

# Psychology of Popular Media Culture

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# Psychology, Political Ideology, and Humor Appreciation: Why Is Satire So Liberal?

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This project explores how appreciation for, and comprehension of, ironic and exaggerated satire is related to political ideology. Drawing upon literature from communication, political psychology, and humor research, we explain how the psychological profiles of conservatives may render them less motivated to process and appreciate certain forms of humor compared to liberals. We test these propositions with an experiment that employs a two condition within-subjects experiment on a national sample ( $N = 305$ ) to assess appreciation and comprehension of ironic and exaggerated humor among liberals and conservatives. Mediating effects of psychological traits are tested. Findings suggest that conservatives are less appreciative of both *irony and exaggeration* than liberals. In both cases, the effect is explained in part by lower sense of humor and need for cognition found among conservative participants. Results are explored in terms of the implications for political discourse, political polarization, and democratic practices.

### **Public Policy Relevance Statement**

This manuscript explores the lack of conservative political satire by testing differences how liberals and conservatives appreciate and comprehend various forms of humor. The findings indicate low appreciation of humor among conservatives explained in part by need for cognition. In our polarized political climate, it is increasingly important for scholars and lawmakers to understand the nature of ideological differences to help identify functional approaches to bridge gaps in communicative strategy.

*Keywords:* political ideology, humor, need for cognition, tolerance for ambiguity

*Supplemental materials:* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000157.supp>

Over the past decade, satirical TV programs like *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart (now Trevor Noah) and Stephen Colbert's former

program *The Colbert Report* have attracted the attention of scholars and journalists trying to understand the influence of these shows (see

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Young, 2017 for a review). Political satire, according to George Test (1991), offers political judgment, with aggressive intent, but with the spirit of play and the goal of producing laughter. This task is a delicate one but one that is often successful when delivered through irony. Although definitions vary, most agree that irony requires the inversion of meanings, such that the speaker “. . . is saying one thing and meaning the opposite” (Wilson, 2013). From Aristophanes’ *The Clouds* to Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal*, artists and philosophers have critiqued social and political hypocrisy by juxtaposing the real and the ideal, often “saying one thing and meaning the opposite.”

### Satire: A Pursuit of the Left?

As we consider American political satire from the past 50 years, what we find is a genre dominated by political liberals: Jon Stewart, John Oliver, Stephen Colbert, Bill Maher, The Smothers Brothers, and Dick Gregory, with few exceptions (among them, Dennis Miller), American political satire is a rhetorical tool used to advance liberal critiques and arguments. When asked *why* this is, before a crowd of Harvard students in 2006, host of *The Colbert Report* on *Comedy Central*, Stephen Colbert posited, “Going after the status quo is not necessarily a conservative thing to do; it’s antithetical to the idea of conservatism. Comedy is all about change. So it’s going to be a challenge for them” (Colbert, 2006).

According to historian, Clinton Rossiter (1955), *conservatism*, in the context of the U.S. history, is grounded in tradition. Core elements of political conservatism include confidence in tradition and institutions and the belief that humans are imperfect and our capacity for knowledge limited (Muller, 1997). In contrast, liberalism is grounded in a more optimistic assessment of the capacity and nature of human beings. According to John Locke, because human’s natural state is to live according to reason, all have the right to “life, liberty, and property,” and government ought to only exist by consent of the people to ensure these freedoms. To the extent that political satire playfully criticizes social norms, individuals in authority positions, or system-wide institutions or practices (see Simpson, 2003), it follows that satire would be a largely liberal pursuit. Dagnes (2012) sought to understand the liberal leaning

of satire through qualitative research on the personalities and lifestyles of political comics. Her interviews reveal personality traits common to the comic, which she argues, are more prevalent among liberals than conservatives. Satire writers are “unconventional” and “unpredictable.” “It is not fixed that these people are liberals,” suggests Dagnes, “but given their education and training, it is likely that they are” (Dagnes, 2012, p. 148). But . . . are “unconventional” and “unpredictable” people more likely to be liberal than conservative? Further, if so, does this explain the lack of political comedy coming from conservatives?

The current examination explores this relationship between satire and liberalism by linking the rhetorical structure often used to deliver satire—*irony*—to research on the psychological and personality differences between liberals and conservatives. We articulate how irony, a popular rhetorical structure of the satirist, is bound to privilege a liberal rather than conservative—sensitivity. We define and outline the research on the psychological processing of *irony* and derive hypotheses concerning how and why ironic messages are more likely to be comprehended and appreciated by those on the left than those on the right.

### Irony: The Complex, but Useful Tool of the Satirist

Irony is a form of rhetoric based on inverted meanings, such that the speaker’s literal utterance is inconsistent with his or her intended meaning (Burgers, van Mulken, & Schellens, 2011). Numerous scholars have highlighted the centrality of irony to satirical texts. Colletta (2009) points out that satire’s efficacy “relies on the ability of the audience to recognize the irony that is at the heart of its humor” (p. 860). Simpson (2003) argues that “. . . it is the concept of *irony*, more than any other device, which tends to be regarded as the central mechanism in the production of satire” (p. 52).

Yet irony is notoriously difficult to comprehend. Many readers come away with literal, rather than ironic interpretations (Burgers et al., 2011; Lamarre, Landreville, & Beam, 2009; Pexman, Ferretti, & Katz, 2000), likely due to the cognitive burden inherent in irony comprehension (Young, 2008). Comprehension and appreciation of irony requires the salient (literal)

meanings be accessed *before* implicit meanings (Giora & Fein, 1999). Only after a literal interpretation can a listener then use context to understand the ironic meaning (Gibbs, 1986). This process is cognitively taxing, as evidenced by the fact that ironic texts take longer to process than literal ones (Pexman et al., 2000). In addition to affecting comprehension, the complexity of irony affects how much audiences appreciate such texts, with appreciation increasing with message complexity—to a point—and then decreasing as the message becomes burdensome. Burgers et al. (2011) conclude that complex ironic texts are less appreciated and understood than simpler ones: “. . . irony is both more complex and better liked than literal language. At the same time, relatively simple irony is more appreciated than relatively difficult irony; and irony that is understood is more appreciated than irony that is not understood” (p. 239).

### Psychological Differences Between Liberals and Conservatives

If irony is cognitively taxing and ambiguous than literal expressions, individuals uncomfortable with complexity and ambiguity should derive less enjoyment from—and be less able to comprehend—ironic texts. The psychological traits of need for cognition (enjoyment of thinking), tolerance for ambiguity, and need to evaluate all speak to an individual's comfort with complex or ambiguous information. Importantly, all of these traits have been found to correlate with political ideology (Jost & Amodio, 2012; Jost et al., 2007). As concluded by Carney, Jost, Gosling, and Potter (2008), “As a general rule, liberals are more open-minded in their pursuit of creativity, novelty, and diversity, whereas conservatives seek lives that are more orderly, conventional, and better organized” (p. 836). The literature is careful to avoid deterministic causal claims about the absolute nature of the relationships between these traits and political ideology. However, it seems that individuals are likely born with innate psychological predilections that render them more *likely* to adopt certain ideological viewpoints. This interpretation also allows direct and vicarious life experiences to play a significant role in shaping political attitudes and beliefs (Carney et al., 2008).

### Need for Cognition

The trait *need for cognition* (Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarvis, 1996), captures an individual's enjoyment of thinking. Need for cognition is a stable trait that captures effortful information processing habits, and greater motivation to engage in complex judgment tasks. According to Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, and Jarvis (1996), “individuals high in need for cognition are characterized generally by active, exploring minds and, through their senses and intellect, reach and draw out information from their environment” (p. 199). Multiple studies from political psychology indicate that need for cognition tends to be higher among political liberals than conservatives (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003).

### Tolerance for Ambiguity and Need for Closure

*Need for closure* captures an individual's need for predictability and “. . . desire [for] definite order and structure” (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Its converse, *tolerance for ambiguity* captures motivation to process and enjoy ambiguous information. Conservatives often report a higher threat salience than do liberals, a tendency that often translates into greater psychological need to reduce uncertainty (Burke, Kossloff, & Landau, 2013). Liberals, on the other hand, with *lower* threat salience, exhibit more comfort with uncertain and ambiguous situations. Across studies, liberals have been found to be higher in tolerance for ambiguity than conservatives (Amodio, Jost, Master, & Yee, 2007; Jost et al., 2007; Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009).

### Need to Evaluate

*Need to evaluate* captures the extent to which people engage in evaluative processes, judging issues or objects as positive or negative (Jarvis & Petty, 1996). A high need to evaluate signifies a tendency to respond well to valenced categorizations of concepts, a phenomenon that may be common among strong ideologues from both the left and the right (Federico, 2004). However, this trait is also related to tolerance for ambiguity and need for closure, with some studies indicating a high need to evaluate

among political conservatives (Bizer et al., 2004).

### Aesthetic Preferences of Liberals Versus Conservatives

If need for cognition, tolerance for ambiguity, and *need to evaluate*, all of which relate to tolerance for and appreciation of uncertain situations, are correlated with political ideology, we should find that liberals' and conservatives' aesthetic tastes are distinct as well. A 1973 study by Wilson, Ausman, and Matthews linked liberals' higher need for cognition and tolerance for ambiguity to their appreciation for art, with conservatives preferring simple, representational art and liberals preferring art which was more abstract (Wilson, Ausman, & Mathews, 1973). In a study of appreciation for open-ended narratives, Wiersema, van der Schalk, & van Kleef (2012) confirmed that "... individuals high in need for closure are less attracted to art forms that do not satisfy their need for clarity, meaning, and quick answers" (p. 169). Given this, it would seem prudent to examine appreciation for complex and ambiguous humor (irony) as a function of political ideology and personality traits as well.

### Humor Preference as a Function of Structure: Exaggeration/Hyperbole Versus Irony

Most considerations of humor preference as a function of political ideology are content-focused, attributing appreciation to the topics or targets being mocked. Yet, Wilson (1990) explored preferences for content *and* structure, finding that conservatives are less tolerant of jokes that fail to reconcile the incongruity. In a similar pursuit, Forabosco and Ruch (1994) found that conservatism was positively related to appreciation of incongruity-resolution humor, but negatively related to appreciation of nonsense humor (jokes that fail to resolve the incongruity) (Forabosco & Ruch, 1994). Such findings are consistent with the notion that conservatives' low tolerance for ambiguity may shape their humor preference—extending beyond a preference based on *content or target*, to humor *structure*.

Like Forabosco and Ruch (1994), we examine respondents' appreciation for humor based

on *structure* rather than content, with a focus on irony and exaggeration (also referred to as hyperbole). As discussed, comprehension of irony is contingent on the listener recognizing that the speaker says one thing but means another (Burgers et al., 2011). Exaggeration or hyperbole is a more explicit type of humor, through which the deliverer's message is presented in an overstated, literal form (Berger, 1993). According to the definition presented by Buijzen and Valkenburg (2004), exaggeration involves, "making an overstatement; reacting in an exaggerated way; exaggerating the qualities of a person or product" (p. 153). Leggitt and Gibbs (2000) define hyperbole/overstatement as "... a description of the state of affairs in obviously exaggerated terms" (p. 5).

Despite the contrast in valence communicated through irony versus hyperbole, scholars continue to debate whether hyperbole should be considered to be a *type* of irony (Gibbs & Colston, 2012; Recchia, Howe, Ross, & Alexander, 2010). Some argue that both forms involve altering the valence of a message, one through exaggeration and one through inversion, and hence should be considered forms of irony (Recchia et al., 2010). Yet, as Wilson (2013) concludes, hyperbole lacks all the "distinctive features of irony" (p. 54), from the mocking tone to the normative bias. Given the current project's focus, we consider each of these humor structures as a distinct category, one which requires the inversion of meanings (irony) and one which does not (exaggeration).

To understand these mechanisms, let us first consider Stephen Colbert's ironic persona on "The Colbert Report." Colbert's portrayal of a conservative news host offers the quintessential example of *ironic* humor. Colbert plays a conservative pundit stating arguments that are the opposite of what he means. He rarely breaks character, instead relies on the audience to decode his ironic inversions (LaMarre et al., 2009). Such ambiguity, Lamarre et al. (2009) note, allows viewers to "see what they want to see" in Colbert. In their study, although both liberals and conservatives found Colbert's jokes funny, conservatives processed his messages literally, whereas liberals processed them ironically (as intended).

In contrast to irony, delivery of hyperbole or exaggeration-based humor capitalizes on external cues and colorful language to present a

heightened version of one's perspective. One comic who often makes use of this style is the stand-up comic Dane Cook. A segment mocking people who give bad directions exemplifies his use of exaggeration:

When people give you directions, do not you get so anal about their directions? Are you like this? [pretends to read directions aloud] 'OK, take a left at the red house,' [rolls eyes, exasperated] That's fucking *maroon*, you idiot! And why is it that the street you're looking for always has a tree from the *Mesozoic* era growing around the sign [with exaggerated hand gesture]?

Making sense of exaggeration-based humor or 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. Given the complexity and ambiguity of irony, and the fact political conservatives' psychological traits likely reduce their appreciation for such texts, we hypothesize that conservatives will be less appreciative of irony than liberals and will show a greater appreciation for exaggeration-based humor than irony.

### Sense of Humor and Measures of Humor Appreciation

In recent years, scholars have sought to understand individuals' appreciation for political humor and their motivations for its consumption. Holbert et al. (2013) offer "Affinity for Political Humor" (AFPH) designed to capture factors that guide one's affinity for political humor (incongruity, anxiety reduction, social connection, or superiority). The AFPH scale has proved useful in identifying specific motivations for the consumption and appreciation of political humor and in capturing complex relationships between humor appreciation and outcomes such as political efficacy (Becker, 2014). However, given that AFPH has been found to be higher among Democrats than Republicans (Peifer & Holbert, 2016), it seems that any baseline measures using the AFPH scale will be—by definition—correlated with political ideology. Instead, to understand appreciation for—and value placed on—humor in general, we turn to a scale that incorporates aspects of humor reception and production (Thorson & Powell, 1993).

### Hypotheses and Research Questions

Based on past literature, the following hypotheses are retested in the data:

*Hypothesis 1:* Conservatism will be negatively associated with need for cognition.

*Hypothesis 2:* Conservatism will be negatively associated with tolerance for ambiguity.

*Hypothesis 3:* Conservatism will be positively associated with *need to evaluate*.

Next, rooted in research about the complexity in comprehending ironic texts and the implicit nature of argumentation that is presented ironically, we proposed the following:

*Hypothesis 4:* Need for cognition will be positively associated with irony appreciation.

*Hypothesis 5:* Tolerance for ambiguity will be positively associated with irony appreciation

Given that conservatives are expected to score lower on need for cognition (Hypothesis 1) and tolerance for ambiguity (Hypothesis 2) than liberals, and given that both of these traits are expected to be positive predictors of irony appreciation (Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5), we deduce the following:

*Hypothesis 6:* Conservatives will show less appreciation of irony than liberals.

*Hypothesis 7:* Need for cognition will mediate the relationship between conservatism and irony appreciation.

*Hypothesis 8:* Tolerance for ambiguity will mediate the relationship between conservatism and irony appreciation.

Based on the documented finding that appreciation for humor—overall—is at least, in part, a function of a personality trait that captures creative expression of humor, we posit that:

*Hypothesis 9:* Individuals who score higher on "sense of humor" will show a greater appreciation for both exaggeration-based and ironic humor.

Finally, due to the mixed findings in existing literature, and the unexplored nature of some of

these relationships, we propose the following in the form of research questions:

*RQ1:* How does sense of humor correlate with (a) need for cognition, (b) tolerance for ambiguity, and (c) *need to evaluate*?

*RQ2:* How does sense of humor correlate with conservatism?

*RQ3:* How does conservatism relate to appreciation of exaggeration-based humor?

*RQ4:* How do (a) need for cognition, (b) tolerance for ambiguity, and (c) *need to evaluate* relate to appreciation of exaggeration-based humor?

Finally, given the burdensome task of interpreting irony correctly, we explore humor *comprehension* as a function of political ideology and psychological traits.

*RQ5:* How does conservatism relate to humor comprehension?

*RQ6:* How do (a) need for cognition, (b) tolerance for ambiguity and (c) *need to evaluate* relate to humor comprehension?

## Method

A sample was obtained through national panels maintained by Qualtrics LLC of Provo, Utah. Quota sampling was used to be certain the sample would include an adequate (and equal) proportion of liberals and conservatives—each at 45% of the sample, as well as a nationally representative distribution on age and education. The resulting sample consisted of 305 participants. The study was conducted in the first week of March, 2015.

Respondents were issued demographic and political items before viewing and responding to stimuli. Stimuli (ironic vs. exaggerated) were randomized within subject. Each respondent viewed a mix of exaggerated and ironic humorous videos (eight in total). To remove the inherent confound between satire and a liberal viewpoint, the stimuli were custom created using apolitical content. To test the role of joke *structure* rather than *content*, joke topics were selected based on nonpolitical current events (e.g., consumer, celebrity, and science news) in the news between January and February, 2015. To address concerns regarding the potential im-

PLICIT ideology of individual jokes, jokes were controlled for in the statistical models.

The author and a professional comic constructed pairs of joke scripts. Both jokes made the same argument aimed at the same target, one through *irony* and the other through *exaggeration*. Respondents viewed videos of jokes delivered by a professional male comic in the style of *Weekend Update*'s "desk jokes" from *Saturday Night Live*, with the comic seated behind a desk in a suit. A total of eight joke topics were issued in random order (topics, joke scripts, and URLs to videos are included in Appendix). Within each topic, respondents were randomized to view either the exaggerated or the ironic joke. Following the 30-sec joke video, respondents evaluated the joke (e.g., funny, smart, and enjoyable) and were asked a closed-ended item to assess joke comprehension. Finally, participants completed batteries measuring need for cognition, tolerance for ambiguity, *need to evaluate*, sense of humor, and their policy-based conservatism score. Details are presented in the following text.

## Pilot Study: Manipulation Checks

Before completing the formal study, a pilot was run in November 2014 to assess whether students trained in the operational definitions of irony and exaggeration ( $N = 44$ ) could identify these categories in joke stimuli, and to check for potential confounds (including different perceptions of "funniness" and "confusion" across condition). A total of 44 undergraduates from courses in political science and communication coded 12 joke pairs. Students were provided a codebook with definitions and examples of irony versus exaggeration. Students rated each joke on four 7-point scales: "This joke is a good example of [irony/exaggeration-based humor]." Then, "The joke was . . . [Funny/Confusing]." Mean comparisons showed that students categorized all 12 pairs of jokes correctly, with irony and exaggeration scores that significantly differed in the appropriate direction ( $p < .01$ ). No significant differences in "confusing" were found. Two pairs of jokes varied in "funny" ratings across conditions ( $p < .01$ ) and hence were removed from the study. Additionally, two pairs of jokes were removed to shorten the survey to under 15 min. This left 8 pairs of

jokes for the formal experiment (see Appendix for joke texts and video URLs).

## Measures

**Need for cognition.** Need for cognition was a 6-item scale adapted from Cacioppo et al. (1996). Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed that (*strongly agree* = 1, *strongly disagree* = 5), “*I would prefer complex to simple problems,*” “*Thinking is not my idea of fun,*” “*I find satisfaction in deliberating hard and for long hours,*” “*I only think as hard as I have to,*” “*I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems,*” “*It’s enough for me that something gets the job done; I don’t care how or why it works,*” and “*I usually end up deliberating about issues even when they do not affect me personally*” ( $\alpha = .68$ ,  $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = .65$ ).

**Tolerance for ambiguity.** Tolerance for ambiguity was adapted from Kruglanski, Peri, and Zakai (1991). In this scale, respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed (on a 1 to 5 scale) that: “*I don’t like situations that are uncertain,*” “*I dislike questions which could be answered in many different ways,*” “*When a book or film ends and it’s not clear what happens to the characters, I feel upset,*” and “*It’s frustrating to listen to someone who cannot make up his or her mind.*” ( $\alpha = .60$ ,  $M = 2.45$ ,  $SD = .71$ ).

**Need to evaluate.** Need to evaluate was adapted from Jarvis and Petty (1996). Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed (on a 1 to 5 scale) that: “*I form opinions about everything,*” “*I try to avoid taking extreme positions,*” “*I often prefer to remain neutral about complex issues,*” “*If something does not affect me, I do not usually determine if it is good or bad,*” “*I would rather have a strong opinion than no opinion at all,*” and “*I only form strong opinions when I have to.*” ( $\alpha = .70$ ,  $M = 3.24$ ,  $SD = .69$ ).

**Sense of humor.** The scale for sense of humor was adapted from Thorson and Powell (1993). Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed (on a 1 to 5 scale) with nine statements: “*Other people tell me that I say funny things,*” “*I use humor to entertain my friends,*” “*I can ease a tense situation by saying something funny,*” “*Humor helps me cope,*” “*Calling someone a ‘comedian’ is a real insult,*”

“*I dislike comics,*” “*People who tell jokes are a pain in the neck,*” “*I like a good joke,*” and “*I’m uncomfortable when everyone is cracking jokes.*” ( $\alpha = .81$ ,  $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = .62$ ).

**Political ideology (self-reported conservatism).** Participants were asked “Which of the following best describes your political ideology” (liberal, conservative, or moderate) with the follow-up for self-identified liberals and conservatives and “Would you say you are . . . very, moderately, or slightly [liberal/conservative].” The 7-point scale is coded such that high values are “very conservative” ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 2.22$ ), which we later dichotomized at 5 (*moderately conservative*) to create a binary self-reported conservatism indicator for use in the robustness models reported further in the following text.

**Policy-based conservatism.** A second measure was used to capture ideology defined not as an individual’s group identification (“I am a conservative”), but as an aggregate of their positions on political issues. Respondents were asked how much they supported or opposed (on a 5-point scale) eight policies and positions: “*Teaching evolution in schools,*” “*Increasing access to birth control,*” “*Legalized abortions,*” “*Investing in a stronger military,*” “*Censorship of inappropriate media and books,*” “*Legalization of gay marriage,*” “*Legalization of marijuana,*” and “*Giving amnesty to children of illegal immigrants*” ( $\alpha = .86$ ,  $M = 2.68$ ,  $SD = .95$ ).

**Demographics.** Demographic items included age ( $M = 40.79$ ,  $SD = 13.02$ ), years of education ( $M = 14.78$ ,  $SD = 3.08$ ), gender (male) ( $M = .34$ ,  $SD = .47$ ), race (nonwhite) ( $M = .18$ ,  $SD = .39$ ), and income in tens of thousands ( $M = 5.5$ ,  $SD = 3.75$ ).

**Party identification.** Party identification was measured on 7-point scale in which high values are strong Republican ( $M = 3.39$ ,  $SD = 2.05$ ).

**Political interest.** Political interest was measured on a 4-point scale “Generally how interested are you in politics and public affairs,” (*not at all, not very, somewhat, and extremely*;  $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = .84$ ).

**Humor appreciation.** Following each video, respondents were asked, “How much do you agree or disagree (on a 5-point scale) with the following. This joke was [funny/interesting/smart/enjoyable].” Across all eight joke pairs, ( $\alpha$  ranged between .92–.98). See Table 1 for joke by joke analysis of appreciation scores.



Table 1  
*Appreciation and Comprehension Means and Standard Deviations by Joke Topic as a Function of Humor type*

Joke topic	Irony	Exaggeration
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Joke 1: Red Bull		
Appreciation	3.17 (1.19)	3.21 (1.14)
Comprehension	80.5%	84%
( <i>N</i> )	(149)	(156)
Joke 2: Snap Chat		
Appreciation	3.20 (1.15)	3.31 (1.17)
Comprehension	83.4%	87.8%
( <i>N</i> )	(157)	(148)
Joke 3: Coffee		
Appreciation	3.19 (1.2)	3.13 (1.10)
Comprehension	84.1%	77%
( <i>N</i> )	(157)	(148)
Joke 4: Tree Contest		
Appreciation	2.87 (1.27)	2.92 (1.14)
Comprehension	83.7%	88.9%
( <i>N</i> )	(153)	(152)
Joke 5: Bear Selfies		
Appreciation	3.14 (1.19)	3.23 (1.19)
Comprehension	84.1%	89.4%
( <i>N</i> )	(145)	(160)
Joke 6: Walmart		
Appreciation	2.95 (1.27)	2.8 (1.18)
Comprehension	60%	72.7%
( <i>N</i> )	(155)	(150)
Joke 7: Mountain Dew		
Appreciation	3.15 (1.12)	3.0 (1.22)
Comprehension	87.8%	82.9%
( <i>N</i> )	(147)	(158)
Joke 8: Exxon		
Appreciation	2.39 (1.07)	3.27 (1.11)
Comprehension	85.5%	83.9%
( <i>N</i> )	(156)	(149)

**Humor comprehension.** Following each video, respondents were asked, “Which do you think comes closest to the MAIN argument being made in this joke?” followed by (a) the correct, inverted interpretation of the ironic version or (b) the incorrect, literal interpretation of the ironic version. Of the 16 jokes, 13 were correctly understood by over 80% of respondents. (See Table 1 for comprehension scores by joke).

## Results

To test our hypotheses, a series of structural equation models (SEMs) were estimated. In full, we separately estimated two primary SEMs

on subsamples corresponding to (a) ironic joke treatments and (b) exaggeration joke treatments, while using conservative policy preferences as our independent variable. Within each SEM, we modeled each of our four observed psychological trait measures as mediators of the effects of conservatism on humor appreciation. This accordingly allows us to evaluate (a) the direct effects of conservatism on each psychological trait (Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3), (b) the effects of each psychological trait on humor appreciation, and also (c) the potential mediating effects of these same traits (Hypothesis 7 and Hypothesis 8). We report path diagrams, with coefficient estimates ( $\#p < .1$ ,  $*p < .05$ ,  $**p < .01$ ,  $***p < .001$ ), for the primary policy-based conservatism models in Figures 1 and 2.

We find significant negative associations between policy-based conservatism and (a) need for cognition, (b) tolerance for ambiguity, and (c) need to evaluate (confirming Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2, and Hypothesis 3). We also find that policy-based conservatism has a significant negative association with sense of humor ( $p < .001$ ), offering some initial insight into RQ3. Next, we proposed that both need for cognition and tolerance for ambiguity would be positively associated with irony appreciation (Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5) and more generally sought to evaluate how need for cognition, tolerance for ambiguity and need to evaluate each relate to humor comprehension (RQ6). To assess these items, we first turn to the right-hand side of Figure 1 (our ironic joke subsample analysis), in which we find that need for cognition exhibits a significant ( $p < .001$ ) positive association with ironic humor appreciation (in support of Hypothesis 4). However, tolerance for ambiguity does not exhibit a significant association with ironic humor appreciation, thereby offering no support for Hypothesis 5. Regarding RQ6, we find across Figures 1 and 2 that need to evaluate is negatively and significantly ( $p < .001$ ) associated with each type of humor appreciation, whereas need for cognition is consistently positively associated with our humor appreciation measures ( $p < .001$ ). Tolerance for ambiguity is not significant in either figure.

To test for our anticipated mediation effects (Hypothesis 7 and Hypothesis 8), we use the Sobel approach—with bootstrapped confidence intervals—to evaluate the significance of the full mediation paths between policy-based con-

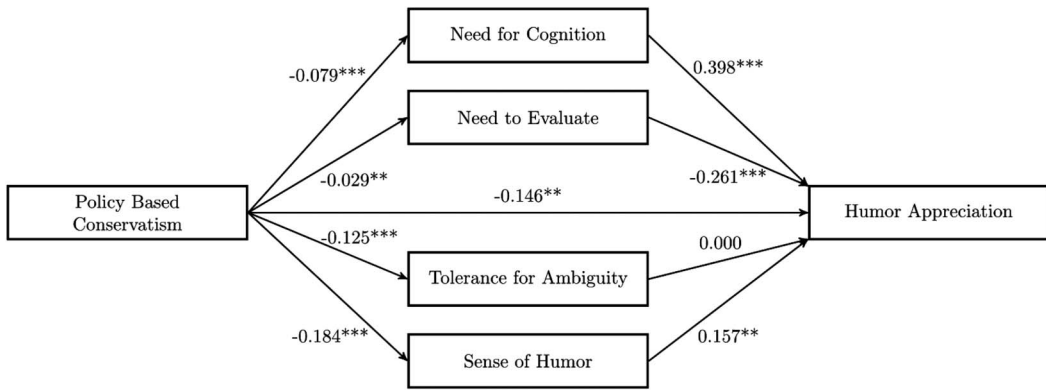


Figure 1. Ironic joke subsample structural equation model results for humor appreciation. \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

servatism, our four psychological traits, and humor appreciation. Results of the mediation analysis indicate that conservatism’s effect on irony appreciation is partially mediated by need for cognition and sense of humor, as the 95% confidence intervals (CI) for these mediating variables did not include zero: need for cognition (effect  $-0.032$ ,  $SE = 0.009$ ,  $LLCI = -0.049$ ,  $ULCI = -0.014$ ), sense of humor (effect  $-0.029$ ,  $SE = .011$ ,  $LLCI = -0.050$ ,  $ULCI = -0.008$ ). However, much of conservatism’s effects on irony appreciation remain unaccounted for, as conservatism’s *direct* effect on irony appreciation (controlling for all four possible mediators explored here) remains strong and significant (effect =  $-0.146$ ,  $p < .01$ ). We find similar results for exaggeration appreciation

(see Figure 2). Here, our SEM analysis indicates that conservatism’s effects on exaggeration appreciation are significantly mediated by need for cognition (effect  $-0.042$ ,  $SE = 0.01$ ,  $LLCI = -0.062$ ,  $ULCI = -0.022$ ), sense of humor (effect  $-0.021$ ,  $SE = 0.009$ ,  $LLCI = -0.040$ ,  $ULCI = -0.003$ ) and need to evaluate (effect  $0.018$ ,  $SE = 0.006$ ,  $LLCI = 0.006$ ,  $ULCI = 0.031$ ). As above, conservatism also continues to exhibit a significant (negative) effect on exaggeration appreciation, even after accounting for our mediation pathways (effect =  $-0.099$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Given that conservatives scored lower on need for cognition (Hypothesis 1) and tolerance for ambiguity (Hypothesis 2) than liberals, and given that need for cognition was a significant

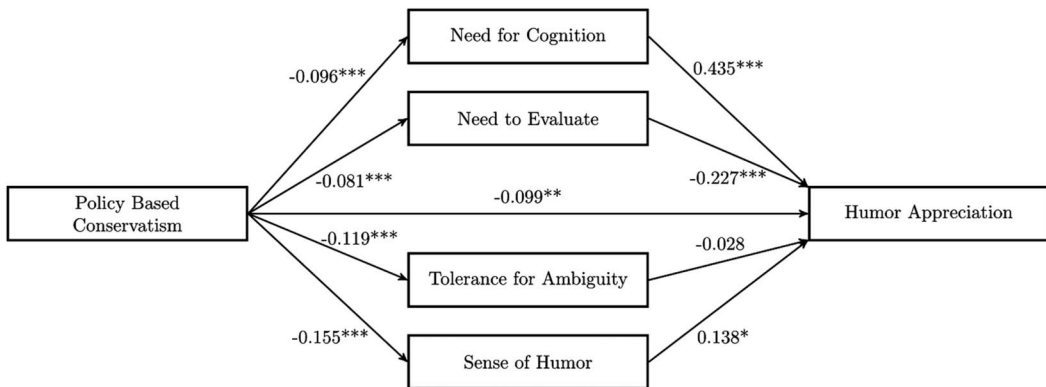


Figure 2. Exaggeration joke subsample structural equation model results for humor appreciation. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

predictor of irony appreciation (Hypothesis 4), we deduced that conservatives would be less appreciative of irony than liberals. *T* tests exploring differences in humor appreciation between self-reported liberals and conservatives for the irony ( $N = 1,219$ ) and exaggeration ( $N = 1,221$ ) samples suggest that liberals are more appreciative of both types of humor than are conservatives. Results are consistent when using self-reported measure of conservatism are consistent (See supplemental materials: Online Appendix S.B for SEMs using self-reported conservatism).

Because of the correlations between ideology, psychological traits, and sociodemographic factors, multivariate regressions were used to more fully evaluate irony and exaggeration appreciation separately with controls. Predictors include policy-based conservatism and our aforementioned psychological traits. Controls include age, education, gender, race, income, political interest, and sense of humor. Given the nested design of our experiments and data, we estimate all multivariate regressions as two-level mixed effects models that include random intercepts for Participant ID and fixed effects for joke number.<sup>1</sup> Doing so allows us to account for the repeated measures of respondent characteristics in our full samples, while controlling for the potential that our jokes vary in their levels of politicization, humor, or interpretability. In keeping with best practices in estimating such models (Carpenter, Goldstein, & Rasbash, 2003; Maas & Hox, 2004, p. 135), we use multilevel bootstraps to recover 95% confidence intervals (and averaged estimated effects) for all variables, and for use in our hypothesis tests. In Table 2, we report the levels of significance achieved based upon 1,000 bootstrapped estimates, and then also report bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals to the right of each corresponding estimate. We report comparable results with self-reported conservatism in Table S.D.1 (See supplemental materials: Online Appendix S.D).

As shown in Table 2, conservatism is a significant negative predictor of irony appreciation, even when controlling for psychological, joke-level, and sociodemographic variables, a finding that does *not* replicate which predicting exaggeration appreciation. This offers a preliminary degree of evidence for Hypothesis 6, which we evaluate more rigorously further in

the following text. Need for cognition is associated with increased appreciation for irony, whereas need to evaluate is associated with decreased irony appreciation. Younger and more politically interested respondents reported greater appreciation of irony than older and less interested respondents.

Looking at appreciation of exaggeration (RQ3 and 4), there is a significant positive coefficient for need for cognition and significant negative coefficient for need to evaluate. Regardless of humor structure, people who like thinking or who report little need to evaluate appreciate jokes *more* than their lower need for cognition, higher need to evaluate counterparts. As was the case when predicting irony appreciation, younger and more politically interested respondents were more appreciative of exaggeration. Finally, sense of humor increased appreciation for exaggeration, a finding that does not emerge predicting irony appreciation.

Recall that, in support of Hypothesis 6, we found above that conservative policy preferences were negatively and significantly associated with irony appreciation (effect  $-0.15$ ,  $LLCI = -0.27$ ,  $ULCI = -0.02$ ), which was not the case for exaggeration appreciation (effect  $-0.09$ ,  $LLCI = -0.22$ ,  $ULCI = 0.04$ ). To more fully evaluate Hypothesis 6, we must also determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between these two sets of estimates. To do so, we follow past scholars (Clogg, Petkova, & Haritou, 1995; Paternoster, Brame, Mazerolle, & Piquero, 1998) in implementing a *z* test to assess the differences in these two sets of coefficient estimates. We find that—although the corresponding *z*-value at times achieves significance in some bootstrapped models—it does not achieve significance across all 1,000 bootstrap simulations. Contra to Hypothesis 6, this implies that, although we *can* conclude that policy-based conservatism is significantly associated with irony appreciation but not significantly associated with exaggeration appreciation, we *cannot* conclude that the estimated effect for conservative policy preferences

<sup>1</sup> To do so, we omit the fixed effect indicator for Joke 1, meaning that the coefficient estimates for the remaining joke indicators are interpreted as the effect of the corresponding joke relative to Joke 1.

Table 2  
Mixed Effects Regressions of Humor Appreciation

Predictors	Irony appreciation		Exaggeration appreciation	
	Coefficient	[95% CI]	Coefficient	[95% CI]
Constant	2.68**	(1.17 ↔ 4.11)	2.51**	(1.10 ↔ 4.01)
Conservative policy preferences	-.15*	(-.27 ↔ -.02)	-.09	(-.22 ↔ .04)
Need for cognition	.2 <sup>#</sup>	(-.02 ↔ .44)	.2 <sup>#</sup>	(-.01 ↔ .43)
Need to evaluate	-.20*	(-.39 ↔ -.01)	-.26***	(-.44 ↔ -.10)
Tolerance for ambiguity	-.01	(-.18 ↔ .18)	-.05	(-.23 ↔ .13)
Sense of humor	.10	(-.09 ↔ .28)	.1 <sup>#</sup>	(-.01 ↔ .38)
Age	-.01**	(-.02 ↔ -.01)	-.01*	(-.02 ↔ -.00)
Education	-.02	(-.11 ↔ .09)	-.05	(-.14 ↔ .04)
Male	.11	(-.14 ↔ .37)	.11	(-.14 ↔ .36)
Non-white	.13	(-.16 ↔ .44)	.21	(-.08 ↔ .50)
Income	.03	(-.07 ↔ .09)	.04	(-.03 ↔ .10)
Political interest	.40***	(.25 ↔ .55)	.40***	(.26 ↔ .56)
Joke 2	-.04	(-.26 ↔ .20)	.1 <sup>#</sup>	(-.03 ↔ .39)
Joke 3	-.04	(-.25 ↔ .16)	-.01	(-.22 ↔ .21)
Joke 4	-.31*	(-.56 ↔ -.05)	-.27*	(-.50 ↔ -.05)
Joke 5	-.09	(-.30 ↔ .13)	.07	(-.14 ↔ .26)
Joke 6	-.34**	(-.60 ↔ -.10)	-.31**	(-.55 ↔ -.08)
Joke 7	-.07	(-.28 ↔ .15)	-.1 <sup>#</sup>	(-.39 ↔ .03)
Joke 8	.07	(-.14 ↔ .55)	.11	(-.13 ↔ .35)
PID (Intercept)	1.45***	(1.25 ↔ 1.69)	1.46	(1.27 ↔ 1.68)
N		1,209		1,207

Note. CI = confidence interval.  
<sup>#</sup>  $p < .1$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

is significantly different across both models and humor types.

Next, OLS regressions were run with the various political and psychological constructs as predictors of sense of humor, along with sociodemographic variables as controls after collapsing our data to the respondent level (as in this case, we do not include any joke-level measures). As indicated in Table 3, the more conservative political policy positions with which one agrees, the lower he or she scores on the sense of humor scale. This finding confirms those discussed for Figures 1 and 2 above and further suggests that this relationship holds even in the face of more extensive controls. Meanwhile, need for cognition and need to evaluate are positively associated with sense of humor. Hence, motivation to think *combined with* motivation to categorize elements as good or bad would be most strongly associated with greater sense of humor. These results hold when using self-identified conservatism in Table S.D.3 (see supplementary materials: Online Appendix S.D).

To explore RQ5 and 6 regarding the predictors of humor comprehension, we return to our

full respondent-joke level samples, which we again split into separate ironic-joke and exaggeration-joke samples. We estimate a second series of SEMs on each subsample, with conservative policy preferences as our independent variable, humor comprehension as our dependent variable, and our psychological variables as potential mediators of the effects of conser-

Table 3  
Multivariate OLS Regressions of Sense of Humor

Predictors	Coefficient	SE
Constant	3.15***	(.46)
Conservative Policy Preferences	-.15***	(.36)
Need for cognition	.16**	(.05)
Need to evaluate	.18**	(.05)
Tolerance for ambiguity	.02	(.05)
Age	-.00	(.00)
Education	.03	(.04)
Male	.00	(.08)
Non-white	-.14	(.09)
Income	-.03	(.03)
R <sup>2</sup>		.18
N		302

\*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

vatism on humor comprehension (see Figures 3 and 4). Focusing on the right-hand side of Figure 3 (irony comprehension), we find that need to evaluate and sense of humor exhibit positive associations with irony comprehension. Counterintuitively, need for cognition exhibits a significant ( $p < .1$ ) negative association with ironic humor comprehension, whereas tolerance for ambiguity exhibits no significant effect. Figure 4 (exaggeration comprehension) yields similar results: need to evaluate and sense of humor are positively and significantly associated with exaggeration comprehension, whereas need for cognition is negative and significant ( $p < .05$ ).

Accounting for our mediators, conservatism exhibits a negative *and significant* direct association with exaggeration comprehension and a negative *but not significant* association with ironic humor comprehension. In the case of irony comprehension, our mediation tests (with a  $p < .05$  threshold) also suggest that sense of humor mediates the effects of conservative policy preferences on humor comprehension (effect  $-0.011$ ,  $se = .004$ ,  $LLCI = -.019$ ,  $ULCI = -.003$ ). For exaggeration comprehension, we find that need for cognition (effect  $.004$ ,  $se = .002$ ,  $LLCI = .000$ ,  $ULCI = .008$ ) and sense of humor (effect  $-0.010$ ,  $se = 0.003$ ,  $LLCI = -.016$ ,  $ULCI = -.004$ ) each significantly mediate the effects of conservative policy preferences on humor comprehension.

We then used multivariate logistic mixed effect models to assess our binary comprehension variable, while including random intercepts for respondent ID and fixed effects for the joke (see Table 4). These results indicate that policy-based

conservatism is a significant negative predictor of exaggeration comprehension but exhibits no significant relationship with irony comprehension. Nevertheless, the  $z$  test discussed above also indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between our estimates of the effects of policy-based conservatism across the exaggeration and irony comprehension models. Meanwhile, the two constructs most indicative of ability and motivation to thoughtfully process information (education and need for cognition, respectively) are again each *negatively* correlated with *both* forms of humor comprehension. The only constructs positively associated with humor comprehension are need to evaluate and sense of humor; meaning the higher an individual scored on the sense of humor and need to evaluate scales, the greater proportion of jokes they understood correctly. Table S.D.2 (See supplementary materials Online Appendix S.D) replicates this analysis when using self-identified conservatism, generally with comparable findings to those discussed here.

## Discussion

This project presents a novel experimental assessment of the effects of political ideology and humor structure (ironic vs. exaggerated) on humor appreciation and comprehension as a function of psychological traits of the audience. Building upon research on the psychological correlates of political ideology (Jost et al., 2003, 2009; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996), we reasoned that the distinct psychological profiles of liberals and conservatives account for differences in aesthetic and

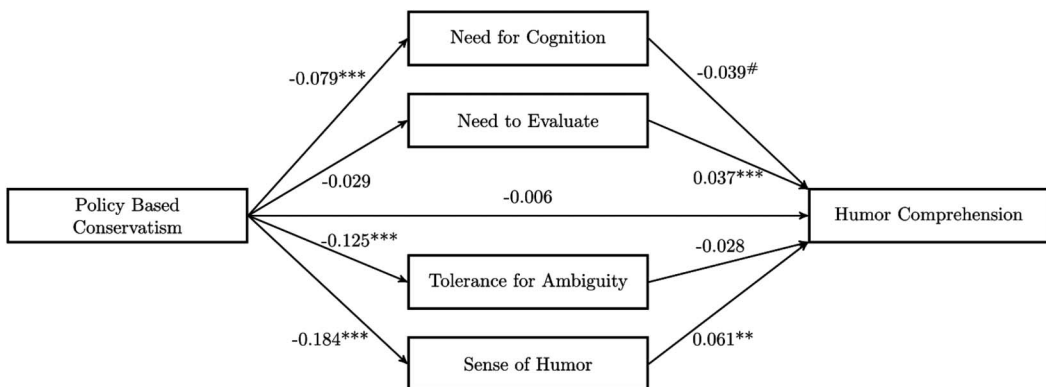


Figure 3. Ironic joke subsample structural equation model results for humor comprehension.  
 \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

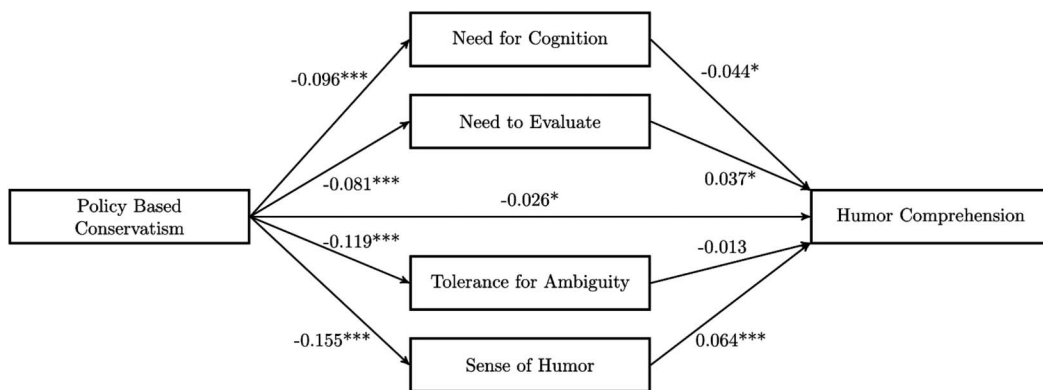


Figure 4. Exaggeration joke subsample structural equation model results for humor comprehension. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

rhetorical preferences. Applying this to an examination of appreciation for humor, we find that conservatism is associated with lower appreciation of both irony and exaggeration. Importantly, political ideology’s effects on humor appreciation were consistent across humor types. This suggests that the structural distinction explicated here, between irony (rooted in cognitive inversion) and exaggeration (rooted in valence-heightening),

might be a distinction without a difference. As measured here, ironic and exaggeration-based jokes produced comparable effects, through essentially the same mediating processes.

The explanatory mechanism proposed at the outset posited that conservatives’ lower need for cognition and lower tolerance for ambiguity would dampen their motivation to process and appreciate cognitively taxing ironic jokes. Al-

Table 4  
Mixed Effects Logistic Regressions of Humor Comprehension

Predictors	Irony comprehension		Exaggeration comprehension	
	Coefficient	[95% CI]	Coefficient	[95% CI]
Constant	3.78*	(.31 ↔ 8.40)	5.33**	(2.37 ↔ 10.75)
Conservative policy preferences	-.15	(-.49 ↔ .16)	-.45**	(-.84 ↔ -.11)
Need for cognition	-.49*	(-1.06 ↔ -.01)	-.52*	(-1.14 ↔ -.01)
Need to evaluate	.4#	(-.08 ↔ .91)	.4#	(-.02 ↔ 1.04)
Tolerance for ambiguity	-.21	(-.63 ↔ .23)	-.11	(-.57 ↔ .34)
Sense of humor	.60*	(.09 ↔ 1.12)	.5#	(-.02 ↔ 1.05)
Age	.00	(-.02 ↔ -.03)	.01	(-.02 ↔ .04)
Education	-.2#	(-.61 ↔ .01)	-.2#	(-.71 ↔ .01)
Male	-.21	(-.90 ↔ .45)	-.19	(-.87 ↔ .49)
Non-white	-.27	(-1.08 ↔ .54)	-.85*	(-1.74 ↔ -.09)
Income	.17	(-.05 ↔ .52)	.18	(-.08 ↔ .56)
Joke 2	.18	(-.88 ↔ 1.32)	.65	(-.37 ↔ 1.84)
Joke 3	.35	(-.62 ↔ 1.38)	-.55	(-1.61 ↔ .41)
Joke 4	.25	(-.75 ↔ 1.31)	.53	(-.52 ↔ 1.71)
Joke 5	.30	(-.77 ↔ 1.40)	.69	(-.30 ↔ 1.85)
Joke 6	-1.54**	(-2.73 ↔ -.58)	-.9#	(-2.00 ↔ .09)
Joke 7	.78	(-.38 ↔ 1.96)	.12	(-.91 ↔ 1.18)
Joke 8	-2.91***	(-4.10 ↔ 1.94)	.15	(-.90 ↔ 1.25)
PID (Intercept)	1.74***	(1.32 ↔ 2.21)	2.01***	(1.50 ↔ 2.76)
N		1209		1207

#  $p < .1$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

though need for cognition was a significant mediator of conservatism's effects on appreciation of *both* forms of humor, tolerance for ambiguity was not. Instead, need for cognition and sense of humor were the only two mediators between political ideology and humor appreciation. In sum, conservatives rated both types of joke stimuli as less funny, smart, enjoyable, and interesting than did liberals, a difference that is partly explained by the cognitive activity required to decode the humor, and in part by the fact that conservatives value humor production and reception less than liberals. The fact that appreciation for *both* forms of humor was affected by need for cognition and sense of humor indicates that perhaps hyperbole and irony *are* related phenomena that engage similar processing pathways, as advanced by linguists like Gibbs and Colston (2012).

Although tolerance for ambiguity did not predict humor appreciation, future research should not abandon this avenue of inquiry. The tolerance for ambiguity measure used in these analyses only reached an  $\alpha$  of .6, certainly not ideal for a key mediating construct. In addition, the items used in the measure included standard items and some new items designed to capture tolerance for ambiguous or open-ended texts, two dimensions that might be best operationalized separately. A more detailed question battery would allow future researchers to have a more reliable measure that could lead to more robust analyses.

The stimuli created for this experiment were designed to be apolitical in topic. However, since satire requires a judgment, all joke stimuli had to make an argument (consistent across conditions). Although the joke topics were not *explicitly* political, the arguments they make (about scientific discoveries, advertising, or consumer news) may be rooted in some world view such as "people should take responsibility for themselves." Hence, even if we avoided *explicit* ideological bias, our stimuli may have activated broad political belief systems. Additionally, the joke stimuli were designed to mimic a "desk joke" style comic delivery to maximize ecological validity. It is possible that the appearance of a comedian seated behind a desk might have cued the audience into "seeing" the content as liberal simply because the desk joke format is associated with liberal comics like Jon Stewart or John Oliver. In the future, researchers should consider using audio- or text-based stimuli to untangle to what extent the desk joke visual might cue a liberal ideological interpretation.

A related issue stems from the order in which items were administered to participants, with the joke stimuli coming first, followed by the psychological and political measures. If, as discussed above, our jokes inadvertently signaled a liberal ideological perspective to participants, might it be the case that their subsequent responses to the "sense of humor" items were differentially affected by that exposure? To rule out the possibility that the lower sense of humor found among our conservative participants was not merely an artifact of "order effects," a post hoc analysis was run on a sample of 184 undergraduates. (See supplementary materials: Appendix S.C for methods and results). Results show the poststimuli administration of the sense of humor scale had no effect on subjects either (a) independently or (b) differentially for our sample's more conservative respondents.

Finally, turning to comprehension, the counterintuitive finding that need for cognition *reduced* joke comprehension was puzzling. However, post hoc analyses revealed that this relationship was likely an artifact of the positive association between need for cognition and sense of humor. Sense of humor appears to drive humor comprehension, whereas need for cognition's negative effects on comprehension were not particularly robust. The importance of the "sense of humor" measure across models is noteworthy, as it points to a trait that captures a unique preference for the production and reception of this unique rhetorical form that is not fully explained by the other political or psychological traits.

These findings add to the growing body of evidence, illustrating a link between political ideology, psychological traits, and appreciation for different types of information and stimuli (Wiersema et al., 2012; Wilson et al., 1973). Although sense of humor and need for cognition accounted for some of the effects of ideology on humor appreciation, much of the impact of conservatism on appreciation remains unaccounted for in these models. This unexplained variance presents an opportunity for researchers to explore the relationship between ideology, psychology, humor, and broader questions about rhetorical preferences.

Over the past decade, countless journalists have asked "Why does every 'conservative *Daily Show*' fail?" (Hesse, 2013). Our results suggest that some of the liberal leanings of political humor rest in the complexity of satirical texts and in the different value that liberals and conservatives

place on humor production and reception. By removing political topics from experimental stimuli, we have ruled out the argument that “political satire is liberal because it challenges the status quo.” When looking only at humor’s structure, rather than its target, conservatives are still significantly less likely to appreciate humor than liberals. It seems that the lack of conservative political satire is not merely about conservatives’ reluctance to challenge governing institutions or the existing social order. Conservative political voices today *often* do *both* of those things. Instead, the lack of conservative satire likely stems from differences in the vehicles and rhetorical forms that liberals and conservatives use to issue such critiques. For conservatives, humor is simply not their preferred vehicle.

In an era of concern about the negative consequences of political polarization (Stroud, 2011), it may seem troublesome to suggest that the left and the right have distinct rhetorical preferences. If our psychological profiles encourage us to prefer different languages, how will we talk to each other? Yet, to bridge a partisan rhetorical divide, we must understand why it is there. Through the application of political psychology to the study of rhetorical preferences, we can begin to identify the roots of these differences in ways that allows us to understand the “other.” Maybe then we will finally learn how best to talk to folks across the aisle.

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## Appendix

### Experimental Stimuli Transcripts

#### 1. RED BULL

##### Irony

Soft drink company, Red Bull, was sued for false advertising because their slogan, “Red Bull gives you wings” fooled consumers into thinking the drink would increase their performance abilities. *Shame* on Red Bull for misleading us *all this time*. And *shame* on Dunkin’ Donuts for *their* misleading slogan, “America Runs on Dunkin.” Imagine how many million Americans are victims of this evil ploy: pumping coffee and crullers into their gas tank every morning. It’s *unjust*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnN08KOW4BM>

##### Exaggeration

Soft drink, company, Red Bull was sued for false advertising because their slogan, “Red Bull gives you wings” fooled consumers into thinking the drink would their increase performance abilities. *Great*. Now some *moron* is going to sue Dunkin’ Donuts because they heard the slogan “America Runs on Dunkin,” and went out and pumped their gas tank full of coffee and crullers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0fCdJlJk10>

#### 2. SNAPCHAT

##### Irony

200,000 personal photos shared using the app, Snapchat, were stolen and leaked online. This has many Snapchat users upset that the app did not do more to protect their private information. It is surely a *sad* day for America when a *grown man* cannot take a picture of his penis and share it with his friends *without* being made to look stupid.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvIX7JwqO5w>

##### Exaggeration

200,000 personal photos shared using the app, Snapchat, were stolen and leaked online. This has many Snapchat users upset that the app did not do more to protect their private information. That’s right. *Grown men* are taking pictures of their penises, sharing them with friends online, and now are complaining that it’s the *software app* that is making them look stupid? *Really?* The *software app*?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J125ZCOJg7k>

#### 3. COFFEE

##### Irony

A new study shows that drinking 140 cups of coffee a day will kill a person. Well, I don’t know about you, but *I* certainly can’t get going in the morning without at least my first 82 cups of coffee.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h08Esw24pRM>

(Appendix continues)

## Appendix (continued)

Exaggeration	A new study shows that drinking 140 cups of coffee a day will kill a person. A related study shows that taking 140 vitamins in a day, consuming 140 bananas in a day, or consuming 140 of <i>anything</i> in a day will also kill a person. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdSsXBpEKrM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdSsXBpEKrM</a>
4. TREE CONTEST	
Irony	The UK is currently holding a contest for The Finest Tree in England. And if you think <i>that</i> sounds exciting, just wait for the <i>talent portion</i> of the competition! <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkM0cMomo6Q">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkM0cMomo6Q</a>
Exaggeration	The UK is currently holding a contest for The Finest Tree in England. This takes the prize for the third most <i>bor-ing</i> competition in England, coming in just ahead of “The Priest Paint in Manchester” and “How Wet Will the Rain be Today?” <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJKafsRsfDg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJKafsRsfDg</a>
5. BEAR SELFIES	
Irony	The US Forest Service issued an advisory to park goers warning them to stop taking selfies with bears. Well, excuse <i>me</i> , US Forest Service! <i>How</i> am I supposed to enjoy my vacation if I can’t document <i>every moment</i> leading up to my own mauling? <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ss49zdnBqM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ss49zdnBqM</a>
Exaggeration	The US Forest Service issued an advisory to park goers warning them to stop taking selfies with bears. This would be a helpful advisory to the .001% of the population who would actually <i>want</i> to take of photo of themselves with a <i>bear</i> . If only those people could <i>read</i> . <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dayt-lAumHg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dayt-lAumHg</a>
6. WALMART	
Irony	Walmart came under intense criticism after their website labeled women’s extra-large Halloween costumes, as “Fat Girl Costumes.” I don’t see what the big deal is. Look at the popularity of their <i>other</i> costume categories: “White Trash Costumes,” “Costumes That Make You Look Totally Gay” and “Things Black People Wear.” <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YSXqIJabZY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YSXqIJabZY</a>
Exaggeration	Walmart came under intense criticism after their website labeled women’s extra-large Halloween costumes, as “Fat Girl Costumes.” But that’s to be expected from a company whose <i>other</i> Halloween categories include “White Trash Costumes,” “Costumes That Make You Look Totally Gay” and “Things Black People Wear.” <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKxm4KCs_W_Y">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKxm4KCs_W_Y</a>
7. MOUNTAIN DEW	
Irony	Mountain Dew has a new Doritos-flavored soda. I don’t know what makes me <i>prouder!</i> That I live in a time when we have the vision to put a man on the moon, or that I live in a time when we can infuse syrupy sweet soda with the flavors of maltodextrin, MSG, and disodium guanylate that people <i>love</i> . <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnygxXb-Kno">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnygxXb-Kno</a>
Exaggeration	Mountain Dew has a new Doritos-flavored soda. I don’t know what makes me <i>more</i> convinced that humanity is fundamentally <i>doomed</i> : that I live in a time when we have chosen to infuse syrupy sweet soda with the flavors of maltodextrin, MSG, and disodium guanylate? Or that people are going to drink this stuff by the <i>gallon</i> . <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOndsehWvww">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOndsehWvww</a>
8. EXXON	
Irony	Exxon-Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson announced that there is enough oil in the ground to last 100 years. This is <i>perfect!</i> Now, Exxon has <i>100 years</i> to figure out how to reuse all the oil they’ve <i>already</i> spilled into the ocean. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I28d-PVUKQI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I28d-PVUKQI</a>
Exaggeration	Exxon-Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson announced that there is enough oil in the ground to last 100 years. He added, it would probably have lasted even longer, if we hadn’t accidentally spilled <i>so much of it</i> into the ocean. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Djnd4fNAqg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Djnd4fNAqg</a>

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