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Objectification of Women Through Metaphors in Stand-up Comedy. From Cars to Banana Bread

ABSTRACT

This paper examines metaphorical expressions labelled under the conceptual metaphor A WOMAN IS AN OBJECT originating from 30 performances by female North American stand-up comedians. By combining the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003) and stand-up comedy research, this corpus- and the dictionary-assisted study examines how women and womanhood are conceptualized in terms of objects such as buildings, food, houseware, or vehicles. The multilevel analysis of the expressions shows that the interplay between the subversive character of stand-up comedy and gendered metaphors allows for reclaiming the power over stereotypical language under the guise of humour.

Keywords: metaphor, stand-up comedy, humour, gender, identity

1. Introduction

This paper investigates linguistic and conceptual metaphors and their role in gender identity negotiation among North American stand-up female comedians. By taking into consideration the formative effect of figurative language on reality (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003), the conducted study examines how comedians shape their identities using objectifying metaphors when referring to female gender.

Regardless of geographical location, identity is a central part of stand-up comedy; autobiographical and observational stances are prevalent in the stories that comedians tell (Brodie, 2014). Even if the comedian creates a stage persona, its creation is based on the comedian's life experiences and observations, which are largely connected to interpersonal relations and often based on gender. With that being said, stand-up comedy narratives told on stage can introduce a change in the way the audience perceives their gendered selves and those of others.

Gender identity should be considered individually for each comedian, but also collectively, with regard to the industry as a whole. Due to the norms of stand-up comedy being influenced by male comedians, this form of entertainment has

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been a male-dominated industry for decades despite the increase of female comics' presence over the years (Horowitz, 1997; Krefting, 2014). Women, in order to "make it" as stand-up comedians, had to adapt and overcome. They did it mostly by copying their male colleagues' styles, which usually meant making self-deprecating jokes or avoiding female-gendered topics altogether (Gilbert, 2004). It should be noted that self-deprecation is not exclusive to female comedians: it is a humour strategy that can be used to regain the power of laughing at something before the audience will (Tomsett, 2018). Ultimately, by positioning themselves as the targets, comedians criticize existing norms which they might represent, willingly or not (Gilbert, 2004).

The long tradition of stand-up comedy and its constant popularity have resulted in a large number of performers who can reach and influence an even larger audience, therefore the power of stand-up comedy performances should not be overlooked or underestimated.

The first section of this paper outlines the theoretical aspects of the conducted research, with a focus on the multi-level nature of identity and conceptual metaphors. The second part describes the materials and methods used to conduct the study. The last part provides the results of the analysis with regard to the three most prominent metaphor frames and discusses the conclusions.

2. Identity

Even though social scientists have extensively studied the concept of identity, the consensus on the definition of identity remains unreached (Vignoles et al., 2011). The lack of general agreement shows the variety of approaches that should be seen as complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

This paper combines approaches by Sedikides and Brewer (2001), and Mittal (2006). Sedikides and Brewer (2001) differentiate between three levels of identity: individual, relational, and collective; Mittal (2006) provides an additional level, material.

Individual identity pertains to how one behaves, acts, and perceives themselves. Moreover, it is who we are not only in the present but also in the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Relational identity refers to oneself through others: it comprises one's societal roles (Vignoles et al., 2011, p. 3). Additionally, relational identity requires recognition of the role to be established (Marková, 1987). The third identity level is collective, and it is the widest one because it refers to one's identity as a member of a group that shares a common characteristic (Vignoles et al., 2011). Collective identity might include ethnicity (Taylor, 1997), nationality (Schildkraut, 2007), or gender (Bussey & Bandura, 1999), among others. Being a member of a social group entails sharing feelings, beliefs, and attitudes common within the group or attributed to it (de Fina, 2007). And finally, the fourth level of

identity is based on one's material possessions and belonging to a geographical space (Mittal, 2006).

When combining all of the above levels, Vignoles et al. (2011, p. 4) define identity as: one's self-perception which includes their beliefs, goals, personal characteristics, and commitments; their roles in society with regard to significant others; their belonging to a social group or category, which includes both their status in the group, as well as the status of the group as a whole; and finally, one's identification with their material possessions or geographical location.

This paper focuses on one aspect of identity: gender. At the same time, gender identity is analysed with regard to other social characteristics that comprise it, such as age, nationality, or sexual orientation. Therefore, the definition provided by Vignoles et al. (2011, p. 4) is narrowed to gender in this paper.

Moreover, we follow Butler's (1990/2006) approach, namely that gender is performed in specific contexts based on social intra- and intergroup interactions. When the context of stand-up comedy is taken into account, "performing" is understood in terms of a rehearsed humorous narrative, as well as the fluid and emergent social identity of gender.

2.2 Conceptualizing identity: metaphor

The sociolinguistic approach to languages states that identity, including gender, is expressed through language which is full of ideologies (Evans, 2015, p. 16). Language becomes a tool to shape and express our reality and, at the same time, our conception of ourselves.

This study's methodology is informed by the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which states that through conceptual metaphors and their realization in language, one can project certain elements of one concept onto another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003). Moreover, metaphors are ideologically and attitudinally charged (Fernando, 1996; Hart, 2020), and the mappings are semantically motivated (Baider & Gesuato, 2003), which makes metaphorical expressions a useful tool to shape one's identity, as well as structure the perception of others (Hines, 1999b). However, the cultural foundation of metaphors may reflect certain attitudes and beliefs and ultimately lead to further reinforcement of stereotypes (Deignan, 2003; MacArthur, 2005).

As Altman (1990, p. 495) notes in her influential article *How Not to Do Things with Metaphors We Live By*, "feminist criticism, and feminism more generally, have both feared and loved metaphor". Altman criticizes Lakoff and Johnson's (1980/2003) way of explaining CMT by pointing out the unconscious gender bias in the choice of subject pronouns. The male pronoun "he" is used most of the time, while "she" is used when talking about "sexuality, domesticity, or neurosis" (Altman, 1990, p. 500).

Current trends in gendered metaphor research revolve around business (Koller, 2002, 2004), and political contexts (Ahrens, 2009; Zeng et al., 2020). Moreover, a distinctive group of researchers examined gendered metaphors that pertain to animals (Hines, 1999a; Kövecses, 2010; López Rodriguez, 2014; Nilsen, 1996; Talebinejad & Dastjerdi, 2005) as well as food (Achugar, 2022; Hines, 1999b). Both animal and food metaphors are prevalent in language due to their ubiquitous presence in people's everyday lives. The use of animal metaphors reduces humans to beings deemed lower on the great chain of being (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). In turn, food metaphors draw on the conceptual metaphors desire as appetite and lust as hunger (Goatly, 2007; Lakoff, 1987).

Baider and Gesuato (2003, p. 22) note that

the more frequently and easily the target domain is implied through the source domain, the more the intended referent is assimilated to the source domain; thus, the more obvious and natural the connection to the language users, the more firmly established it becomes ideologically.

Given language's formative power on perceptions of reality, metaphors can be used to both maintain and reject gender ideologies.

Semino and Koller (2009) distinguish gendered metaphors that either highlight gender differences, are used by either gender, or refer to men or women. In this paper, the attention is given to the last type, focusing on objectifying metaphors that can be used subversively in order to break social norms and taboos regarding gender identity.

3. Material and methods

The analysis builds on 118 metaphorical expressions used by 30 stand-up female comics in their comedy specials on the streaming platform Netflix.

The first step in the methodology included choosing specials for the analysis. The decision was made to include comedy shows released over the span of six years, from 2015 to 2020. A comedy special that was meant to be incorporated into the study material had to meet several requirements.

The first requirement was the origin of the comedian: for this particular study, the authors were concerned only with the North American variety of English, therefore comedians speaking any other variation of English (or another language) were not considered for inclusion. Secondly, the comedian had to identify with the female gender: this study aims to examine the ways female comedians conceptualize themselves. It should be noted that throughout this study female gender refers to the social construct of women rather than the biological sex of the comedians; in other words, all comedians, both cis and transgender who identify as female were considered for the study.

The remaining requirements concerned the comedy special. Only comedy shows longer than 30 minutes were considered to ensure a larger sample range. Additionally, these programs had to be performed by a single comedian; programs which featured more artists were excluded due to the performances being shorter than 30 minutes, which affects the way the comedians present their material. Moreover, shows based on characterization were considered to be outside the scope of stand-up comedy. Due to the disproportion between the number of male and female comedians both on Netflix and in the industry as a whole, the original timeframe of the releases which included a span of five years (2016–2020) was extended to six years (2015–2020). The year 2020 saw a shortage of releases due to the sanitary restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, making the underrepresentation of female comics even more apparent. Out of over 40 comedy specials released in 2020, only nine of them were performed by female comics, and only four of them met the requirements posed in the study: Michelle Buteau, Fortune Feimster, Leslie Jones, and Taylor Tomlinson.

A total of 30 shows were chosen for this study, which is almost twice as many when compared to other stand-up comedy studies (e.g., Kon, 1988 used 16 and Linares Bernabéu, 2019 used 15 sources for their data). It is of course connected with the scope of the research; studies examining a particular comedian usually oscillate around 2–4 comedy specials. In this case, having an extensive source of data contributed to a greater variety of the collected samples.

3.1 Metaphor identification

Data collection began with the manual extraction of utterances which referred – directly or indirectly – to any aspect of the female gender. The collected utterances were then subjected to a metaphor identification procedure to assess their figurativeness.

This study utilizes Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (henceforth: MIPVU) by Steen et al. (2010) as opposed to its predecessor MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) due to the metaphor classification offered by the former method: while both methods are meant to identify metaphors based on the difference (or lack thereof) between the contextual and basic meaning of the word, there is a separate distinction for implicit metaphors. Implicit metaphors include personal pronouns that substitute the name to avoid repetitions, among others (Steen et al., 2010).

MIPVU is a dictionary- and corpus-based procedure that allows metaphor researchers to make informed decisions as to which utterances are potentially figurative expressions. However, while it allows for objectivity, it is ultimately the researcher's decision to classify a word or phrase as metaphorical. For space constraints, a superficial description is included in this paper; for a detailed explanation of the procedure, consult Steen et al. (2010).

The first stage of MIPVU requires familiarizing oneself with the context of the analysed phrases, which was completed at the time of collecting the utterances. The subsequent step includes the division of the text into lexical units. Steen et al. (2010) give precise guidelines as to what and in what cases constitutes a lexical unit; these guidelines are extremely helpful in unclear cases such as collocations or multi-words.

Once the text is divided, the researcher can begin the dictionary-based analysis. For this study, the main dictionary was *Macmillan Dictionary Online* (henceforth: *MDO*). A secondary choice was the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (henceforth: *LDOCE*). In the case of slang, *Urban Dictionary* was consulted. The aforementioned dictionaries are corpus-based, meaning the senses provided in these dictionaries are rooted in real-life language use.

The dictionary-aided analysis requires determining two senses for each lexical unit: basic and contextual. The basic meaning of the word refers to the dictionary sense that is “concrete, specific, and human-oriented” (Steen et al., 2010, p. 35). In other words, it is a dictionary meaning that refers to one’s senses.

On the other hand, the contextual meaning, as its name suggests, is derived from the context of the utterance. It can be different from the basic meaning (an indirect metaphor), or the same (a direct metaphor) (Steen et al., 2010). Direct metaphors can entail metaphor flags (MFlag) that signal the metaphorical character of the utterance: *such as, like*, etc., which suggest cross-domain mappings.

Each lexical unit is analysed in terms of its the basic and contextual meanings and a potential cross-domain mapping. The word “potential” plays an important role in this analysis: by using dictionaries, the analyst assumes that language users are ideal English speakers who possess the dictionary and encyclopaedic knowledge to encode and decode the metaphors. Therefore, it should be noted that all instances examined later in this paper are potentially metaphorical.

All utterances which are (possibly) figurative were collected and annotated with regard to their source and target domains. To do so, we followed Kövecses’s (2017) levels of metaphor approach: sample realizations were first categorized into frames before determining the source or target domains. It allowed for some level of specificity and a better overview of the metaphors. When a frame could be categorized into two domains at the same time, the decision was made based on the most salient feature that was being evoked through the metaphorical expression.

The final part of the metaphor annotation concerned the level of identity negotiated in the utterance. It was necessary to be familiar with the context to determine whether it is an individual, collective, relational, or material identity. However, it should be noted that one level of identity did not exclude other levels, but they rather complemented each other, as is also the case with the analysed

metaphorical expressions; in the annotation the most salient level of identity was distinguished, but they were all taken into consideration during the qualitative analysis.

4. Results and discussion

This paper looks at a specific type of metaphor found in the collected data: A WOMAN IS AN OBJECT. Therefore, the remainder of this paper discusses only instances which were categorized as such, with a particular focus on food, place, and vehicle metaphors.

4.1 Gender identity in metaphor

As noted in Section 3.1, metaphorical expressions were annotated according to the most salient level of identity being expressed: individual, relational, collective, or material. If an expression referred to the comedian or a specific person, the metaphor was generally annotated as individual identity, as in (1):

(1)

I was *rotten*. I need to be made into *banana bread*. That's how *rotten* I was. (Wong, 2016)

When any societal role, whether connected to a relationship or an occupation, was brought up in the utterance, it was most likely to be annotated as a relational identity. See (2) as an example:

(2)

My dream, my goal for the longest time, was to be a *trophy* wife, but then I found out that in order to be a *trophy* wife, you have to be a trophy. I am more of a *commemorative plaque*. (Wong, 2018)

The collective identity included generalizing utterances which often occurred via personal pronouns 'we' and 'you', or by naming the group, as in (3) below. In such cases, the plural nouns were also taken into account:

(3)

Women are the ones with the socially predetermined *shelf life*. (Shlesinger, 2018)

And finally, material identity was evoked mostly through references to the objects which are associated with the female gender, as in (4):

(4)

Women's fashions are a beautiful *prison*. (Ryan, 2019)

Due to identity not being an easy concept to define (as mentioned in Section 1), there were some unclear cases in the collected data. Many of them were unclear because of the fluidity of identity and the multiple ways of viewing particular aspects of womanhood. When possible, the contextual information was the ultimate confirmation of the level of identity, but in cases where the context did not provide clarity, the utterances were annotated with two or more levels of identity. Let us consult (5), which quotes a metaphorical expression related to the postpartum body:

- (5)
Maternity leave is for new moms to hide and heal their *demolished-ass* bodies! (Wong, 2018)

This metaphorical expression, which makes a cross-domain mapping between a building that is demolished and a woman's body after giving birth, was determined to refer to both collective and relational identities. The collective aspect is conveyed in the generalization used through the plural "moms", suggesting not only the comedian (who was a new mom herself at that time) but also other women who recently had given birth. At the same time, Wong evokes the relational identity by referring to the societal role of mothers, namely women who have children.

The larger context of the metaphorical expression in (5) points to the collective identity as the salient one: the narrative focuses on the woman's body rather than the role of being a mother. However, only mothers can experience symptoms connected with a postpartum body; therefore the line between the two levels of identity is not clear-cut.

4.2 WOMAN IS AN OBJECT metaphor

A total of 118 instances of A WOMAN IS AN OBJECT metaphor were found in the data. As stated in Section 3, the annotation of metaphors regarded source and target domains, which were later divided into the source and target frames. Therefore, A WOMAN IS AN OBJECT metaphor encompassed metaphors which included more specifically A WOMAN'S BODY IS A VEHICLE, OR A BABYSITTER IS A GRENADE, among others.

It should be noted that both the source and target frames are slightly less detailed than the actual sample realization of the metaphor and are meant to systematize (to an extent) the expressions for an easier overview. For example, a WOMAN IS A VEHICLE was further divided into A WOMAN'S BODY IS A GARAGE as in (6), A WOMAN IS A TRAIN (7), OR A PROSTITUTE IS A RENTAL CAR (8):

- (6)
You want to back the *garage* up to the car. (Schumer, 2019)

(7)

You can call me a choo-choo *train*. (Notaro, 2018)

(8)

What kind of *rental* are we talking about? Like, a *mid-sized Japanese*?. (Wolf, 2019)

When it comes to the target frames, 68 out of 118 collected instances referred to the female body through a collective identity, which points to a general use of objectifying language used toward women. 23 out of 118 expressions referred to women generally, without specifying any particular aspect of womanhood. The remaining frames included activities performed by women, age, appearance, family, health, occupation, personality, and family or relationship. They did not exceed 7 instances each. For a comparison, consult table 1:

Table 1. Target frames of the A WOMAN IS AN OBJECT metaphor

target frames	No. of instances
activity	3
age	4
appearance	6
body	68
family	1
health	3
female-associated object	5
occupation	1
person	23
personality	1
relationship	3
total	118

When the source frames are taken into account, there is a great variety in their choices. It is mostly connected to the fact that stand-up comedy is superficially spontaneous and the narratives that comedians tell are scripted (Brodie, 2014). In other words, the creativity behind the expression is caused by the nature of the performance: a comedian prepares their narratives, allowing for more innovative use of metaphors.

Source frames were categorized according to their salient features, which means that, just as with the identity levels, some frames could be assigned to two or more categories at the same time, but the most noticeable feature was the key for the annotation.

Two source frames were the most prominent in the data: place and food, with 31 and 29 instances, respectively. Moreover, food metaphors, especially dessert metaphors, are consistent with previous research on metaphorical expressions referring to women as sex objects (Hines, 1999b). Moreover, even the comedians are aware of it: “Let’s just all stop calling women desserts for a while. If you must call a woman a dessert, at least pick a cool dessert, you know. Like bear claw” (Cummings, 2019).

The remainder of the source frames did not exceed 10 instances each. See Table 2 for comparison:

Table 2. Source frames of the A WOMAN IS AN OBJECT conceptual metaphor

source frames	No. of instances
Activity	1
Clothes	6
Container	4
Film	1
Food	29
Furniture	5
Garbage	4
Garden	2
Law	1
Military	3
Object	6
Place	32
Possession	4
Product	2
Sports	2
Travel	3
Vehicle	9
total	118

As seen in Table 2., there were three prominent source frames found in the data: food, place, and vehicles. We will now proceed to discuss them.

The metaphors’ creativity produces a broad array of sample realizations, making individual expressions incredibly challenging to overlap across the identified shows. The themes conveyed through frames and conceptual metaphors seek to standardize some repeating concepts, but due to the low frequency of each sample realization, one should be cautious of making generalizations from the presented data. The metaphors discussed here are, for the most part, unconventional, creative, and deliberate. Nevertheless,

since all metaphors are ideologically loaded, they deserve examination despite their unrepeatability. After all, the shows that prompted these metaphors are commonly accessible; if a metaphorical expression is repeated numerous times, it has the possibility of reaching a wider audience. Additionally, the language used here is intentional: stand-up comedy seems spontaneous only on the surface but is actually staged. As a result, the authors of these metaphors had to first generate an idea that was later transformed into a narrative, which takes us back to the ideological viewpoint behind conceptual metaphors and their manifestation in language.

4.3 Discussion: conventionalized subversion

The main aim of this study was to analyse the ways female comedians conceptualize themselves and others using objectifying metaphors. The sociolinguistic approach to language states that identity, including gender, is expressed through language which is full of ideologies (Evans, 2015 p. 16). In turn, all elements of our identity, regardless of their level, influence our way of perceiving reality. In other words, language becomes a tool to express and, at the same time, shape our conception of ourselves. When it comes to language, studying metaphorical expressions from a myriad of perspectives can unveil functional differences dictated by ideological backgrounds based on cultural associations (Gibbs, 2011, p. 11). The study of the attitudinal aspects of metaphors opens up a potential space for discussion about conceptualizations and allows for the reinvention of language.

Stand-up comedy creates another dimension for the ideological character of metaphors: it is in itself countercultural and counterhegemonic (Brodie, 2014). The narratives, especially those coming from the comics “from the margins”, question traditional social norms and behaviours (Gilbert, 2017, p. 57). Female comedians, in order not to appear threatening, adapt their comedic styles to match their male colleagues, or downplay their experience by using self-deprecating humour (Gilbert, 2004).

Metaphors analysed in this paper use inanimate objects as their source domain: food, places, and vehicles, among others. The goal was to examine the attitude of these metaphors on the level of metaphor, but also on the level of inherently subversive stand-up comedy. And given the centrality of the comedian’s identity, the way the comedians conceptualize themselves and others has a direct influence on how they negotiate gender identity and what message they want to convey under the guise of humour.

Metaphors collected for this study were largely negative on the level of the utterance. The reason for this lies within the very nature of these expressions: figurative language that uses inanimate objects as its source is essentially dehumanizing. Regardless of the subversive power of stand-up comedy, the countercultural attitude of the comedian or contextual information surrounding

the narrative, humans compared to objects are always shown in a negative light. This was also true for the collected metaphors.

While the attitude of the metaphors is established, it is beneficial to consider the choice of source domains. Stand-up comedy is only seemingly a spontaneous form of performance; the narratives are scripted and practised in front of the audience many times before the recording and digital dissemination of the material (Brodie, 2014). Therefore, comedians can afford to be creative in the language they use, which potentially makes metaphors creative as well. Due to space constraints, we would like to focus on the most prominent types of metaphors found in the data: expressions referring to places, food, and vehicles.

The most common source domain revolves around places: a woman's body becomes a place that one can go to or leave; women's clothes are compared to a prison; and a woman's attractiveness is likened to a city's infrastructure. Metaphors of place are creative and deliberate, mostly referring to female genitalia. Some of them pertain to intercourse, but there are also a considerable number of expressions referring to the postpartum body. The comedians compare them to disaster areas, demolished buildings, and food factories producing breast milk for new-borns.

Reducing women to places like houses creates the impression that marriage is synonymous with home ownership, and women's attractiveness becomes a property value. The aforementioned birth "demolishes" a woman's body, causing a decrease in a woman's worth until she recovers. Moreover, a woman with many sexual partners is likened to a nightclub, a public park, or a "crack house", which can further perpetuate the stereotype that chastises women but glorifies men in the same context.

(9)

"All right, Ali, you gotta make this dude believe that your body is *a secret garden*. When, really, it's *a public park*... that has *hosted* many reggae fests... and has even accidentally let... two homeless people inside". (Wong, 2016)

(10)

That's what we have to do after birth. Get a reporter in there, put 'em in one of those weird raincoats. Like, "I'm here in Martha's vagina, and things are bleak. Roads and bridges are out. Man cannot survive. Debris is everywhere. I have Martha's husband here, let's see what he has to say." "I mean, you try to prepare, and, uh..." "Well, it's just... my home is gone". (Wolf, 2019)

When the female gender is talked about in terms of food, it is similar to everyday language use where women are desserts (Hines, 1999b). However, stand-up comedians take these metaphors to the next level and extend their creativity to make the audience laugh.

The woman's body is once again brought to the foreground with food expressions. The freshness of the produce refers to a woman's age; a young woman is a yellow banana that becomes ripe or even rotten with time. Such women become dispensable, and the best way to do that is by baking banana bread. While Hines (1999b) examined the connection between desserts and women-as-sex-objects, our data extends that view and points to women as desserts to highlight undesirable characteristics. Similar to how banana bread is associated with mature women, a common flavour of ice cream points to a woman who is "bland and boring". Another example shows pancakes that are used in the context of something predictable, like the idea of waking up next to one's wife every morning. Sample expressions:

(11)

Your 30s, you start off as a beautiful, *bright yellow banana*. Till you're 39, you a *black-ass banana*. Only thing to do with you is to throw you out or make *banana bread*. (Jones, 2020)

(12)

I gotta start my day with her. I am gonna call her *pancake*. (Koplitz, 2017)

(13)

My whole body is shaped like a *drumstick*¹ emoji. (Buteau, 2020)

Moreover, food metaphors highlight the aspects of metaphors – just as it was the case with a postpartum body being likened to demolished buildings, ground meat becomes the metaphor for a woman's body after giving birth. Creating "unappetizing" associations of the physical changes a female body undergoes can potentially do more harm than good, especially if the subject is considered a social taboo:

(14)

To make sure that... *the carne asada* wouldn't fall out of *the taco*, and become *nachos* on the floor. (Wong, 2018)

The final group of gendered metaphors we would like to focus on revolves around the domain vehicle, as was already brought up in (6), (7), and (8). It is a relatively small group of expressions (9 instances) compared to food or space metaphors (29 and 31 instances, respectively), but the variety of target domains makes the group discussion worthy. Let us consider these examples:

(15)

That little red *Corvette* is gonna get stuffed. (Jones, 2020)

¹ „Drumstick“ here refers to a chicken leg instead of the part of the musical instrument.

(16)

[after giving birth] I know underneath that sheet is a *car accident*. Like, if an insurance guy came by, he'd be like, "No, it's totaled." "The best we can do here is a *rental*". (Wolf, 2019)

(17)

I look like a goddamn *road flare* and we're in public. (Shlesinger, 2016)

As it can be observed, the source frames range from cars (including specific cars such as Corvettes or a type of car such as rentals) to garages or traffic elements. The comparisons once again create negative associations: for instance, traffic jams will be effective especially with commuters spending long hours travelling. Wearing too much makeup on a date become a warning similar to a road flare warning drivers of a vehicle accident ahead. Moreover, a woman's genitalia becomes both a garage and a car that can be *stuffed* or *totalled*. A totalled car cannot be used, therefore, a driver needs a *rental to get around*. In other words, women become a commodity that can be sold, bought, or rented. These metaphors are far from the feminist stance on gender, and it is even more surprising to hear that they were created by women.

5. Conclusion: context matters

Section 4.3 offered interpretations that could be evoked when encountering the analysed metaphors. When these expressions are examined collectively (but still taken out of their context), the gender identity that they evoke creates negative associations that perpetuate already existing stereotypes and social norms. On the level of metaphors, there is nothing subversive about objectifying expressions. However, if we take into consideration the nature of stand-up comedy, there is another layer of meaning associated with the collected metaphors: as mentioned in the introduction, one of the ways female comedians can "make it" in the male-dominated industry is to adapt their male colleagues' styles, and that includes what they include in and how they convey their narratives. In order to make gender-specific content "digestible" to the male-dominated industry and audience (to continue with food metaphors), female comedians need to present their stories and experiences in a way that is not threatening: the most effective way to do that is through self-deprecating humour.

To break or change social norms and stereotypes with humor, they must first be identified (Kant & Norman, 2019; McGraw & Warren, 2010). In other words, comedians use their own experiences and observations to make fun of themselves while bringing forward what is considered taboo material and addressing audience members who might find their narratives relatable. Ironically, by creating negative associations about the postpartum body through the metaphors of unappetizing food, demolished places, and totalled vehicles, female comedians attempt to break the taboo of unspoken negative aspects of childbearing. In sum, the subversive

power of stand-up comedy is a perfect example of how the ideological and attitudinal character of metaphors can be used to change the very ideologies and attitudes they represent. The very thing that can stop identity negotiation can become a tool to do exactly that, all under the guise of humour.

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Appendix

No.	Comedian	Title	Year	Duration
1	Ali Wong	Baby Cobra	2016	1h
2	Ali Wong	Hard Knock Wife	2018	1h 4m
3	Amy Schumer	The Leather Special	2017	57m
4	Amy Schumer	Growing	2019	1h
5	Anjelah Johnson	Not fancy	2015	1h 30m
6	Christina Patsitzky	Mother Inferior	2017	59m
7	Cristela Alonzo	Lower Classy	2017	1h 6m
8	Ellen Degeneres	Relatable	2019	1h 8m
9	Iliza Shlesinger	Freezing Hot	2015	1h 11m

No.	Comedian	Title	Year	Duration
10	Iliza Shlesinger	Confirmed Kills	2016	1h 17m
11	Iliza Shlesinger	Elder Millennial	2018	1h 12m
12	Iliza Shlesinger	Unveiled	2019	1h 18m
13	Jen Kirkman	I'm gonna die alone (and I feel fine)	2015	1h 18m
14	Jen Kirkman	Just Keep Livin'	2018	1h 9m
15	Katherine Ryan	In trouble	2017	1h 3m
16	Katherine Ryan	Glitter Room	2019	1h 5m
17	Kathleen Madigan	Bothering Jesus	2016	1h 12m
18	Leslie Jones	Time Machine	2020	1h 6m
19	Lynne Koplitz	Hormonal Beast	2017	51m
20	Maria Bamford	Old Baby	2017	1h 4m
21	Michelle Buteau	Welcome to Buteaupia	2020	58m
22	Michelle Wolf	Joke Show	2019	59m
23	Nikki Glaser	Bangin'	2019	1h 3m
24	Sarah Silverman	A speck of dust	2017	1h 11m
25	Taylor Tomlinson	Quarter-life crisis	2020	1h 1m
26	Tiffany Haddish	She ready	2017	1h 7m
27	Tiffany Haddish	Black Mitzvah	2019	55m
28	Tig Notaro	Happy to be here	2018	58m
29	Wanda Sykes	Not Normal	2019	1h
30	Whitney Cummings	Can I touch it?	2020	59m