

## **Exploring the Aspect of Incongruity in Dave Chappelle's Stand-up Comedy**

Mohamed Bassou  
*Doctoral Student*  
*Department of English*  
*Hassan II University Casablanca*

---

**Abstract:** This article explores the incongruity theory of humor by examining the ways in which stand-up comedian Dave Chappelle creates humorous content. It argues that the appreciation of humor in Chappelle's stand-up comedy presupposes the detection of some kind of incongruity. To test this hypothesis, this article examines extracts from comedy routines performed by the comedian. The purpose is to show the ubiquity of the aspect of incongruity in the type of humor produced in stand-up comedy. It argues that it is through the use of incongruity that Chappelle manages to unmask racial imbalance and political injustice. In other words, it is by posing black and white cultures side by side that he manages to criticize the detrimental contradictions embedded in some aspects of American culture.

**Keywords:** Humor, Dave Chappelle, incongruity Theory, Stand-up comedy.

---

### **Introduction**

In her insightful paper on charged humor and American stand-up comedy, Rebecca Krefting (2014) initiates her investigation by asserting that any examination of stand-up comedy should stress the social dimension of humor and the role of the comedian as a social agent representing a particular group community or as a representative and advocate of a specific ideology. According to Krefting, multiple minority communities include "middle eastern, Muslim, and Arab Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, African Americans, differently-abled persons, LGBTQ folks, and those who are economically disenfranchised" (13). The comedian is an active person whose duty is to find the right place to position himself/herself within his/her dynamic group in order to talk about the needs, pains and the general concerns of the people. By this new occupation, the comedian becomes the main player in the process of uniting the people of his/her community in order to both negotiate and revisit the essence of their belonging. The socio-cultural value of the feeling of belonging is undoubtedly significant and it is undeniable that people's existence is highly dependent on this factor. This is how comedians intervene on stage by gathering big crowds in one place and providing them with the necessary instruments to think about their daily issues and forge their sense of belonging.

Different generations of stand-up comedians in the US have managed to put their voices in the service of the community and speak on behalf of the diverse groups of American society. It is a common practice in the American scene that every comedian tends to represent or identify himself/herself with a particular personal or ethnic identity, be it racial, ethnic, sexual, or religious. These multifaceted segments embedded in American society have somehow generated a diversity of comedic orientations in terms of the styles and languages of stand-up comedy. This is demonstrated in the fact that every comedian defends a particular ideology and/or stresses a distinguishing line of thought. African American comedians such as Dave Chappelle, Kevin Hart, Chris Rock, William Williams, Eddie Griffin and others usually advocate issues that are related to their race and ethnicity, exploring national citizenship and using humor to negate social and cultural inequalities. They use the scene to respond to the negative social discrimination, break down cultural stereotypes and fight the common misperceptions about African Americans. Chappelle made it to the top of America's show business because he is able to adapt his comic vision to the American comic tendency and culture drawing on various comparisons between his environment and the dominant modes of American life.

There is a strong unanimity among comedy professionals and critics, inside and even outside the US, that Dave Chappelle is one of the most brilliant and genius stand-up comedians in the history of the country. Similarly to Richard Prior, who was credited with paving the way for other African-American comedians to exploit the African merit and heritage in humor manufacturing, contemporary African-American humorists succeeded in developing a germane comic discourse that portrayed the idiosyncrasies of African-American culture. Besides, Black comedians of the 1970s were on the list of American entertainers who exploited the stage to unrestrainedly address daily concerns, especially those of the black community. The socio-cultural and political critique was a nascent practice either through comedy or via other art forms. Richard Pryor and other comedians of that time were able to avow their provocative criticism and fill the social gaps, exposing the chasms of American life and perfectly inspiring generations of American comedians of different backgrounds

and ethnicities. Along with other pioneers of African American stand-up comedy, Chappelle has managed to make from stand-up comedy a powerful discourse transcending the entertainment level and speaking on behalf of people. A great portion of his comedy is dedicated to the black pride and history by exploring the sad realities of his African ancestors and celebrating their unforgettable glories and sacrifices.

Chappelle started his comedic career at the age of fourteen, an earlier start than that of his contemporaries, allowing him to make his way to one of the icons of the stand-up genre in the United States. Winning unprecedented support of fans and spectators, Chappelle's outstanding works have greatly contributed to the general evolution of comedy. As Andrew DeStaeble (2019) puts it, "his first breaks came in 1992 and 1995 when he gained credit for his performances at Def Comedy Jam, and followed that success with three HBO specials between 1998-2004" (4). Chappelle is best renowned for his thought-provoking critique on race and politics as he seldom hesitates to express his opinions both as an actor on TV and as a comedian on stage. He fervently returned to stage in 2017, releasing four specials for Netflix, after a quite long cut, proves that his love of social criticism is true, and that the craft of stand-up comedy is an innate quality in him. Reflecting upon the socio-political contrarities prevailing in American society, Chappelle finds refuge in negotiating these issues on stage with complete audacity and unprecedented confidence, which is unequivocally manifest when Chappelle continuously addresses American society and people with fierce and bitter criticism.

The creation of incongruity demands linguistic proficiency and its appreciation rests mostly upon cognitive knowledge shared between the comedian and the audience. The majority of humor theorists and researchers seem to agree that the appreciation of humor presupposes the detection of some kind of incongruity or illogicality in the text of humor. Advocates of the incongruity theory explicitly claim that the source of humor is the incongruity that takes place at the level of linguistic or conceptual components of the joke. In other words, it is based on a clash or a conflict between two ideas that seem similar at the beginning of the joke, but turn out to contradict each other at the punch line. According to John Morreall (1987), one of the main and contemporary supporters of the incongruity theory, humor results from the fact that there is some inconsistency between what the hearer of the joke expects and what actually happens. This denotes that the main source of humor is some illogicality evoked by two incongruous ideas. The main body of the joke might evoke some expectations in the recipient's mind but the punch line disappoints their expectation. Chappelle's stand-up routines are replete with copious instances of humor focusing on the exploration of his mother culture and the experience of African Americans in general by juxtaposing conflicting and incompatible ideas. Specifically, the endeavor of this article is to deeply examine the use of incongruity in Chappelle's humor and how he makes the most of his ethnic identity, as African American, and other socio-cultural stereotypes in order to trigger laughter among his audience.

### **The Incongruity Theory**

Arthur Schopenhauer, theorizes humor as a conflict between thought and perception. In *The World as Will and Idea* (2008), Schopenhauer maintains the claim that laughter usually takes place when our actual imagination of things is being deceived by an unexpected reality. The reality we are confronted with is the source of humor because it creates incongruous shifts in our minds. He stipulates, "The cause of laughter in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation, and laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity" (95). It is Schopenhauer's view that there are two methods for understanding reality: through abstract concepts and through sense perception. Humor eventually derives from a perceived conflict between thought and perception. In particular, laughter is the acknowledgment of an incoherency between one's intellectual expectations and what is sensed by the senses to be the case (Badron 8). In the same vein, Immanuel Kant's theoretical view hammers at the same issue, although his concept of incongruity varies from that of Schopenhauer, at least to some extent.

Kant argues that the pleasure we experience in humor gives a wholesome shock to the body. In *Critique of Judgment* (2004), Immanuel Kant provides an elaborative explanation of the incongruity theory stating that the pleasure found in jokes is based on intellectual frustration rather than intellectual contradiction. Frustration, according to Kant, is the appropriate term to be associated with intellectual expectations: "laughter is the expression of a kind of pleasure that derives from seeing thought frustrated by perception when expectation is contradicted by reality" (8). Kant emphasizes the physical dimension of humor rather than the mental one. This physical dimension of humor is manifested through a certain ability of our thought, as the engine of the physical action, argues Kant, to expose our organs to various motions. The body's fluidity in moving from one thought to another is but a reflection of the flexibility of our thought: "For if we assume that all our thoughts are, in addition, in a harmonious connection with some agitation in the body's organs, then we can pretty well grasp how, as the mind suddenly shifts alternately from one position to another in order to contemplate its object" (Kant 205). Although humor derives from the play of ideas, it is only our state of well-

being and the feeling of good health that guarantees our amusement. When listening to a humorous story or a joke, Kant continues, we develop a set of expectations of how this story will end, but these expectations vanish at the punch line (Morreall 45). Kant considers thought the engine of human senses and it is responsible for various types of feelings. Hence, when these feelings are contradicted with a given reality, they finally create some frustration in our minds and thoughts. If Kant focuses on the physical side of amusement, Hazlitt transcends this view to stress the mental aspect of it.

First introduced by Victor Raskin in his *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor* (1985), the Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor (SSTH) is exclusively considered the first theory with a linguistic dimension. Its main concern is verbal humor, especially written and spoken narratives or jokes with an introductory script and a punch line. It is meant to account for native speakers' humor 'competence' because native speakers can tell whether or not a joke or a text is funny. The linguistic script is defined as an organized chunk of information that surrounds the word; it is a sort of cognitive knowledge about the word not only as a lexical unit, but it covers every knowledge about the word, as it exists in the world (46). Raskin suggests two essential conditions in order to produce humorous texts: "The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different [semantic] scripts, the two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite [...]" and the two scripts with which the text is compatible are said to overlap fully or in part on this text" (Raskin 99).

In general, humor is evoked when the end of the joke or the punch line destroys every single idea built previously. This idea reveals itself in an unequivocal fashion in the following joke presented by Raskin: "Is the doctor at home?" the patient asked in his bronchial whisper. "No," the doctor's young and pretty wife whispered in reply. "Come right in" (25). This joke contains two essential scripts. The first one belongs to the patient and the second one belongs to the lover; it is only the insertion of the word 'whispered' by the joke teller before the lover's script that makes the joke meaningful. The shift from the first script to the second one is made smoothly by the "whispered" reply of the "young and pretty wife". The whispered reply makes sense in the script of the lover whereas, in the patient's, the listeners never pay attention to such a detail. Raskin elaborates more on this argument by presenting expanded analyses of other jokes, examining in each one of them how scripts both overlap and oppose each other in different texts.

However, it should be noted that the previous condition of opposition alone never guarantees the funniness of a joke or a text. The existence of two scripts opposing each other does not necessarily result in humor because there are essentially other variables that govern its production. One cannot merely juxtapose two incongruous things and call them a joke: the essence of the humorous is governed by finding a clever way of making them incongruous and humorous at the same time. In order to fulfil such an objective, Raskin presents various types of script opposition. A first list includes dichotomies such as: good/bad, life/death, obscene/non-obscene, money/no money, high/low stature, normal/abnormal, possible/ impossible, actual/non-actual. For each culture, there is a list of finite script oppositions depending on historical, social, religious and many other variables (26)

Humor arises from that quick and sudden encounter of two ideas that contradict each other to some degree. A view that is explicitly expressed by Nerhardt (1977) who views humor as the "consequence of the discrepancy between two mental representations, one of which is an expectation and the other is some other idea or a percept" (47). Nerhardt emphasizes in his work that once recipients discover an incongruity in the joke, they immediately react to it with laughter. Joining Kant's view of the main source of laughter, he thinks that everything intended to cause laughter must be something foreign and ridiculous. The ridiculous object in terms of incongruity which emerges from the disappointment of a strained expectation is the heart of humor.

Regardless of the considerable amount of literature written on the incongruity theory, there undoubtedly exists more space for novice researchers to intervene with their academic initiatives to carry out more investigations on the nature of incongruity in order to explain the essence of humor, mainly in stand-up comedy. The argument advocated in this article draws initially on prior philosophical and theoretical stands. Incongruity, as it will be analyzed later in the practical part, surpasses all that has been proposed earlier as it carries out an in-depth examination of new levels of incongruity by analyzing humorous excerpts from Chappelle's stand-up comedy. While initial analysis of incongruity defines it as the ability of humor creators to play with words to deceive receivers with inconsistent puns that surprisingly challenge their earlier vision of the world, the current version, however, transcends the linguistic layout, mainly the one stressed by Raskin and Attardo, to deal with the ability of humorists to juxtapose familiar and ordinary experiences, actions, and practices in a way that they appear incongruous to one another.

Strictly, the real essence of incongruity should not only be restricted to the violation of the receiver's expectation via introducing some sort of surprising wordings or puns, but it should also take into consideration the ability of humorists to render the ordinary life of people unordinary and call their quotidian practices into question, which most of stand-up comedians actually do. Incongruity is not just the act of inserting some incompatible words at the end of every joke to deceive the receiver's expectation. It is the activity of, first,

grouping a set of familiar and harmonious experiences and, second, introducing them as incongruous to one another by means of exaggeration, irony, and other techniques of humor creation mastered by stand-up practitioners. In other words, it is the humorist's capability to make the audience see what is correct as incorrect, normal as abnormal, true as false, white as black and eventually logical as illogical. A comprehensive understanding of incongruity should eventually transcend the traditional view that incongruity is a mere technique or a tool that humorists may resort to whenever they like to make their audience laugh. Incongruity reshapes people's vision of things through its critical and opposing dimensions of social practices, political opinions, and religious beliefs.

### **Analysis**

Carla Canestrari and Ivana Bianchi (2012) argue that an appreciation of incongruity in any type of humor is based on the identification of some sort of contrariety. In other words, for humor to take place, the audience needs to easily observe or perceive some incompatibility revealed by the text of humor or its denotation. The authors offer the following joke example as an illustration: "Yesterday at school we celebrated my classmate Marcellina's birthday so I gave her a cherry and she kissed me to say thank you. Today I gave her a watermelon... But she didn't get it!"(3). To understand and get the essence of humor in this joke, it is required to assign two incompatible interpretations to its text. The first one is an innocent and nonsexual implication revealed by the set-up of the joke and the second one is evidently a sexual one, emerging directly in the second script of the joke or the punch line. This is the first level of contrariety in the joke. Lexically speaking, there are no particular antonyms in the joke, but the general build-up of its text systematically alludes to an easily perceived contrariety. A thorough analysis of certain aspects of these words undoubtedly proposes some hidden levels of this contrariety. Sexuality is implicitly manifested through the use of two different types of fruits: a water-melon and a cherry. Contrariety is achieved and supported by the features of size, weight and, with a lesser degree, color. While the speaker gives a small and a light gift and gets a kiss, a big and heavy gift like a watermelon should automatically stimulate much more than a kiss.

### **Relation**

If an easy and a quick detection of contrariety is what governs the appreciation of humor in a joke or any other type of comic production, then comedians need to be more selective in terms of the patterns they put in opposition to one another. Stand-up comedians use different methods of humor creation when it comes to writing their bits. Unlike the double structure of jokes, which is based on two opposing scripts; a set-up and a punch line the form of the stand-up monologue is structured in rather different ways. Watching Dave Chappelle, for instance, and paying attention not only to his separate gags but to the overall structure and flow of his bits, it is always too hard to point to a particular set-up or punch line because the whole show is a giant chain of punch lines. In the case of other comedians, it is very easy to point out to individual bits or a succession of set-ups and punchlines. Chappelle's stand-up special, in contrast, is a kind of a long joke with few set-ups and several punchlines, as in the following excerpt from one of his Netflix specials.

1. I don't know if you ever saw on TMS, the big headline: 'Dave Chappelle drunk on stage in Detroit'
2. Well, if you saw it I wasn't drunk
3. I had smoked some reefer with some rapper, YEAH
4. I don't know if you know anything about hanging out with but their weed is very strong
5. The article goes on to say I was booed off stage, which is also incorrect
6. I was booed,
7. I did not leave...
8. You know when you do comedy niggas be looking at you like (stimulating the public's facial gestures when watching his show)
9. Didn't take long for their faces to switch up
10. It just takes one person to break the ice
11. It was the black lady with the ford shirt on
12. Stood up suddenly: '(F\*ck) you Dave Chappelle'
13. I said: 'excuse me'
14. 'This show sucks' and in a weird act of racial harmony,
15. A conservative white guy stood up and backed her up, 'yeaaaaaah'<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>'How Dave Chappelle Writes his **joke**,' Alex Mayers, Youtube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrNzxlCkKZQ&t=4s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrNzxlCkKZQ&t=4s). (accessed December 12, 2019).

From a textual perception, it is unchallenging to distinguish this stand-up monologue from the earlier joke example. While the effect of humor in the former is based on some incongruity easily found in the overlap between the set-up and the punchline, the latter does not seem to adhere to a particular joke pattern. With brilliant comedians like Chappelle, one single contrariety does not do justice to his line of thought. The comedian provides maximum conflicting ideas to trigger more hilarity, considering that the show is approximately one hour long. The above example is composed of fifteen comic lines of which the lines numbered 1 and 8 are the only set-ups and the rest of the other thirteen comments are separate punch lines.

Based on the audience's response to Chappelle, it is worth mentioning that those lines called set-ups in this extract are also funny because they generate tremendous laughter responses. Amazingly, this is a significant observation that can be applied to the style of Chappelle's humor. This is due to the fact that he is one of the few comedians who perfectly uses self-derogative comedy as a means to criticize the audience rather than poking fun at the comedian. Incongruity, in this case, takes place when the comedian misdirects the audience, who at the beginning, think that the comedian is going to victimize himself by his humor but the punchline suddenly turns out doing the opposite in a comic-turn-tables fashion.

The above passage starts with a question by the comedian asking the audience whether they are aware of the news about him being drunk on stage in Detroit. It is a kind of a warm-up that is meant to break the ice with the public and make them superbly comfortable because they are not going to be the victim of his humor. Besides, the news is completely incorrect because the comedian announces with total certitude that he was not drunk on stage. Now, being acquainted with these two realities, the audience gets more relaxed and starts sympathizing with the comedian. After winning their trust, Chappelle throws in a succession of unexpected information to which the audience irresistibly responds with a burst of loud laughter. Therefore, the incongruity in the first section of the passage (lines 1-7) can be paraphrased as follow: "I was not drunk, I only took some drugs". This table here illustrates how Chappelle constructs the contradictory relationship between one set-up and many punch lines.

Set-up	Punch line
I don't know if you ever saw on TMS, the big headline: 'Dave Chappelle drunk on stage in Detroit'	Well, if you saw it I wasn't drunk I had smoked some reefer with some rapper, YEAH I don't know if you know anything about hanging out with but their weed is very strong The article goes on to say I was booted off stage, which is also incorrect I was booted, I did not leave...
You know when you do comedy 'niggas' be looking at you like	Didn't take long for their faces to switch up It just takes one person to break the ice It was the black lady with the ford shirt on Stood up suddenly: '(F*ck) you Dave Chappelle' I said: 'excuse me' 'This show sucks' and in a weird act of racial harmony, a conservative white guy stood up and backed her up, 'yeaaaaaah'

The second section of the passage (8-14) demonstrates the beginning of another instance of incongruity. This time, it is the intention of the comedian to comment on racial issues and announce his point of view concerning sensitive matter. While black people are supposed to support humorists of the same race and ethnicity, it grows as if it is not the same case here with Chappelle who publically receives a harsh attack from a black lady in the front rows. This is a perfect example of how Chappelle's comedy style misdirects the public and manifests incongruity by using this idea of teaming up a black lady with a white man on the same side in order to scorn the man on stage. It is surely thanks to the comedian that American society comes together as one group without any social or racial intricacies. When the audience thinks that the joke ends at line 14 with the black lady hooting, line 15 successfully and surprisingly doubles the effect of funniness.

As with the first example, Chappelle decides to misdirect the audience with another incongruity by telling them in another set-up that he has no problem with white people but in the punch line he says that poor whites are his least preferred category:

1. I must tell you, I have never had a problem with white people ever in my life, but for disclosure
2. The poor whites are my least favorites

3. We got a lot of trouble out of them
4. And I have never seen so many of them up close
5. I looked them right in their coal-smearred faces
6. And to my surprise, you know what I didn't see? I didn't see one deplorable face in that group, I see some angry faces and some determined faces, but they felt like decent folks...
7. And I listen to them; I listen to them saying naïve poor white people things...
8. Man...Donald Trump is gonna go to Washington to fight for us
9. I am staying thinking to my mind 'you dumb mother (f \*ckers)'
10. 'You are poor, he is fighting for me'<sup>2</sup>

In line 1 Chappelle gets the audience's attentiveness with an excellent set-up announcing that he does not hate white people, but what comes next in the following line reveals the opposite: "the poor whites are my least favorites". This incongruity excites big laughter among the public because the audience has just discovered that the comedian disappointed their expectation by declaring the opposite of what he announced earlier. In the following punch lines he accuses them of being the source of all the national troubles in contemporary America because of their votes and their support of Trump during his electoral campaign. According to Chappelle, these poor and miserable whites think that Trump will go to Washington DC to save them. Unfortunately, it is not a matter of black or white. In other words, it is a matter of money and capitalism: "you are poor, he is fighting for me".

Chappelle is known for his thought-provoking comments on racial and political issues on stage, as he allows himself to explicitly and unthinkingly express his opinions. Reflecting on the socio-political contrarities prevailing in American society, he finds refuge in negotiating these issues on stage with complete audacity and unprecedented confidence. The latter is apparent when Chappelle continuously addresses society and people with all types of criticism including every famous personality in politics or arts. In his Netflix special '*Equanimity & the Bird Revelation*' Chappelle strikes up his opening monologue by telling his audience that it is not easy to be black and successful in the American show business, the following is considered one of the best Chappelle's set-ups ever:

1. I came back here where I started because I will shoot my Netflix special, and after this (shit) it is time for America to wait again.
2. I am done too well, you know, if you black and do well, it is scary.
3. You got to go the (fuck) out of the casino while the getting is good,
4. while you still winning.
5. If you do not walk away from the table that's how niggas get Kevin *Harted*

Understanding any type of humor requires an amount of shared knowledge, which means that both the comedian and the audience need to have some points in common in order that communication becomes possible between them. Therefore, an understanding of the first line of this opening monologue entails being well acquainted with American culture and what is currently happening in the field of show business. In 2003, Chappelle refused to sign a 50 million dollar contract with *Comedy Central* (a famous American comedy TV channel) to finish the shooting of his hit TV program '*Chappelle Show*'. More than that, he took an unthinkable decision by traveling to South Africa for unjustified reasons, according to many media reports<sup>3</sup>. Chappelle was seriously aware of the repercussions of his predicament especially after walking away from the show and money. Being absent from the scene for more than ten years, he told David Letterman in one interview in 2017 that the reason for his escape refers back to the fact that he did not feel comfortable about the impact of his show on people. Convincingly, it is easy to understand why people laugh loudly at line 1:

I came back here where I started because I will shoot my Netflix special, and after this (shit) it is time for America to wait again.

In lines (2-3) Chappelle tackles the issue of race arguing that color matters seriously in show business and that black artists should sometimes take some rest because the field is too dangerous for them. Incongruity is apparent in this punch line especially when the comedian reminds his audience of how difficult and scary it is for black people, unlike the whites, to embark in the domain of arts in the US. The world of show business, according to Chappelle, is similar to the casino where the winner has to quit the game before losing again.

---

<sup>2</sup>Sharf, Zack. "Dave Chappelle Says 'Poor Whites' Are His 'Least Favorite' Because They Got Trump Elected President." *IndieWire*, 21 Dec. 2017, [www.indiewire.com/2017/12/david-chappelle-netflix-poor-white-voters-donald-trump-1201910142/](http://www.indiewire.com/2017/12/david-chappelle-netflix-poor-white-voters-donald-trump-1201910142/).

<sup>3</sup> 'Dave Chappelle on walking away from a hit TV show', Martin B News, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXnaNljnG8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXnaNljnG8) (accessed December, 22, 2019)

You got to go the (fuck) out of the casino while the getting is good, while you still winning.

The last punch line is the most hilarious part of this passage. Chappelle provides evidence of his fear by comparing himself with other competitors in stand-up comedy. He makes an allusion to comedian Kevin Hart by asserting that he is scared to stay longer in the field and become Kevin Harted. The choice of Hart is legitimate because he is one of the famous and hilarious comedians in the contemporary stand-up scene. This small passage is tremendously rich with the necessary ingredients to classify Chappelle as one of the most outstanding and genius comedians to master critical thinking and dig profoundly at almost everything. This is not because he was able to put four specials in one year for Netflix with \$60 million. It is not an arbitrary or personal conclusion found randomly in a comment on social media, It is rather a reality that every professional in the US or elsewhere confirms. The followings are some striking testimonies of comedians paying tribute Dave Chapelle:

- ✓ He is a genius, he is a real comedy genius he is deeply introspective, very intensely well thought off he is not a surface guy. (Joe Rogan, comedian)
- ✓ Dave Chappelle is the baddest<sup>4</sup> person to touch the microphone that's alive right now. I mean, I will say it and stand by it. (Kevin Hart, comedian)
- ✓ He is a beast, Dave is a beast, man! The only man that puts fear in my heart ok, what is he doing? That's my man. (Chris Rock, comedian)<sup>5</sup>
- ✓ Dave is so much smarter than everyone Dave is like maybe the most intellectual comedian ever. He stretches the art form and his impact on the culture. He is the voice of his generation without question. Nobody is even close to him. (Eddie Murphy, comedian)
- ✓ He is a truth-teller and the funniest person working today (Lorne Michaels, producer)
- ✓ People talk about honesty in comedy, but a lot of comedians do not tell the truth, when we say honest we talk about not being afraid to tell people the truth. I think nobody does it better than Dave. (Michael Che, comedian and writer)<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, the truth for Chappelle is the ability to share every kind of belief, feeling and political attitude with the audience, which means that being funny is not the ultimate objective of the business. Truth should never be limited to pleasing an audience and getting their laughter responses. Watching Chappelle is but an opportunity to think critically because he invites the audience to both laugh and stops at every single word in his comedy in order to grasp the depth and the dimensions of his thoughts. The majority of stand-up comedians normally follow the strategy of self-derision in order to win the sympathy of their audience because they know that people do not usually take it when they are the butts of humor, especially when they are in public. Nevertheless, it is not the case with Chappelle who seizes every single chance on stage to directly tell the truth and overtly express his sincere views:

If you're in a group that I made fun of, then just know that I probably will only make fun of you if I see myself in you. I make fun of poor white people because I was once poor. And I know that the only difference between a poor black person and a poor white person is that a poor white person feels like it's not supposed to be happening to them. Yeah! Everything else is the same. I know what it's like to have a cold house.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, stand-up comedians are asked to put into consideration the fact that not all people can resolve an incongruous remark. There has been an academic debate recently as to what extent an incongruity alone is adequate for humor. What are the possible results if the resolution of an incongruity grows very easy or becomes extremely difficult. Graeme Ritchie (1999) claims that "the usual statement of the incongruity-resolution (IR) model postulates that humor is created by a multistage process in which an initial incongruity is created, and then some further information causes that incongruity to be resolved" (1). This assumption sufficiently explains that humor creation does not only rest on the ability to presenting strong incongruities to an audience, these incongruities should be attached with further explicit or implicit information that makes them easily solved as with the examples provided earlier in this analysis. To sum up, what this article

---

<sup>4</sup>Baddest is a slang word with urban roots meaning the coolest or the best ever.

<sup>5</sup> 'Comedians Talking About Dave Chappelle,' YouTube, [www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=comedians+on+dave+chappelle](http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=comedians+on+dave+chappelle).(accessed January, 2020)

<sup>6</sup>Celebrating Dave Chappelle (Mark Twain Prize for American Humor). Directed by Chris Robinson, Volcan Productions, 2020. Netflix, [www.netflix.com/title/81214015?s=a&trkid=13747225&t=wha](http://www.netflix.com/title/81214015?s=a&trkid=13747225&t=wha).

<sup>7</sup><https://scrapsfromtheloft.com/2019/08/26/dave-chappelle-sticks-stones-transcript/>

tries to explain is that any humorous situation can be examined and/or analyzed in terms of having two main parts that are somehow incongruous to each other.

### Works Cited

- [1]. Badron, Adrian. "The Philosophy of Humor," *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide*, ed. by Maurice Charney. Connecticut: Greenwood Pres. 2005. PDF.
- [2]. 'Comedians Talking about Dave Chappelle,' YouTube, [www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=comedians+on+dave+chappelle](http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=comedians+on+dave+chappelle) (Accessed January, 2020)
- [3]. Canestrari, Carla, and Ivana Bianchi. "Perception of Contrariety in Jokes." *Discourse Processes*, 49.7. Web. (2012) : 539-564. Feb. 2020.
- [4]. Celebrating Dave Chappelle (Mark Twain Prize for American Humor). Directed by Chris Robinson, Volcan Productions, 2020. Netflix, [www.netflix.com/title/81214015?s=a&trkid=13747225&t=wha](http://www.netflix.com/title/81214015?s=a&trkid=13747225&t=wha).(Accessed January, 2020)
- [5]. 'Dave Chappelle on walking away from a hit TV show', Martin B News, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXnaNljenG8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXnaNljenG8). (Accessed December, 2019)
- [6]. Charney, Maurice. *Comedy: a Geographic and Historical Guide*. Praeger, 2005. PDF.
- [7]. DeStaebler, Andrew. "Something Punny to Precede the Colon: Marking Whiteness and Exploring Blackness in Standup Comedy." *Digital Commons @ Colby*, [digitalcommons.colby.edu/honors\\_theses/970/](http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/honors_theses/970/). (Accessed January, 2020)
- [8]. 'How Dave Chappelle Writes his joke,' Alex Mayers, Youtube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrNzx1CkKZQ&t=4s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrNzx1CkKZQ&t=4s). (Accessed December, 2019).
- [9]. Morreal, John, ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987. Print.
- [10]. Nerhardt, Göran. *Operationalization of incongruity in humour research: a critique and suggestions. It's a funny thing, humour*, ed. by Anthony J. Chapman; and Hugh C. Foot, 47-51. Oxford: Pergamon Press.1977. PDF.
- [11]. Raskin, Victor. *Semantic mechanisms of humor*. Dordrecht: Reidel.1985. PDF.
- [12]. Rebecca Krefting, *All Joking Aside: American Humor and Its Discontents*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. PDF.
- [13]. Schopenhauer, Arthur, et al. *The World as Will and Presentation*. trans. Richard E. Aquila in collaboration with David Carus. New York: Pearson Longman, 2008. PDF.
- [14]. Sharf, Zack. "Dave Chappellee Says 'Poor Whites' Are His 'Least Favorite' Because They Got Trump Elected President." *IndieWire*, 21 Dec. 2017, [www.indiewire.com/2017/12/david-chappellee-netflix-poor-white-voters-donald-trump-1201910142/](http://www.indiewire.com/2017/12/david-chappellee-netflix-poor-white-voters-donald-trump-1201910142/). (Accessed December 2019).