

## **Late Night Politics**

Using Moral Foundations Theory to Analyze Political Satire

### **Abstract**

This study investigated the viability of the Moral Foundations Theory as an effective analytical tool for examining satirical media. The focus was on late night talk shows, as they have emerged as prominent sources of news and political commentary over the past decade. Specifically, the investigation centered around three shows: *Late Night* with Seth Meyers, *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah, and *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert in the week following the inauguration of President Donald Trump. These three shows are built around political satire, and their content is often perceived to have a liberal tilt, and therefore provide a good control against which to test the Moral Foundations Theory. A quantitative content analysis was performed on the political content of each show. From there, the moral foundations of each show were paired with a contextual analysis of satire, considering both the explicit and implicit meanings of each segment. The results of the pairing were analyzed to determine both the success of the methods' analyses, as well as the conclusions about political satire that can be drawn from the completed results. The study determined that the Moral Foundations Theory is only an effective analytical tool in examining political satire if it is paired with another method of analysis that considers implicit meaning.

### **Introduction**

Over the past several decades, late night television has evolved from a comedic form of entertainment to a prominent source of political commentary. This new brand of comedic journalism has become an important source of news for many Americans. As a result, many researchers have begun to study and analyze political satire in late night television; however, its evolution into a hybrid form of media situated somewhere between entertainment and news has made its analysis uniquely challenging. As the meteoric rise of late night television continues, researchers have begun to search for an effective analytical tool for examining satirical media.

Free from the restraints of broadcast journalism, talk show hosts present the news through comedy and satire, taking a stance on key issues and holding politicians accountable (Jonathan, Jones, & Thompson 2009, 13). This satiric component allows viewers to engage in politics in a

more relaxed and playful manner, something that networks like CNN, Fox, and MSNBC simply cannot offer (Jonathan, Jones, & Thompson 2009, 22). These shows include *The Late Show* (TLS) with Stephen Colbert, *The Daily Show* (TDS) with Trevor Noah, and *Late Night* (LN) with Seth Meyers, all of which have revolutionized political discourse with their brand of political humor which centers around “opposition news,” ridiculing the hypocrisy of American politicians (Duffy & Page 2013).

While many people watch late night television for entertainment, these shows were created to contain just as much information and content as traditional networks, despite still featuring the satiric style of other late night television programs (Feldman 2013). This unique combination allows hosts to move past the partisan talking points of mainstream media and present a more substantive form of coverage (Feldman 2013). However, it makes any analysis of this new brand of late night television inherently complex. While they report the news much like a traditional news anchor, the commentary of Meyers, Noah, and Colbert is laced with satire and hidden meaning (Brewer, Young, and Morreale 2013). According to Feldman (2012), this contrast between what is explicitly stated and what is implicitly meant allows each viewer to read the commentary in his or her own way. For example, a study examining the perception of satire in *The Colbert Report* found that an individual’s political ideology had a significant impact on the perceptions of Colbert’s political leaning (LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam 2009). LaMarre, Landreville, and Beam’s (2009) research demonstrated that conservatives were more likely to believe the explicitly conservative statements Colbert was making, while liberals believed Colbert was mocking conservatives in his explicit statements and implicitly sided with the liberal point of view. Therefore, when analyzing the content presented by Meyers, Noah, and Colbert, it is

important to account for both the explicit and the implicit meanings of a particular statement (LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam 2009).

One of the methods used to analyze political leanings is the Moral Foundations Theory (MFN), developed by Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009), which states that moral judgements vary across the political spectrum; therefore, the moral foundations used in a given statement can give indication of political leaning. However, the unique challenge presented by political satire highlights some of the gaps in a moral foundations analysis. A common form of satire in late night television is the parody; hosts often mock politicians, public figures, or political views, explicitly agreeing with a statement while implicitly ridiculing it through their sarcastic presentation. In her article examining political satire, Colletta (2009) references a quote made by Colbert during his show about school redistricting in Nebraska where Colbert seems to condone re-segregation. However, Colbert's show is a parody, and his brand of satire often involves saying one thing, while meaning the exact opposite. Using MFN to analyze this segment would likely yield a result claiming Colbert is a conservative, and while some people would agree with this assessment, LaMarre, Landreville, and Beam (2009) demonstrated that many viewers would see this statement as a sarcastic parody, making Colbert's views seem liberal. While the MFN is excellent in analyzing the explicit meaning of a statement, in order to properly analyze satire, the implicit meanings must be considered as well. Therefore, each segment must be analyzed contextually, noting the satire and accounting for the implicit meanings of every statement highlighted by MFN (Littau & Stewart 2015).

## **Methods**

How can one accurately analyze political satire? MFN yields a concrete political leaning but it can sometimes be inaccurate, failing to consider the implicit meaning of a statement. In order to definitively analyze the political satire of late night television, a moral foundations analysis must

be paired with a comprehensive satirical analysis. This pairing allows for the consideration of both explicit and implicit meaning, improving the MFN and yielding an accurate analysis of political satire.

This study analyzes *Late Night* with Seth Meyers, *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah, and *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert. These three shows were selected because they are all centered around political content; each show contains multiple segments or “bits” that are purely devoted to political satire. The goal in the show selection was the maximization of political content; therefore, Meyers, Noah, and Colbert were selected over their less political counterparts, Fallon and Kimmel. Episodes from each of the three shows were selected from the weeks following the inauguration of President Trump, again to ensure the maximization of political content. These episodes were also considered highly likely to bring out the political leanings of each show considering the controversy surrounding the inauguration and President Trump’s first weeks in office. This selection yielded six episodes of TLS, six episodes of TDS, and five episodes of LN. Given that new episodes of TLS did not air during the week of January 23<sup>rd</sup>, episodes from the following week were selected. The date ranges for each show were created so that at least one episode sampled from each show was aired on the same day as the other two shows for the sake of comparative analysis. Episodes were obtained from the website of each show’s network. A comprehensive list of the exhibits can be found in the appendix.

Once the episodes were collected, each episode was viewed and the political content was separated from the rest of the show. The political content from each episode was then transcribed into a textual format and analyzed. Political content was determined by the presence of any reference made to a political figure, issue, or event. The analysis utilized the Moral Foundations Theory, which identifies five virtues, harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, authority/respect,

ingroup/loyalty, and purity/sanctity, that determine political leaning. According to Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009), liberals place more emphasis on the individualizing foundations (harm/care and fairness/reciprocity), while conservative's virtues encompass the five categories more evenly, with a slightly higher emphasis on the binding foundations (authority/respect, ingroup/loyalty, purity/sanctity). Although the MFN has been updated, the 2009 version divides the foundations into two distinct categories based on political orientation, while the newer version presents more universal and broadly utilized foundations (Day et al. 2014). As the present study attempts to replicate the moral foundations analysis performed by Graham, Haidt, and Nosek in their 2009 study, the newest version of the Moral Foundation Theory was rejected in favor of the older, better tested version to ensure methodological accuracy.

In order to perform the analysis, the Moral Foundations Theory Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (LIWC) dictionary (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek 2009) was used to perform a quantitative content analysis of the dialogue of the political content in each individual episode. The LIWC dictionary, which can be found in the appendix, provided a list of 295 words and word stems divided under each of the five core virtues. The number of times a word or word stem from each virtue was used during the political content of each episode was recorded to provide a numerical representation of political leaning. The lack of a comprehensive LIWC for the updated MFN and new foundation was another reason for its rejection and the use of the 2009 version of the theory.

Once the results of the moral foundations analyses were recorded, each episode was coded for satire. Each statement that used one of the 295 words or word stems in the LIWC was both read and watched in context and coded. The coding method involved a comprehensive set of yes or no questions designed specifically for this study. The full list of questions can be found in the appendix. The questions were designed to detect comments that seemed out of place with the

direction of the narrative or contained an element of satire and sarcasm; comments that could have an implicit meaning that either somewhat or entirely contradicted the explicit message. Each question was geared around a specific element or indicator of satire. Satirical content has specific characteristics or “tells” that distinguish it from traditional commentary, and these characteristics can be used to study satire (Johnathan, Jeffery, and Ethan 2009) (Yetkin 2011). In their book on satire in television, Johnathan, Jeffery, and Ethan (2009) identify 15 indicators of satirical content; another researcher, Yetkin (2011), in his case study into the perception of satire by Yetkin, identifies 19 such indicators. The characteristics listed were cross-referenced, providing 12 indicators that were identified by both Johnathan, Jeffery, and Ethan, as well as Yetkin. These indicators included elements like irony, exaggeration, and juxtaposition. A yes or no question pertaining to late night television was tailored to each of the 12 indicators to form the satirical coding method. For example, the question meant to identify the juxtaposition asks, “Does the comment/segment intentionally put two elements that don’t belong together (or are opposite) side by side for emphasis?” A yes was coded with the number one while a no was given a zero; the total value yielded by this coding method provided a numerical value to represent the level of satire in each statement. This coding was then factored into the results from the MFN examination in order to ensure an accurate estimation of the political leaning of each show.

## **Findings**

The results below are separated into two subsections: one for the moral foundations analysis and another for the satire coding. Each section contains a single data table or chart representing the data from each analysis. From there, the results of each show are presented individually with a written review. Finally, the results from each show are compared for each separate analysis. The full results, including episode by episode breakdowns, can be found in the appendix. It is worth noting that in one episode from each show, the word “order” was used exactly

fifteen times. Each of these episodes involved a discussion of President Trump's plethora of executive orders during his first days in office. While this fact is noted in the discussion, it was not factored into the respective numerical analyses of each show, as the significance of the word's frequency would have drastically altered the results in favor of the authority/respect foundation.

### Moral Foundations Theory

The transcription of each of the three shows yielded 9,666 words of political content for LN, 7,615 words of political content for TDS, and 8,938 words of political content for TLS. The quantitative content analysis of each show yielded 128 relevant words, or 1.32% of the overall political content, for LN; 103 relevant words, or 1.34% of the political content, for TDS; and 109 relevant words, or 1.22% of the political content, for TLS. The results of the analysis are displayed in the table below.

		Harm	Fairness	Ingroup	Authority	Purity
Meyers	Total	32	10	37	47	2
	Relative Frequency	25.00%	7.81%	28.91%	36.72%	1.56%
Noah	Total	28	9	34	31	1
	Relative Frequency	27.18%	8.74%	33.01%	30.10%	0.97%
Colbert	Total	29	14	30	35	1
	Relative Frequency	26.61%	12.84%	27.52%	32.11%	0.92%

The first talk show that was analyzed was *Late Night* with Seth Myers. The most frequently utilized foundation was authority/respect, representing nearly 37% of the total relevant words. Slightly behind the authority/respect foundation was ingroup/loyalty with a relative frequency of approximately 29%. These results directly contradict the conclusions of Graham, Haidt, and Nosek's (2009), as Seth Meyers is well known as a very liberal talk show host. However, the emphasis on conservative moral foundations may not be completely out of the ordinary, as they could be the result of the satirical critique of a conservative government. The episode on January 30<sup>th</sup> contained by far the largest proportion of relevant words with 38%. This episode was the first

one released after Trump's executive order banning immigration from seven majority Muslim countries, which might explain the spike in words referencing the ingroup/loyalty foundation.

Second, the Moral Foundations Theory quantitative content analysis was performed on six episodes of *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah. Once again, the authority/respect and ingroup/loyalty foundations occurred most frequently, even though Noah is a strong liberal. The episode aired on January 30<sup>th</sup>, the first after the release of the travel ban, also contained the largest portion of relevant words at 29%. While the harm/care foundation was prevalent as expected, the fairness/reciprocity foundation occurred surprisingly infrequently at just above 8%, lower than every foundation except purity/sanctity which occurred 1% of the time in both TDS and LN.

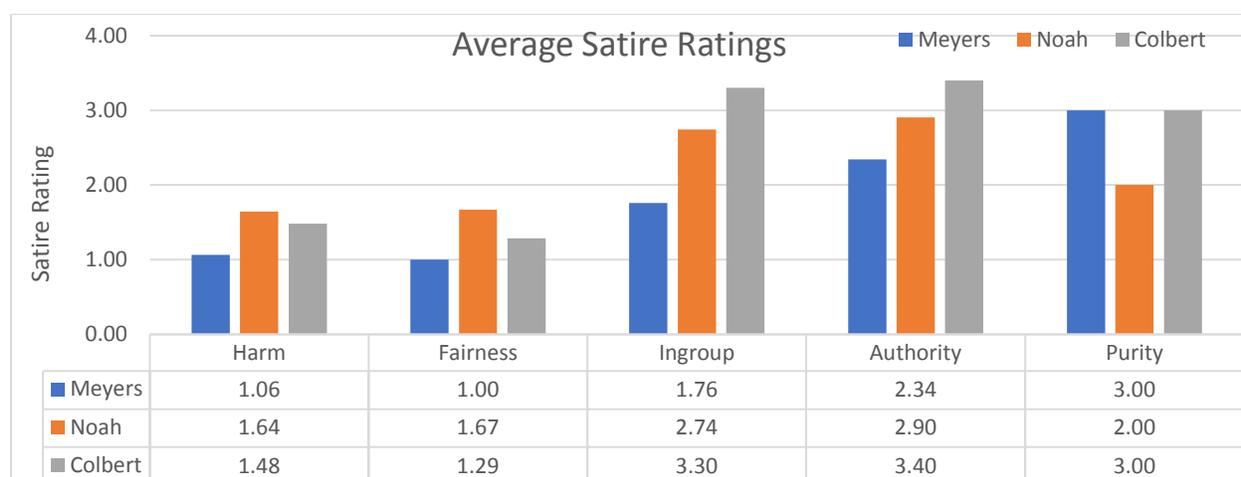
Finally, six episodes of *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert were analyzed. The six episodes were taped and aired a week after those of TDS and LN; the only overlap between TLS and the previous two analyses were the shows aired on January 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. The relative frequencies of each foundation in TLS follow the same overall trend that can be seen in the previous two analyses, with authority/respect and ingroup/loyalty being the two most frequent foundations. Once again, while the frequency of the harm/care foundation was expectedly high, the fairness/reciprocity foundation, while higher than the previous two analyses, was still significantly lower. The purity/sanctity foundation was all but nonexistent for the third time running. Colbert also utilized the largest amount of moral foundations in his January 30<sup>th</sup> episode, which addressed not only the travel ban, but everything that happened in the week prior as his show did not air in the week of January 23<sup>rd</sup>. Surprisingly, Colbert's January 20<sup>th</sup> episode, airing mere hours after the inauguration, contained by far the fewest relative words with just 8.26%.

According to the Graham, Haidt, and Nosek's (2009) hypothesis, the strong liberal leaning of Meyers, Noah, and Colbert should have led to an emphasis on the individualizing foundations.

However, each show placed the greatest amount of emphasis on the binding foundations, except for purity/sanctity which was almost unmentioned throughout the analysis. The emphasis on the authority/respect foundation spiked during episodes addressing the many executive orders during the first week of Trump's presidency. The ingroup/loyalty foundation was emphasized during the episode following the controversial travel ban. Each show contained a much larger proportion of relevant words in the episode aired on January 30<sup>th</sup>, the first taping after the announcement of the immigration ban. All three shows also had small proportions of words relevant to the fairness/reciprocity foundation, which directly contradicts the moral foundations hypothesis.

### Satire Coding

After performing the quantitative content analysis, each show was analyzed using the satire coding method developed for this study. Every relevant word was highlighted and the sentences around it were read and watched in context to determine the level of satire in each statement. The average satire rating for each of the five foundations was found for each episode (this data can be found in the tables located in the appendix), as well as for each show as a whole. Nearly every comment analyzed yielded a satire rating of at least one, as they were often criticizing or highlighting a mistake or hypocrisy. The overall averages were organized into a bar graph along with a small table beneath that provides each foundation's name and exact satire rating.



The blue bars display the average satire ratings for each of the five foundations across the five episodes of *Late Night* with Seth Meyers that were analyzed. The purity/sanctity foundation was only referenced once; this small sample size prevented it from regressing to the mean, resulting in a higher average. Aside from purity/sanctity, the authority/respect foundation received the highest average satire rating (2.34), with the ingroup/authority foundation obtaining the next highest (1.76). The harm/care and fairness/reciprocity foundations received average ratings of 1.06 and 1.00 respectively, both of which were lower than TDS and TLS. The episode on January 30<sup>th</sup> received the highest average (1.96), while the episode on January 24<sup>th</sup> received the lowest (1.38).

The orange bars represent the average satire ratings for each of the five foundations across the six episodes of *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah that were analyzed. Overall, the satire ratings for TDS were much higher than those of LN. TDS also received high satire ratings for the binding foundations; authority/respect received the highest (2.9), followed by ingroup/loyalty (2.74), then purity/sanctity (2.00) which was only referenced once throughout the six episodes. The individualizing foundations received far lower scores, albeit not as low as Meyers', as Noah typically referenced them in a positive, rather than critical manner. The episode aired on January 26<sup>th</sup> received the highest average satire rating (3.56); this episode also had the smallest sample size, which likely contributed the high rating. The episode aired on January 20<sup>th</sup>, the day of the inauguration, surprisingly received the lowest average satire rating (1.75).

The gray bars show the average satire ratings for each of the five foundations across the six episodes of *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert that were analyzed. For the third time running, the binding foundations received the highest average satire ratings, further enforcing the hypothesis that the emphasis on those three foundations was due to their ridicule rather than their acceptance. Colbert's satire ratings for the binding foundations were particularly high, with the

authority/respect (3.40) and ingroup/loyalty (3.30) foundations representing the two highest averages across all three shows. The individualizing foundations also remained low across the six episodes, with harm/care receiving a rating of 1.48 and fairness/reciprocity receiving a rating of 1.29. The episode aired on January 20<sup>th</sup> received the highest average (3.67). This episode also had the smallest number of relevant words, none of which fell under the individualizing foundations, which likely contributed toward the exceedingly high average. The episode aired on January 30<sup>th</sup> received the lowest average satire rating (2.11), despite having the largest number of references to the binding foundations of the six episodes, as well as the largest number of relevant words overall.

The satire coding analysis reveals that the large emphasis on the binding foundations, particularly authority/respect and ingroup/loyalty, were largely satirical and spent ridiculing the foundations rather than affirming them. While each show was far more satirical when referencing the binding foundations than when referencing the individualizing foundations, they varied greatly in the satire ratings themselves, with TLS receiving significantly higher ratings than LN. TDS, on the other hand was much more satirical than its counterparts when discussing content relevant to the individualizing foundations.

While the episode aired on January 30<sup>th</sup> contained the largest amount of relevant words for all three talk shows, only LN received the highest satire rating on the 30<sup>th</sup>, with TDS receiving the third highest, while TLS shockingly received the lowest. However, TLS's January 30<sup>th</sup> rating (2.11) was still higher than the rating given to LN (1.96), and relatively comparable to that of TDS (2.52). Overall, when paired with the results of the moral foundations analysis, Graham, Haidt, and Nosek's hypothesis was confirmed, as the individualizing foundations were affirmed while the binding foundations were rejected, yielding a liberal leaning as expected.

## Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the effectiveness of the Moral Foundations Theory in analyzing satire in late night television. All three of the late night comics analyzed are known to be very strong liberals, providing a basis on which to test the MFN. According to Graham, Haidt, and Nosek's (2009) hypothesis, liberals place a great deal of emphasis on the individualizing foundations; therefore, an effective moral foundations analysis of the three late night talk shows should have shown each host placing most emphasis on the harm/care and fairness/reciprocity foundations. However, the analysis demonstrated the opposite.

In aggregate, the results of the moral foundations analysis seemed to indicate that Meyers, Noah, and Colbert all had a strong conservative tilt. All three talk shows placed a great deal of emphasis on the ingroup/loyalty and authority/respect foundations, which are usually avoided in liberal commentary. While the harm/care foundation was usually referenced slightly less often than the binding foundations, the fairness/reciprocity foundation was not referenced more than 9% of the time in any of the three shows. Each show also aired an episode discussing the plethora of executive orders President Trump signed during his first days in office, mentioning the word "order" at least 15 times which, had it been factored into the results, would have given the binding foundations, particularly authority/respect, a much larger emphasis. These results indicate that, when used by itself, the MFN is a poor method of analysis for political satire. However, a variety of other factors must be considered before a conclusion is drawn.

First, the proportion of relevant words in each show was approximately 1.3% of the total word count, much lower than the typical 4-5% seen in strictly political or news-based commentary (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek 2009). This small sample size made it very easy for a single episode or segment to skew the results, suggesting that a modified or expanded LIWC dictionary might be more effective in analyzing satire. For example, each show received a massive spike in relevant

words during the episode aired on January 30<sup>th</sup>, the first episode taped after the implementation of President Trump's controversial immigration ban. During this episode, Meyers, Noah, and Colbert all referenced the ingroup/loyalty foundation with disproportionate frequency in relation to the other foundations. This emphasis was likely the result of the subject matter, as the discussion of immigration often leads to an increased emphasis on groups and community. A similar spike can be seen during each show's segment on President Trump's many executive orders. Given that executive orders are of the more extreme uses of presidential power, Trump's unrestrained usage of this power lead to an uptick in the emphasis placed on the authority/respect foundation.

While the sample size and subject matter being discussed may explain the emphasis placed on certain foundations, they do not completely rectify the errors of the moral foundations analysis. The MFN examines the speaker's explicit meaning, leading to errors; however, when paired with a contextual analysis of satire, the results demonstrated marked improvement. In this study, the moral foundations analysis made it seem like Meyers, Noah, and Colbert were affirming conservative virtues given their emphasis on the binding foundations. However, the satire ratings told another story, as all three shows yielded significantly higher satire ratings for the binding foundations. Each show was particularly critical of the authority/respect foundation, which received the highest rating of any foundation. The individualizing foundations had extremely low satire ratings across all three shows, reflecting their affirmation, which was expected given the liberal views of each host. The binding foundations on the other hand were heavily critiqued, meaning that the large emphasis discovered in the moral foundations analysis was due to the frequency of their ridicule, and was in no way indicative of the hosts' overall political leanings. In fact, when the results of the satire coding are paired with the moral foundations analysis, the strong

liberal tilt of each host becomes obvious, as the individualizing foundations were typically affirmed while the binding foundations were usually rejected.

On a comparative basis, the overall satire ratings of each show were varied. *Late Night* with Seth Meyers received the lowest satire ratings across all five foundations. While Meyers' show still relies on satire, he is very open with his political opinions and usually voices them explicitly during his show, leading to a lower frequency of diverging implicit meaning. Colbert on the other hand, received significantly higher satire ratings, particularly for the binding foundations. These scores reflect his strongly critical narration style. Colbert's popularity has soared in the wake of Trump's election, as he has not been afraid to openly criticize and ridicule the President's follies and hypocrisies. This intense ridicule meant that Colbert's references to the binding foundations were heavily laced with satire. *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert epitomizes the "opposition news" discussed by Duffy and Page (2013), and his satire ratings demonstrate his critical nature.

*The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah on the other hand fell somewhere in the middle. While Noah obtained higher satire ratings on average, he was less satirical than Colbert when discussing the binding foundation, and more satirical than both Meyers and Colbert when discussing the individualizing foundations. While Meyers and Colbert structure their shows around politics from a critical lens, Noah focuses more on comedy. Noah's satire revolved around components like understatement, juxtaposition, and irony, using his comedic background and expertise to highlight the hypocrisies of the Trump Administration; a direct contrast to Meyers and Colbert, who relied mainly on critique and ridicule. The diversity of Noah's comedic approach allowed his content to address a wider range of satiric characteristics leading to higher satire ratings, particularly for the individualizing foundations, which remained low during the critical segments of his counterparts.

The present study demonstrated the importance of considering implicit meaning when analyzing political satire, confirming the findings of both Colletta (2009), who discussed the importance of implicit meaning in satire, and Feldman (2013), who demonstrated the effects of implicit meaning on satirical analysis. The satire coding allowed for the reevaluation of the moral foundations results, providing a more accurate and comprehensive picture of each show's political leaning. Although the satire coding was highly subjective, given both its novelty and the use of a single reader, which called into question its reliability and validity, it provided a concrete method for considering implicit meaning, and any attempt to analyze political satire using the MFN should utilize this study's satire coding method, or a similar technique, to ensure accurate results.

Given the reliance of satirical content on implicit messaging, Moral Foundations Theory alone is an ineffective analytical method, as a quantitative content analysis fails to analyze the reference of a foundation in context. However, when paired with a contextual analysis that codifies satirical content and considers implicit meaning, the Moral Foundations Theory can be used to determine the political leanings of satirical media. The results of this study have shown that the significant emphasis on conservative moral foundations in late night television is the result of the rejection, rather than the affirmation of the binding foundations. The critical and satirical nature of late night television requires an analytical method that addresses both the explicit and implicit meaning of a given statement; therefore, the Moral Foundations Theory must be paired with an additional analytical tool that considers both context and implicit meaning.

## References

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – List of Exhibits

**The Exhibits** – Episodes of *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert, *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah, and *Late Night* with Seth Meyers.

**Source:** <http://www.cbs.com/shows/the-late-show-with-stephen-colbert/video/>

01.20.17 – *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert: Season 2 Episode 82

01.30.17 – *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert: Season 2 Episode 83

01.31.17 – *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert: Season 2 Episode 84

02.01.17 – *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert: Season 2 Episode 85

02.02.17 – *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert: Season 2 Episode 86

02.03.17 – *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert: Season 2 Episode 87

**Source:** <http://www.cc.com/shows/the-daily-show-with-trevor-noah>

01.20.17 – *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah: Joy Reid

01.23.17 – *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah: Matt Taibbe

01.24.17 – *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah: Big Sean

01.25.17 – *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah: Heather Ann Thompson & Bellamy Young

01.26.17 – *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah: Laurence Fishburne

01.30.17 – *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah: Sybrina Fulton & Tracy Martin

**Source:** <http://www.nbc.com/late-night-with-seth-meyers/episodes>

01.23.17 – *Late Night* with Seth Meyers: Season 4 Episode 56

01.24.17 – *Late Night* with Seth Meyers: Season 4 Episode 57

01.25.17 – *Late Night* with Seth Meyers: Season 4 Episode 58

01.26.17 – *Late Night* with Seth Meyers: Season 4 Episode 59

01.30.17 – *Late Night* with Seth Meyers: Season 4 Episode 60

### Appendix 2 – Linguistic Inquiry Word Count Dictionary

#### **Harm:**

safe\*, peace\*, compassion\*, empath\*, sympathy\*, care, caring, protect\*, shield, shelter, amity, secur\*, benefit\*, defen\*, guard\*, preserve, harm\*, suffer\*, war, wars, warl\*. warring, fight\*, violen\*, hurt\*, kill, kills, killer\*, killed, killing, endanger\*, cruel\*, brutal\*, abuse\*, damage\*, ruin\*, ravage, detriment\*, crush\*, attack\*, annihilate\*, destroy, stomp, abandon\*, spurn, impair, exploit, exploits, exploited, exploiting, wound\*

#### **Fairness:**

fair, fairly, fairness, fair\*, fairmind\*, fairplay, equal\*, justice, justness, justifi\*, reciproc\*, impartial\*, egalitar\*, rights, equity, evenness, equivalent, unbias\*, tolerant, equable, balance\*, homologous, unprejudice\*, reasonable, constant, honest\*, unfair\*, unequal\*, bias\*, unjust\*, injust\*, bigot\*, discriminant\*, disproportion\*, inequitable, prejud\*, dishonest, unscrupulous, dissociate, preference, favoritism, segregat\*, exclusion, exclude\*

**Ingroup:**

together, nation\*, homeland\*, family, families, familial, group, loyal\*, patriot\*, communal, commune\*, communit\*, communis\*, comrad\*, cadre, collectiv\*, joint, unison, unite\*, fellow\*, guild, solidarity, devot\*, member, cliqu\*, cohort, ally, insider, foreign\*, enem\*, betray\*, treason\*, traitor\*, disloyal\*, individual\*, apostasy, apostate, deserted, deserter\*, deserting, deceiv\*, jilt\*, imposter, miscreant, spy, sequester, renegade, terroris\*, immigra\*

**Authority:**

obey\*, obedian\*, duty, law, lawful\*, legal\*, duti\*, honor\*, respect, respectful\*, respected, order\*, father\*, mother, motherl\*, mothering, mothers, tradition\*, hierarch\*, authorit\*, permit, permission, status\*, rank\*, leader\*, class, bourgeoisie, caste\*, position, complain\*, command, supremacy, control, submit\*, allegian\*, serve, abide, defere\*. defer, revere\*, venerat\*, comply, defian\*, rebel\*, dissent\*, subver\*, disrespect\*, disobe\*, sediti\*, agitat\*, insubordinat\*, illegal\*, lawless\*, insurgent, mutinous, defy\*, dissident, unfaithful, alienate, defector, heretic\*, nonconformist, oppose, protest, refuse, denounce, remonstrate, riot\*, obstruct

**Purity:**

piety, pious, purity, pure\*, clean\*, steril\*, sacred\*, chast\*, holy, holiness, saint\*, wholesome\*, celiba\*, abstention, virgin, virgins, virginity, virginal, austerity, integrity, modesty, abstinen\*, abstemiousness, upright, limpid, unadulterated, maiden, virtuous, refined, intemperate, decen\*, immaculate, innocent, pristine, humble, disgust, deprav\*, disease\*, unclean\*, contagio\*, indecen\*, sin, sinful\*, sinner\*, sins, sinned, sinning, slut\*, whore, dirt\*, impiety, impious, profan\*, gross, repuls\*, sick\*, promiscu\*, lewd\*, adulter\*, debauch\*, defile\*, tramp, prostitut\*, unchaste, wanton, profligate, filth\*, trashy, obscen\*, lax, taint\*, stain\*, tarnish\*, debase\*, desecrat\*, wicked\*, blemish, exploitat\*, pervert, wretched\*

\* = word stem

Appendix 3 – Satire Coding

1. Does the comment/segment appear to ridicule a human weakness, vice, or folly; does it highlight an inconsistency or hypocrisy?
2. Does the comment/segment appear to criticize or ridicule the given moral foundation it addresses?
3. Does the comment/segment enlarge, increase, or represent something beyond normal bounds so that it becomes ridiculous or its faults can be clearly seen and openly mocked?
4. Does the comment/segment express an idea with less emphasis or in a lesser degree than is the actual case?
5. Does the comment/segment present an idea in a manner that is out of place or is absurd in relation to the rest of the segment?
6. Does the comment/segment ridiculously exaggerate the traits of a person or type of person?

7. Does the comment/segment imitate the techniques and/or style of some person, place, or thing?
8. Does the comment/segment intentionally put two elements that don't belong together (or are opposite) side by side for emphasis?
9. Does the comment/segment use phrasing or words that could have a double meaning?
10. Does the speaker drastically elongate (or use a nasal tone) any specific word or words in the comment/segment?
11. Does the speaker use over-the-top facial expressions or wild gestures (including limitations) during the comment/segment?
12. Does the speaker use words with heavily positive or negative connotations during the comment/segment?

#### Appendix 4 – *Moral Foundations Analysis*

**Table 1:** Episode by episode analysis of the frequency of each moral foundation in *Late Night* with Seth Meyers.

Episode	Harm	Fairness	Ingroup	Authority	Purity	Totals	Relative Frequency
23-Jan	6	0	5	7	0	18	14.06%
24-Jan	1	5	3	6	1	16	12.50%
25-Jan	9	1	3	9	0	22	17.19%
26-Jan	8	1	5	10	0	24	18.75%
30-Jan	8	3	21	15	1	48	37.50%
<b>Totals</b>	32	10	37	47	2	128	
<b>Relative Frequency</b>	25.00%	7.81%	28.91%	36.72%	1.56%		

**Table 2:** Episode by episode analysis of the frequency of each moral foundation in *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah.

Episode	Harm	Fairness	Ingroup	Authority	Purity	Totals	Relative Frequency
20-Jan	10	1	2	6	0	19	18.45%
23-Jan	2	3	4	3	0	12	11.65%
24-Jan	5	2	1	6	0	14	13.59%
25-Jan	2	1	10	7	0	20	19.42%
26-Jan	1	1	2	5	0	9	8.74%
30-Jan	8	1	15	4	1	29	28.16%
<b>Totals</b>	28	9	34	31	1	103	
<b>Relative Frequency</b>	27.18%	8.74%	33.01%	30.10%	0.97%		

**Table 3:** Episode by episode analysis of the frequency of each moral foundation in *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert.

Episode	Harm	Fairness	Ingroup	Authority	Purity	Totals	Relative Frequency
20-Jan	0	0	3	6	0	9	8.26%
30-Jan	11	4	6	15	0	36	33.03%
31-Jan	8	3	5	4	0	20	18.35%
1-Feb	3	4	3	6	0	16	14.68%
2-Feb	4	1	7	2	0	14	12.84%
3-Feb	3	2	6	2	1	14	12.84%
<b>Totals</b>	29	14	30	35	1	109	
<b>Relative Frequency</b>	26.61%	12.84%	27.52%	32.11%	0.92%		

Appendix 5 – Satire Coding**Table 4:** Episode by episode analysis of the average satire rating for each moral foundation in *Late Night* with Seth Meyers.

Episode	Harm	Fairness	Ingroup	Authority	Purity	Average
23-Jan	1.67	-	2.00	2.14	-	1.94
24-Jan	0.00	0.80	0.00	2.50	3.00	1.38
25-Jan	1.22	1.00	0.67	2.56	-	1.68
26-Jan	0.63	2.00	1.20	2.30	-	1.50
30-Jan	1.00	1.00	2.24	2.27	-	1.96

**Table 5:** Episode by episode analysis of the average satire rating for each moral foundation in *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah.

Noah	Harm	Fairness	Ingroup	Authority	Purity	Average
20-Jan	0.60	2.00	3.00	3.00	-	1.75
23-Jan	1.00	2.33	2.00	4.00	-	2.42
24-Jan	3.00	0.00	3.00	3.00	-	2.57
25-Jan	0.50	3.00	2.80	1.71	-	2.20
26-Jan	4.00	2.00	2.50	4.20	-	3.56
30-Jan	2.25	1.00	2.87	2.25	2.00	2.52

**Table 5:** Episode by episode analysis of the average satire rating for each moral foundation in *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert.

Colbert	Harm	Fairness	Ingroup	Authority	Purity	Average
20-Jan	-	-	3.33	3.83	-	3.67
30-Jan	1.36	1.50	1.83	2.93	-	2.11
31-Jan	1.88	1.00	3.40	4.00	-	2.55
1-Feb	1.00	2.00	4.67	3.67	-	2.94
2-Feb	1.25	-	3.00	3.50	-	2.36
3-Feb	1.67	0.50	4.33	3.50	3.00	3.00

One of my favorite things to do in my free time is watching late night television. The way each host can brilliantly and comedically analyze current events has always fascinated, providing a relaxing and enjoyable form of entertainment. In the wake of the election of President Trump, late night television has experienced a meteoric rise in viewership and ratings, especially those shows oriented around the critique of politics and government. This rise in popularity, along with my interest, led me to explore writing a research paper on late night television. In my University Writing course, we had learned about a variety of analytical tools for examining political content, and with the help of my professor, I closed in on one method: The Moral Foundations Theory.

My initial topic was designed to use the Moral Foundations Theory to determine the political leanings of late night talk show hosts, and as a result, my initial research strategy was constructed accordingly. I began by research by simply Googling the Moral Foundations Theory and late night television, searching through the millions of random websites and finding little that could help. After a few days of useless searching, I was left with nothing of value and a lot of uncertainty surrounding my topic. However, as a part of my UW course, we spent a class devoted to a “library orientation session” where we were taught how to navigate the Gelman and Eckels libraries and utilize their wide variety of resources. The orientation session was largely focussed around the library's website. The instructor, Zachary Elder, taught us the ins and outs of the website, teaching us strategies for both widening and narrowing search topics, searching for specific types of sources, finding sources specifically relevant to our topic, and much more.

Learning how to use the library's search engine and how to structure my searches led to complete revamping of my research strategy. Rather than searching for long sentences and phrases in Google, I used the library's search engine, allowing me to ensure I was finding credible academic sources. The orientation sessions taught me how to use the ‘and,’ ‘or,’ and ‘quotation’

functions, rather than complex sentences and phrases to narrow my search to ideas specifically relevant to my topic. I was also taught how to use the ArticlesPlus search, providing me with peer-reviewed articles from scholarly journals. In the past, when a paper required scholarly sources, I was forced to use complex online databases and search engines just to find a few sources. The GW library provided me with a simple and easy way to compile the results from multiple databases and libraries, making the research process much simpler and more efficient.

Not only was I taught where to search and specific search techniques, I was taught how to search. When my initial searches on Moral Foundations Theory and late night television yielded few useful results, I was shown how to break my topic down into broad concepts and ideas. Instead of searching for the specific theory, I searched using key words like “satire” AND “television.” This provided me with a plethora of resources that I narrowed down using the method explained by Zachary Elder and my UW Professor, Michael Svoboda. In a search of thousands of results, I read every title, selecting approximately 100 articles whose titles were relevant to my topic. I then read the abstracts of each article, narrowing it down to the ten most relevant resources. From there, I read all ten articles, using the BEAM method taught in class, which divides sources into four categories (background, exhibit, argument, and method) to find sources that would help me build my method and argument. This gave me three sources that completely redefined my paper.

The first source was an article that summarized a book on satire in television. I followed the article to the full book, and used the techniques I learned in my orientation session to locate it in the Gelman library. The book discussed how satire in television relies heavily on implicit meaning. The Moral Foundations Theory only analyzes explicit meaning through a quantitative contextual analysis, and therefore could be flawed. This source led me to re-evaluate my topic, switching from the utilization of the theory to the evaluation of its methodological effectiveness.

The second source was an article analyzing global warming reporting in late night television using the Moral Foundations Theory. This study got around the flaws of the theory by contextually analyzing whether the host was affirming or rejecting the foundation referenced. This source provided me with a template for analyzing the Moral Foundations Theory, and an idea of how it could be improved. The third source was an analysis of satire, identifying the elements of satirical content. This source was used to develop a new analytical tool to complement the Moral Foundations Theory. This tool, the satire coding method, was a series of questions designed to highlight the elements of satire, something I created to better analyze satire in late night television.

Combining the information I gathered from these three sources allowed me to use their ideas to develop my own analytical tool, letting me branch off from the rest of my classmates by working to study, modify, and improve one of the theories we were taught rather than simply employing it for my analysis. Rather than writing a research paper for the average reader by just analyzing political content, my paper was geared toward other researchers, hopefully contributing to the political science community by improving an established theory and providing the first steps toward developing a new analytical tool that can be used by future political scientists.

I've written three additional research papers since that first library orientation, and I haven't gone back to Google since. Now, every time I start a paper, the first thing I do is go to the library's website and search for other articles and studies on my topic. When I have questions about the direction of my paper, I use the search techniques I was taught, searching for specific concepts and ideas that can contribute to my understanding of the topic at hand and narrowing my searches down to resources that are directly relevant to my research. When citing my sources, I always ensure that they are credible and peer-reviewed by backchecking through the library's system. The Gelman and Eckles libraries have greatly improved the way research and write.