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Empathy Through Satire: How Empathy in Satire May Catalyze More Enjoyment, Persuasion
and Understanding

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ABSTRACT

Previous work assessing the persuasiveness and perceived funniness of satirical comedy has chiefly focused on gender (Becker, 2023). The present study sought to expand the scope of the research to focus on the interaction of empathy, gender, and the persuasiveness of satire. Employing a 2 (liberal versus conservative satire) X 2 (empathy versus no empathy) within/between subjects mixed factorial design, this study sought to determine if participants would find satire funnier, more persuasive, and more important from comedians if they were exposed to the adversity a comedian has overcome in their rise to fame, as opposed to only knowing the comedian's accolades. We hypothesized that those exposed to the high-empathy backstories would find the satire more persuasive, funnier, and more important. Participants (N=113) showed no statistically significant difference in how they rated persuasiveness, perceived funniness, or state empathy of satirical comedy between the empathy and no empathy conditions (all $ps > 0.1$). As a result, analysis of the results was shifted to explore differences in how participants who identified themselves as conservative or liberal rated satirical comedy.

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Empathy Through Satire: How Empathy in Satire May Catalyze More Enjoyment, Persuasion and Understanding

In recent years, the type and amount of political humor Americans consume has begun to change. Late-night talk shows that were once known to present playful and innocuous humor have changed their tone, and now present a longer format with more politically charged material (Becker, 2022). This shift reflects the mounting importance of satirical comedy as a source of information, enjoyment, and relaxation for consumers.

While satire is now viewed as complicated and intriguing in psychology and political science, some prior theorists rejected the notion that satire could be an agent of positive change in society. Freud viewed satirical humor as a way of viciously humiliating one's adversaries through intellectual superiority (Stein, 2000). Freud believed that satire “aims at provoking as much controversy and disagreement as possible” (Freud, 2014, p. 107). Freud saw tendentious humor as a means of expressing superiority over others, and satire’s connection to ideological beliefs only made the perception of it as a form of belittlement stronger. Freud cast satirical humor as a narcissistic exercise of intellectual dominance that arose from a desire to recoup lost pleasure (Stein). However, modern theorists have begun to reconsider Freud’s perspective as reductive. Theorists have proposed that, unlike Freud’s belief that satire is an expression of aggression, satire is a non-violent substitute for aggression that encourages open dialogue (Griffin, 1994).

Moreover, research has begun to focus on how satire has been used to encourage social change (Zekavat, 2021). Zekavat reviews the methods of satire in times of crisis by analyzing *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study examined the

content shown on Colbert's show during the COVID-19 pandemic and concluded that the show changed the nature of its content and humor to encourage viewers to engage in safe social distancing behaviors. The persistent dogma surrounding satire in psychological research has changed but so has the way consumers receive satire.

Satire in the Digital Age

In the age of short-form content platforms, YouTube, and parody satire have become a focus point for more serious investigations. Satire can be found in a multitude of different mediums. Cartoons, late-night television, stand-up comedy, parody, and sketch comedy are all venues where comedians use satire. Additionally, the appetite for satire on these platforms is growing more than ever. Skepticism about the quality of genuine news and political polarization have become great fodder for satirical comedy and the creation and consumption of satirical content has increased as a result.

Furthermore, the variety of satirical comedy content that consumers can access has grown immensely. Traditionally, late-night television comedy has reflected the likes of *The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon* or *The Late Late Show with James Corden* which have employed a jovial entertainment-driven program style. However, shows like *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, and *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah* have taken a politically focused approach to late-night television. With in-depth journalism and scalding critiques, these shows encourage reappraisal and action from their viewers while interweaving a comedic and satirical angle. Researchers have not only aimed to discover how this satirical content has encouraged activism but also why it has encouraged viewers to do so. Theorists and researchers have long sought to define satire and understand its cognitive mechanisms.

Satire in Research

Scholars have pondered what “defines” satire at length for many years with definitions ranging from a content basis to an entertainment basis (Declercq, 2018). As a result, these unclear bounds for satire have made it difficult for scholars to generate a working definition. Satire often walks this unmanageable line between hate and playful criticism, but true satire intends to do more than just critique. True satire intends to persuade and inform with ideas presented in funny and engaging mediums. Hateful rhetoric pawned off as satire only intends to mock and persuade, not inform. Satire’s critical lens allows for effective and engaging persuasion. Comparatively, large chunks of information overwhelm people, yet satire makes difficult information more digestible. Furthermore, this study will define satire as a form of critical aggressive humor meant to persuade. Satire differs from other forms of humor in that it innately possesses a subliminal motive. What differentiates satire and mockery is this intention to persuade viewers of a novel perspective and have them question another. Satire’s tendency to persuade and a lack of relevant research makes it a key area for future study. A critical part of any persuasive argument is the medium of persuasion, and in the case of satire, this medium is often the performance of a comedian.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

Prior research has investigated how viewers cognitively process satirical comedy. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) developed by Petty and Cacioppo provides a theoretical framework for understanding how people process persuasive messages. The ELM proposes a dual processing model with both central and peripheral routes playing a role in persuasion. The central route of processing requires deep cognitive processing of the message content, and

persuasion through the central route is based on the strength and quality of the arguments presented in the message. Peripheral processing, on the other hand, involves less cognitive effort and focuses on cues. Persuasion through the peripheral route is based on superficial cues rather than on the quality of the arguments. Researchers in the domain of political satire have employed the ELM to see if message persuasion occurs through the peripheral route or the central route of processing (Lamarre & Walther, 2013). One prior published study on the topic used a 2x2 factorial design with high motivation, low motivation, and entertainment compared to news conditions. This study found that “audiences tend to rely more on superficial or peripheral processing. As such, the common viewer is likely to consider political information provided by Jon Stewart and Anderson Cooper with equal regard” (Lamarre & Walther, 2013, p. 319).

This study found that superficial and effective cues were more important to the persuasiveness of political satire than cues present in the central route of processing. However, they also found that the longer participants had to think about the message and the more information they were given, the more likely they were to view satire as less credible than news (Lamarre & Walther 2013, 318). Short-form video platforms allow consumers to watch satirical content with little opportunity to think critically about the topic or learn about the program from which they are viewing, stimulating peripheral route processing. This relevant research concerning the ELM highlights that satire persuades audiences through the peripheral route of processing, yet present research has not answered if these means of persuasion can be manipulated to increase appreciation and opinions in viewers.

A comedian’s voice, gender, and attractiveness can all affect how funny someone finds their material. But what about how persuasive? Limited research has been conducted to evaluate

the persuasive nature of humor and what characteristics moderate and mediate this effect. In the case of satire presenting funny material is just as important as presenting persuasive material. One area where research was not focused before this study was the effect of empathy on the persuasiveness, funniness, and message discounting of satire. Empathy has been shown to influence persuasion in terms of decision-making, (Li et al., 2020) but could this same effect be true in the case of political satire? While prior research regarding empathy manipulations, decision-making, and affective responses did not concern humor, the research found that empathy manipulations in media content can influence the decisions and opinions of viewers (Li et al).

Satire and the Affect

A budding research question then became does the level of empathy towards the performer of satire influence the persuasiveness of the material, the perceived funniness, and the message discounting? Relevant background literature neglected to investigate the issue of empathy in their studies. However, one study focused on the relationship between satirical humor, gender, and the effects of the message on the viewer paving the way for further investigation into the relationship between satire and affective responses (Becker, 2023) and sought to investigate the relationship between comic gender, viewer gender, message elaboration, message discounting, and perceived informativeness. Becker found that “analysis confirms that exposure to political satire on a serious topic encourages less message discounting, is perceived as more informative, and results in greater message elaboration than exposure to less serious political satire content. Furthermore, the results suggest that female viewers are less likely to engage in message discounting when presented with salient comedy on the issue of

COVID-19, childcare, and economic participation. Variation in message discounting is impacted more by viewer gender than variation in the gender of the comic program host” (Becker, 2023, p.1). Becker’s study employed a three-group online experiment. There was one control group, one group was shown *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, and the other group was shown *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*. Becker intended to examine the effect of showing different gender hosts. Becker found no significant effect for viewers when shown different gender hosts. However, female viewers were less likely to engage in message discounting (Becker) and found that there is a statistically significant effect for a lack of message discounting and an increase in perceived informativeness in satire that participants believed to be serious. However, female viewers were less likely to engage in message discounting (Becker) and found that there is a statistically significant effect for a lack of message discounting and an increase in perceived informativeness in satire that participants believed to be serious.

The findings in this study establish that the salience and seriousness of political satire affect the tendency of viewers to discount the message and view it as informative. Furthermore, the present study sought to expand upon these findings into the domain of empathy, suggesting that empathy, in addition to seriousness and salience, may moderate satire appreciation. Existing literature does not provide preliminary data on the relationship between satire and empathy.

While Becker’s investigation of satire focuses more closely on gender than the present study it provides a useful framework for the presentation of stimulus, and it provides gender-based effects that could compound with empathy.

The Dispositional Theory of Humor

The justification for investigation using empathy manipulation originated from prior work linking satire and the dispositional theory of humor (Becker, 2014) (Zillman & Cantor, 1976). The disposition theory of humor states “humor appreciation varies inversely with the favorableness of the disposition toward the agent or entity being disparaged and varies directly with the favorableness of the disposition toward the agent or entity disparaging it” (Zillman & Cantor, 1976, p. 2). The theory proposed by Zillman and Cantor highlights how dispositions towards both the performer of comedy and the subject of disparagement can influence humor appreciation. Experimentally, prior work has either prompted subjects with parody or no parody conditions or has manipulated the seriousness of the satire shown to participants (Becker, 2014). (Becker, 2023). Relevantly, prior published work has shown that “the interaction of disposition and exposure to different types of humor significantly influences variation in political parody appreciation” (Becker 2014, p.1). Prior research has shown that disposition towards agents will influence satire appreciation, yet research has not shown if these dispositions can be successfully manipulated to enact this effect. The dispositional theory of humor offers a paradigm for understanding the affective components in satire appreciation that would make empathy toward the agent an essential moderator of enjoyment, appreciation, and persuasiveness.

This study manipulated participants’ empathy towards performers to investigate if a manipulated disposition towards the agent of satire will still affect satire appreciation. Prior work on the disposition theory of humor in satire has only used participants’ pre-existing political values and has manipulated the content shown to them yet has not tried to manipulate participants’ opinions of performers before being shown the content. The present study asserts

that empathy towards performers may be an unresearched moderator in facilitating satire appreciation and the dispositional theory of humor.

Hypotheses

We hypothesized that in conditions in which viewers were primed to be more empathetic towards the performers of satire, they would engage in less message discounting, present higher levels of perceived informativeness, and experience more humor. Furthermore, we hypothesized that greater perceived seriousness of the topic would increase these effects. Another dimension we considered was political ideology. We predicted that satire in high empathy conditions that affirms pre-existing political beliefs would show the highest levels of humor experience and informativeness. Similarly, we predicted that satire in high empathy conditions that contradicts pre-existing political beliefs would be rated more humorous than satire that contradicts pre-existing political beliefs in the no empathy condition. Lastly, we predicted that participants in high empathy conditions would be more willing to share the content with their community and engage with the comedian further.

Methods

Participants

Undergraduate students taking introductory psychology courses at The Pennsylvania State University (N=112, 81 females, 28 males, 3 non-gender identifying) received partial course credit to participate in this study.

Materials

Rating Scales

An Eight-Item Form of the Empathy Quotient and an Application to Charitable Giving. This scale lists eight different statements which are designed to measure participant trait empathy. Responses are given on a 7-point scale (1=" Strongly disagree to 7=" Strongly agree") to express the degree to which participants agree with the given statement. This eight-item version of the empathy quotient was derived by researchers from a larger 60-item empathy quotient. (Loewen 2008).

On a Scale of State Empathy During Message Processing. This twelve-item state empathy scale was designed to measure state empathy toward characters in entertainment. The scale proposes a three-dimensional approach to state empathy: affective, cognitive, and associative empathy. In a prior study examining the validity of the twelve-item scale, the scale exhibited good internal and external consistency and reliability. (Shen 2010). Responses are given on a 7-point scale (1=" Strongly disagree to 7=" Strongly agree") to express the degree to which participants agree with the given statement.

Message Discounting, Message Elaboration, and Perceived Informativeness Measures. A prior study that examined variance in participant responses to satire used message discounting,

message elaboration, and perceived informativeness as three dimensions to determine variance in response to different satirical programs. (Becker 2023). There are four questions on each of these three dimensions. Responses are given on a 7-point scale (1=" Strongly disagree to 7=" Strongly agree") to express the degree to which participants agree with the given statement.

Video Clips

Bill Burr "Paper Tiger" Clip. The clip used is a 3-minute and 11-second clip from the 2019 film "Paper Tiger" by Bill Burr. The comedy in the clip focuses on Burr's qualms with issues of "political correctness" and "wokeness" (Burr, 2019).

Dennis Miller "We are Not Allowed to Do Anything Anymore!" Clip. The clip used from a 2020 stand-up comedy performance from Dennis Miller is 4 minutes and seconds in length. In the clip, Miller laments how modern culture and thinking have limited freedoms and hurt society (Miller, 2020).

"John Oliver Wants to Talk About Budweiser Beer & Bud Light on Last Week Tonight." This 3-minute and 57-second clip used from a 2023 episode of the television show *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* makes satirical criticism of transphobic people and how sponsoring a transgender activist has caused great backlash to Anheuser-Busch from some of its consumers (Oliver, 2023).

"Learning about 'Charming Racism'"-Trevor Noah. This 4-minute and 6-second clip from a 2019 stand-up comedy performance by Trevor Noah takes a satirical approach to discussing the differences between racism in the United States and South Africa (Noah, 2019).

Design

This study design has a 2x2 2(empathy/no empathy) x 2(liberal/conservative satire) factorial design with a manipulation. This study employed a mixed experimental design. This design will have two independent variables. The first is whether participants receive a backstory aimed at heightening empathy for the performer or a neutral backstory. The second independent variable will be whether participants will be shown satire from comedians expressing viewpoints traditionally associated with conservative values or satire from comedians expressing traditionally liberal viewpoints. The dependent variables measured will be taken from the replicated study (Becker, 2023), which are persuasiveness of the satire, funniness of the material, and message discounting as reported by the participants. Furthermore, the study will also measure state empathy (Shen, 2010) and employ novel questions about willingness to engage further with the content.

Procedure

Participants could register for this study through The Pennsylvania State University Park campus SONA subject pool. After reading a brief description of the study in SONA, participants could register and complete the study in Qualtrics. The study consists of one 40-minute session on Qualtrics.

After implying consent participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. These conditions were for either the conservative satire or the liberal satire, as well as for empathy-inducing backstory, or neutral backstory. Neutral backstories will include a list of the performer's accolades and previous roles. Empathy-inducing backstories will include more details about the performer's personal life and the hardships they have had to overcome. Participants were then randomly assigned to either view conservative or liberal satire.

The two groups were as follows: Group 1: participants were shown liberal satire with no empathy manipulation and conservative satire with empathy manipulation. Group 2: participants were shown liberal satire with empathy manipulation and conservative satire with no empathy manipulation. After being assigned to one of the two conditions, participants viewed four three-minute clips of political satire. Before viewing each clip, participants read an empathetic or neutral backstory about the comedian depending on their group assignment. After viewing each of the four clips, participants answered 33 questions gauging how funny, persuasive, and pertinent they found the video. After viewing all four clips and answering the questions for each of the four videos, participants were given an 8-item trait empathy quotient (Loewen, 2008). Lastly, participants answered demographic questions about their age, race, gender, and political ideology. They were then debriefed and notified that the study had concluded, and they were directed back to SONA.

Results

To evaluate the hypotheses presented, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for each hypothesis. The ANOVA test compared responses in the empathy-manipulated condition and the neutral empathy condition for each question under each video. The ANOVA tests found that there was no statistically significant difference in perceived informativeness, state empathy, message discounting, message elaboration, and willingness to share the material when comparing the manipulated empathy condition and the neutral empathy condition (all $ps \geq 0.1$).

Furthermore, additional analysis was conducted controlling for political ideologies to see if participant political ideologies caused an interaction with the empathy manipulation. Upon isolating data from participants who identified themselves as liberal or conservative, further ANOVA tests were conducted. These ANOVA tests found no statistically significant difference between the neutral and heightened empathy conditions for any of the tested variables when controlling political ideology (all $ps \geq 0.1$).

In response to all presented hypotheses being found null, the focus of data analysis shifted to exploratory variables. One exploratory paradigm that became of chief interest was how students' political ideology had a significant effect on how they enjoyed, rated, and discounted satire. Across all participants, liberal comedians were found to be far funnier ($M = 4.917$, $SD = 1.539$) than conservative comedians ($M = 4.199$, $SD = 1.785$) and more moral ($M = 5.1287$, $SD = 1.4615$) than conservative comedians ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.538$) were, $F(1, 457) = 21.25$, $p = .0001$, $r^2 = .0444$ and $F(1, 575) = 57.42$, $p = .0001$, $r^2 = .0908$, respectively.

Students found the comedy that aligned with their political beliefs far funnier than the comedy that opposed their beliefs. Conservative students rated conservative comedy ($M = 5.429$, $SD = 1.425$) as far funnier than liberal students (see Figure 1). $F(1,188) = 6.86$, $p = .001$, $r^2 = .068$. ($M = 3.918$, $SD = 1.924$). Consequently, liberal students rated liberal comedy ($M = 5.112$, $SD = 1.512$) far funnier than conservative students did $F(1,152) = 5.76$, $p = .017$, $r^2 = .0366$ ($M = 4.464$, $SD = 1.768$) (see Figure 2).

The funniness of the material was not the only dimension in which conservative and liberal students differed. Conservative participants were far more likely to discount the message of conservative satire ($M = 16.107$, $SD = 4.122$) than liberal participants were $F(1, 75) = 3.98$, $p = .05$, $r^2 = .0501$ ($M = 13.98$, $SD = 4.701$) (see Figure 3). However, conservative and liberal students were not different in their likelihood of discounting the message of liberal satire (all $ps \geq 0.1$). Much like their equal likelihood to discount liberal satire, participants displayed no difference in their willingness to share liberal satire based on their political ideology (all $ps \geq 0.1$). However, conservative participants were far more willing to share conservative satire ($M = 21.107$, $SD = 2.129$) than liberal participants were to share it $F(1,153) = 37.32$, $p = .0001$, $r^2 = .1961$ ($M = 19.333$, $SD = 1.471$).

The variable of perceived informativeness across political affiliations was also explored. Across political affiliations, there was no difference in how informative participants found liberal satire (all $p \geq 0.1$) (see Figure 4). Conversely, conservative participants found conservative satire far more informative ($M = 17.37$, $SD = 6.96$) than liberal participants found it. $F(1,121) = 10.61$, $p = .001$, $r^2 = .0801$ ($M = 13.143$, $SD = 6.966$) (see Figure 5).

Another variable that showed significant differences across political affiliations was message elaboration. Liberal participants were more likely to engage in message elaboration with liberal satire ($M = 12.708$, $SD = 4.5$) than conservative participants were to engage in it. $F(1,178) = 4.77$, $p = .039$, $r^2 = .0238$ ($M = 11.238$, $SD = 4.966$). When presented with conservative satire there was a marginal effect for increased elaboration in conservative participants ($M = 10.821$, $SD = 4.70$) compared to liberal participants. $F(1,50) = 2.77$, $p = .095$, $r^2 = .0181$ ($M = 9.51$, $SD = 4.67$).

The last exploratory variable considered along the paradigm of political ideology was state empathy towards the comedian. There was a statistically significant effect for liberal participants having more state empathy ($M = 58.1$, $SD = 13.79$) towards liberal comedians than conservative participants did $F(1,155) = 6.03$, $p = .015$, $r^2 = .038$ ($M = 52.48$, $SD = 13.20$). Similarly, conservative participants showed significantly more state empathy ($M = 55.77$, $SD = 16.00$) towards conservative comedians than liberal participants did. $F(1,155) = 19.89$, $p \leq .001$, $r^2 = .1137$ ($M = 44.00$, $SD = 15.75$).

Discussion

The hypotheses presented in the current study were all found to be null. The empathy manipulation did not affect how much participants empathized with comedians, discounted messaging, perceived messages as informative, and were willing to further engage with the material. The ineffectiveness of the empathy manipulation highlights flaws in the experimental design, limitations of the study, and possible areas for future investigation.

Limitations surrounding preexisting dispositions toward the comedians presented may have limited the effectiveness of empathy manipulation. Forty-eight percent of participants reported previously choosing to watch comedy from Trevor Noah. Twenty-nine percent of participants reported previously choosing to watch comedy from Bill Burr. Twenty-three percent of participants reported previously choosing to watch comedy from John Oliver, and two and a half percent of participants reported previously choosing to watch comedy from Dennis Miller. For all comedians other than Miller, preexisting dispositions toward them may have limited the effect of empathy manipulation. The Dispositional Theory of Humor (Zillman & Cantor, 1976), a tenet of this study's conceptual foundation, suggests that disposition towards comedians and their subject matter moderates humor enjoyment, and in the case of this study, we overestimated the malleability of formed dispositions. A future exploration of satire and empathy could employ unknown comedians to not interfere with preexisting dispositions.

While participants may have been unaffected by the empathy manipulation due to their preexisting dispositions, the weakness of the empathy manipulation itself may have been a limitation as well. The empathy manipulation was only a couple of sentences about the comedian's upbringing and the adversity they faced growing up. There was no validation of the

reading comprehension of the participants, and due to time and resource constraints, the research team was not able to pilot-test the efficacy of the empathy manipulation. Future investigations of empathy in satirical views should use an empathy manipulation that researchers can confirm elicits a stronger affective response than the one used in the present study. Additionally, study designs could include validation questions to ensure the reading comprehension of participants.

Participants of varying political ideologies had vastly different responses on the funniness and morality of comedians performing liberal satire and conservative satire, confirming that the videos chosen for the experiment aligned with the political ideologies they were intended to portray. While the videos effectively displayed satire of these political ideologies, the subject matter of the videos themselves may have caused variation in participant sentiment. The two examples shown to participants of liberal satire from John Oliver and Trevor Noah focused on issues of transphobia and racism respectively. Conversely, the two examples shown to participants of conservative satire from Dennis Miller and Bill Burr focused on how modern culture has begun to infringe on personal freedoms and the comforts of everyday life. The identity-based issues at the center of the liberal satire depicted may have triggered more visceral reactions in participants than the content of the conservative satire. Moreover, prior beliefs held about the issues at the center of the liberal satire may have prevented participants from being affected by the manipulation. Ideally, future investigations would use satirical clips on the same political issue with opposing belief sets, and if possible, use clips from the same comedian. Sourcing materials for this study posed a challenge to the research team, as we sought clips of satire that were uniform in length, addressed consistent themes, and showcased a diverse array of comedians. As a result, the clips that were chosen lacked diversity and thematic

consistency but were uniform in length and accurately captured differences in liberal and conservative participants.

After it became clear that the empathy manipulation on which the hypotheses were predicated did not work, the data analysis shifted to investigating exploratory variables. The exploratory paradigm that became of chief interest was the differences in responses to satire between liberal and conservative participants.

The data analysis highlighted that participants found satire aligned with their political beliefs to be funnier than satire in opposition to their political beliefs. While this finding may not be surprising, the related findings show a more nuanced and novel depiction of how political differences altered responses to satire. Both liberal and conservative participants showed more message discounting for satire aligned with their political beliefs. Before the study, the research team hypothesized that participants would be less likely to discount satire that they saw as pertinent and informative. However, especially in the case of conservative participants, participants discounted the satire they agreed with most (see Figure 3). While we do not have an experimental explanation for this effect, we hypothesize that participants were more likely to dismiss content they saw as funny as innocuous and lighthearted. Conversely, we hypothesize that participants may have found satire from opposing political beliefs as more threatening and less funny, priming them to view the message as serious. The investigation into this exploratory variable suggests the need for more research into the relationship between humor and message discounting.

Furthermore, conservative participants also found conservative satire far more informative than liberal participants did (see Figure 5). However, liberal, and conservative

participants were not significantly different in how informative they found liberal satire. We expected this effect to be somewhat similar for conservative and liberal participants, and we were surprised that this effect only applied to conservative satire. Similarly, conservative participants were far more willing to share conservative satire than liberal students were, but there was no difference between liberal and conservative students in their willingness to share liberal satire. Across multiple dimensions, conservative participants displayed more appreciation for liberal satire than liberal participants did for conservative satire. One possible explanation could be the subject matter of the satire. Conservative participants found liberal satire to be slightly more informative than conservative satire. Perhaps if conservative satire that took a more educational and information-based approach was chosen liberal participants would have been more willing to engage with conservative satire. Although the study did not primarily concentrate on variances in how conservatives and liberals perceive political satire, the exploratory results have highlighted the necessity for additional investigation in this area. Examining potential differences in how these groups interact with political satire could yield valuable insights for promoting more effective inter-party dialogue and understanding the spread of misinformation.

The present study, while insubstantial in its findings, initiates a line of research surrounding satire and empathy. Satire critiques existing systems and provides digestible and enjoyable information that may have been otherwise inaccessible. While consumers may not change their empathy towards performers based on supplemental background information, that

does not mean empathizing towards these performers changes the way people interact with satire.

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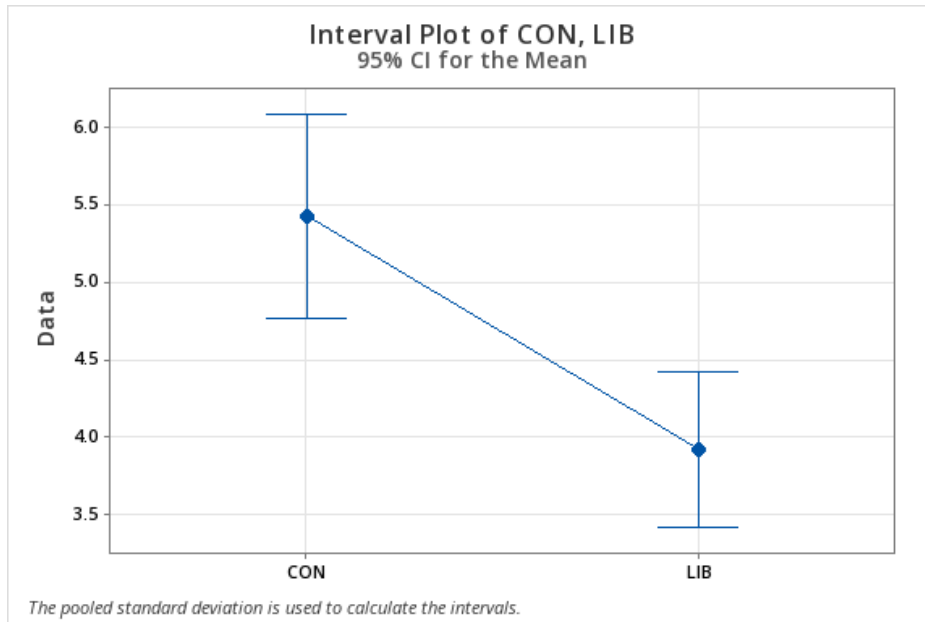
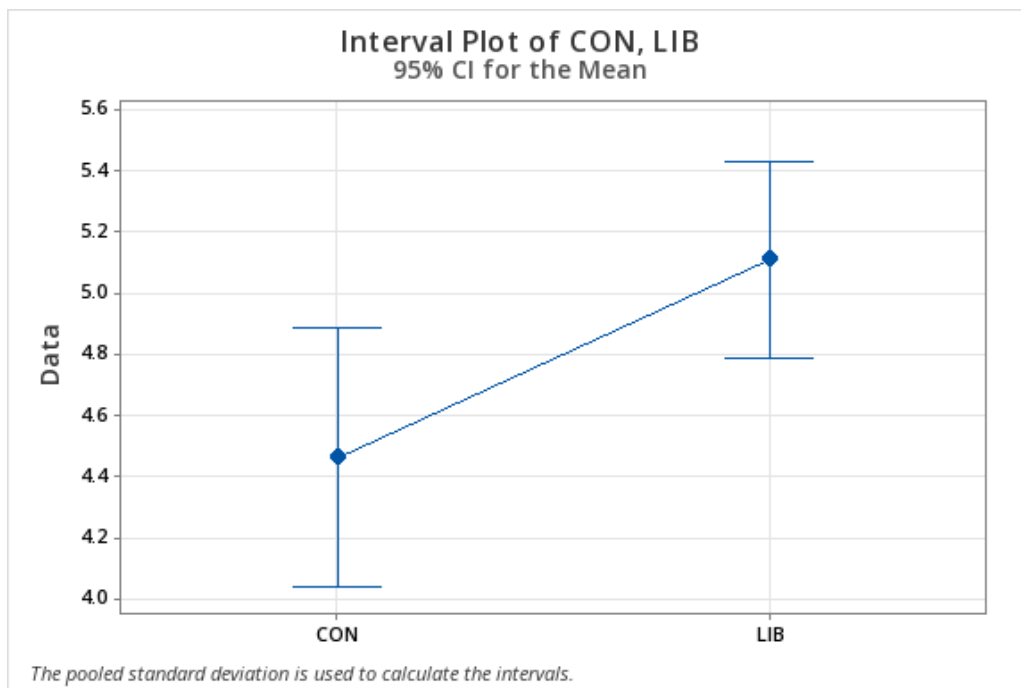
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Appendix A

**Figure 1: Perceived Funniness of Conservative Satire****Figure 2: Perceived Funniness of Liberal Satire**

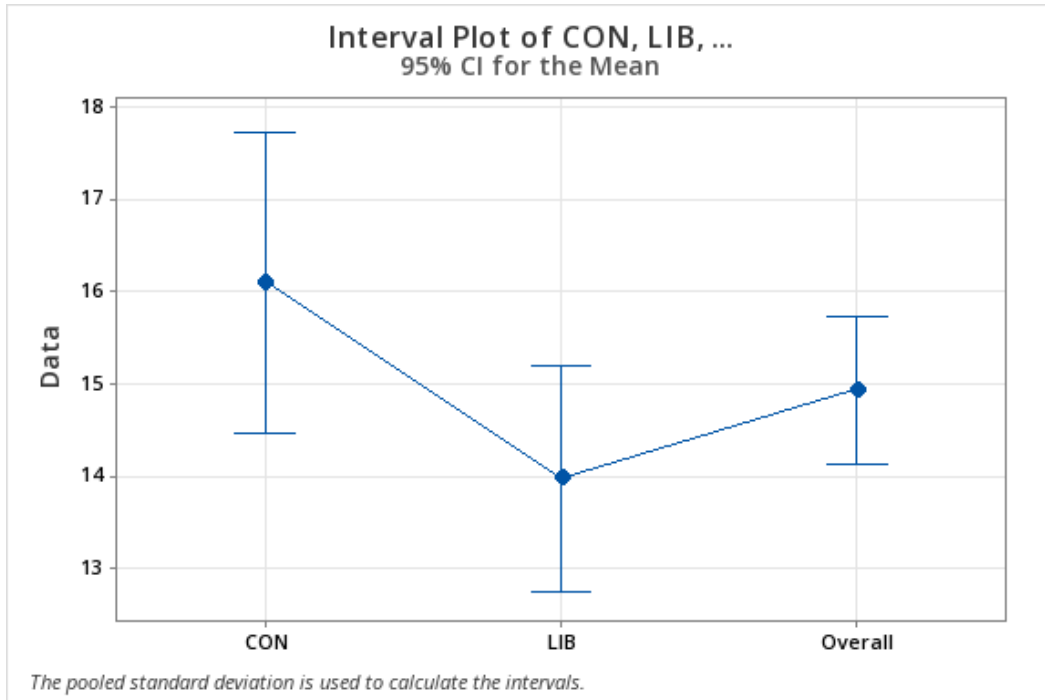


Figure 3: Message Discounting of Conservative Satire Among Participants

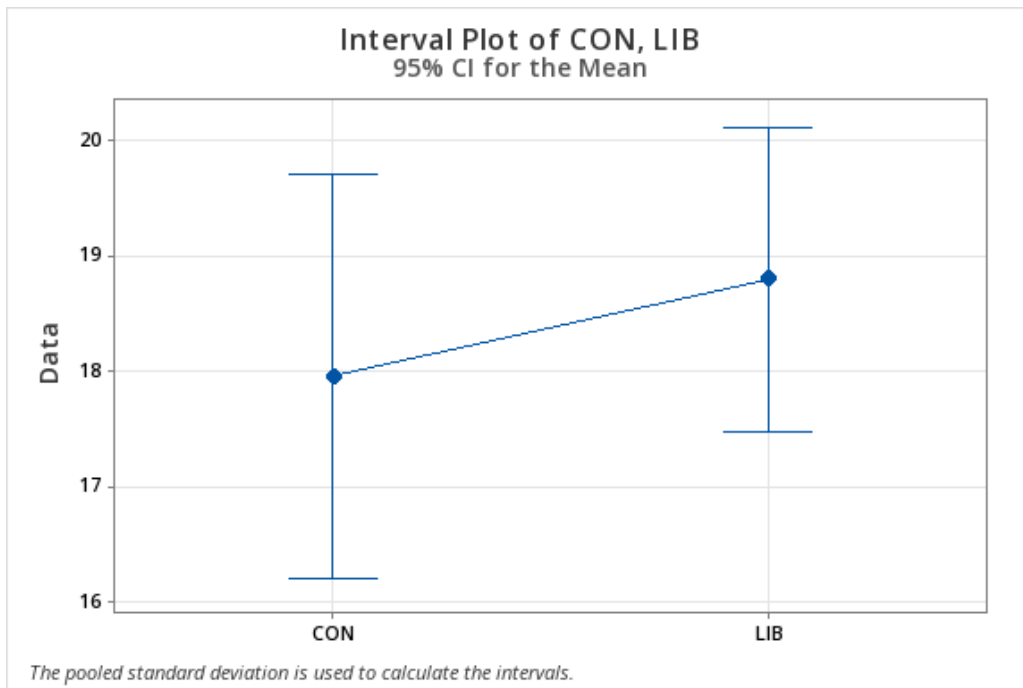


Figure 4: Perceived Informativeness of Liberal Satire

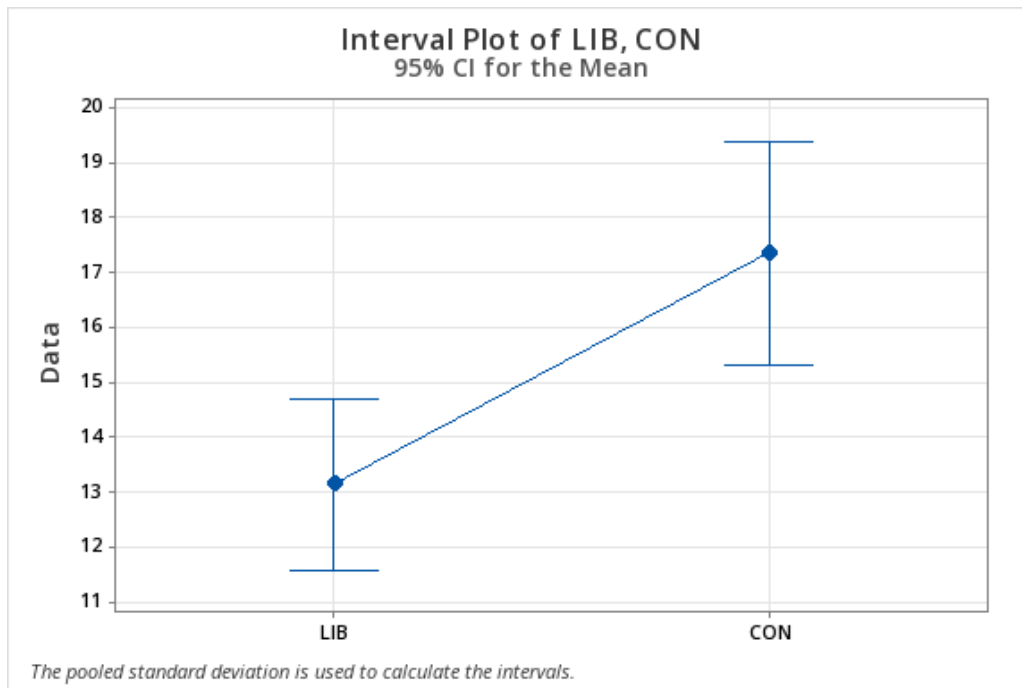


Figure 5: Perceived Informativeness of Conservative Satire