There were layers to sketches with backstory and origin stories.
- Participants were thoughtful in how they listened and laughed.
- The participants were able to pivot quickly and share ideas in an open way.
- The troupe members researched concepts and came with back story; elements of

dramaturg.

- Some sketches brought in real life experiences and finding the funny in more mundane elements of life on a college campus like being a student employee at a IT help desk.
- Participants shared their knowledge of technical elements of performing arts like ‘where to film ’and the ‘green room.’
- A joint sketch – determine the best ways to block – considering ‘part video, part stage...’
- At one point, I heard someone say, “Do you have your gorilla suit?”
- There’s the opportunity to engage and to share ideas without fear of judgment.
- At one point, I heard someone say, “I’ve been repressing this for a long time...”
- After going through the sketches, the troupe members shared pitches ’around 8:57 p.m. after an hour and a half of going through the previously written sketches – some were more fully baked while others were less-baked/half-baked.
  - Cinderella sketch: A sketch about two kids who go to a liquor store and they’re stacked on top of each other; use a fake ID. One of the ideas is that the cashier is one of the friend’s mom. Parent could come into the liquor store
  - An idea for a black -out – Tom & Jerry sketch
    - Runner with 3 iconic show & sound-effects
    - Sound-effects and the humor associated with sound, voice
  - Zombie – slam poetry or a song
  - Yoda focused sketch
    - Crazy Stars Wars sketch
  - Black-out : split the stage into (2 go-puff orders)
  - Do you think there’s a way to do a “20 Questions” for an emergency?
  - Song/runner idea: One girlie mentioned that they had an idea about a sketch connected to John Stamos. The lyrics were, “We have thoughts about John Stamos...”

### **Vertigo-go Swarthmore College: Tuesday, April 5, 2022 observation**

Tuesday, April 5, 2022, I met with the Vertigo-go troupe on Tuesday, April 5<sup>th</sup>. There were 5 individuals present in a classroom. Performance – understanding of who will be present in the performance. Understanding of who will be present.

The overall dynamics of the meeting were casual...Everyone sat around in a circle and there were moments of laughter. The rehearsal started a little after 9:00 p.m. EST at Swarthmore College – student appeared to be in a classroom in an academic building. All troupe members went around in a circle and shared more about their experience. One member of “Vertigo-go” talked about a trip they took. Everyone in the room seemed to speak a language of ‘improv’ and did various miming activities.

One student in the troupe discussed their current life-happenings and the difficulties they were experiencing. After each experience was shared – a participant would try. Everyone shared in a way that revealed that the rehearsal/meeting was ‘safe space.’

One student shared that they were in an experience where they were the only person that had

something to say. Because of the connection and potential distance from the computer and the students -it was difficult to clearly hear a lot of what was said during the rehearsal. One student shared how excited they were for graduation and the opportunity. One student raised their hand and another student said 'You didn't have to raise your hand...'. After everyone went around the room being seated/ at about 9:26 p.m. – students stood up and moved their chairs

The overall energy of the room was silly and after warming up; everyone went around in a circle clapping as a warm-up. The clapping became more and more vibrant. The students jumped into the circle and started freestyling about trees. The overall skills in this exercise showed spontaneity and the energy to jump right in. Everyone involved in the exercise encouraged one another

After the circle clapping, the troupe members discussed business + leadership for next year. Discussed what they were able to have at their final show. Discussing games at senior show.

Around 9:36 p.m. – one additional member showed up to rehearsal and shared something about their weekend. The troupe went over the possible games for the Senior show and discussed what they could do during the senior show. Everyone – specifically 2 members in particular shared a lot about their ideas. It was a bit difficult to fully hear their ideas. The troupe discussed for about 15-minute after the clap warm-up. The next game seemed to focus mostly on agility and being able to jump from one space to another. The focus on agility and warming-up was key element of the rehearsal.

The game played was called “Beastie Boys” which appeared to be a game of ‘leapfrog.’ The overall atmosphere – lot of laughing, playful, silliness. The troupe played a game soon after the “leapfrog” style game. One troupe member described the rules of the improv game. In the game – there’s the opportunity to participate. Students in the troupe were able to share ideas throughout this game.

### **Key takeaways:**

- Students were supportive of one another
- Suggestions were fun
- Students were quick on their feet and had to jump in to the bit quickly.
- The participants had to be able to quickly jump in and shift from set to interact with one
- Students interacted with one another in a way that was playful, silly.
- There is a good sense of trust in how the members interact with one another
- The troupe shared some of the ways that they incorporated their skills in the ‘under water ’improv.
- One member raises their hand when it’s time to come out from ‘under water.’ The game is quick – on your feet.
- The team debriefed on the elements of the ‘game ’and some of its pros + cons
- The fire-round of ‘improv ’provided an opportunity for participants to jump in quickly and think on their feet
- The troupe members tend to laugh at the content/The participation of the troupe member
- Each team split up (3 members in each)
- A part of the video faded out because of the student’s network bandwidth being low in

the middle of the rehearsal...

- The troupe discussed their work in the playwright festival.
- The troupe took a brief break after discussing logistics
- During lulls, the troupe members seem to get along and casually talk amongst each other

---

### **Derby Comedy troupe rehearsal: April 11, 2022 observation**

**Summary:** The troupe members casually started entering their rehearsal space which looks like a classroom. The troupe casually talked to each other and talked about a variety of things including a mutual love for Christian Bale. Students started discussing their need for Real-ID. Congrats on the show! The troupe reached out and people have reached out to express enjoying the show. The troupe debriefed from their sketches + discussed what their friends and roommates said about the content. Students in the room sat around in a circle and discussed a few things. The overall atmosphere was casual.

#### **Business Review**

Derby discussed what other troupes would be returning next year. Derby discussed that they had a show next Tuesday. One member said that they would not be able to make it; the troupe determined that the 18<sup>th</sup> would be an ideal day for elections. The troupe discussed what Tuesday's show would do; they were invited by an on-campus troupe.

Exec Board: President, VP, Social Media, Treasurer (The troupe discussed what the exec board and descriptions of the role). Everyone seemed to agree with the exec board depictions. Troupe discussed that they would see who could do certain sketches. There was an interest in determining what the next sets would be.

Mind-meld game: One Derby member said they were interested in trying stand-up. One member said, "Wanna do a 'mind-meld?'" | It was a warm-up game where the team goes, "3-2-1" and then attempts to say the same word. The game seemed to make a lot of people laugh. When the team did a "3-2-1" Disney – there was a loud cheering because they said the word in sync.

The "3-2-1" mind-meld game is an example of the troupe having to be in sync and connect with one another. The troupe discussed that they would have to do some animation/ other tasks after doing a warm-up, they moved the desks to create space. The troupe members talked about different elements of their life and what they were looking forward to.

## Appendix H

### Bloomers Comedy Troupe Sketches

The following appendix features the list of Bloomers Comedy troupe sketches from the Fall 2020 show. The sketch “Goodbye 2020” was analyzed and coded using the dramaturgical method.

Name of Sketch	Length of Sketch
1. Cupcakes for Refugees	2:47
2. Intro to American Lit	5:06
3. There Ain't No Laws When You're Drinking Claws	2:49
4. Commercial Break	5:36
5. Art Thou Up?	2:34
6. Call of Daddy	2:40
7. How to Park a Plane	1:27
8. Participation Credit	1:02
9. Swab Me Daddy	1:24
10. Irresponsible at Penn	1:13
11. La Vie At Penn	3:02
12. Goodbye 2020	2:34

The lyrics to the sketch “Goodbye 2020” written and performed by Bloomers Comedy troupe are featured below:

*Harvey Weinstein went to jail  
Had to save the U.S. mail  
Parasite  
Timothee*

*Almost World War 3.  
Meg & Harry ditch the crown  
New York is a ghost town  
Outer Banks*

*Chloe Ting  
Supreme Court nominee  
Kim Jung Un is dead  
Everyone is baking bread*



*Cancel culture  
Cardi B & Offset cut their ties  
Gwyneth P.'s vagina candle  
We all watched "Too Hot to  
Handle"  
Q-Anon spouting lies  
stomping lantern flies  
Welcome to 2020  
Since the year got started  
We've been broken hearted  
No escape from 2020  
Getting worse and worse  
This is hell on earth  
Economy in a recession  
Everyone has depression*

*Did they really need to make a  
Kissing Booth 2?  
J.K. Rowling is transphobic  
Trump denies that people voted  
Arizona, Pennsylvania, Georgia  
turned blue  
They tried to take Tik Tok away  
Murder hornets out to play  
Australia fires  
Cali fires  
Everyone is doomed  
Logan Paul steps in the ring  
Watching all of "Tiger King"  
White House held a super  
spreader*

*We're all stuck on Zoom  
Welcome to 2020  
Since the year got started  
We've been broken hearted  
No escape from 2020  
It got worse & worse  
We've lived on hell on earth  
Say goodbye to 2020  
It was full of drama  
Now we  
all have trauma  
F you to 2020  
It's finally done  
Here's to '21.*

## Appendix I

### Troupe Observation Protocol

The following served as observational field note form for reflection of the troupe sketches and rehearsals.

Name of Sketch:

Date of Performance

Link to performance on YouTube:

Length of Sketch:

The number of cast members in the sketch:

Name of characters featured in the sketch:

\_\_\_\_\_

Themes covered in the sketch:

In this section of the notes, the researcher should note various components of the themes. Prompts featured below will help make accurate, clear, and structured notes during the observation.

#### Setting

- Describe the physical setting of the sketch.
- What is the setting like?
- What kinds of behaviors are being explored in the sketch?
- What objects and props are being used in the sketch?

#### Participants

- Without any specific references to names, describe the participants in the scenes.
- How many troupe cast members are in the sketch?
- What is bringing the participants together?
- Is there a narrator in the sketch or someone who is speaking, but not visible?
- Are there any patterns of interactions in the sketch that have been featured in other sketches?
- Do any of the participants look like external or guest members (not cast members?)
  - If yes, why are they in the sketch/what is their role?

#### Activities & Interactions

- What is going on in the sketch?
- How are people in the sketch interacting with one another?
- Is this sketch rooted in a realistic situation? If yes, what are the themes?
- Is the sketch rooted in science fiction/non-realistic situations? If yes, what are the themes?

### Conversation (The Jokes)

- What are the premises of the jokes in the sketch?
- How would you describe the humor of the jokes in the sketch? (Using the Blatchford, 2020 article in “The Huffington Post”)
  - Physical
  - Self-deprecating
  - Surreal
  - Improvisational
  - Wit-Wordplay
  - Topical
  - Observational
  - Bodily
  - Dark

Describe if and how any of the jokes/ humor in the sketches fall outside of the parameters of these comedy styles as described by Blatchford (2020)?

### Subtle Factors:

- Are there any comedy sketches that this reminds you of?
- What are some of the nonverbal communication elements of the sketch?

---

### Reference

Blatchford, E. (2017, July 19). *There are nine different types of humour. Which one are you?* The Huffington Post. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/07/19/there-are-nine-different-types-of-humour-which-one-are-you\\_a\\_23036626/](https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/07/19/there-are-nine-different-types-of-humour-which-one-are-you_a_23036626/)

## Appendix J

### Informed Consent Form: Individual Interview

Jaymi C. Thomas,  
EdD Candidate, Education Policy, Planning & Leadership  
William & Mary School of Education  
Williamsburg, VA 23187  
(757) 604.9797 (phone)  
[jcthomas01@email.wm.edu](mailto:jcthomas01@email.wm.edu) (email)

---

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This study is called *Fostering the Funny: A Case Study of Undergraduate Women in Collegiate Comedy Troupes*. The study is being conducted by Jaymi Thomas, an EdD candidate at William & Mary's School of Education.

#### **What is this study about?**

The study is being conducted as a case study of the women in collegiate comedy troupes. The research will employ a qualitative design approach and will include individual interviews and focus-group interviews. You are being asked to participate in the study because of your current status as an 18 to a 25-year-old member, woman-identified college student in a collegiate comedy troupe who was active in the troupe in 2020 - 2021.

#### **What you will be asked to do**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following

1. Participate in a recorded interview lasting between 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes in length.
2. Possibly participate in follow-up interviews.

#### **Risk and benefits**

Risks for participating in this study are minimal. There may be no direct benefits to you as a participant for this study. Participants will be provided pseudonyms to help with confidentiality. While your name will not be included in the study, the name of the comedy troupe and the name of the respective college/university will be included throughout the study. The first 15 individual interview participants will be eligible to receive a \$10.00 Visa e-gift card that will be emailed to participants. The information you provide may be beneficial to the understanding of your participation in your respective comedy troupe and how you build relationships with other members throughout a time of heightened loneliness. This information will be helpful for higher education leaders in particular student affairs practitioners who are actively seeking to help students build community and work toward wellness in the midst of COVID-19 and beyond. This information will help other practitioners who are interested in fusing humor and comedy into their programming. Ultimately, students and others within higher education may benefit if the information uncovered helps provide rich data around wellness, community, and how

laughter and comedy impact both.

**Your participation is voluntary**

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. You may refuse to answer any of the questions. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. Not participating or choosing to leave the study will not result in any penalty or loss of any benefits you would otherwise receive.

**Your answers to questions will be confidential**

The researcher will maintain the confidentiality of participants as far as possible. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom and the recordings of the interviews will be saved on my host computer. The recording of the interview will be transcribed and analyzed. The date and times for the focus group interviews will be chosen after participants complete a Qualtrics generated survey with various date and time offerings. The audio recording of the Zoom held interviews will be transcribed using the third-party service, Rev. The College of William & Mary Education Review Board is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The Ethics Review Board may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly. The following links provide insight into the terms of service and privacy statements for Zoom, Rev. and Qualtrics are linked below:

- Zoom terms of service can be found here: <https://zoom.us/terms>
- Zoom privacy statement can be found here: <https://zoom.us/privacy>
- Rev terms of service can be found here: <https://www.rev.com/about/terms>
- Rev privacy policy can be found here: <https://www.rev.com/about/privacy>
- Qualtrics term of service can be found here: <https://www.qualtrics.com/terms-of-service/>
- Qualtrics privacy policy can be found here: <https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>

**Contact Information**

If you have questions about the study right now, please ask them. If you have any questions about the study later on, please call the investigator Jaymi Thomas at the contact information listed above. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Dr. Jennifer Stevens, PHSC Chair, William & Mary Institutional Review Board (Ethics Committee) at [jastev@wm.edu](mailto:jastev@wm.edu) or via phone at 757.221.3862.

---

I have read this consent form. The study has been explained to me. I understand what I will be asked to do. I freely agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

---

Signature of Research Participant

---

Date

---

Investigator’s Signature

---

Date

## Appendix K

### Participant Informed Consent Form: Focus Group Interview

Jaymi C. Thomas,  
EdD Candidate, Education Policy, Planning & Leadership  
William & Mary School of Education  
Williamsburg, VA 23187

(757) 604.9797 (phone)  
[jcthomas01@email.wm.edu](mailto:jcthomas01@email.wm.edu) (email) \_\_\_\_\_

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This study is called Fostering the Funny: A Case Study of Collegiate Historically Women’s Comedy Troupes. The study is being conducted by Jaymi Thomas, an EdD candidate at William & Mary’s School of Education.

#### **What is this study about?**

The study is being conducted as a case study of women-centered collegiate comedy troupes [OR women-centered collegiate comedy troupes that participated in LaughtHERfest 2019]. The research will employ a qualitative design approach and will include individual interviews and focus-group interviews. You are being asked to participate in the study because of your current status as an 18-25-year-old member of a women-centered collegiate comedy troupe who was active in the troupe in 2020 - 2021.

#### **What you will be asked to do**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following

1. Participate in a recorded focus group interview via Zoom

#### **Risk and benefits**

Risks for participating in this study are minimal. There may be no direct benefits to you as a participant for this study. Participants will be provided pseudonyms to help with confidentiality. While your name will not be included in the study, your respective comedy troupe’s name will be included throughout the study. All participants from the focus group interviews will be put into a lottery where one participant will be selected at random to win a “Prize Pack.” The “prize pack” will include a curated package and be shipped directly to the winner’s address. The information you provide may be beneficial to the understanding of your participation in your respective comedy troupe and how you build relationships with other members throughout a time of heightened loneliness. This information will be helpful for higher education leaders in particular student affairs practitioners who are actively seeking to help students build community and work toward wellness in the midst of COVID-19 and beyond. This information will help other practitioners who are interested in fusing humor and comedy into their programming.

Ultimately, students and others within higher education may benefit if the information uncovered helps provide rich data around wellness, community, and how laughter and comedy impact both.

**Your participation is voluntary**

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. You may refuse to answer any of the questions. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. Not participating or choosing to leave the study will not result in any penalty or loss of any benefits you would otherwise receive.

**Your answers to questions will be confidential**

The researcher will maintain the confidentiality of study participants as far as possible. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom and the recordings of the interviews will be saved on my host computer. The recording of the interview will be transcribed and analyzed. The date and times for the focus group interviews will be chosen after participants complete a Qualtrics generated survey with the various date and time offerings. The College of William & Mary Education Review Board is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The Ethics Review Board may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly. Due to the nature of this interview being a focus group, I cannot control how others choose to share information from the group after leaving the session. However, I ask that all participants keep information from the focus group confidential.

The following links provide insight into the terms of service and privacy statements for Zoom, Rev., and Qualtrics:

- Zoom terms of service can be found here: <https://zoom.us/terms>
- Zoom privacy statement can be found here: <https://zoom.us/privacy>
- Rev terms of service can be found here: <https://www.rev.com/about/terms>
- Rev privacy policy can be found here: <https://www.rev.com/about/privacy>
- Qualtrics term of service can be found here: <https://www.qualtrics.com/terms-of-service/>
- Qualtrics privacy policy can be found here: <https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>

**Contact Information**

If you have questions about the study right now, please ask them. If you have any questions about the study later on, please call the investigator Jaymi Thomas at the contact information listed above. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Dr. Jennifer Stevens, PHSC Chair, William & Mary Institutional Review Board (Ethics Committee) at [jastev@wm.edu](mailto:jastev@wm.edu) or via phone at 757.221.3862.

I have read this consent form. The study has been explained to me. I understand what I will be asked to do. I freely agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix L

### Individual Interviews: Participant Recruitment Email

**Subject Line:** Fostering the Funny: Call to Participate in A Qualitative Research Case Study  
Dear \_\_\_\_\_ [Insert Name]:

Hello, my name is Jaymi Thomas. I am a graduate student (EdD candidate) at William & Mary's School of Education located in Williamsburg, Virginia. I am conducting a case study on women-identified students who participate in collegiate comedy troupes. I am inviting you to participate because you are a valued member of [insert name of troupe] between the ages of 18-25.

Participation in this research includes participating in an individual interview. The individual interviews will last anywhere between 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Before participating in an individual interview, I request that you complete a consent form with your electronic signature and return via email. **The consent form can be found attached to this email.**

Additionally, if you are interested in participating in the individual interview, please complete the survey linked here:

[https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0V5VROrhLOaspwy](https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0V5VROrhLOaspwy)

If you are one of the first 15 participants for an individual interview, you will receive a \$10.00 Visa gift card emailed to your email of choice. If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, I can be reached at (757) 604.9797 or via email at [jcthomas01@email.wm.edu](mailto:jcthomas01@email.wm.edu)















Sincerely,  
Jaymi Thomas  
William & Mary School of Education | EdD Candidate










## Appendix N

### Emoji Code Database

Emoji Symbol	Emoji Name	UNICODE	Number of Tags
<b>Animals, Creatures, &amp; People (17)</b>			
	Fly	U+1FAB0	1
	Peacock	U+1F99A	2
	Man	U+1F468	1
	Woman Cook	U+1F469	1
	Rabbit	U+1F407	1
	Princess	U+1F478	3
	Worm	U+1FAB1	1
	Woman tipping hand with medium skin tone	U+1F481	1
	Horse	U+1F40E	1
	Turkey	U+1F983	1
	Elf	U+1F9DD	1
	Santa Claus	U+1F385	1
	Man dancing	U+1F57A	1
	Weight lifter	U+1F3CB	2






	Cat face	U+1F431	2
	Clown	U+1F921	1
	Honeybee	U+1F41D	3

<b>Arts &amp; Culture (12)</b>	<b>Emoji Name</b>	<b>UNICODE</b>	<b>Number of Tags</b>
--------------------------------	-------------------	----------------	-----------------------












	Flashlight (Spotlight)	U+1F526	52
	Microphone	U+1F3A4	11
	Performing Arts	U+1F3AD	97
	Video Camera	U+1F4F9	10
	Musical Note	U+1F3B5	7
	Guitar	U+1F3B8	4
	Movie Camera	U+1F3A5	5
	Mirror	U+1FA9E	1
	Studio Microphone	U+1F399	1
	Muted Speaker	U+1F507	1
	Menorah	U+1F54E	1
	Radio	U+1F4FB	5

















<b>Clothing, Accessories, &amp; Fashion (6)</b>	<b>Emoji Name</b>	<b>UNICODE</b>	<b>Number of Tags</b>
---	-------------------	----------------	-----------------------





	Ring	U+1F48D	1
---	------	---------	---

	Top hat	U+1F3A9	1
	Briefcase	U+1F4BC	1
	Graduation cap	U+1F393	1
	Dress	U+1F457	1
	Crown	U+1F451	2

**Emotions, Expressions,  
& Gestures (34)**












	<b>Emoji Name</b>	<b>UNICODE</b>	<b>Number of Tags</b>
	Face with tears of joy	U+1F602	22
	Angry Face	U+1F620	2
	Face screaming with fear	U+1F631	1
	Face with symbols on mouth	U+1F92C	2
	Red heart	U+2764	18
	Black heart	U+1F5A4	4
	Party Popper	U+1F389	1
	Confetti Ball	U+1F38A	1
	Clapping hands	U+1F44F	1
	Partying face	U+1F973	1
	Face with medical mask	U+1F637	11

	Handshake	U+1F91D	9
!	Red exclamation mark	U+2757	1
	Winking face	U+1F609	8
	Wrapped gift	U+1F381	5
	Sleeping face	U+1F634	1
	Raising hands	U+1F64C	1
	Hour glass not done	U+23F3	1
?	Red question mark	U+2753	2
	Candle	U+1F56F	1
	Zany face	U+1F92A	2
	Sad but relieved face	U+1F625	1
	Green heart	U+1F49A	10
	Victory hands	U+270C	5
	White heart	U+1F90D	1
	Yin Yang	U+262F	1
	Footprints	U+1F463	1
	Crying face	U+1f622	1
	See No Evil	U+1F648	1







	Eyes	U+1F440	2
	Purple heart	U+1F49C	5
	Kiss mark	U+1F48B	2
	Overheated face	U+1F975	1

**Food & Beverage/  
Cooking (12)**










	<b>Emoji Name</b>	<b>UNICODE</b>	<b>Number of Tags</b>
	Hot Beverage	U+2615	1
	Shallow pan of food/ paella	U+1F958	1
	Cupcake	U+1F9C1	2
	Jack-O-Lantern	U+1F383	1
	Wine glass	U+1F377	1
	Banana	U+1F34C	1
	Mushroom	U+1F344	1
	Cheese wedge	U+1F9C0	1
	Grapes	U+1F347	1
	Hamburger	U+1F354	5
	Birthday cake	U+1F382	5
	Fork and Knife plate	U+1F374	1

<b>Outdoors, Nature, &amp; Places (11)</b>	<b>Emoji Name</b>	<b>UNICODE</b>	<b>Number of Tags</b>
	Cherry blossom	U+1F338	45
	Rainbow	U+1F308	4
	National Park	U+1F3DE	1
	Fallen leaf	U+1F342	1
	Maple leaf	U+1F341	1
	School	U+1F3EB	7
	Christmas tree	U+1F384	1
	Blossom	U+1F33C	2
	Coffin	U+26B0	1
	Butterfly	U+1F98B	1
	Church	U+26EA	1

<b>Politics, Social Justice, &amp; Economy (10)</b>	<b>Emoji Name</b>	<b>UNICODE</b>	<b>Number of Tags</b>
US	US Flag	U+1F1FA	5
	Statue of Liberty	U+1F5FD	1
TT	Flag for Trinidad & Tobago	U+1F1F9	1
	Banknote with dollar	U+1F4B5	3








	Raised fist with dark skin tone	(👊 U+270A U+1F3FF)	6
	rainbow flag	U+1F3F3	1
	ballot box	U+2708	2
	Recycling symbol	U+267B	8
	Police car light	U+1F6A8	1
	Money bag	U+1F4B0	1

Sports & Hobbies (9)	Emoji Name	UNICODE	Number of Tags
----------------------	------------	---------	----------------

	Skateboard	U+1F6F9	1
	Magic Wand	U+1FA84	1
	Crayon	U+1F58D	2
	Crystal Ball	U+1F52E	3
	Scroll	U+1F4DC	1
	Game die	U+1F3B2	1
	Video Games	U+1F3AE	2
	Puzzle piece	U+1F9E9	8
	Writing hand emoji	U+270D	2

Technology (Tools & Devices) + Travel (7)	Emoji Name	UNICODE	Number of Tags
---	------------	---------	----------------



	Television	U+1F4FA	1
	Laptop	U+1F4BB	24
	Mobile phone	U+1F4F1	1
	Airplane	U+2708	2
	Rocket	U+1F680	1
	Oncoming police car	U+1F694	1
	Calendar	U+1F4C5	1

---

## Appendix O

### Humor Styles Mini Quiz

The following Humor Styles Mini Quiz as featured in Aaker and Bagdonas (2021) will be adapted and asked in the individual interviews with members of Bloomers Comedy troupe. The humor style quiz questions will be intertwined into the semi-structured individual interviews and focus group interviews. The questions will be posed to the participants without making a specific reference to the humor styles quiz or the four designated humor styles (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021). The questions will allow for a better understanding of how members of the troupe with stronger senses of each style of humor interact with one another.

The following provides examples of how the Humor Styles Mini Quiz influences individual interview questions:

1. How would you define your sense of humor in a few adjectives?
  - When saying something humorous, how do you typically deliver your jokes?
  - How has being in a comedy troupe impacted your outlook on humor and what is funny?
  - What style of humor do you typically enjoy (i.e. understated and modest, bold and more roasting)? Explain more about your preferred humor and what type of jokes you find yourself more drawn to.

*The questions below are a quick, back-of-the-envelope way to get a sense of which humor style is closest to yours. To take the full humor styles quiz and learn more about*

*your style and the styles of others, head to [humorseriously.com](http://humorseriously.com)*

*Step 1:*

*Read each statement and score yourself from 1 to 5, where 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree”*

1. *My sense of humor is uplifting and wholesome; I am generous with laughter.*
2. *While saying something humorous, I often deliver it while smiling or laughing.*
3. *Others would describe my humor as animated, sometimes slapstick.*
4. *My sense of humor is dark and edge; you have to earn my laughter.*
5. *When saying something humorous, I often deliver it with a straight face.*
6. *Others would describe my humor as dry and sarcastic, an acquired taste.*
7. *I enjoy being the center of attention when joking and am confident riffing on the spot.*
8. *My humor is bold, irreverent, and roasting: I’m not afraid to ruffle a few feathers to get a laugh.*
9. *I have a thick skin for people making fun of me and don’t mind being the butt of a joke.*
10. *I prefer to plan out humor before I say it and am not interested in the spotlight.*
11. *My humor is understated and modest; I carefully consider how my humor will land on others before saying it.*
12. *I think that roasts, pranks, and teasing usually aren’t worth the risk of hurt feelings.*

*Step 2:*

*Add up your scores as indicated below and*

*circle the highest. The higher your score, the more likely you are to display characteristics of the corresponding humor style:*

***YOUR SCORE***

*Sum of items 1-3:*

*Magnet*

*Sum of items 4-6:*

*Sniper*

*Sum of items 7-9:*

*Stand-Up*

*Sum of items 10- 12:*

*Sweetheart*

The humor styles featured here were created by Aaker and Bagdonas (2021) after a series of studies in the course of six years to tease apart “individual differences in both what people tend to joke about and how they most naturally deliver their humor” (p.32).

The four styles described briefly include:

- The stand-up: These are natural entertainers and “come alive in front of crowds” and in group situations tend to make jokes.
- The sweet-heart: When a sense of humor falls more under the “sweet-heart” style, these jokes are often “planned and understated” with more subtleties and tend to have “a more optimistic” bend to the humor (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021).
- The magnet: This style of humor is typically charismatic and avoids controversy. Magnets “often crack up when delivering a goofy joke because it’s just too fun to tell” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p. 34)
- The sniper: This style of humor is rooted in being “edgy, sarcastic, and nuanced” (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021, p.35).

## Vita

Jaymi C. Thomas

### Contact information:

[jcthomas01@email.wm.edu](mailto:jcthomas01@email.wm.edu)

757-604-9797

### Education

2014 - 2022

William and Mary School of Education

Doctor of Education in Higher Education Policy, Planning  
& Leadership

2011-2012

Marymount University

Master of Arts in Literature

2006-2010

Wake Forest University

Bachelor of Arts in English Literature

### Professional Experience

2017-2018

Graduate Enrollment Manager

Marymount University

2016-2017

Graduate Assistant

William and Mary

Office of Student Leadership Development

2013-2016

Student Peer Advisory Network

William and Mary

Center for Student Diversity

2013-2014

Adjunct Instructor

Thomas Nelson Community College