

**ARE ‘NASTY WOMEN’ FUNNY WOMEN?  
DIFFERENTIAL APPRECIATION AND  
SELECTIVE PERCEPTION IN THE CASE  
OF FULL FRONTAL WITH SAMANTHA BEE**

by

Erin Drouin

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between feminist political satire, humor structure, socio-demographic determinants, including ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity, and differential appreciation and perception. One hundred and ninety two college aged students ( $N= 192$ ) in public speaking classes at the University of Delaware participated in a three conditioned experiment that exposed them to a clip of *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* that was either ironic, hyperbolic, did not feature an exclusive humor structure. The ironic and hyperbolic clips were feminist in nature. The students were then asked about how they appreciated the clip and how they comprehended the clip.

Results indicated that while humor structure was not a significant determinant of differential appreciation or selective perception, attitudes about gender equity did have an effect on comprehension. Those with higher scores and more feminist attitudes about gender equity perceived feminist humor in alignment with their views, while those with less feminist views and lower scores of attitudes about gender equity interpreted feminist humor incorrectly. This implies that selective perception did occur in terms of attitudes about gender equity.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In our current political climate, there is no shortage of political humor. From late night comedy programs to viral videos to funny tweets, people are doing their best to find the humor in particularly divisive times. Ample research has explored the content of these jokes and their effects - who finds political humor funny, how do they comprehend it, and what makes a good joke? Central to processes of comprehension and interpretation are cognitive processes related to selective perception. Throughout the history of media effects research, scholars have identified selective perception as an important psychological phenomenon that shapes the influence of media messages on individuals (Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974; LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam, 2009)

In 2017-18, feminism and messages advocating feminist themes were especially salient. From the Women's March on Washington on January 20, 2017 and 2018, to the #metoo movement recognizing the epidemics of sexual assault and harassment, feminist themes have come to dominate. In fact, Merriam Webster's online dictionary reported that "feminism" was the most looked up word for the year of 2017. The concept of feminism is a greatly contested one. Moi (1988) articulates a rather "agnostic" definition, calling feminism "...the struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist oppression. Such an oppositional definition posits feminism as the necessary resistance to patriarchal power." Moi continues, "Logically, then, the aim of feminism, like that of any emancipatory theory, is to abolish itself along with its opponent" (p. 5).

So how do people process feminist messages when the very concept of feminism is so complex? And how do people process humorous feminism messages? Comprehension of humor is already complex enough (Young, 2008), but when the humor is feminist as well, does that change how people understand it? Do they selectively perceive it? How do they appreciate it?

The goal of this research was to understand how two types of humor that portray feminist principles may lead to differential appreciation and comprehension across three individual level characteristics: political ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity. To answer these questions, a three condition between-subjects experiment was conducted to test how appreciation and comprehension of feminist political satire (clips from Full Frontal with Samantha Bee) was contingent on both message-level characteristics (whether humor is presented with irony or with hyperbole) and individual level characteristics (political ideology, gender, and gender-related beliefs).

Results indicated that both appreciation and comprehension were contingent upon having a belief system compatible with the underlying message of the humor, in this case: feminist humor. In fact, the construct of attitudes about gender equity was a stronger predictor of feminist humor appreciation and comprehension than most other constructs. Most notably, in the ironic condition, more feminist attitudes about gender equity was a strong predictor of comprehension, supporting the notion that, especially in the face of feminist stimuli that is ambiguous and ironic, selective perception likely occurred.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Understandings of Feminism and Feminist Humor*

Although there is ample debate amongst the feminist community about how to define feminism, we will understand feminism at one of its more simple and encompassing definitions. According to theorist bell hooks, feminism is the “movement to end women’s oppression” (hooks, 2000, p. 26). On a more general level, the gendered nature of the word makes it divisive and draws attention from the true nature of the movement: cultivating social equality (Karl, 2017). For the purposes of this research, *feminist humor* will be defined as per Bing (2004), to be “a joke created by a feminist that assumes the shared values of most feminists” (p.22).

Feminist humor seems to be used even more frequently as a way to respond or critique political or cultural events. Recently, Saturday Night Live even did a sketch called “Welcome to Hell”, which called attention to the recent visibility and public concern for women being sexually harassed and assaulted. The sketch was a musical commentary about the fact that the public was being made aware about a problem that feminists had been aware of for some time (Robinson, 2017). Thus, feminist humor, much like other forms of political humor, is beyond that of merely being entertainment, it is instead being used to address social inequities and call for a change.

The use of feminist humor as an avenue for cultural critiques is not new. Novelists of the eighteenth century such as Jane Austen, Frances Burney, and Maria Edgeworth used their books to propel women as nuanced and multifaceted rational characters - something that was often for naught in that time period (Biliger, 2002). Criticizing current gender politics is a trend that persisted over time, even to the 1950s, when Phyllis Diller became popular in the standup community with her humor poking fun at domestic life (Harris, 2012). Similarly, at the same time, Lucille Ball was on everyone's television - and defied "...gender roles, doing physical, slapstick comedy" (Horowitz, 1997, p. x). Still, much like Diller, her comedy was based around the perils of motherhood and domesticity.

Ten years later, the humor of Joan Rivers tackled issues of sexuality and female empowerment in a way that was notably progressive for her time. The feminist humor of Joan Rivers helped "pave the way for more political and feminist comics to emerge," according to Harris (2012, p. 2) including Lily Tomlin, Mary Tyler Moore, Roseanne Barr, and Ellen DeGeneres.

This trend of feminist humor continued well into the 2000s, with more female-led comedies featuring feminist themes, this time in very obvious and intentional ways. *30 Rock*, *Parks and Recreation*, *Girls*, and *The Mindy Project*, led by Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Lena Dunham, and Mindy Kaling respectively; all mark a potential for leading feminist characters in comedy: characters who even refer to themselves as feminists. In spite of its growing prevalence, audiences are often unsure how to interpret feminist messages in mainstream comedy (Swink, 2017). Thus, there is

certainly a need for furthering research into how feminism and comedy are perceived in the new millennium, especially in the divisive political climate.

### ***Full Frontal with Samantha Bee***

One such forum for feminist political humor is the weekly program, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, a late night political satirical television program that features a feminist perspective. “She has given voice to all the women who have wanted to take on the political establishment”, raves Jane Curtin in her 2017 Times 100 Profile on Samantha Bee (Curtin, 2017). After 12 years as the longest running correspondent on The Daily Show, Bee left to form her own show, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, which premiered in 2016 (Poniewozak, 2016).

Bee has said about the overall perspective of her show: “We kept saying, ‘Oh, our show’s gonna be different ... not just because it’s being hosted by a woman, but because it’s being hosted by a different human being. It’s being hosted by me, and I have a different point of view’” (Couric, 2016). Bee even cites groundbreaking feminist comedians as inspiration for her show, drawing from her childhood, stating “I also watched female comedians killing it on television every day, because I grew up in the '70s when you watched TV when you ate dinner. TV was your best friend and your baby sitter, but I would sit and watch The Carol Burnett Show, I Love Lucy, SCTV [Second City TV], Catherine O'Hara, Andrea Martin — there was no shortage of strong female performers making their way in comedy” (Gross, 2016). Based on these inspirations, she implemented feminist themes into the content of her show. This is an important distinction, as Bee’s mere status as a woman does not necessarily indicate

that her humor is feminist. Her subject matter and delivery does. Her gender may communicate to some audiences that she could be an expert on feminist principles, however. This would make her message effective because viewers consider her an expert (Wilson & Sherrell, 1993).

In terms of format, the show is distinct from those hosted by Bee's male counterparts. Bee stands in front of the camera, not obscured by a desk, and does not feature interviews with weekly guests (Blay, 2016a). The show was almost immediately popular and Bee established herself as the "the lone female host in late-night" (Poniewozak, 2016). She quickly became a representation of feminist humor, bridging the gap between late night comedy and women. The show also established early on that it would bring issues of sexism to the forefront (Morris, 2016). In a 2017 survey by public opinion and communication firm Perry Udem found that 10% of those surveyed were able to recognize Samantha Bee as a representative of feminism.

In the aftermath of the 2016 election, *Full Frontal* has become potentially even more relevant, as Bee faced threats after having criticized President Trump's administration. Immediately after the election, she received violent tweets and Bee herself said she "could feel me personally being a target. ... It was vicious right out of the gate. And in that moment I kind of understood the way it was going to be from then on" ("Samantha Bee On Trump's Win: 'I Could Feel This Seismic Shift'", 2017). Viewers, however, have responded positively towards the mainstream overt feminism during the Trump presidency, with some calling it 'feminist church' (Blake, 2017).

Bee's feminist political humor and status as the only woman in late night makes her a unique case for understanding potential effects that her satire has on the viewers. The feminist nature of the humor and the delivery by the woman makes the case for an investigation into the potential for selective exposure or selective perception by viewers as in comparison to more mainstream and less feminized forms of political comedy. It also provides an opportunity to integrate work on humor theory, selective perception, and disposition theory into one coherent set of questions. Finally, due to Bee's use of both ironic and hyperbolic humor to make her political critiques, her content provides an opportunity to examine how irony and hyperbole differentially affect selective perception and selective appreciation.

### ***The Psychology of Humor: Appreciation and Comprehension***

Ample research has been conducted in the hopes of understanding how and why people find certain things funny, specifically how the mind works when processing humor. One such explanation for the phenomenon of humor is that of incongruity and bisociation (Koestler, 1962). When people are presented with two independently perceived pieces of information, also known as 'matrices', there are three potential results: the matrices collide - resulting in laughter, they fuse into an intellectual thought, or they stimulate a confrontation of ideas. Humor attempts to cause matrices or frames of reference to collide - and thus be bisociated with one another. When specifically applying bisociation to satire, it is posited that:

"We are made suddenly conscious of conventions and prejudices which we have unquestioningly accepted, which were tacitly implied in the codes in control of our

thinking and behaviour. The confrontation with an alien matrix reveals in a sharp, pitiless light what we failed to see in following our dim routines; the tacit assumptions hidden in the rules of the game are dragged into the open. The bisociative shock shatters the frame of complacent habits of thinking; the seemingly obvious is made to yield its secret” (Koestler, 1964, p.73).

Thus, satire is the collision of two matrices: one in which we are presented with our own behavior, and another in which encounter the “ideal” or what “ought to be.” Through this, we come to recognize the prejudices within that original behavior. This process is rooted in cognitive humor theories of incongruity (Koestler, 1962) How humorous a person finds a joke is contingent on the listener’s ability and motivation to use cognitive mechanisms to reconcile the incongruity in a joke. Humor is a two stage process; first, the recipient experiences a humorous situation that does not meet their expectation by the end of the joke - also known as an incongruity; second, the recipient activates relevant information from longterm memory to reconcile the incongruity and hence perceive the humor (Suls, 1972). The idea that humor is appreciated is thus, grounded in the reconciliation of an incongruity; it is up to the listener's’ cognitive processes to process the joke. Further research supported the idea that it is often the listeners’ experiences that dictate how they understand humor. When humorous stimuli is familiar to the listener, they are often more likely to understand it to be funny and have greater appreciation for it (Suls, 1975).

Appreciation for varying types of humor is affected by audience’s perceptions of actors within the humor, as explained by disposition theory. Under disposition

theory, humor appreciation is dependent upon an audience's view of a 'protagonist' - specifically "humor appreciation is facilitated when the respondent feels antipathy or resentment towards disparaged protagonists and impaired when he feels sympathy or liking for these protagonists" (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976, p. 93). When examining political humor and disposition theory, findings support the notion that prior disposition can have great influence on humor appreciation and can even affect political values (Becker, 2014).

In the context of feminist humor, research suggests that jokes with feminist themes and arguments are more likely to be appreciated and watched by people who share a feminist belief systems. This would suggest that feminist humor appreciation is dependent upon the gender-related attitudes, beliefs, and values which are strongly embedded in our identities (Valentine et. al, 2017). As such, these gender-related attitudes will most certainly factor into selective perception processes; with people likely to interpret information based on their preconceived notions of gender equity.

### ***Humor Appreciation as a function of Source and Target***

Research has also presented the idea that no matter the content of the joke, a woman's presence may make it unappealing to men. One study that asked participants to guess the gender of a joke's author yielded somewhat sexist implications: across both genders, participants guessed that the funniest jokes were authored by men, and the least funny jokes were authored by women (Hooper et. al, 2016). No matter participant gender, the prominence of female comedians gives the interpretation that the humor is inherently gendered. Viewers also found the female-led humor to be

subpar in comparison to comedy that featured predominantly male comedians (Bore, 2010).

This differentiation in terms of source of the humor is important to note and relates back to research on credibility and effectiveness of a message depending upon both source and content. A meta-analysis of understanding source in terms of persuasive messages yielded the result that in evaluating credibility of the source, the most important variable is that of expertise. If the source is viewed as being expert on the topic, the message is more effective (Wilson & Sherrell, 1993).

While source expertise can affect efficacy of messages, the content of the message itself is potentially even more relevant in understanding how effective messages are processed. There has been ample research on message content and how recipients process those messages, but there hasn't been much research into how feminist humor messages are processed.

The topic itself may be somewhat divisive to many viewers, who are wary to engage with discussions about gender issues and to also identify with the term feminist itself. Research has shown that even if participants agree with the concepts of gender equity, they will hesitate to call themselves feminists, often speaking derogatorily about them (Olson et. al, 2008). This is why this research asked questions about general gender equity ideals as opposed to merely feminist identification.

### ***Selective Perception of Humor***

The prediction of audience's comprehension and appreciation of feminist humor is complicated due to the capacity for subtle or implicit satire to be interpreted

in various ways. This phenomenon is known as selective perception. Selective perception is grounded in the hypothesis that “a person’s attitudes and values will affect that person’s perception or interpretation of social stimuli” (Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974, p. 38). This is because preexisting beliefs have a large effect on how people interpret the meaning of messages. People would rather maintain their attitudes and understand material in a way that is in accordance with that existing attitude than have that attitude challenged (Raney, 2004). Several studies highlight the role of selective perception in shaping audience comprehension of political humor. One such case is that of *The Colbert Report*, hosted by Stephen Colbert, who acts with a persona as a satirical, extremely conservative version of himself. *The Colbert Report* is a special case of late night political comedy due to his delivery and ironic parody of a conservative persona. Colbert’s show is rooted in irony because what Colbert states explicitly is the opposite of what he really believes to be true or desirable. As stated by Burgers et al. (2011), irony can be described as “an utterance with a literal evaluation that is implicitly contrary to its intended evaluation” (p. 190).

There was great potential for misinterpretation in the case of Colbert as he hosted *The Colbert Report*, in which, without added context, he could be perceived as entertaining political commentator who is mocking modern liberal America; or as an ironic performance artist satirizing conservative political pundits. In 2009, researchers sought to understand selective perception of the political leanings and intention of Colbert. At the time of the LaMarre, Landreville, and Beam study, Colbert still relatively unknown. The authors conducted a study to examine how Colbert’s ironic

ambiguity could affect perceptions of the show's content. Findings supported the idea that there were significant ideological differences in interpretations of humor within Colbert's persona on *The Colbert Report*. Liberals thought (correctly) that Colbert's persona was mocking conservatives while conservatives (incorrectly) thought Colbert's persona was mocking liberals. However, most importantly, ideology did not affect whether viewers thought Colbert's persona was funny (LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam, 2009). Everyone appreciated Colbert's jokes, but ideologues interpreted his jokes in two very different ways. These findings were consistent with study that incorporated online discussion forums of Colbert's show; although some participants recognized the satirical intent, others simply viewed the show as being humorously conservative in nature (Mohammed, 2014).

This is consistent with the finding of the landmark study by Vidmar & Rokeach (1974) studying perceptions of Archie Bunker. Archie bunker was the lead character in Norman Lear's popular, *All in the Family*, from the 1970s. Bunker was intended to be the racist, misogynist butt of the jokes. The authors found that audience members believed that Archie Bunker was either a satirical character or not, depending upon their established political beliefs. They selectively perceived the character in terms of their own political leanings (1974).

Perhaps some of this opportunity for selective perception can be explained by the fact that viewers are motivated to appreciate humorous content and laugh along with it. Viewers typically have a more positive reaction towards the satirized subject matter when they find the satire humorous. Viewers are also less likely to

counterargue satirical content (Boukes et. al, 2015; Nabi, Moyer-Guse, & Byrne, 2007; Young, 2008). This points to the idea that because viewers do not seek to counterargue satire, and are motivated to “get the joke” within it, they are motivated to adapt the meaning of the joke to match their own political and social beliefs - especially when they consider it to be funny. Hence, like other forms of political humor, feminist humor is likely to be understood through the lens of selective perception – with people interpreting feminist jokes in a manner consistent with their beliefs related to gender equity.

### ***Irony versus Hyperbole in Selective Perception Processes***

The studies described above illustrate how ironic satire increases the likelihood that an audience will engage in selective perception. But irony is not the only form of political satire. In the case of *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, Bee employs a variety of styles of humor in delivering her political and feminist jokes. Bee’s humor can be described as *both* ironic (saying the opposite of what she means) and hyperbolic – (using exaggeration and heightened language to express her point). Irony is a complex form of discourse that involves various levels of cognitive processing to be understood by the audience (Giora & Fein, 2009). Misinterpretation often occurs when listeners of verbal irony take the literal evaluation and fail to recognize the ironic intent. This results in the listeners failing to invert the meaning of the statement, hence taking its meaning literally rather than ironically. This is likely due to confusion with context and source cues because “without clear source cues to signal intent, more

readers are prone to misread irony, interpreting it and sharing it with others as real” (Young, 2017, p. 1).

Hyperbole is different than irony as it is “a more explicit type of humor, through which the deliverer’s message is presented in an overstated, literal, form” (Young et. al, 2017). As suggested by Young and colleagues, (2017) “hyperbole, then, would seem to involve a lower reliance on complex cognitive processes, as the intended meaning is literal and explicit, requiring less cognitive work to understand it.” (Young et. al, 2017). The result, it would seem, is a form of humor that is less likely to be misinterpreted than irony – and hence less likely to suffer from the biases of selective perception.

### ***Irony and Hyperbole in Full Frontal with Samantha Bee***

Samantha Bee uses both irony and hyperbole in the feminist humor segments on her show. As of this writing, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* has aired sixty-two episodes across its two seasons; season two is still ongoing. Individual segments from every episode are available on Youtube. Show segments are divided into themes, which then feature jokes and responses to clips of other content, such as interviews with elected officials and news segments.

As Bee’s show commonly employs feminist themes and encourages women empowerment, feminist irony is often used throughout the show. For example, Bee often uses irony to display her criticism towards the patriarchy. In a segment on her April 26, 2016 episode titled “Twenty-Dollar Tubman”, Bee responds to criticism about the addition of Harriet Tubman to the twenty dollar bill. Ironically, she states

“when we make such a dramatic change to something that no one ever looks at, we have to consider the fragile feelings of white men who tragically appear on only seven out of seven bills currently in production.” Again, you have to invert the meaning behind Bee’s words instead of taking it literally. The literal interpretation would imply that men are not adequately represented on currency.

While Bee sometimes says the opposite of what she means in the context of her feminist segments (which constitutes irony), she also employs hyperbole to heighten a situation through analogy and metaphor. In a June 28, 2017 episode, for example, Bee used hyperbole to address reproductive rights in a segment entitled “Last Call for Nasty Women.” The segment featured a clip of a woman who lives in southern California going across the border to Mexico to receive health care. Bee responds with “Okay, skipping down to Mexico for discount cosmetic surgery is one thing, but forcing women to go through border control to hear their baby’s heartbeat is another. It’s like Republicans are trying to turn gynecological care into Louboutins: an uncomfortable luxury that only rich ladies can buy...If I know anything about the Trump family, it won’t be long before Ivanka’s jewelry collection gets repurposed as a line of IUDs”. Unlike irony, the content and meaning of the joke here is sincere and does not require any meaning to be inverted; the humor is simply aggrandized. The idea that jewelry is repurposed into IUDs is ridiculous and exaggerated, but it conveys the intent of the joke: that Republicans are attempting to make women’s health care something of a luxury. Due to the ludicrous hyperbole of this joke, it does not lend itself to be misinterpreted in the same way as it's ironic counterparts. The punchline

involving a potential jewelry line of IUDs from Ivanka Trump is so wildly ridiculous, and is consistent with the valence of Bee's intended argument, that it is unlikely to run the same risk of misinterpretation that we find with irony. An ironic interpretation of the joke would leave the impression that somehow the new healthcare policy would allow women to have more health care access, which simply does not make sense.

### ***A Note on Incidental Exposure in Digital Contexts***

For years, political communication scholars have operated under the assumption that audiences selectively seek out belief-confirming content, while selectively avoiding belief-dissonant content (Stroud, 2011). Rooted in the concept of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), selective exposure and avoidance posit that people are unlikely to encounter information that contradicts their opinions. And in a fragmented media environment, in which people can seek out infinite niche content outlets, selective exposure and avoidance would seem to dominate. However, in the social media era, certain sites have become mechanism through which people discuss or share things about politics and current affairs. Voters, most notably young people, are using the internet to engage with politics in a variety of ways (Bakker & De Vreese, 2011). At least a quarter of Americans report seeing political content on Facebook and Twitter. And in terms of content, "Roughly half of Facebook users (53%) and more than one-third of Twitter users (39%) say that there is a mix of political views among the people in their networks" (Pew Research Center, 2016, p.

3). Thus, social networks are a source of political engagement or information, and there is some diversity amongst users and the ideologies they encounter.

These findings complicate the theory of selective exposure. Among those with little interest in news, for example, social media users have been found to have more exposure to news than those not on social media. Thus, even if someone does not actively seek information about politics or attempt to inform themselves about news, they are still incidentally exposed to these things through social media (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017).

So, in the context of the feminist satire on Full Frontal with Samantha Bee on TBS, while those who reject certain principles of contemporary feminism may not tune in to watch the show in real time when it airs on TBS on Wednesday nights; social media and viral videos have brought about the opportunity for videos that are not within one's own echo chambers to come across timelines and newsfeeds when shared by friends (Bakker & De Vreese, 2011; Pew Research Center; Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017). This incidental exposure to belief – disconfirming humor makes it even more necessary that we understand the ways in which different people will make sense of such texts.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

Due to the lack of consensus on feminist humor appreciation, part of this research will seek to address how gender, political ideology, and beliefs about gender equity shape humor appreciation and comprehension.

H1: Appreciation of feminist humor would be greater among liberals than conservatives, women than men, and among those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity than those with lower scores.

H2: Liberals, women, and participants high in gender equity beliefs will show greater appreciation of feminist humor in comparison with non-feminist humor (the control).

H3. The effect of ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity on appreciation of feminist humor are moderated by humor type. Liberals, women, and those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity will be more appreciative of hyperbolic feminist humor than conservatives, while we shouldn't find a relationship between ideology and appreciation in the ironic condition.

RQ1. How do ironic and hyperbolic humor differ in terms of their ability to be accurately comprehended by audience members, overall?

H4. Comprehension of feminist humor would be greater among liberals than conservatives (a), women than men (b), and those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity than those with lower scores (c).

H5: Liberals (a), women (b), and participants high in gender equity beliefs (c) will show greater comprehension of feminist humor in comparison with non-feminist humor (the control). Feminist humor would be comprehended less accurately than non-feminist humor.

H6. The effects of ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity on comprehension of feminist humor are moderated by humor type. Liberals (a), women (b), and those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity (AAGE) (c) will have higher rates of accuracy of comprehension of ironic feminist humor than conservatives, men, and those with lower scores of attitudes about gender equity, while we shouldn't find a relationship between these predictors and understanding in the hyperbolic condition.

The following chart outlines the expectations for the three conditions that will be used in this experiment:

	<b>Condition: Hyperbolic feminist</b>		<b>Condition: Ironic feminist</b>		<b>Control: Non-feminist Humor</b>	
<b>Audience</b>	<i>Who</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>Who</i>

<b>characteristics:</b>	<i>Comprehends</i>	<i>Appreciates</i>	<i>Comprehends</i>	<i>Appreciates</i>	<i>Comprehends</i>	<i>Appreciates</i>
Gender	ALL	Women more than men	Women more than men	ALL	ALL	ALL
Attitudes towards feminism	ALL	Feminists more than non	Feminists more than non	ALL	ALL	ALL
Political ideology	ALL	Libs more than cons	Libs more than cons	ALL	ALL	ALL

## **Chapter 4**

### **METHODOLOGY AND MEASURES**

A sample was obtained of undergraduates at the University of Delaware through twelve sections of Communication 212: Oral Communication for Business. The students in these courses are typically diverse in major and age. The resulting sample consisted of 192 participants and the survey was distributed from March 2nd, 2018 until March 9th, 2018.

Participants were exposed to one of three experimental conditions. Each condition featured a clip from Full Frontal with Samantha Bee. One condition features Samantha Bee using irony to express feminist satire, one condition featured her using exaggeration to express feminist satire, and a control clip featured her using an indistinct humor structure in a more interview-based segment about a non-feminist issue, Brexit. (See Appendix A for Full Stimuli). The conditions were distributed randomly and evenly. Participants were given the clip before any of the demographic questions to minimize the priming some of measures may have, particularly the measure for evaluating attitudes about gender equity.

The ironic segment, “The Greatest Feminists in Feminism Herstory Hall of Fame” is from the January 18th, 2017 episode of Full Frontal. The clip features Bee using ironic jokes to feature flaws in Kellyanne Conway’s construction as a feminist and inducts her to the ‘Feminism Herstory Hall of Fame’. The hyperbolic segment, entitled “Heir to the White House Throne” is from the April 5th, 2017 episode of Full Frontal. Here, Bee uses hyperbole to criticize Ivanka Trump’s role in the White House

and her construction as a feminist. Both clips will be edited for length and to remove any extraneous jokes or clips. The control segment is entitled “Praise the (Time) Lord” and is from the June 27th, 2016 show. It features a clip discussing Donald Trump and the Brexit Vote, and features Scottish television star David Tennant reading tweets about Donald Trump.

Following exposure to one of the clips, participants participated in a post test. Immediately after the clip, they were asked to measure their humor appreciation for the clip. Using a likert item, participants were asked to rate from “Extremely well” to “not well at all” how closely they thought the words funny, entertaining, offensive, enjoyable, interesting, and smart described the clip they watched.

Participants were then given two statements: one featured the inverted meaning of the clip, and one featured the literal meaning of the clip. They were asked to rate each statement from ‘very accurately’ to ‘not accurately at all’ in response to how well it described the clip. Participants were then given the text of one of the jokes in the clip that particularly featured the humor structure of that condition. They were given the literal and inverted interpretation of that joke and again, asked to how accurately it represented the argument of the clip from ‘very accurately’ to ‘not accurately at all’. They also had the option to provide their own open ended interpretation of what argument the clip was making.

To measure attitudes about gender equity, participants were asked to answer questions on Renzetti’s Sex Role Attitudinal Inventory (Appendix B) to identify their attitudes about gender equity. As feminist is a somewhat divisive term, a scale was chosen that did not exclusively ask questions revolving around feminism but more questions about attitudes towards gender equity. The scale divides 24 questions into

four subsets: nine statements indicating traditional attitudes towards gender roles, five statements indicating feminist attitudes, four statements indicating awareness about gender inequity, and six statements indicating attitudes towards the women's movement. Participants were asked to indicate agreement to these statements on a five point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Renzetti, 1987).

Participants were then asked to rate how they thought the word feminist represents figures involved with the three stimuli: Samantha Bee (the comedian delivering the jokes), Ivanka Trump (the subject of the exaggerated stimulus), Kellyanne Conway (the subject of the ironic stimulus), and Donald Trump (the subject of the control). They were also asked whether they felt the word feminist was positive or negative from "very positive" to "very negative".

To assess their engagement with Full Frontal with Samantha Bee, participants were asked how familiar they were with Bee from 'extremely familiar' to 'not familiar at all', as well as how often they've viewed her programming. Further, to understand their familiarity with political and comedic programming, participants rated from "all the time" to "never" how often they've viewed: The Daily Show, Last Week Tonight, Hannity with Sean Hannity, The Rush Limbaugh Show, The Rachel Maddow Show, Tucker Carlson Tonight, The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell, The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon, and Jimmy Kimmel Live. Finally, participants were asked to identify their age, gender identity, racial identity, interest in politics, political ideology, and party affiliation.

### **Manipulation Check: Pilot Study**

Before executing the finalized survey, a pilot study was performed to act as a manipulation check for the various stimuli. A class of students ( $n = 17$ ) were

trained on identifying exaggerated versus ironic humor during a class lesson and given an additional codebook (see Appendix E). The codebook defined satire on a general level and identified examples of ironic humor and exaggerated humor. Students were given the target of the joke, the literal interpretation and the actual interpretation of the joke to make the difference between the two humor structures more clear. For each condition, students were asked to identify using a likert item how closely they thought the video used ironic humor and exaggerated humor. They were then asked to identify, again using a likert item, how they found the video to be funny, interesting, boring, confusing, understandable, offensive, enjoyable, and challenging. Participants were then asked to explain what they thought the main message of the clip was in an open ended format. Finally, students were provided the literal and inverted meanings of each of the clips and asked to rate on a likert item how accurately they thought it portrayed the meaning of the clip.

Participants rated the ironic clip to be more ironic ( $M = 6.411$ ,  $SD = .618$ ) than exaggerated ( $M = 4.125$ ,  $SD = 1.784$ ). They also rated the exaggerated clip to be more exaggerated ( $M = 4.313$ ,  $SD = 1.922$ ) than ironic ( $M = 3.125$ ,  $SD = 1.258$ ). There was also no significant difference between the two clips in terms of how participants found them to be funny, interesting, boring, confusing, understandable, offensive, enjoyable, or challenging. When comparing the control clip to the ironic and exaggerated clips, there was also no significant difference in how participants rated the clip along those factors.

Students were asked to provide open ended answers to what they thought the real meaning of the clip was. All of the open ended answers provided across conditions were aligned with the correct interpretation for the clip - the literal

meaning of the exaggerated clip and the inverted meaning of the ironic clip. When provided with both literal and inverted options for the clips across the conditions, results were similar. The accurate interpretation ( $M = 4.333$ ,  $SD = .969$ ) was perceived more often than the negative interpretation ( $M = 1.68$ ,  $SD=.952$ ).

## **Chapter 5**

### **RESULTS**

Collectively this research sought to understand the relationship between feminist humor, humor structure, comprehension, appreciation, ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender and feminism. Before main hypotheses – concerning irony and hyperbole - are addressed, the research also explored appreciation and comprehension of feminist humor and non-feminist humor.

#### **Randomization Check**

Before any analyses were run, a randomization test (Table 1) was run to assure that the individual level characteristics that would be used as our main predictor variables were not conflated with experimental condition. A One Way ANOVA comparing means between each experimental condition and the three main variables (ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity) showed no significant correlation between conditions and hypothesized predictor variables.

**H1: Appreciation of feminist humor would be greater among liberals than conservatives, women than men, and among those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity than those with lower scores.**

**H2: Liberals, women, and participants high in gender equity beliefs will show greater appreciation of feminist humor in comparison with non-feminist humor (the control).**

After first limiting the sample to only those in the feminist humor condition (irony and hyperbole only:  $N = 127$ ), a simple correlation of appreciation for

feminist humor and ideology found that a significant relationship between the two ( $r = -.37, p < .001$ ). Thus, the more liberal a participant, the more likely they were to appreciate feminist humor.

Importantly, in the non-feminist humor condition ( $n = 65$ ), humorous appreciation and ideology were similarly correlated, albeit less significantly ( $r = -.301, p < .05$ ). This finding is consistent with past research indicating that even non-political humor might be less appreciated by conservatives than liberals (Young, Bagozzi, Poulsen, Goldring, and Drouin, 2018). However, it could also be the case that the critique of Trump in the control stimulus prompted conservatives to be less appreciative of the joke there as well.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine if there was a relationship between gender and appreciation for feminist humor: women ( $M = 3.1733, SD = .983$ ) did not report significantly higher levels of appreciation of feminist humor than men ( $M = 3.38, SD = .912$ )  $t(124) = -1.287, p = .207$ . However, for appreciation of non-feminist humor, women ( $M = 3.453, SD = .952$ ) reported significantly higher appreciation than men ( $M = 2.96, SD = .917$ ),  $t(62) = 2.088, p < .05$ .

And finally, looking at the correlation between attitudes about gender equity and appreciation for feminist humor, we find a significant correlation, consistent with H1,  $r = .240, p < .01$ . Similarly, for the non-feminist condition, appreciation and attitudes about gender equity were significantly correlated to an even greater extent,  $r = .399, p < .001$ .

Looking just within the feminist humor conditions, we then ran a regression (Table 2) to understand the relative predictive power of gender, ideology, and gender equity beliefs on humor appreciation in the face of socio-demographic controls (Table

2). This model allows us not to compare between appreciation of feminist and non-feminist humor, but rather to understand the correlates of appreciation of feminist humor alone.

In this model (Table 2), significant predictors of feminist humor appreciation are men (women are coded as 0, men are coded as 1), those who are non-white (coded as 0, white is coded as 1), and those who identify with a liberal ideology (higher scores indicate more conservative ideology, while a negative score indicates a more liberal ideology). This indicates that when examining appreciation of just feminist humor, men, non-whites, and liberals are appreciate the clips the most.

In an attempt to understand these relationships while taking the control into consideration, a model (Table 3) with gender, ideology, and gender equity beliefs as predictors along with party, age, and race as control variables was run to understand the relative predictive power of ideology, gender and gender equity beliefs, and to understand how this predictors hold up in the face of control variables (Table 3) Results indicate that humor appreciation was significantly higher among those with positive beliefs about gender equity, among non-whites, men, and self-identified Democrats, when controlling for feminist v. non-feminist humor exposure. There was no significant effect of being assigned to a feminist humor condition.

When examining the relationship between predictors, sociodemographic factors, and appreciation of feminist humor and non-feminist humor, there was not a significant relationship or large effect on appreciation when taking into account the feminist content of the humor. This regression again marks the significance of higher attitudes about gender equity, more liberal ideology, non-white, and men having significant appreciation for humor.

**H3. The effect of ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity on appreciation of feminist humor are moderated by humor type. Liberals, women, and those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity will be more appreciative of hyperbolic feminist humor than conservatives, while we shouldn't find a relationship between ideology and appreciation in the ironic condition.**

First, to understand potential main effects of humor type on appreciation, we ran a model (Table 4) to test these main effects, including dummy variables for the ironic and control conditions, leaving out the hyperbolic condition as the reference group. When comparing the effects of both the ironic condition and the control against the hyperbolic condition, and while controlling for socio-demographic variables, men, non-whites, liberal participants, and those with greater gender equity beliefs appreciated jokes more than women, whites, conservatives, and those with lower gender equity beliefs (Table 4). However, there were no significant effects of humor structure (irony or control versus hyperbole) on appreciation.

*Ideology and humor type.* First, the dataset was filtered to look only within the ironic condition. Here, appreciation and ideology were significantly correlated ( $r = -.367, p < .003$ ). The negative correlation indicates that liberals were more likely to have higher rates of appreciation than conservatives. In the hyperbolic condition, there was also a significant relationship between ideology and appreciation, in the same direction ( $r = -.377, p < .003$ ). For a statistical test to assess how ideology shaped humor appreciation as a function of humor type (ironic v. hyperbolic) in the face of multiple control variables, interaction terms were calculated. To do that, the dummy variable for the ironic condition was multiplied by ideology and was added to the regression model along with the main effects of ideology and experimental condition. The

interaction of ideology and the ironic condition was not significant ( $p = .842$ ), indicating that liberals and conservatives were not differentially appreciative of the humor as a function of condition. (In the interest of space, the model results are not presented in table form.)

*Gender and humor type.* To understand how the relationship between gender and appreciation may have varied as a function of humor type, first, independent samples t-tests were used to explore mean humor appreciation across men and women within each humor type (ironic then hyperbolic). Looking within only the ironic condition, women ( $M=3.12$ ,  $SD=.108$ ) did not report significantly higher levels of appreciation than men ( $M=3.39$ ,  $SD=.88$ ),  $t(63)=0.056$ ,  $p=.295$ . Similarly in strictly the hyperbolic condition, there was also no significant relationship between women ( $M=3.233$ ,  $SD=.831$ ), men ( $M=3.38$ ,  $SD=.95$ ), in their appreciation of the humor,  $t(59)=-.634$ ,  $p=.529$ .

For a statistical test comparing the effects of gender on appreciation across the humor structures, an interaction term was calculated by creating a dummy variable for the ironic condition multiplied by gender, which was then added to the regression model that included main effects and experimental condition. The interaction of gender and the experimental condition was not significant ( $p = .264$ ), indicating that men and women were not differentially appreciative of the humor as a function of condition. (In the interest of space, the model results are not presented in table form.)

*Attitudes about gender equity and humor type.* Understanding how attitudes about gender equity, appreciation, and humor structure intersect, first correlations were run within condition to see if there was an established relationship. When examining the ironic condition, a correlation test showed a significant relationship

between gender equity beliefs and appreciation ( $r=.363, p<.01$ ), while, contrary to expectations, the hyperbolic condition did not feature any significant relationship ( $r=.106, p=.415$ ). Again, a dummy variable was created which was the product of the ironic condition and attitudes about gender equity. When added to the regression, the interaction of gender equity beliefs and the experimental condition was not significant ( $p = .536$ ), indicating that people with different attitudes about gender equity were not differentially appreciative of the humor as a function of condition. (In the interest of space, the model results are not presented in table form.)

### **Comprehension**

Tests of comprehension were run to examine how participants understood two aspects of each stimulus: the meaning of the overall segment's intended message, as well as the meaning of one specific joke drawn from the clip. A score was created for each participant by subtracting "how accurate" participants rated the *incorrect* interpretation of the segment/joke from their rating of "how accurate" they rated the *correct* interpretation of the segment/joke. Hence, higher scores indicate a greater distinction between the inaccurate and accurate interpretations of the stimuli – and hence greater "comprehension accuracy."

#### **RQ1. How do ironic and hyperbolic humor differ in terms of their ability to be accurately comprehended by audience members, overall?**

A regression was run to compare comprehension accuracy of the overall segments and individual jokes with: ideology, gender, attitudes about gender equity, socio-demographic variables, and dummy variables for the ironic and control conditions compared to the hyperbolic condition. Results are shown in Table 5. Looking at the humor structure variables specifically in the regression, however,

comparing the ironic segment to the hyperbolic segment and the control segment to the hyperbolic segment, none of the coefficients were significant. Thus, humor, overall, was not selectively perceived as a function of its structure. Interestingly, though, results also show that attitudes for gender equity was a significant predictor of comprehension of jokes and segments, a finding that will be important as we explore individual differences in appreciation and comprehension across humor structures.

**H4. Comprehension of feminist humor would be greater among liberals than conservatives (a), women than men (b), and those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity than those with lower scores (c).**

When limited to only the two feminist humor conditions, there were significant correlations between political ideology and the accuracy of one's comprehension of both the overall video segment ( $r = -.354, p < .000$ ), and the specific joke to which respondents were asked to respond ( $r = -.246, p < .01$ ). The correlations operate in support of H4a, as liberals were more accurate in their comprehension than were conservatives.

An independent samples t-test comparing men and women in the accuracy of their comprehension of just the feminist segments ( $N = 127$ ) indicated that women ( $M = .889, SD = 1.78$ ) comprehended the segments more accurately than men ( $M = .279, SD = 1.7$ ),  $t(126) = 1.997, p < .05$ , consistent with H4b. When looking at how accurately people comprehended the individual jokes in the feminist segments, however, there was not a significantly different level of comprehension between women ( $M = 1.54, SD = 1.74$ ) and men ( $M = 1.132, SD = 1.891$ ),  $t(126) = 1.283, p = .551$ .

There was, however, a strong relationship between attitudes about gender equity and accuracy of humor comprehension across both overall segment ( $r=.503, p<.001$ ) and joke ( $r=.347, p<.001$ ). Here, consistent with H4c, the higher one's score on gender equity, the greater the comprehension of the overall argument made through humor.

To look at all predictors together (Table 6), the dataset was again limited to only those in the feminist humor conditions (irony and hyperbole only), and a multiple regression analysis was run with gender, ideology, and gender equity beliefs as predictors, plus race, age, and political party as controls, predicting participants' comprehension accuracy of both the segment and the individual joke. Results are illustrated in Table 6.

None of the sociodemographic predictors was significantly related with comprehension across either joke or segment, however, attitudes about gender equity was a strong predictor in both models. Thus, those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity were especially adept at understanding the meaning of the feminist humor in comparison to those with lower gender equity belief scores, consistent with H4c.

**H5: Liberals (a), women (b), and participants high in gender equity beliefs (c) will show greater comprehension of feminist humor in comparison with non-feminist humor (the control). Feminist humor would be comprehended less accurately than non-feminist humor.**

First, correlations were run to understand how our individual level characteristics correlated with comprehension accuracy within feminist humor

conditions (irony and hyperbole) and within non-feminist humor (control). In the feminist humor condition, there was a significant relationship between a more liberal ideology and the accuracy of one's understanding of both the overall video segment ( $r = -.354, p < .000$ ), and the specific joke to which respondents were asked to respond ( $r = -.246, p < .01$ ). In the control condition (which was not feminist in nature), a more liberal ideology was also significantly related to comprehension of both segment ( $r = -.301, p < .05$ ) and joke ( $r = -.324, p < .01$ ). These findings are consistent with H5a.

An independent samples t-test comparing men and women in the accuracy of their understanding of the feminist segments (irony and hyperbole only) indicated that women ( $M = .889, SD = 1.78$ ) comprehended the segments more accurately than men ( $M = .279, SD = 1.7$ ),  $t(126) = 1.997, p < .05$ . However, contradicting H5b, in the control segment comprehension, men ( $M = .4118, SD = 1.65$ ) displayed significantly lower comprehension than women ( $M = 1.42, SD = 1.77$ ),  $t(63) = -2.38, p < .05$ . When looking at how accurately people understood the individual jokes in the feminist segments, however, there was not a significantly different level of comprehension between women ( $M = 1.54, SD = 1.74$ ) and men ( $M = 1.132, SD = 1.891$ ),  $t(126) = 1.283, p = .551$ . Similarly, there was no significant difference between men ( $M = .4118, SD = 2.09$ ) and women ( $M = .968, SD = 1.43$ ) in their comprehension of the individual joke in the control ( $t(63) = -1.262, p = .212$ ).

There was a strong relationship between attitudes about gender equity and accuracy of humor comprehension across both overall segment ( $r = .503, p < .001$ ) and joke ( $r = .347, p < .00$ ) in the feminist humor conditions (ironic and hyperbolic stimuli), consistent with H5c. However, complicating H5c, the control condition, which featured non-feminist humor also showed a significant relationship between attitudes

about gender equity with comprehension of segment ( $r=.429$ ,  $p<.00$ ) and joke ( $r=.324$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

When looking at the regression (Table 7) that predicts comprehension of humor with a dummy variable denoting “feminist humor versus non” (irony and hyperbole combined versus control), attitudes about gender equity was a significant predictor of comprehension much like that of the regression that exclusively looked at comprehension of feminist humor. In this regression, however, another significant predictor was the dummy variable for feminist humor. Feminist humor, which is coded as 1 (non-feminist humor was coded as 0) was a significant predictor of comprehension. Interestingly enough, however, in the context of comprehension of the overall video segment, the control was better comprehended than the ironic/hyperbolic clips, but in the context of the individual joke, the feminist condition was better understood. This might have more to do with the subtleties inherent in the individual joke stimuli and segments, which will be discussed in both the discussion and in the context of the overall limitations of the project.

**H6. The effects of ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity on comprehension of feminist humor are moderated by humor type. Liberals (a), women (b), and those with higher scores of attitudes about gender equity (AAGE) (c) will have higher rates of accuracy of comprehension of ironic feminist humor than conservatives, men, and those with lower scores of attitudes about gender equity, while we shouldn't find a relationship between these predictors and understanding in the hyperbolic condition.**

At its core, H6 is about the likely selective perception of the meaning of ironic humor. Due to its ambiguous nature, irony is expected to be more open to

interpretation by the audience than is hyperbole. Due to the feminist nature of the experimental stimuli, the ironic feminist humor is likely to be best understood by liberals, women, and those high in AAGE (among whom pre-existing beliefs support the argument made in the humor), and least understood by conservatives, men, and those low in AAGE (among whom pre-existing beliefs contradict the actual argument made in the humor).

To explore these interactions between individual level characteristics and humor structure, first data were limited to just the ironic condition. Looking at H6a, ideology and comprehension accuracy were significantly correlated when looking at comprehension of the overall segment ( $r = -.414, p < .001$ ) but not of the individual jokes ( $r = -.152, p = .228$ ). When limited to just the hyperbolic condition, ideology was significantly correlated with comprehension accuracy both in the context of overall segments ( $r = -.284, p < .05$ ), and individual joke ( $r = -.322, p < .05$ ).

Expanding the analyses to include the full sample, a regression was run, predicting comprehension accuracy in the context of the full video segment and again in the context of the individual joke. To capture differential effects of humor type on comprehension as a function of ideology, gender, or gender equity beliefs, interaction terms were created and added to the model as predictors along with the main effects of the variables involved. Predicting comprehension of the full segment, the interaction of ideology and ironic condition was not significant ( $p = .483$ ), indicating that liberals and conservatives did not selectively perceive the meaning of the segment as a function of condition. Predicting accuracy of comprehension of the joke, the interaction of ideology and ironic condition was not significant ( $p = .125$ ) indicating that liberals and conservatives did not selectively perceive the meaning of the joke as a

function of condition. (These full models are not shown in the paper due to considerations of space).

Turning to H6b, an independent samples t-test comparing men and women's comprehension accuracy in strictly the ironic segment showed that women ( $M=.887$ ,  $SD=1.794$ ) were not significantly more likely to understand the ironic segment than men ( $M=.29$ ,  $SD=1.93$ ),  $t(64)=1.29$ ,  $p=.2$ . The hyperbolic segment also did not show any significant differences ( $t(59)=1.511$ ,  $p=.16$ ) between women ( $M=.9167$ ,  $SD=1.815$ ) and men ( $M=.2703$ ,  $SD=1.502$ ).

Expanding the analyses to include the full sample once again, a regression was run, predicting comprehension accuracy in the context of the full segment and again in the context of the individual joke. In the context of full video segment comprehension, the interaction of gender and ironic condition was not significant ( $p=.563$ ), indicating that men and women did not selectively perceive the meaning of the segment as a function of condition. In the context of the individual joke, the interaction of gender and ironic condition was not significant ( $p=.885$ ), indicating that men and women did not selectively perceive the meaning of the joke as a function of condition.

In strictly the ironic condition there is a significant relationship between positive attitudes about gender equity and comprehension of the ironic segment ( $r=.579$ ,  $p<.000$ ). There is also a strong relationship between higher scored attitudes about gender equity and the comprehension accuracy in the context of the hyperbolic segment ( $r=.418$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Again, a regression was run on the full sample, predicting comprehension accuracy in the context of the full segment and again in the context of the individual joke. The interaction of beliefs about gender equity and ironic condition

was approaching significance ( $p = .089$ ), supporting the notion that people with varying beliefs about gender equity had different levels of comprehension accuracy compared to the hyperbolic condition. In the context of the individual joke, the interaction of attitudes about gender equity and ironic condition was approaching significance ( $p = .158$ ), indicating that men and women did not significantly differ in their perceived meaning of the joke as a function of condition, though it too was approaching significance.

To better understand the meaning of the marginally significant interaction of AAGE and ironic condition predicting segment comprehension accuracy, we calculated predicted values of Y (comprehension accuracy) at various levels of AAGE, among those in the ironic, hyperbolic, and control condition. These predicted values were based on the coefficients from the regression analysis that explored segment comprehension accuracy with AAGE, condition, and the interaction of those two, while controlling for gender, ideology, party, age, and race. In calculated predicted values of comprehension accuracy, all variables were placed at their mean and sample values of AAGE and experimental condition were plugged in to the model to generate the graphic depiction shown in Figure 1.

*n predicting segment comprehension accuracy.*

According to Figure 1, consistent with the hypothesis, in the ironic condition, those highest in attitudes towards gender equity showed the highest comprehension accuracy. Those lowest in attitudes towards gender equity showed the lowest comprehension accuracy. These results support a model in which irony facilitates comprehension among those who share a belief system and knowledge base consistent with the point of view of the comic. But those lacking that belief system and

knowledge base are at a disadvantage in the face of irony, and, in fact, may be inclined to take away the *opposite* meaning from the humorous stimuli. This is evidenced by the strong negative predicted values of comprehension accuracy among those low in AAGE in the ironic condition. These negative values indicate that these participants thought the *inaccurate* reading of the segment was *more* accurate than the actual (accurate) meaning of the segment. So, in the context of the ironic clip criticizing Kelly Anne Conway, those low in AAGE believed that Samantha Bee was “criticizing Fox News for forcing feminist principles upon her audience” *more* than she was “...commenting on how Fox News generally criticizes liberals for their use of “identity politics,” such as feminism.” This finding is direct evidence of selective perception in the face of ironic humor. Hyperbole and the control clip were similarly comprehended, also predicted by the hypothesis, as the explicit, exaggerated nature of hyperbole did not lend itself to being selectively perceived in the same way that irony did.

### **Post-hoc data visualizations**

To visualize the many relationships explored here, means comparison were run by condition, and graphs were created in excel. Ideology was broken up into 3 categories based on how participants described themselves: liberal, moderate, and conservative. Gender was divided up between men and women. Attitudes about Gender Equity were averaged and divided into two categories: those below the average (also known as Low AAGE) those above the average (also known as High AAGE). Means comparisons (Tables 8 & 9) were then run within each experimental condition to better comprehend some of the interactions between the predicting

variables (gender, ideology, and attitudes about gender equity) and comprehension of both segment and joke. One way ANOVAs were run between condition and measurement to see if any of them achieved significance.

Graphs were created to better illustrate the difference in the humor comprehension across condition and across gender, ideology and attitudes about gender. In the means comparison graph shown below (Figures 2 and 3), conservatives have a lower rate of comprehension in terms of segment regardless of condition, however, the difference is most notable in the hyperbolic condition, contrary to our hypothesis, as it was suspected they would selectively perceive the humor. In terms of comprehension of overall segment, conservatives understood the control condition the best out of the three conditions, but the lowest comprehension of the joke from that same condition.

There were some interesting gender differences across condition as well (Figures 4 and 5), although these were only statistically significant in the context of the control condition. While the lower rates of comprehension among men in the other conditions may not be a significant finding, it is still noteworthy as it supports the hypothesis.

Finally when examining the most notable predictor thus far in the data, attitudes about gender equity, those with lower scores of attitudes about gender equity did not comprehend the feminist humor. They most notably ( $p < .001$ ) did not comprehend the ironic condition (the relationship illustrated with the regression results in Figure 1), which indicates that they may have selectively perceived the segment itself in order to align with their own belief systems. Given the marginally significant interaction of AAGE and the ironic condition illustrated in Figure 6, the unique

relationship between AAGE and comprehension in the ironic condition merits a follow-up examination.

## **Chapter 6**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Discussion**

##### *Appreciation*

H1 tested basic relationships and main effects when exclusively looking at feminist humor conditions (the ironic condition and the hyperbolic condition) and was proven partially correct. A liberal ideology and high attitudes about gender equity had strong relationships with appreciation for feminist political humor, which supported H1. Going against H1's prediction, however, gender did not have a significant relationship with appreciation of feminist humor. When those hypothesized predictors were added along with socio-demographic factors in predicting feminist humor appreciation, those who were more liberal, those who were men, those who were non-white were more likely to have higher rates of appreciation. While the higher rates of appreciation of feminist humor among liberals and non-whites are in alignment with H1, the fact that men are more appreciative of feminist humor contradicted H1. Feminist humor can often take the perspective of alienating men and making them the 'other'.

Perhaps the feminist humor stimuli used in the experiment, deconstructed female political figures and pointed out how they did not uphold feminist ideals in such a way that reduced the "othering" of male viewers. This may account for the gender disparity in appreciation; women may not have liked seeing women in power being attacked even though they don't uphold feminist policies, and men may not have

been bothered by the feminist nature of the humor since women were being derided in the clips.

H2a-c attempted to differentiate whether or not having feminist humor in general, regardless of humor structure, was appreciated differently across ideology (a), gender(b), and attitudes about gender equity(c). When examining appreciation as a function of gender, appreciation, and feminist/non-feminist humor, there were no significant correlations, which contradicts H2. However, results indicated that women were significantly *more* appreciative of non-feminist humor than their male counterparts (perhaps for the reasons explored above), which is not what H2 anticipated.

Similarly there was a significant relationship between attitudes about gender equity and of appreciation feminist humor, which supported H2, however, there was an even stronger relationship between attitudes about gender equity and non-feminist humor. A regression that added in the main effects, sociodemographic factors, and whether the humor was feminist or not indicated that humor appreciation was significantly higher among those with positive beliefs about gender equity (lending some support for H2c), among non-whites, men, and self-identified Democrats, when controlling for feminist v. non-feminist humor exposure. There was no significant effect of being assigned to a feminist humor condition on appreciation. These findings may indicate that feminist humor may not be as abrasive or unappreciated as was originally anticipated. However, this may also be the result of the control condition, which, while non-feminist in nature, was delivered by a woman and was liberal in its content. The control clip was also mocking a male Republican president, which may have a similar effect to that of feminist content.

H3 attempted to examine humor appreciation as a function of the 3 hypothesized predictors of ideology (a), gender (b), and attitudes about feminism (c). Hypotheses predicted that liberals, women, and those with higher attitudes about gender equity would have significantly higher rates of appreciation in the hyperbolic condition and that the ironic condition wouldn't have significant relationships. When looking at main effects, liberals had significant relationships with appreciation in both the ironic and hyperbolic condition, although slightly higher with the hyperbolic condition, supporting H3a. Gender did not have a direct significant effect on appreciation, which did not support H3b. Attitudes about gender equity, however, did have a significant relationship, such that those with more positive attitudes about gender equity were more appreciative in the context of the ironic clip, which supported H3c. Coefficients for ironic and control condition indicate that appreciation was not significantly different in either of those conditions compared to the hyperbolic condition. Again, like the other appreciation regressions, men, non-white participants, more liberal participants, and those with more positive attitudes about gender equity were all significantly more likely to have higher appreciation for the humor, which partially supported H3.

Thus, in terms of feminist humor and humor structure, there was no differential appreciation across the two humor structures of irony and hyperbole. This could be because the segments were so similar in content – as they were both deconstructing the anti-feminist views of prominent Republican female figures. Also, the jokes featured a lot of exposition beyond that of strictly the jokes themselves, so that build up and context may have also contributed to appreciation.

### *Comprehension*

H4 was partially supported. When strictly examining feminist humor, ideology (a) and attitudes about gender equity (c) were significant predictors of comprehension accuracy of both the overall clip and of the sample joke, which supported H4a and c. Gender, however, had a significant relationship with comprehension accuracy while looking at the segment overall, but not the jokes from the segments themselves, which was not predicted by H4b. When added to a regression, however, the only significant predictor of comprehension accuracy in the context of feminist humor was attitudes about gender equity, consistent with H4. Further, the relationship is quite strong even when accounting for other factors that could contribute towards attitude about gender equity such as gender, ideology, and race. This illustrates that the accuracy of one's comprehension of feminist humor is contingent on holding beliefs about gender equity. It also suggests that the bivariate relationships between comprehension and ideology or comprehension and gender, might be driven by the strong relationship between comprehension and AAGE. Without those gender equity beliefs, one may not possess the requisite conceptual knowledge and understanding to comprehend such jokes.

When comparing these measures to that of the control condition, the control condition was less accurately comprehended in comparison to that of the feminist humor conditions, which does not support the expectations set by H5. This finding was echoed in the results of a regression that added a dummy variable for feminist humor as a predictor along with other socio-demographic factors. In the segment comprehension, the non-feminist humor (control) was better understood, which supported H5, however in the joke comprehension, feminist jokes were better

comprehended after controlling for the sociodemographic variables, which does not support H5. This is likely because the overall message of the control segment was somewhat obvious whereas the feminist conditions might be making a more sophisticated and complex argument.

When understanding the dimension of humor structure, various tests indicated that there were no significant effects on comprehension as a function of ironic or hyperbolic humor (RQ1). There were also few significant interactions when exploring potential moderators of humor structure on comprehension accuracy. Ideology and gender did not significantly moderate the effects of humor structure on comprehension, contradicting H6a and H6b. Attitudes about gender equity, however, did moderate the effects of humor structure on comprehension across both humor structures, irony and hyperbole, offering some support to H6c. Interestingly, both irony and hyperbole were best understood by those high in AAGE. This is understandable as both stimuli were feminist in nature and thus, those with high scores of attitudes about gender equity were able to comprehend the content and intention behind that humor. We hypothesized that due to hyperbole's explicitness, it would be comprehended equally across various types of audience members. But, contrary to this assumption, those higher in AAGE showed greater comprehension of hyperbole when looking just within that condition. It's possible that in order to correctly comprehend feminist humor (regardless of the complexity of its underlying structure), you may need baseline feminist beliefs.

While hyperbole alone was best understood by those higher in AAGE, the marginally significant interaction of AAGE X experimental condition shows that the greatest effects on comprehension occurred in the context of the ironic condition. This

was illustrated in Figure 1, which predicted comprehension accuracy dependent upon attitudes about gender equity contingent upon humor structure, including interaction terms between condition and attitudes about gender equity. This figure illustrates that ironic feminist humor, in particular, was selectively perceived based on prior beliefs about gender equity.

## **Chapter 7**

### **LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study suffered from several key limitations. While the overall sample size was large ( $n=192$ ), because each participant was only exposed towards one of three conditions, the sample size for each condition was between  $n=63$  and  $n=65$ . Further, the sample was only college aged students at a mid-Atlantic university who tend to be homogenous across age, race, and education level. A representative sample would be much more desirable and potentially yield more generalizable results.

This project attempted to study the impact that certain factors had on appreciation of a certain type of humor. Due to the scope and timeliness of this thesis, creating custom produced stimuli specifically for this project was not possible, however, that would have been beneficial for a variety of reasons. It would have allowed for researchers to control for the clips to feature less exposition, make the stimuli more similar between humor structures, and to develop the jokes to be funnier and more explicit examples of irony and hyperbole.

Secondhand stimuli was utilized for this research in the form of edited clips from Full Frontal with Samantha Bee. Researchers found existing examples of clips that were feminist in nature, similar in topic matter, and each exclusively featured one of the humor structures. While pilot test verified that the jokes and segments were each in alignment with one of the humor structures, custom jokes would have allowed for the structures to be more explicit and for the content to be funnier and more similar.

As stated in the discussion, the two feminist clips utilized as stimuli both criticized two leading Republican women leaders, which likely greatly affected the results. First, instead of focusing on a feminist issue, it focused on partisan leaders, which may have been the reason that ideology was such a large predictor. More so, the clips were criticizing two women for their failure to be good feminists. This may explain why the humor was more appreciated by men than women, a finding that contradicted the hypothesis. Future research should utilize feminist humor that focuses on a specifically feminist issue as opposed to deconstructing both partisan and female leaders.

There were also limitations stemming from the use of Full Frontal with Samantha Bee as a stimulus. First, Bee is a relatively well known feminist figure; the fact that she is the one delivering the humor may have affected participants' rating of the humor or their overall comprehension. Additionally, she is a woman delivering a feminist message - this may have potentially affected how participants understood the humor and how funny they found it, as past research has indicated that people tend to find women less humorous than men (Hooper et. al, 2016). Future research may feature how appreciated a joke is when it is delivered by a woman in comparison to the same message delivered by a man.

Based on the results, the control clip chosen may have affected the research in terms of appreciation and comprehension. An effort was made to choose a non-feminist topic (Brexit) and featured both humor structures - hyperbole and irony. The clip, however, was especially humorous which may give the impression that the control clip was more humorous because it was not-feminist. Again, custom stimuli could control for these content differences in a way that could allow for feminist and

non-feminist humor that is similar in humorousness and topic to be compared in an experimental context.

As always with some social science research, there is the concept of social desirability in terms of answering questions, such as the measure for attitude about gender equity, where participants may have wanted to have more socially acceptable answers about their beliefs of gender norms. This was also likely affected by the fact that participants watched the clip before they were asked about their attitudes about gender equity. In future research it would be preferable to collect information about attitudes about gender equity separately (by time or by adding more clips). Future researchers should consider taking a more longitudinal approach to be able to see how beliefs at time 1 shape perceptions of content viewed at time 2.

As with any study where the participants are given interpretations and asked to rate them, there are limitations to the comprehension items as well. Participants were asked to rate two given interpretations of the stimuli based on joke structure. Each given interpretation featured the literal and the inverted interpretation of the joke. These interpretations – crafted and provided by the researchers - may not capture the many nuanced interpretations that participants may have had.

## **Chapter 8**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

This research sought to understand the relationship between humor structure, characteristics that relate to feminist beliefs (ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity), and the appreciation and comprehension of feminist political satire. Although several of the main hypotheses were not supported by the data, some interesting findings emerged. Individual characteristics, such as ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity as well as socio-demographic factors (race, party affiliation, etc.) were predictors of who would appreciate feminist political satire: namely men, non-whites, liberals, and those with the most supportive beliefs about gender equity.

Perhaps the most notable relationship was between that of comprehension of feminist humor and attitudes about gender equity. Results indicate when examining feminist humor and non-feminist humor, having a higher score of attitudes about gender equity (and therefore having feminist beliefs) is a strong predictor of accurate comprehension of feminist humor. Further, when attempting to examine if the ironic condition was selectively perceived, again attitudes about gender equity shaped how participants comprehended the jokes; not only did those who had higher scores of attitudes about gender equity comprehend the humor more accurately, those with lower scores comprehended the humor more inaccurately, which implies that selective perception did take place. The ironic humor was perceived by the participants in alignment with their preconceived beliefs about gender equity. When

the same participants who have lower scores on attitudes about gender equity also have lower scores of feminist humor comprehension, this means that they are failing to invert the meaning of the ironic humor and are instead taking away the opposite meaning from the joke.

Collectively this implies that feminist beliefs are necessary as a primer or background towards not just appreciating – but *understanding* - feminist humor at all. Regardless of gender and other socio-demographic variables, attitudes about gender equity were the strongest driver of both appreciation and comprehension of feminist humor. This does not necessarily imply that feminist concepts are themselves complex, but that, in the absence of the requisite belief system, ambiguous humorous takes addressing feminist issues are unlikely to be understood. In a media environment in which users incidentally encounter messages that run counter to their own views, it is crucial that creatives and humorists understand the many ways in which their content is being interpreted by audiences, often in ways that undermine the larger points they are looking to make.

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If you want to number your bibliographic entries, change the style of the items to *Bib Entry - numbered*.

## **Appendix A**

### **STIMULI**

#### **Ironic Stimulus**

The ironic clip that will be used as a stimulus in this experiment is a clip from the “January 18th, 2017” Episode, entitled “The Great Feminists in Feminism Herstory Hall of Lady Fame”. In the clip Bee uses irony to convey her dissatisfaction with Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to President Trump. She begins with “And tonight we want to celebrate a truly special female woman: Donald Trump’s omnipresent spokescobra, Kellyanne Conway.” They then show clips of Fox News recognizing Ms. Conway as the ‘first woman to run a successful presidential campaign. Bee responds to these clips by saying “Jesus Fox, stop shoving your feminist identity politics down America’s throats.” This joke is carefully constructed. Bee is criticizing Fox in an ironic way. Contextually, one has to have the knowledge that Fox News is a known critic of feminist principles. Bee does not mean to criticize Fox for uplifting a woman, but instead intends to show the hypocrisy in their stance by accusing them of the same “identity politics” crime of which Fox often accuses mainstream media outlets. The joke is even more complex as it not only displays a politically liberal message by highlighting hypocrisy within a conservative news organization, but it also advocates for feminism as well. As with irony, there is a cognitive switch in interpretation and valence that must occur in order for the joke to be successful. If the switch in meaning were successful here, the joke would also convey a feminist concept: the idea that the

common criticism that by empowering women, you're shoving 'identity politics' in places where they shouldn't be is a ludicrous criticism of feminism. Potentially if a viewer were to misinterpret the use of irony in this segment, they might find that Bee is agreeing with the notion that Fox News is 'shoving' feminist politics down viewers' throats. If one lacks the context that Fox News is typically somewhat critical of feminist principles and if they also lack the knowledge that Bee herself identifies as a feminist, they may think her joke is actually misandrist. Without these contexts, one might gain the impression that Fox News is the feminist organization here and Samantha Bee is a conservative critic.

### **Hyperbolic Stimulus**

The hyperbolic stimulus for this experiment also features an induction to the 'Feminism Herstory Hall of Fame', this time in the case of Ivanka Trump. There are multiple instances throughout the clip where Bee utilizes hyperbolic humor and exaggeration to deconstruct Ivanka as a feminist and discuss her role in the White House. At the start of the segment, Bee criticizes how some people consider Ivanka to be an advocate for the environment. Following a clip about how Ivanka met with Leonardo DiCaprio/advocates for environment, Bee says "Meeting with Leonardo DiCaprio is not a sign that you care about climate change. It's a sign that you were a teenager in the 90s...She's not going to convince her dad climate change isn't a Chinese hoax. Anyone with a dad knows they have invincible old man opinion strength. I can't change my dad's mind about chemtrails for longer than 8 hours." Bee here is straightforward in her criticism; her humor structure is simple in that she's explicitly saying that what Ivanka Trump does is not noteworthy and doesn't deserve

commendation. This is in contrast to the aforementioned Kellyanne Conway clip in which Bee ironically pretends to laud Conway for her 'feminism'.

Bee continues her criticism of Ivanka Trump by attacking her feminism, or lack thereof. After a clip about how people are writing to Ivanka and how people feel as though she's advocating for liberal ideals in the White House: "Stop it, democrats. She's not a wailing wall for you to desperately stuff your prayer notes into. Look, I get it? People are comforted by the thought of a progressive feminist in the White House. To which I say - if you wanted that, you should have voted for it. The failing New York Times even published an article fantasizing that Ivanka might save federal arts funding because she took ballet lessons when she was 8. Which is like hoping she'll save blue collar jobs because of her brief stint as a jackhammer operator. Hey working class men, immigrants aren't taking your jobs, rich white ladies are." Again, the humor here is straightforward. Bee is aggrandizing the image of Ivanka and a feminism and pointing out fallacies in her construction as a feminist by using exaggeration, such as the aforementioned jackhammer operator joke; it's obvious that Bee is intending to be critical of Ivanka Trump here - the humor is so grandiose that it is unlikely to be misinterpreted.

## **Appendix B**

### **SEX ROLE ATTITUDINAL INVENTORY**

Sex Role Attitudinal Inventory (Renzetti, 1987)

#### **Statements indicating traditional attitudes toward gender roles**

1. For a woman, marriage should be more important than a career.
2. Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most women.
5. For a woman to be truly happy, she needs to have a man in her life.
6. If a husband and wife each have an equally good career opportunity, but in different cities, the husband should take the job and the wife should follow.
10. A wife should willingly take her husband's name at marriage.
11. There are some jobs and professions that are more suitable for men than for women.
12. Women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men.
16. For a woman in college, popularity is more important than grade point average.
17. Career women tend to be masculine and domineering.

#### **Statements indicating feminist attitudes toward gender roles**

4. If there is a military draft, both men and women should be included in it.
14. There should be no laws preventing a woman from having an abortion if she wants one.
19. A woman should not let bearing and rearing children stand in the way of a career if

she

wants it.

23. A woman can live a full and happy life without marrying.

24. When you get right down to it, women are an oppressed group and men are the oppressors.

**Statements indicating awareness of gender inequality**

7. If women want to get ahead, there is little to stop them.

8. Many women who do the same work as their male colleagues earn substantially less money.

13. Things are much easier for girls growing up today than they were for girls growing up 10 years ago.

22. Men tend to discriminate against women in hiring, firing, and promotion.

**Statements indicating attitudes toward the women's movement**

3. Women are right to be unhappy about their role in American society, but wrong in the way they are protesting.

9. In general, I am sympathetic with the efforts of women's liberation groups.

15. I consider myself to be a feminist.

18. Many of those in women's rights organizations today seem to be unhappy misfits.

20. The leaders of the women's liberation movement are trying to turn women into men and that won't work.

21. Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and Mothers.

## **Appendix C**

### **FULL FRONTAL WITH SAMANTHA BEE CLIPS REFERENCED IN ANALYSIS**

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[Full Frontal with Samantha Bee]. (2017, November 1). Close the Boyfriend Loophole. [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBuKbe40uWM>

## **Appendix D**

### **SURVEY AND STIMULI**

#### **Disclaimer**

For this study, you will be asked to answer a series of survey questions about humor and entertainment clips. Please answer all to the best of your ability, being as honest as possible. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Make sure you have headphones or functioning speakers.

Your responses are confidential. We will be obtaining your name at the end of the survey to be able to allocate extra credit points. However, once points are allocated, individual names will be stripped from the dataset.

By clicking on this button I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older and that I am willing to participate in this research. I understand that I am under no obligation to participate in this research if I do not want to, and that I can quit the research at any time.

#### **Stimuli**

*Participants will be shown one of the following three stimuli at random: Ironic, Hyperbolic, and Control. After each of the stimuli and before comprehension questions, participants were also given the following measure for humor appreciation:*

Please indicate how well you think each word or phrase describes the clip you just watched:

	Extremely well (1)	Very well (2)	Moderately well (3)	Slightly well (4)	Not well at all (5)
Funny					
Entertaining					
Offensive					
Enjoyable					
Interesting					
Smart					

**What words or phrases came to mind watching this clip?**

**1: Ironic Stimulus and Comprehension Questions:**

The ironic stimulus can be found here: <https://youtu.be/RtQEvlakKY>

Which do you think most closely represents the overall message of this video clip?

How well do each of the following represent the overall message of this video clip?

Despite her controversy, Kellyanne Conway advocates for women's rights in her own way and should be commended for it. (1)

Although Kellyanne Conway may be presented as an advocate for women's rights, her politics are actually harmful to women. (2)

Other, please specify (3)

---

During the clip, Samantha Bee said “Jesus Fox, stop shoving your feminist identity politics down America’s throats.” Which of the following comes closest to what Bee meant in this statement?

Samantha Bee is criticizing Fox News for forcing feminist principles upon their audience. (1)

Samantha Bee is commenting on how Fox News generally criticizes liberals for their use of "identity politics," such as feminism. (2)

Other, please specify (3)

---

## **2: Hyperbolic Stimulus and Comprehension Questions:**

The hyperbolic stimulus can be found here: <https://youtu.be/a1DfT7iagKs>

Which do you think most closely represents the overall message of this video clip?

Despite her controversy, Ivanka Trump advocates for women's rights in her own way and should be commended for it. (1)

Although Ivanka Trump may be presented as an advocate for women's rights, her politics are actually harmful to women. (2)

Other, please specify (3)

---

During the clip, Samantha Bee said "The failing New York Times even published an article fantasizing that Ivanka might save federal arts funding because she took ballet lessons when she was 8. Which is like hoping she'll save blue collar jobs because of her brief stint as a jackhammer operator." What do you think comes closest to what she meant?

Ivanka Trump will likely advocate for more arts funding and create positive change based on her past experiences. (1)

Ivanka Trump's past ballet experience does not mean she will advocate for more arts funding. (2)

Other, please specify (3)

---

### **3: Control Stimulus and Comprehension Questions:**

The control clip can be found here: <https://youtu.be/7zvNu3qgjno>

Which do you think most closely represents the overall message of this video clip?

Donald Trump had an inappropriate reaction to the Brexit vote and deserves criticism for that. (1)

Donald Trump correctly advocated in favor of Brexit, and the tweets read about him were too harsh. (2)

Other, please specify (3)

In the clip, Samantha Bee stated "Ugh - I can't decide which of those loud windbags is more painful to listen to." Which do you think comes closest to what she meant?

The bagpipes playing in Scotland are generally unpleasant to hear. (1)

Donald Trump speaking is generally unpleasant to listen to. (2)

Other, please specify. (3)

---

### **Sex Role Attitudinal Inventory (Randomized)**

Please read the following statements and indicate how you agree with them. Please select only one answer between "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Neutral", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree".

For a woman, marriage should be more important than a career.

Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most women.

For a woman to be truly happy, she needs to have a man in her life.

If a husband and wife each have an equally good career opportunity, but in different

cities, the husband should take the job and the wife should follow.

A wife should willingly take her husband's name at marriage.

There are some jobs and professions that are more suitable for men than for women.

Women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men.

For a woman in college, popularity is more important than grade point average.

Career women tend to be masculine and domineering.

If there is a military draft, both men and women should be included in it.

There should be no laws preventing a woman from having an abortion if she wants one.

A woman should not let bearing and rearing children stand in the way of a career if she wants it.

A woman can live a full and happy life without marrying.

When you get right down to it, women are an oppressed group and men are the oppressors.

If women want to get ahead, there is little to stop them.

Many women who do the same work as their male colleagues earn substantially less money.

Things are much easier for girls growing up today than they were for girls growing up 10 years ago.

Men tend to discriminate against women in hiring, firing, and promotion.

Women are right to be unhappy about their role in American society, but wrong in the way they are protesting.

In general, I am sympathetic with the efforts of women's liberation groups.

I consider myself to be a feminist.

Many of those in women's rights organizations today seem to be unhappy misfits.

The leaders of the women's liberation movement are trying to turn women into men and that won't work.

Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and Mothers.

### **Familiarity with Samantha Bee**

Prior to viewing this clip, how familiar were you with Samantha Bee, host of the comedy show "Full Frontal" on TBS and former correspondent for the Daily Show with Jon Stewart?

Extremely familiar (1)

Very familiar (2)

Moderately familiar (3)

Slightly familiar (4)

Not familiar at all (5)

Prior to viewing this clip, about how many times had you viewed Samantha Bee's program on TBS, or viewed clips from her show online:

I had never seen this show before. (1)

I had seen a few clips of this show before. (2)

I had seen many clips of this show before. (3)

Before this study, I was already a consistent viewer of the show. (4)

### **Demographics**

What is your age?

Which of the following best describes your gender identity?

Male (1)

Female (2)

Gender neutral (3)

Genderfluid (4)

Transgender (5)

Prefer not to respond (6)

What is your racial identity?

African American/Black (1)

Asian/Pacific Islander (2)

Hispanic/Latino (3)

Multiracial (4)

Native American (5)

White/Caucasian (6)

Other (7)

Prefer not to respond (8)

In politics today, do you consider yourself a:

Republican (1)

Democrat (2)

Independent (3)

Something else (4)

In general, would you describe your political views as...

Very conservative (1)

Conservative (2)

Moderate (3)

Liberal (4)

Very liberal (5)

### **Extra Credit and Conclusion**

For extra credit, please type your name and the name of your professor into the boxes below.

Thank you for your participation!

For any comments and questions, please contact Erin Drouin at [drouin@udel.edu](mailto:drouin@udel.edu)

## **Appendix E**

### **MANIPULATION CHECK MEASURE**

Thank you for your interest in our survey. It should take about 15 minutes to complete. Before completing the survey, please read the consent form information below: You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Dr. Dannagal Young from the University of Delaware's Department of Communication to understand different kinds of humor, how they are processed, and how they are appreciated. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You are being offered 2 percentage points added to your first exam for completion of this survey. **YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL QUESTIONS TO RECEIVE THESE POINTS.**

If you would like the 2 percentage points, but are NOT interested in completing a survey, you may contact me about an alternative short essay assignment.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Danna Young, [dgyoung@udel.edu](mailto:dgyoung@udel.edu) (250 Pearson Hall). If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact [hsrb-research@udel.edu](mailto:hsrb-research@udel.edu).

Your participation in this online survey indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.

Please indicate your consent by clicking on the button below:

☐ I have read the information above and understand the terms of my participation.

Before going ANY farther into the survey, you must have read and understood the rules included in the "Handy Dandy Handout" posted on sakai. These rules dictate how to determine if a joke is best categorized as irony or as exaggeration-based humor.

**REMEMBER:** The key in separating Irony from Exaggeration-based humor is in examining the attitude of the speaker towards the joke target.

**IRONY:** If the speaker is stating they approve of something, but you know they actually hate it: That is **IRONY** If the speaker is stating they disapprove of something, but you know they actually like it: That is **IRONY**

**EXAGGERATION-BASED HUMOR:** If the speaker is stating they approve of something and you can tell that they really do approve of it: That is

**EXAGGERATION.** If the speaker is stating they disapprove of something and you can tell that they really do disapprove of it: That is **EXAGGERATION.**

o I have read the rules included in the "handy dandy handout" and will use them to categorize the jokes included in this survey.

For the next section, you will be asked to read and respond to a series of THREE different video clips. For each video, you will be asked several questions. Please feel free to use the "handy dandy handout" while you respond to this survey.

Please watch the following video in its entirety

Now, thinking about the video you just viewed, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	It's hard to
say	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	

This video is a good example of ironic humor

This video is a good example of exaggeration-based humor

Thinking about the video you just watched, please indicate how well the following terms and phrases describe your feelings.

The video was...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	It's hard to
say	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	

Funny

Interesting

Boring

Confusing

Understandable

Offensive

Enjoyable

Challenging

What do you think is the MAIN argument being made in this video?

How closely do you think each of these statements accurately represents the overall message of the clip?

Very accurately      Somewhat accurately      Neither accurately nor inaccurately      Not very accurately      Not accurately at all

Despite her controversy, Ivanka Trump advocates for women's rights in her own way and should be commended for it.

Although Ivanka Trump may be presented as an advocate for women's rights, her politics are actually harmful to women.

End of Block: Exaggerated

Start of Block: ironic

Please watch the following video in its entirety

Now, thinking about the video you just watched, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	It's hard to
say	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	

This video is a good example of ironic humor

This video is a good example of exaggeration-based humor

Thinking about the video you just watched, please indicate how well the following terms and phrases describe your feelings.

The video was...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	It's hard to
say	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	

Funny

Interesting

Boring

Confusing

Understandable

Offensive

Enjoyable

Challenging

What do you think is the MAIN argument being made in this video?

How closely do you think each of these statements accurately represents the overall message of the clip?

Very accurately      Somewhat accurately    Neither accurately nor inaccurately    Not  
very accurately      Not accurately at all

Despite her controversy, Kellyanne Conway advocates for women's rights in her own way and should be commended for it.

Although Kellyanne Conway may be presented as an advocate for women's rights, her politics are actually harmful to women.

Please watch the following video in its entirety.

Now, thinking about the video you just watched, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Strongly Disagree    Disagree      Somewhat Disagree    It's hard to  
say    Somewhat agree      Agree    Strongly Agree

This video is a good example of ironic humor.

This video is a good example of exaggeration-based humor

Thinking about the video you just watched, please indicate how well the following terms and phrases describe your feelings.

The video was...

Strongly Disagree    Disagree      Somewhat Disagree    It's hard to say

Somewhat Agree      Agree    Strongly Agree

Funny

Interesting

Boring

Confusing

Understandable

Offensive

Enjoyable

Challenging

What do you think is the MAIN argument being made in this video?

How closely do you think each of these statements accurately represents the overall message of the clip?

Very accurately      Somewhat accurately      Neither accurately nor inaccurately      Not very accurately      Not accurately at all

Donald Trump had an inappropriate reaction to the Brexit vote and deserves criticism for that.

Donald Trump correctly advocated in favor of Brexit, and the tweets read about him were too harsh.

For this last section, we would like to know a bit about you.

Generally speaking, how INTERESTED are you in politics and public affairs?

Extremely interested

Somewhat interested

Not very interested

Not at all interested

Which of the following best describes your political party affiliation?

Strong Democrat

Democrat

Leaning Democratic

Independent

Leaning Republican

Republican

Strong Republican

Which of the following best describes your political ideology?

Very Liberal

Liberal

Somewhat Liberal

Moderate

Somewhat Conservative

Conservative

Very Conservative

In order to receive extra credit on Exam 1 for completion of this survey, you MUST provide your first and last name.

Indicate your FIRST and LAST NAME in the space below

---

## Appendix F

### IRB EXEMPTION LETTER



RESEARCH OFFICE

210 Halliher Hall  
University of Delaware  
Newark, Delaware 19716-1551  
Ph: 302/831-2136  
Fax: 302/831-2828

DATE: February 28, 2018

TO: Erin Drouin  
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [1168079-2] Differential Appreciation and Interpretation of Feminist Political Satire in the case of Full Frontal with Samantha Bee

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS  
DECISION DATE: February 28, 2018

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Please remember to notify us if you make any substantial changes to the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Maria Palazuelos at (302) 831-8619 or mariapj@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

## Appendix G

### TABLES

*Table 1: Randomization Check: Means Comparison of Main Variables across Conditions with One-Way ANOVA*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Ideology</i>			<i>Gender</i>			<i>Attitudes About Gender Equity</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Ironic</i>	4.20	1.83	.156	.48	.503	.358	3.5048	.496	.305
<i>Hyperbolic</i>	3.79	1.593	.156	.61	.493	.358	3.4908	.5167	.305
<i>Control</i>	4.36	1.665	.156	.63	.845	.358	3.3750	.5367	.305

*Table 2: Regression Testing Main Effects on Appreciation of Feminist Humor (irony and hyperbole only) as a function of gender, ideology, and gender equity N = 127.*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>
<i>(Constant)</i>	2.770	1.748	
<i>Male</i>	.545**	.168	.287
<i>White</i>	-.459*	.200	-.188
<i>Age</i>	.016	.075	.018
<i>Ideology</i>	-.18**	.068	-.285
<i>Party</i>	-.059	.051	-.114
<i>Attitudes About Gender Equity</i>	.349	.193	.185

*Adjusted R-squared*= .218

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

*Table 3: Predicting Appreciation for Feminist Humor (Irony and Hyperbole) V. Non-Feminist Humor (Control) as a function of gender, ideology, and gender equity beliefs. N = 192*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>
<i>(Constant)</i>	3.570	1.451	
<i>Male</i>	.371**	.139	.196
<i>White</i>	-.497**	.162	-.205
<i>Age</i>	-.043	.065	-.044
<i>Ideology</i>	-.132*	.056	-.204
<i>Party</i>	-.077	.044	-.132
<i>Attitudes About Gender Equity</i>	.457**	.151	.249
<i>Feminist Humor v. Non</i>	-.005	.132	-.002

*Adjusted R-squared= .219*

*\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.*

*Table 4 Predicting Appreciation of Segments Across Humor Structures (with the hyperbolic condition as comparison) as a function of gender, ideology, and gender equity (N=192)*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>
<i>(Constant)</i>	3.592	1.465	
<i>Male</i>	.377**	.140	.199
<i>White</i>	-.501**	.163	-.207
<i>Age</i>	-.045	.066	-.046
<i>Ideology</i>	-.133*	.057	-.206
<i>Party</i>	-.078	.044	-.143
<i>Attitudes About Gender Equity</i>	.457**	.152	.249
<i>Ironic Condition</i>	.06	.153	.03
<i>Control Condition</i>	.035	.154	.018

*Adjusted R-squared*= .215

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

*Table 5: Main Effects of Comprehension Accuracy Dependent on Humor Conditions a function of gender, ideology, and gender equity (n=192)*

Variable	Accurate Segment Interpretation		Accurate Joke Interpretation			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$
Constant	-1.752	2.734		.206	2.972	
Male	-.036	.262	-.01	.052	.285	.014
White	.263	.304	.058	.527	.331	.111
Age	-.111	.123	-.059	-.114	.134	-.059
Ideology	-.095	.09	-.091	-.215	.115	-.17
Party Identification	-.057	.084	-.056	.105	.09	.099
Attitudes About Gender Equity	1.396**	.278	.405	1.021**	.308	.285
Ironic Condition	.141	.286	.038	-.496	.310	-.127
Control Condition	.630*	.287	.167	-.798**	.312	-.204
<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>		.222			.154	

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

*Table 6: Main Effects of Comprehension Accuracy in Strictly the Feminist Conditions (Hyperbolic and Ironic) as a function of gender, ideology, and gender equity (n=126)*

Variable	Accurate Segment Interpretation		Accurate Joke Interpretation			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$
Constant	-3.141	3.205		.997	3.536	
Male	.127	.309	.036	.061	.341	.016
White	.398	.367	.087	.718	.405	.152
Age	-.092	.138	-.054	-.203	.152	-.114
Ideology	-.206	.125	-.172	-.205	.138	-.165
Party Identification	.089	.094	.092	-.149	.104	.148
Attitudes About Gender	1.689**	.354	.452	1.112**	.39	.305
<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	.25			.13		

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

*Table 7: Main Effects of Comprehension Accuracy Comparing Feminist Humor (Ironical and Hyperbolic) vs. Non-Feminist Humor (Control) as a function of gender, ideology, and gender equity (n=192)*

Variable	Accurate Segment Interpretation		Accurate Joke Interpretation			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$
Constant	-1.045	2.712		-.187	2.965	
Male	-.042	.26	-.012	.103	.284	.028
White	.296	.303	.065	.495	.332	.104
Age	-.102	.122	-.055	-.131	.134	-.068
Ideology	-.141	.105	-.116	-.227*	.115	-.179
Party Identification	-.047	.082	-.046	.101	.09	.095
Attitudes About Gender Equity	1.351**	.282	.392	1.019**	.309	.284
Feminist Humor	-.565*	.245	-.150	.541*	.268	.138
<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	.228			.147		

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

*Table 8: Means Comparison of Comprehension Accuracy of Segment Across Condition as a function of ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Ironic</i>			<i>Hyperbolic</i>			<i>Control</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Liberal</i>	1.57	1.853	.011	.833	1.74	.172	1.5	1.47	.364
<i>Moderate</i>	.44	1.44	.011	.682	1.21	.172	.88	1.78	.364
<i>Conservative</i>	-.048	2.11	.011	-.2	1.93	.172	.5	1.91	.364
<i>Male</i>	.29	1.94	.79	.27	1.5	.264	.41	1.66	.059
<i>Female</i>	.886	1.78	.79	.92	1.81	.264	1.41	1.76	.059
<i>High AAGE</i>	1.58	1.55	.000	1.103	1.44	.257	1.72	1.69	.05
<i>Low AAGE</i>	-.703	1.48	.000	.00	1.67	.157	.39	1.70	.05

*Table 9: Means Comparison of Comprehension Accuracy of Joke Across Condition as a function of ideology, gender, and attitudes about gender equity*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Ironic</i>			<i>Hyperbolic</i>			<i>Control</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Liberal</i>	1.437	1.71	.351	2.13	1.92	.153	1.1	1.44	.05
<i>Moderate</i>	.92	1.61	.351	1.59	1.74	.153	1.19	1.8	.05
<i>Conservative</i>	.905	1.67	.351	.8	2.24	.153	.00	1.89	.05
<i>Male</i>	1.0	1.71	.943	1.24	2.05	.656	.41	2.09	.134
<i>Female</i>	1.11	1.61	.943	2.16	1.78	.656	.967	1.42	.134
<i>High AAGE</i>	2.62	1.5	.606	2.62	1.5	.011	.651	1.81	.003
<i>Low AAGE</i>	.74	1.46	.606	.69	1.94	.011	.842	1.95	.003

## Appendix H

### FIGURES

Figure 1. Graphing the interaction of AAGE and humor condition in predicting segment comprehension accuracy.

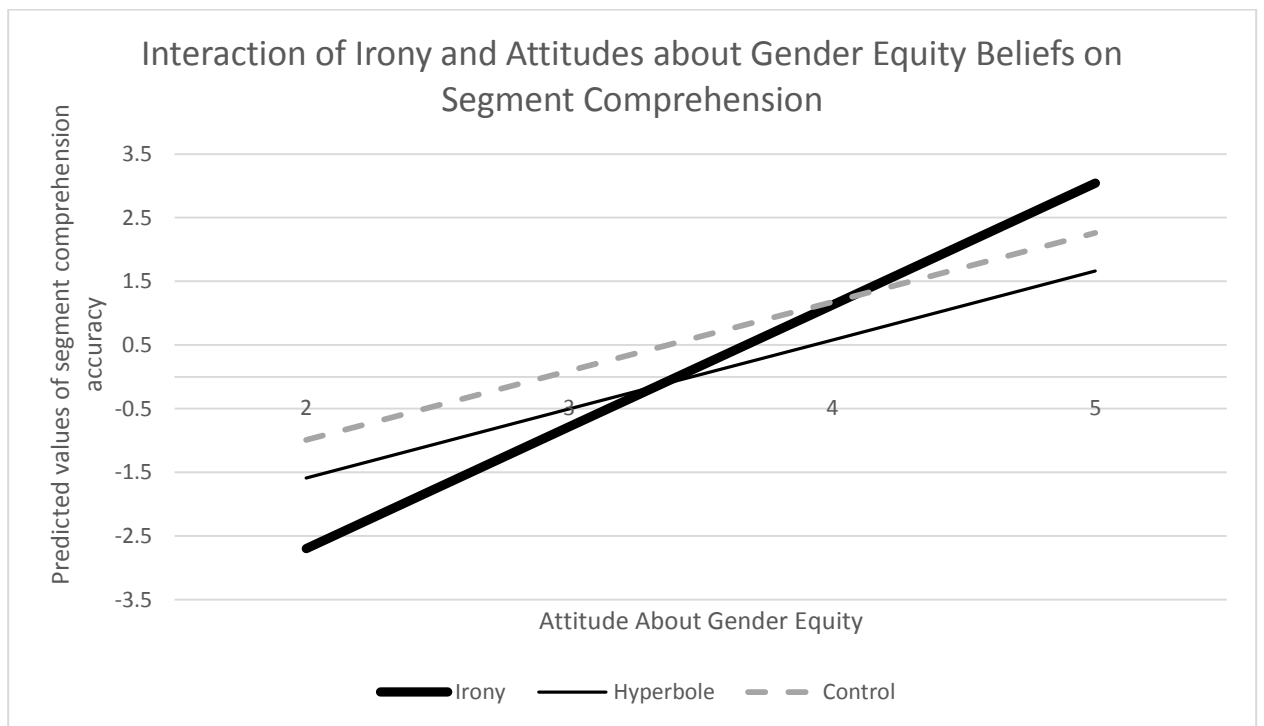


Figure 2: Mean Comprehension Accuracy of Segment as a Function of Ideology and Condition

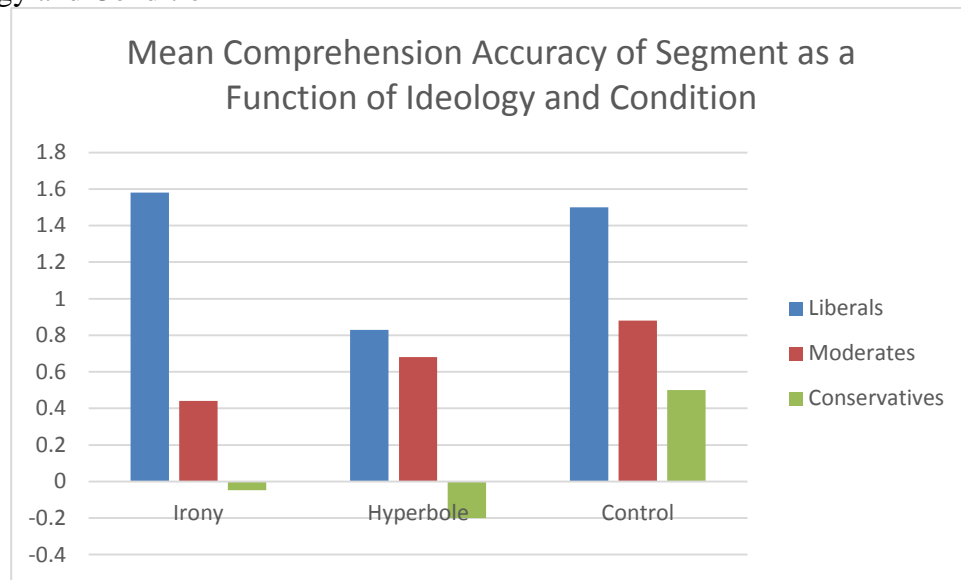


Figure 3: Mean Comprehension Accuracy of Joke as a Function of Ideology and Condition

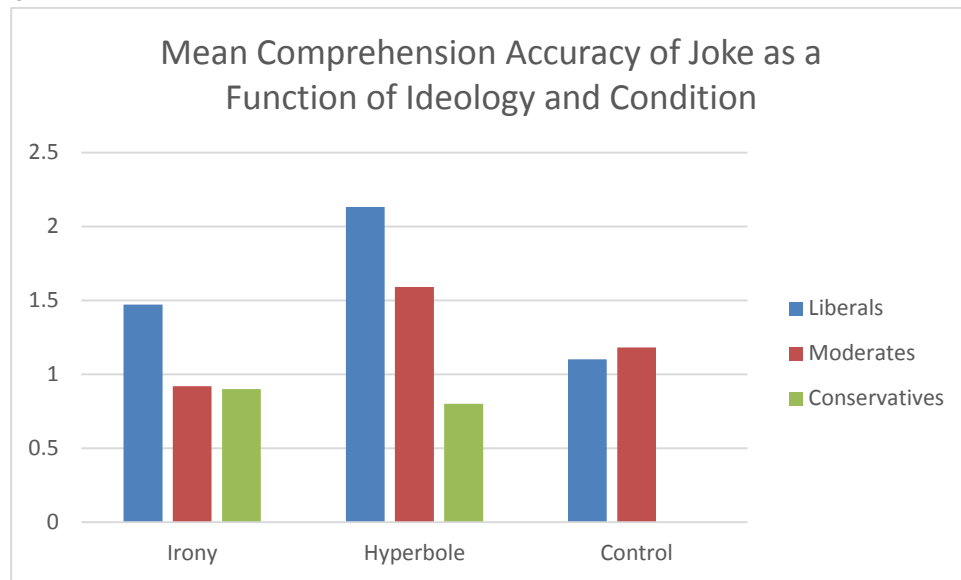


Figure 4: Mean Comprehension Accuracy of Segment as a Function of Gender and Condition

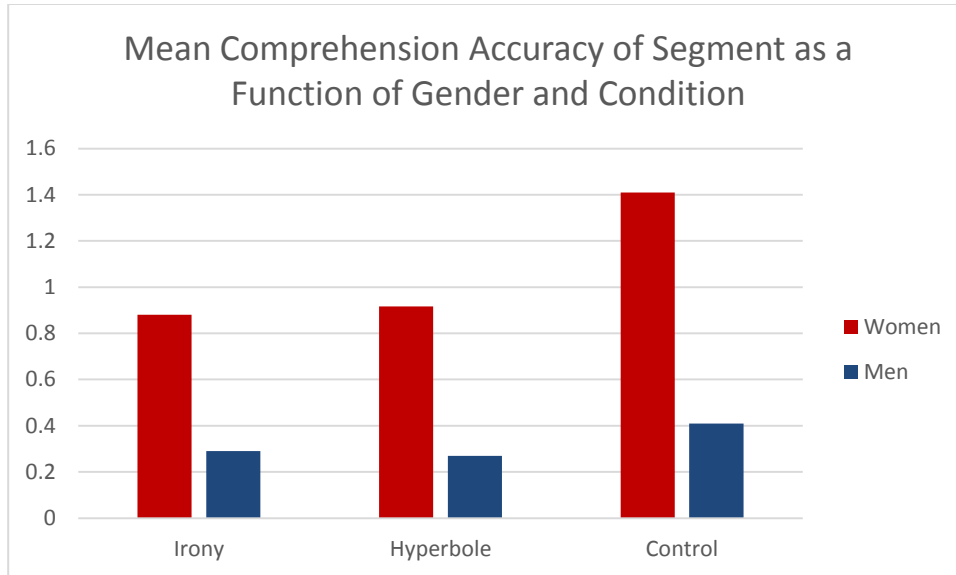


Figure 5: Mean Comprehension Accuracy of Joke as Function of Gender and Condition

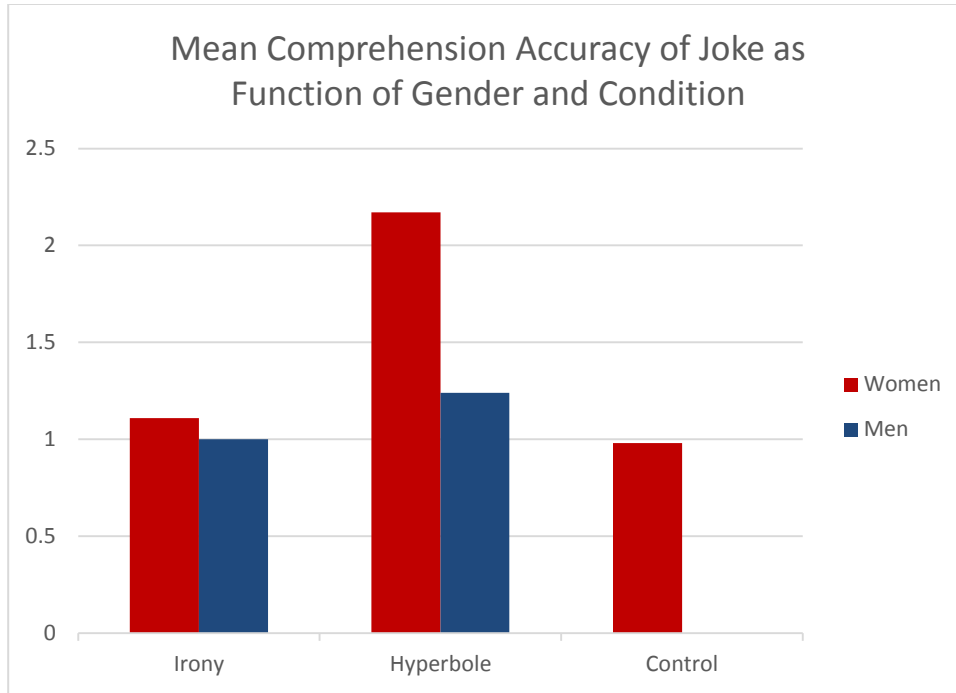


Figure 6: Mean Segment Comprehension Accuracy as a Function of Attitudes About Gender Equity and Condition

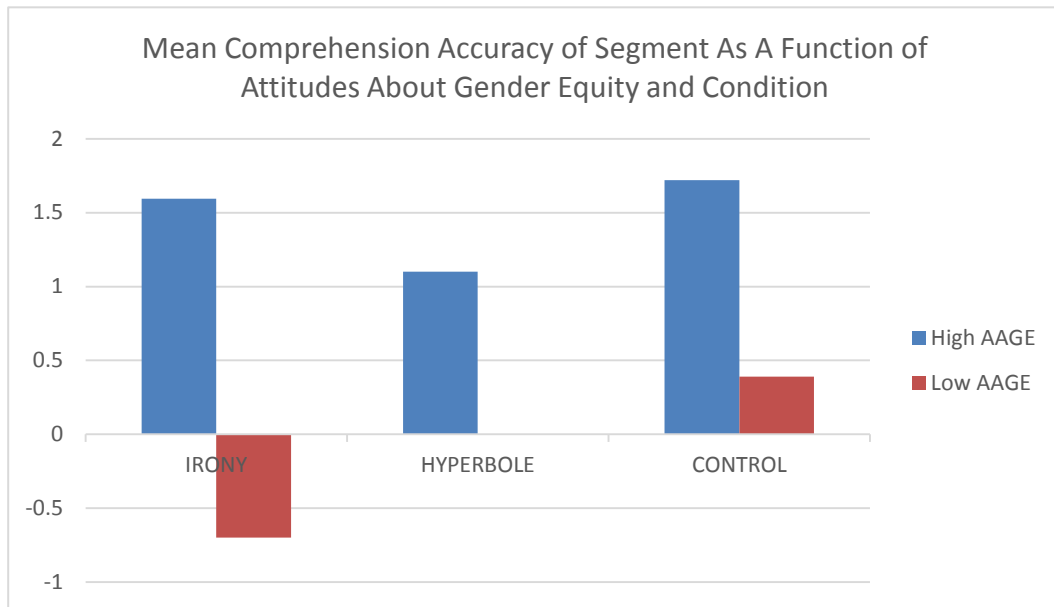


Figure 7: Mean Joke Comprehension Accuracy as a Function of Attitudes About Gender Equity and Condition

