

## The Persuasive Force of Political Humor

### Abstract

*Political humor is ubiquitous in some contexts and forbidden in others, and yet scholars have described political humor as unreliable and attempts to control its meaning as futile. How do speakers design political humor to influence audiences, and why do they expect those designs to work? We argue that speakers design persuasive political humor by making visible their intent and undertaking obligations to act in accord with specific norms. We explain how designs constrain audiences from discounting the message as just a joke and create reasons to scrutinize arguments.*

**Key words:** Political humor, Argument scrutiny, Normative pragmatic theory, Communication design theory, Anna Howard Shaw

Beth Innocenti (corresponding author)  
Department of Communication Studies  
University of Kansas  
1440 Jayhawk Blvd.  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
785-864-9018  
bimanole@ku.edu

Elizabeth Miller  
Department of Communication Studies  
University of Kansas  
1440 Jayhawk Blvd.  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
mille264@miamioh.edu

## **The Persuasive Force of Political Humor**

Political humor is ubiquitous in some contexts and forbidden in others, indicating belief that humor has persuasive force and affects the legitimacy of political institutions and political participation (Hart & Hartelius, 2007; Hariman, 2008; Kuhlmann, 2012). And yet scholars have described political humor as not “a reliable tool” (Laineste, 2013, p. 489) and “[a]ttempts to control or fix its meaning [as] futile” (Rossing, 2012, p. 53). These circumstances beg the questions: How do speakers design political humor to influence audiences, and why do they expect those designs to work? To answer these questions, we analyze the persuasive design of political humor in Anna Howard Shaw’s (1915a) “The Fundamental Principle of a Republic,” a paradigm case of civic speech advocating political action. Shaw deploys political humor as part of a broader campaign to influence male voters in New York to vote “yes” on a referendum to change the state constitution to permit women to vote. We argue that Shaw designs persuasive political humor by making visible her intent and undertaking obligations to act in accord with specific norms. We explain how her designs constrain voters from discounting the message as just a joke and create reasons to scrutinize arguments.

To make the case, we first review social scientific and rhetorical theories of political humor in order to specify how integrating communication design theory (Aakhus, 2007; Jackson & Aakhus, 2014) and normative pragmatic theory (Goodwin, 2011; Innocenti, 2011; Jacobs, 2000) complements them. We then describe a basic model of the persuasive force of communication design strategies. We use the model to analyze how Shaw designs political humor, and conclude by discussing theoretical and analytical implications, and directions for future research.

## **Social scientific and rhetorical accounts of political humor**

Political humor can take any number of forms including jokes, satire, ridicule, parody, and cartoons, and can be deployed in any number of contexts, such as late-night entertainment television, presidential debates, and political demonstrations.<sup>1</sup> We base our inquiry on a campaign speech designed to influence voters to vote “yes” on a referendum to change a state constitution. A core strategy of campaign speeches is reason-giving; it would be incoherent to say, “I urge you to vote ‘yes’ on the referendum, but I cannot give you reasons why you ought to vote ‘yes.’” We assume that speakers deploy political humor to enhance the conditions for the favorable reception of their arguments (Jacobs, 2000).

At the same time, cognitive-response-based research suggests that political humor can reduce individuals’ motivation or ability to scrutinize arguments. Reduced motivation has been explained by the discounting cue hypothesis: Receivers may discount the message as “just a joke” (Nabi, Moyer-Gusé, & Byrne, 2007) and so have lower motivation to scrutinize arguments. Reduced ability has been explained by the resource allocation theory: Receivers may allocate so much cognitive effort to processing the humor that they have fewer cognitive resources and therefore lower ability to scrutinize arguments (Young, 2008). LaMarre, Landreville, Young, and Gilkerson (2014) have followed Polk, Young, and Holbert (2009) in describing different implications for agency based on whether the discounting cue hypothesis or resource allocation theory accounts for why message receivers do not scrutinize humorous political arguments. They posit that the discounting cue hypothesis assigns agency to the receiver to decide whether the humorous political argument deserves serious scrutiny. They hold that the resource allocation hypothesis assigns most of the agency to the creator who decides how complex and therefore

cognitively draining a humorous political argument ought to be.

However, the reverse account of agency is equally plausible. First, in the case of the discounting cue hypothesis, a measure of agency remains in the hands of the creator to design a humorous political argument that pressures receivers to take it seriously. For example, a creator could counteract discounting of a humorous message by designing a conclusion that reestablishes serious intent (Nabi, Moyer-Gusé, & Byrne, 2007). Second, in the case of the resource allocation theory, even if the humor is complex, receivers can decide the arguments deserve scrutiny and allocate effort to scrutinize them. Consequently, we generate a model of the persuasive force of political humor that distributes agency between senders and receivers, one that accounts for how senders can design political humor to influence receivers, including individuals who are short on motivation or ability to scrutinize arguments.

Understanding how individuals cognitively process political humor does not fully explain how political humor is designed to influence audiences and coordinate public action. First, individual cognitions may be irrelevant to public action. Laineste (2013) has noted the tenuous link between reactions to jokes and actual attitudes and behaviors. For example, a woman may not display that she is offended by a sexist joke, because “traditionally, women have been expected to identify with comedy which insults us, so as to ‘belong,’ to be seen as having a sense of humor and the shared values this sensibility implies” (Merrill, 1988, p. 274). In addition, any number of contextual variables needs to be taken into account in order to predict how individuals will respond to a humorous political message. When joke tellers justify flops with, “I guess you had to be there,” they indicate the weight of context (Lengbeyer, 2005, p. 320). And as Meyer (2000) has noted, “attempts at humor that meet with success depend directly on the specific audience and the situation in question” (p. 316). For example, “[a] male-identified audience may

not perceive feminist humor to be amusing, just as a feminist audience may not perceive sexist humor to be amusing. Other audience variables, such as race and sexuality, are equally relevant to an audience's interpretation of an[d] response to attempts at humor" (Shugart, 2001, p. 98). The deeply situational nature of humor may account for inconsistent findings about the persuasive effects of humorous messages generally (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; O'Keefe, 2002), and the apparently "minimal" persuasive effects of political satire specifically (Holbert, 2013, p. 310).

Analysis of situated deployments of strategies is a traditional domain of rhetorical theory. Rhetorical theories of humor describe broad functions that strategies can potentially perform. In this branch of theorizing, Meyer (2000; see also Martin, 2004; Rhea, 2012) has provided a comprehensive and parsimonious approach to analyzing functions of political humor. Meyer (2000) has argued that rhetors use humor to perform two basic functions—unification and division—resulting in “four ‘theories of use,’ or key functions of humor in messages” (p. 311): identification (building support by identifying message creators with their audiences), clarification (encapsulating message creators' views in memorable forms), enforcement (leveling criticism while maintaining a degree of identification with the audience), and differentiation (contrasting message creators with opponents, or some views or social groups from other views or social groups). Meyer's (2000) theory describes broad functions of a wide range of political humor. But any rhetorical transaction can be theorized in terms of unification and division. If there were either absolute unification or absolute division, there would be no strife, and thus no need for rhetoric. It is precisely in the ambiguity of unification and division—the unspecifiability of where one ends and the other begins—that there is an invitation to rhetoric (Burke, 1969). Descriptions of broad, potential functions of political humor do not explain how speakers

actually design humor to influence situated audiences and coordinate public action.

Ridicule is a humor style that can also be described in terms of the broad, potential functions of unification and division. Ridicule is divisive humor that simultaneously unifies (Meyer, 2000). Ridiculing generally involves impugning others' conduct and making them the butt of the joke, so it performs additional functions. First, it performs a "hierarchization" function as it "reflects and reinforces a dynamic of status ascription within a given domain of social interaction" (Cowan, 2005, para. 33). Second, it performs a "stabilization" function as it "preempts or reduces deviance within both the aggressor group and the aggressor audience" (Cowan, 2005, para. 33). But this kind of broad, functional account does not explain how speakers design ridicule to influence situated social actors, and at the same time constrain them from dismissing the ridicule as irrelevant, mean-spirited, or untrue.

How speakers design messages to influence audiences to "take" political humor in specific ways deserves scholarly attention. Humor is a slippery strategy precisely because of the ambiguity and wiggle room that it affords. Speakers may design political humor to create a carnivalesque context in which they can insult or challenge authority with impunity (Hariman, 2008; Meddaugh, 2010; Turton-Turner, 2007). They do so by leaving themselves wiggle room to duck behind a "just joking" or "lighten up" defense, thus putting the audience at risk of criticism for not having a sense of humor (Bing, 2004; Case & Lippard, 2009). But, other things being equal, if speakers leave themselves wiggle room to discount their message as just a joke, the audience is also free to discount it with impunity. Presumably, speakers make special efforts to influence how audiences "take" humor, perhaps designing humor to constrain audiences from discounting their message as just a joke. Analyzing these special efforts heeds the call for "[e]xploring the conditions under which [persuasive] effects are likely to occur, particularly in

more naturalistic environments” (Nabi, Moyer-Gusé, & Byrne, 2007, p. 51), and supplements rhetorical accounts of broad functions of political humor by explaining the persuasive design of situated political humor.

### **Communication design and normative pragmatic theory**

To account for the persuasive force of political humor, we follow researchers such as Jackson (1998), Jacobs (2000, 2006), and Tracy (2012) in conceiving context as communicatively designed. Consciously or not, communicators deploy strategies to enhance the conditions for the favorable reception and influence of their messages (Jacobs, 2000). In what follows, we outline normative pragmatic theory and the assumptions it shares with communication design theory (Aakhus, 2007). Integrating communication design theory and normative pragmatic theory can account for the persuasive force of political humor. Both explain how communicators deploy strategies to design a context where even reluctant audiences—individuals short on motivation or ability to act—are influenced to act as the speaker intends. This mode of theory construction is based on the assumption that “designs for communication embody theories of communication and [that] communication-design work is an activity of theorizing communication” (Aakhus, 2007, p. 115). Our goal is not to recommend communication redesign but instead to explain how speakers design political humor to coordinate public action. Articulating a speaker’s design theory is based on the assumption that “[c]ommunication design is natural, describable activity that is evident in ordinary communicators’ creativity in language use and capacity to exploit mutual knowledge and principles of interaction” (Aakhus, 2007, p. 113).

Jackson and Aakhus (2014) have described communication design theory as a third way

of knowing that supplements and bridges empirical and humanistic accounts of communication. Likewise, the term “normative pragmatic” was first used by van Eemeren (1990) to describe a mode of theorizing that aims to transcend purely normative and purely descriptive approaches to argumentation (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson, & Jacobs, 1993). The account is “normative” because it accounts for persuasive influence based on norms that strategies bring to bear in a situation, and “pragmatic” because it refers to actual communication practices. Normative pragmatic theories have been developed to account for the persuasive force of speech acts such as proposing and accusing, and for design features including graphics and appeals to authority and fear (Goodwin, 2002, 2011; Innocenti, 2011; Jacobs, 2000, 2006; Kauffeld, 1998, 2001, 2009).

The basic normative pragmatic model comprises reasoning that accounts for why speakers can expect design strategies to influence audiences.

1. A strategy changes the context by making visible the speaker’s (a) intent and (b) concomitant obligation to live up to some norm.
2. The obligation is reciprocal. Both speaker and audience can hold each other accountable for seeing the norm and living up to it.
3. As a result, the strategy creates two reasons to be influenced.
  - a. The audience can reason that the speaker would not risk criticism for failing to meet the obligation unless she planned to live up to it.
  - b. The speaker can reason that the audience will be influenced in order to avoid criticism for failing to live up to the obligation.

To illustrate the basic model, consider why theater personnel can expect the design strategy of setting up a line divider to influence even patrons who are short on motivation or ability to line



up. The line divider changes the context by making visible (a) theater personnel's intent and (b) concomitant obligation to act in accord with norms of queuing. The line divider creates two reasons for patrons to line up. First, it licenses patrons to presume theater personnel would not set up a line divider unless they intended to act in accord with norms of queuing. In ordinary circumstances, theater personnel cannot plausibly, coherently deny the intent or obligation. If ticket-takers let their friends move to the front of the line, other patrons could justifiably say, "Jerks!" and perhaps even disregard the line divider and enter en masse. The obligation to act in accord with norms of queuing is reciprocal. Making intent visible and undertaking an obligation to act in accord with norms of queuing constrains patrons from ignoring the line divider. In ordinary circumstances they cannot say with impunity, "I didn't know there was a line" or "I didn't see the line." Thus, the line divider creates a second reason for them to be influenced: To avoid being called jerks and to display that they are acting fairly, patrons can line up. The same basic model explains why the design strategy of saying, "Line up!" influences patrons to line up. Of course both personnel and patrons can accept risks of criticism and disregard norms of queuing, or try to explain why the norms do not apply in the circumstances. Persuasive force is not compulsion. But attempts to resist or dodge persuasive force indicate that design strategies have generated persuasive force.

To show that the model accounts for the persuasive force of political humor, we analyze designs of political humor that constrain audiences from discounting the message as a whole as just a joke, and that influence them to take seriously some instances of humor and to not take seriously other instances of humor.

## **Method**

To illustrate the explanatory power of a normative pragmatic model of persuasive force, we analyze the design of a well-circumscribed, widely-circulated case of complex communication, renowned for humor, designed to influence voters. Anna Howard Shaw delivered “her masterpiece” (Campbell 1989, p. 159), “The Fundamental Principle of a Republic,” many times in many venues, and a transcript of this speech was published in the *Ogdensburg Advance and St. Lawrence Weekly Democrat*. Shaw’s performances are tiles in the “mosaic” (Becker 1971, p. 33) of public messages comprising campaigns for and against the New York state referendum to change the state constitution to permit women to vote. In this speech, Shaw designs political humor to influence male voters to vote “yes” on the referendum. What is her design theory? Why does she expect her designs to influence voters?

We base our account on both Shaw’s talk and her “talk about talk” (Craig, 2005)—her metadiscourse about how her strategies are designed to influence voters. As Jackson and Aakhus (2014) have noted, good design work is reflective. Situated social actors may explicitly reflect on why their messages ought to influence other social actors. Our analysis of metadiscourse is based on the assumption that “[e]ach design for communication hypothesizes how communication works and how it ought to work through its affordances and constraints” (Aakhus, 2007, p. 114; Aakhus & Laureij, 2012). To identify affordances and constraints, we reconstruct the communicative context based primarily on the February 7, 1915 anti-suffrage editorial in the *New York Times* and the six pages, eight columns each, of letters to the editor in response to it. We supplement these sources with other newspapers and periodicals that include messages available to readers who want to be able to say they are well-informed about political issues. These sources also include reflections about why specific message designs ought to influence voters.

We focus on how Shaw designs ridicule, because ridicule is the characteristic form of humor she uses. For example, in her autobiography published during the 1915 referendum campaign, Shaw (1915c) recalls what she describes as an “amusing” reply by an anti-suffragist to a suffragist’s challenge to a debate: The anti-suffragist “declined the challenge, explaining that for anti-suffragists to appear upon a public platform would be a direct violation of the principle for which they stood—which was the protection of female modesty! Recalling this, and the present hectic activity of the anti-suffragists, one must feel that they have either abandoned their principle or widened their views” (p. 154). Shaw makes the same point in an April 1915 speech in Alabama: “When I was in the campaign last year, I was followed from place to place by an anti-suffrage speaker from New Jersey. She was a very agreeable young woman who had left her husband and home and gone forth to tell women that their place is at home, that they have not time to vote, and that they must not go out in public because it is unwomanly!” (Shaw, 1915b, p. 230). Two months later in “The Fundamental Principle of a Republic,” Shaw (1915a) mentions the New Jersey anti-suffragist again: “She left her husband home for three months to tell the women that their place was at home, and that they could not leave home long enough to go to the ballot box” (p. 451). What a reviewer of Alice Duer Miller’s 1915 book of poems ridiculing anti-suffrage arguments writes about Miller could have been written about Shaw: “[H]er perception of the absurd [. . .] will afford cause for merriment among those who are on her side of the suffrage argument. Those who are on the other side are likely to feel different about it” (“Are women people,” 1915). Nonetheless, a newspaper account of a later speech reports, “Dr. Shaw read from anti-suffrage literature and raised many a laugh” (“Mayor,” 1915). Shaw certainly intended to influence audiences to appreciate the unintended humor of self-contradictory anti-suffrage arguments and apparently did so with some success.

## Analysis

### *Designing political humor to constrain discounting of the speech as a whole*

Opponents of woman suffrage attempted to discount the advocacy of “[t]he average suffragist of the present day” who is “merely a chronic seeker of the ‘limelight’” (“Like the ‘limelight,’” 1915; “Vast majority opposed,” 1915). Seeking the limelight is such a serious criticism that even suffrage advocate Carrie Chapman Catt (1915) charges anti-suffragists with standing “[i]n the center of the stage where the limelight is most brilliant.” Shaw may have been particularly vulnerable to message discounting on these grounds. Advance notices of her 1915 speeches report, “Dr. Shaw is famous for her wit. Her speeches abound with humor, and her audience is promised not only one of the most enlightening speeches on a vital question but one of the most enjoyable” (“Dr. Anna H. Shaw,” 1915); and Shaw “is famous for her humor. Her audiences always declare they have a better time, listening to her speeches, than when attending the best theatres, and that she is as enjoyable as she is interesting” (“Mass meeting in Newark,” 1915; see also “Local items,” 1915; “Mass meeting to-night,” 1915). Following the referendum campaign, one periodical summarizes her style: “Subtle humor, quick wit, broad sympathy, intense conviction, keen sense of justice, and sharp thrust of satire have been her chosen fighting weapons” (“Anna Howard Shaw, inveterate,” 1915). What design strategies does Shaw deploy to constrain voters from discounting her political humor as mere spectacle? The key features are making visible (1) her intent to persuade men to vote for woman suffrage and (2) concomitant obligation to make a responsible case.

Shaw (1915a) begins her speech by asserting that she came to the same venue twenty-one years ago “for exactly the same purpose”: “to persuade American men to believe in the

fundamental principles of democracy,” to coax “the men of New York” to take advantage of “the greatest opportunity which has ever come to the men of the state,” and on November 2, to make “this state truly a part of a Republic” (p. 434). Anyone who wanted to lay claim to keeping informed would know from reading newspapers that Shaw intended to influence men to vote for woman suffrage. Upon her return to New York after campaigning for suffrage in other states, the *New York Tribune* reports that Shaw would give 120 speeches as “her gift to the referendum fights in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania” (“Suffrage calendar,” 1915), and quotes Shaw’s statement of purpose for the campaign: “The men are the ones who will vote on this question . . . I am out to convert them” (“Suffrage day,” 1915).

Why does Shaw bother stating her obvious intent? That design strategy displays both her intent to persuade men to vote “yes” and concomitant obligation to make a responsible case for the position. Just as it would be incoherent for theater personnel to set up a line divider and disclaim an obligation to act in accord with norms of queuing, so it would be incoherent for Shaw to say, “I intend to persuade you to vote ‘yes,’ but I will not make a responsible case for it.” Although a woman speaking to promiscuous (mixed-gender) audiences may have been less controversial in 1915 than in the previous century (Zaeske, 1995), women still risked criticism for trying to influence men. Even a supporter of woman suffrage leveraged the position that women who try to influence men act immodestly: Arguing that women are not already represented by men, the writer asserts, “Some women are too modest and refined to try to ‘influence’ men, so that the majority of women are not represented as they wish to be” (Beerbower, 1915).

Shaw’s statement of intent creates two reasons for voters to take her overall message seriously and to scrutinize her arguments. First, they can presume Shaw will discharge the

obligation to make a responsible case, and not immodestly make a spectacle of herself. Shaw's entire speech is designed to discharge that obligation; one report describes it as "one of the finest forensic pleadings ever listened to in Ogdensburg" ("Dr. Anna Shaw," 1915). The obligation is reciprocal. Just as a line divider constrains theater patrons from ignoring norms of queuing and affords them the possibility of displaying fairness, so too does undertaking and discharging an obligation to make a responsible case constrain voters from dismissing the message as mere spectacle and afford them the possibility of displaying responsible voting. The strategy creates a context in which even uninformed, disengaged voters could not attend or read the speech and dismiss it with impunity as mere spectacle. Thus the statement of intent creates a second reason for voters to take the overall message seriously: To avoid criticism for irresponsible voting, they can scrutinize the arguments.

Shaw's metadiscourse indicates her design theory, or why she expects that undertaking and discharging the obligation to make a responsible case will influence voters to scrutinize arguments. Shaw (1915a) states, "[A]ny man who goes to the polls on the second day of next November without thoroughly informing himself in regard to this subject is unworthy to be a citizen of this state, and unfit to cast a ballot" (p. 435). As she puts it to a reporter when making the same point, "[Voters] don't think about it. They won't discuss it, and they won't listen to those who will discuss it. And when the time comes they will go to the polls and vote their prejudices and their whims" ("Anna Howard," 1915). Likewise, letter-writers for and against woman suffrage make visible the norm to vote responsibly. For example, one writes, "Most intelligent and responsible men inform themselves through the newspapers and other accessible channels as to the state of affairs concerning which they are to cast their votes" (Dunning, 1915), and another writes, "No advocate of woman suffrage should lightly regard this forceful editorial

arraignment of their cause” (Baker, 1915; see also Beadle, 1915; Gilson, 1915; Harmon-Brown, 1915; Sykes, 1915; “Vast majority,” 1915). Two newspaper reports display affordances of scrutinizing arguments and risks of not doing so. First, scrutinizing arguments affords voters the possibility of displaying responsible voting behavior. In the days leading up to the referendum, one newspaper report states that “men were generally listening with serious attention” to suffrage speeches delivered from automobiles, and that “[e]verywhere there were indications that the electors were endeavoring to inform themselves and were disposed to consider the suffrage amendment in every light” (“Suffrage campaign,” 1915). Second, voters who do not scrutinize arguments risk criticism. In another newspaper report following the defeat of the referendum, suffrage advocate Harriot Stanton Blatch concludes that “[s]treet meetings are very ineffective. The men stand—not listening—but hypnotized by the sight and sound of a woman making a speech” (“Women start triple,” 1915). To avoid criticism for acting on prejudices and whims, or for merely gawking at a spectacle, and to display responsible citizenship, voters can take the overall message seriously and scrutinize Shaw’s arguments.

In short, Shaw communicatively designs a context that constrains discounting of the message as a whole by (1) stating her intent to persuade men to vote for woman suffrage and thereby (2) undertaking an obligation to make a responsible case. These design features change the context by creating two reasons to scrutinize her arguments rather than discount her message. First, they license voters to presume Shaw would not risk criticism for making a spectacle of herself unless she intended to make a responsible case. Second, they make it risky for voters who want to display responsible voting behavior to dismiss Shaw’s performance as mere spectacle. Voters can avoid the risk and display responsible voting behavior by scrutinizing her arguments.

### *Designing political humor to take seriously*

In addition to constraining how voters “take” the message as a whole, Shaw designs political humor to influence how voters “take” specific humorous arguments. In this section we analyze political humor she designs to be taken seriously, and in the following section we analyze political humor she designs to be taken as just a joke. In both instances Shaw’s broader intent is to influence voters to scrutinize arguments. Designing political humor that was not in some sense serious was risky. Advocates for woman suffrage recognized the risks of not acting with gravity. One newspaper report of a suffrage parade remarks, “It was no laughing matter, this parade. The women in it did not smile or giggle. They were serious and determined. And this mental characteristic was contagious. The crowds took the parade seriously, too” (“45,000,” 1915). Likewise, instructions for how women ought to act at polling places on the day of the referendum exhort, “BE DIGNIFIED. BE SERIOUS” (“5,000,” 1915). Moreover, one letter-writer praises the *New York Times* anti-suffrage editorialist for treating “the matter neither as a joke nor fulsomely prais[ing] the woman suffragists, as some of your contemporaries do” (Gilpcke, 1915). Shaw had to design humor that constrained voters from dismissing it with impunity as mere buffoonery.

How does Shaw design humorous ridicule, and why does she expect it to influence voters? What obligations does she undertake by ridiculing? Ridicule impugns another person’s conduct, so anyone deploying ridicule undertakes some obligation to act fairly. What counts as “fair” is a situated judgment, comprising assessments of veracity and propriety within a framework of contextual norms. For example, audiences may consider whether the speaker ridicules something that others have in fact done, and whether the ridicule is mean-spirited. Ridicule may lack persuasive force if there is a failure in higher-order conditions—if speakers



ridicule audiences for violating norms the audience does not recognize as normative (Jacobs & Jackson, 1993). When a rhetor fails to discharge the obligation to act fairly, the persuasive force of their ridicule is diminished, because audiences can dismiss it as untrue or hostile.

To see how the persuasive force of ridicule is diminished by failing to discharge obligations, we first analyze a design that lacks persuasive force. In Shaw's context serious instantiations of the harmful consequences line of argument—that woman suffrage would produce harms—were widespread, featured for example in the *New York Times* editorial. Shaw (1915a) designs an instance of ridicule of the harmful consequences line of argument by taunting, “The anti-suffragists’ cries are all the cries of little children who are afraid of the unborn and are forever crying, ‘The goblins will catch you if you don’t watch out’” (p. 445). By deploying ridicule, Shaw undertakes an obligation to act fairly, and this particular design brings to bear a norm that listeners will not or ought not take seriously childish statements. But anti-suffragists did not actually make statements about goblins, so Shaw fails to ridicule with veracity and thus fails to discharge the obligation to act fairly. Her taunt can be dismissed with impunity as unfair, childish, false mimicry, and buffoonery.

In contrast, ridicule designed to exaggerate actual actions and statements constrains voters from easily dismissing it as unfair hyperbolic mimicry or buffoonery. For example, Shaw designs ridicule to influence voters to see inconsistencies in anti-suffrage arguments and in denying voting rights to qualified citizens in a republic. Shaw's intent is clear as she stylistically displays at a glance actual inconsistent anti-suffrage lines of argument: “We will either vote as our husbands vote or we will not vote as our husbands vote. We either have time to vote or we don't have time to vote. We will either not vote at all or we will vote all the time” (Shaw, 1915a, p. 452). She displays inconsistencies with humorous ridicule when she asserts, “And then the

very one who will tell you that women will vote just as their husbands do will tell you in five minutes that they will not vote as their husbands will and then the discord in the homes, and the divorce” (p. 447). She ridicules the anti-suffragist from New Jersey who argues that women would not use the ballot, and then imagines that if women had the ballot, “we cannot think of anything else, we just forget our families, cease to care for our children, cease to love our husbands and just go to the polls and vote and keep on voting for ten hours a day 365 days in the year, never let up, if we ever get to the polls once you will never get us home, so that the women will not vote at all, and they will not do anything but vote” (Shaw, 1915a, p. 447). She ridicules anti-suffragists’ use of statistics to prove inconsistent positions. The anti-suffragist from New Jersey first argues that it was pointless to give women the ballot, “because if they did have it they would not use it, and she had statistics to prove it” (Shaw, 1915a, p. 446). But, Shaw said, “Then the young lady, unfortunately for her first argument, proved by statistics, of which she had many, the awful results which happened where women did have the ballot; what awful laws have been brought about by women's vote” (Shaw, 1915a, p. 447). The design strategy of displaying inconsistencies constrains voters from saying they do not see them and affords them the chance to display that they are informing themselves and reasoning. “Getting” Shaw’s humor is a fallible sign that they see inconsistencies and are scrutinizing arguments.

Shaw’s metadiscourse indicates her design theory, or why she expects displaying inconsistencies to influence voters to scrutinize arguments. She begins the speech by displaying the norm to act consistently with dizzying wordplay designed to give invective humorous edges: “The difficulty with the men of this country is that they are so consistent in their inconsistency that they are not aware of having been inconsistent; because their consistency has been so continuous and their inconsistency so consecutive that it has never been broken, from the

beginning of our Nation's life to the present time” (Shaw, 1915a, p. 435). Later in the speech she states, “Men know the inconsistencies themselves; they realize it in one way while they do not realize it in another” (Shaw, 1915a, p. 442). Seeing inconsistencies and acting consistently are at the core of Shaw’s performance. Shaw intends to display the inconsistency of a republican government, based on citizens’ power to elect representatives, denying voting rights to qualified citizens.

In sum, just as a line divider influences patrons to line up by making visible theater personnel’s intent and concomitant obligation to act in accord with norms of queuing, so Shaw’s ridicule influences voters to scrutinize arguments by displaying actual inconsistencies and concomitant obligation to act fairly. Shaw’s design changes the context to create two reasons for the audience to scrutinize her arguments. First, the design licenses voters to presume Shaw will discharge an obligation to act fairly—in this case to display actual inconsistencies in opponents’ arguing—rather than risk criticism for failing to do so. If she fails to discharge the obligation—if she unfairly taunts opponents, for example—then voters can dismiss the ridicule with impunity. The obligation is reciprocal. So, second, by appreciating Shaw’s humorous ridicule, voters can both avoid criticism for failing to see the inconsistencies and display that they are scrutinizing arguments.

### *Designing political humor to not take seriously*

Shaw also designs ridicule to be taken as just a joke. Perhaps designs that are just jokes influence listeners to scrutinize arguments because joking makes the speaker more likeable; humor has been associated with source likeability and processing depth (Nabi, Moyer-Gusé, & Byrne, 2007). But how does Shaw design humor to influence even individuals who do not like

her to scrutinize arguments? Shaw faced just that obstacle; her use of ridicule could be grounds for dismissing her message as mean-spirited. One of the first points made in an anti-suffrage editorial published one month before the referendum is that suffragists are antagonistic toward men (George, 1915). Shaw's ridicule could be taken as rancor and license voters to dismiss Shaw as a woman having a "bee in her bonnet" as she "loses all sense of proportion and sees everything through colored glasses" (Wheeler, 1915). In fact, one newspaper describes a core argument of "The Fundamental Principle of a Republic" as ridicule delivered scornfully: "Dr. Shaw ridiculed the accepted idea of a republican form of government in force in this country, asking her hearers in scornful tones, 'When did any of our states, except those along the Pacific Coast, ever hear of a republican form of government?'" ("Dr. Shaw declares," 1914). Shaw's vulnerability to charges of antagonism is indicated by a letter, printed in the *New York Times*, praising its anti-suffrage editorial for displaying "a rare courage, when you are aware that ridicule and unreasonable antagonism will be the consequence of your patriotic efforts" (Baruch, 1915). The letter writer quotes Shaw calling opponents of equal suffrage "'that band of anti-suffragists who go around the country advocating home, heaven, and mother'" and remarks, "Would that the rancor now so needlessly exhibited by our opponents were replaced by reason and patriotic devotion to the best interests of the people, not to women alone!" (Baruch, 1915). How does Shaw design ridicule to constrain audiences from dismissing it as mean-spirited, regardless of whether they actually like her?

Evidence for Shaw's intent to not antagonize men comes from newspaper interviews and another speech. Shaw says she does not want to antagonize men based on their political party: "Do not allow it to be said that the women voters are campaigning against the party in power, thereby antagonizing that party" ("Women ask," 1915; see also "Vote fight," 1915). In an April

1915 speech she jokes, “I know that, if you want to convert a man, he must be physically comfortable while you are attempting it, so, if any sinner here is uncomfortable, let him come and take my seat” (Shaw, 1915b, p. 207). Now consider a part of “The Fundamental Principle of a Republic” where Shaw (1915a) ridicules men for fearing their wives would disagree with them and vote differently: “Great big overgrown babies! Cannot be disputed without having a row!” (p. 448). In isolation, her taunt could be dismissed with impunity as mean and childish. But of course Shaw does not ridicule in isolation. She communicatively designs a context that constrains listeners from easily dismissing that ridicule as mere rancor.

First, Shaw (1915a) immediately suggests she is joking: “While we do not believe that men are saints, by any means, we do believe that the average American man is a fairly good sort of fellow” (p. 448). But that design strategy seems easy enough to dismiss as pandering. So, second, she continues by making a humorous prediction that is certainly joking. Just as a line divider creates a context where patrons are afforded the chance to display fairness by acting in accord with norms of queuing, so the humorous prediction creates a context where voters get something from “getting” the humor, namely a chance to display citizenship that is informed, capable, unsentimental, savvy.

[I]nstead of believing that men and women will quarrel, I think just the opposite thing will happen. I think just about six weeks before election a sort of honeymoon will start and it will continue until they will think they are again hanging over the gate, all in order to get each other’s votes. When men want each other’s votes they do not go up and knock them down; they are very solicitous of each other, if they are thirsty or need a smoke, or—well we won’t worry about the home. The husband and wife who are quarreling after the vote are quarreling now. (Shaw, 1915a, pp. 448-449)

Although the prediction is just a joke, what reasons for influence are created by Shaw's design?

First, Shaw's design affords listeners a chance to show that they recognize conventions of political reasoning by appreciating the humor. Of course voters could take Shaw's humor as a serious prediction, but if it strains credulity to think they would, that is a testament to how Shaw designs the humor to play on conventional political reasoning. Shaw's position is consonant with her point that voters ought to decide how to vote based on the fundamental principle of a republic rather than on matters of expediency such as whether woman suffrage would cause marital strife. Just as a line divider creates a context that makes it risky for patrons to bypass the queue, so Shaw's humorous prediction creates a context that increases the risk of missing her serious point. Failing to appreciate her humor would be a fallible sign of an inability to follow her political reasoning. The risk is serious; this kind of failure is displayed in an article about Shaw circulated in several newspapers: "Belief that is at the mercy of the winds of expediency is not belief; it is mere sham and self deception. Dr. Shaw's belief in suffrage is real. Her consecration to principle is unswerving. The antis cannot understand it" (Young, 1915).<sup>2</sup> To avoid criticism for lacking the ability to follow political reasoning, and to lay claim to capable citizenship, the audience could take the humorous prediction as a joke and see the broader, serious point.

Second, Shaw's design affords listeners the chance to display unsentimental reasoning. Shaw's design theory is indicated by metadiscourse as she (1915a, p. 443; see also "Men illogical," 1914) humorously states, "We used to believe that women were the sentimental sex, but they can not hold a tallow candle compared with the arc light of the men. Men are so sentimental in their attitude about women that they cannot reason about them." Here, getting the joke depends on voters recognizing romantic relationship scripts (Bing & Heller, 2003)

involving partners becoming less solicitous of each other over time, but that factor alone does not account for whether voters will openly appreciate the humor. Both proponents and opponents of woman suffrage charge the opposition with sentimentality and emotional excess. The *New York Times* anti-suffrage editorial asserts that on “the gravest public questions [. . .] men vote according to judgments founded on observation and knowledge acquired in the pursuit of their daily business. Women would inevitably attempt to decide such matters empirically or emotionally” (“The woman suffrage crisis,” 1915). The newspaper prefaces letters in response by writing, “It is doubtful whether argument for or against votes for women works many conversions. It has become very largely a matter of sentiment, which is mistaken for opinion, and sentiment blocks all the ways that lead to reason” (“The Times’s,” 1915). A letter writer reverses the charge, accusing the *New York Times* anti-suffrage editorial of “sentimental obscurantism” (Bjorkman, 1915). Shaw’s humorous prediction changes the context to create another reason to be influenced: To avoid criticism for holding sentimental attitudes about continuously harmonious marriages and to display unsentimental citizenship, voters could take the prediction as a joke and scrutinize the serious arguments.

Finally, Shaw’s design affords listeners a chance to display additional hallmarks of good citizenship. Appreciating the humor externalizes an attitude that political machinery is not out of bounds as a source of laughter. Shaw nods to political machinery and leverages it to make with a wink a humorous argument that as men court each other for votes, so spouses will court each other for votes. Openly appearing to “get” the humor affords voters the possibility of laying claim to political savvy, avoiding criticism for naïveté about the role of political machinery and buying votes with liquor and tobacco, and claiming moral high ground, without appearing insufferably righteous, over those who sell their votes. In short, Shaw’s design changes the

context to afford voters the possibility of laying claim to what she and the broader culture of public talk in newspapers and periodicals point to as hallmarks of good citizenship: enlightened, practical, political savvy unmarred by sentimentality, naïveté, and insufferable righteousness. Shaw's humor displays that she acts in accord with those norms of citizenship so generates persuasive force for listeners to act in accord with them as well.

## **Conclusion**

The designs of political humor that we have analyzed generate persuasive force by making visible (1) Shaw's intent and (2) concomitant, reciprocal obligation to act in accord with some norm. In the first example, Shaw openly intends to persuade voters to vote "yes," undertaking and discharging an obligation to advocate responsibly, and therefore pressuring voters to decide responsibly by scrutinizing arguments. In the second example, Shaw openly intends to ridicule anti-suffrage arguments. When her design fails to discharge an obligation to act fairly—when it is merely a childish taunt—it lacks persuasive force. Listeners can dismiss it with impunity as buffoonery. But when her design points to inconsistencies in actual anti-suffrage arguments—when Shaw undertakes and discharges an obligation to act consistently and fairly herself—the design changes the context to create reasons for voters to see the inconsistencies and act consistently. In the third example, Shaw intends a taunt to be taken as a joke. She does not openly state that intent but undertakes an obligation to ridicule fairly, with veracity and propriety. She designs the message to pressure listeners to take it as just a joke by making a humorous prediction. If voters take the prediction seriously, Shaw could say, "Just joking" with impunity and, further, "You are sentimental, naïve, insufferable." The design—like all designs—changes the context, in this instance affording voters the possibility of displaying



good citizenship. Openly appreciating her political humor is a fallible sign that they are scrutinizing her arguments—that they see when she is joking, they see inconsistent reasoning, they see a serious intent to persuade. Shaw’s designs constrain them from acting otherwise by making it risky to do so.

The basic model of the persuasive force of political humor explains how specific design strategies influence even individuals short on motivation or ability to coordinate their public actions as the speaker intends while respecting their autonomy. The model distributes agency between speaker and audience because it comprises reasoning on both sides of the transaction. Metadiscourse indicates speakers’ reasoning about how they expect listeners to reason. First, design strategies license audiences to presume the speaker would not undertake an obligation to act in accord with some norm unless they intended to act in accord with it. Second, at the same time, design strategies influence audiences to act in accord with the norm by making it risky for them to ignore, disregard, or flaunt it; and by affording them the chance to display good character for acting in accord with it. In short, a speaker can design political humor that creates reasons for audiences to not discount the message and to allocate cognitive resources for scrutinizing the message and arguments. By undertaking and discharging obligations, the designs hold all participants in the transaction accountable for acting in accord with norms.

The need for visibility and accountability is clear from the referendum results. The defeat of woman suffrage in New York in 1915 was a turning point as militant and radical suffragists such as Harriot Stanton Blatch “could not go back to the simple democratic appeal, to ask men one by one to extend justice to women” (DuBois, 1997, p. 181). As one suffragist puts it, “The public has all the education it can stand on this subject. Personally, I never want to hear another suffrage speech again” (Bugbee, 1915). Instead, they advocate for a federal amendment. Stanton

Blatch states the rationale to a reporter following the referendum defeat: “We can’t follow up an individual voter, but we can one in a legislative body” (“Mrs. Blatch,” 1915; DuBois, 1997).

Carrie Chapman Catt responds to Stanton Blatch, “The man on the street is the sovereign of this state. You are his subjects. Unless you have his backing you cannot appeal to legislative bodies which he creates” (“Women raise,” 1915, p. 7). But she adds, “If, however, the man on the street does not respond quickly enough, if the men he represents do not grant our demands soon, we shall go into politics ourselves and elect men who will do what we demand” (“Women raise,” 1915, p. 7). Even Catt acknowledges the need to supplement moral suasion with a mechanism of visibility and accountability.

Our account explains why the persuasive force of political humor is diminished if social actors can dodge accountability. If speakers can disclaim a serious intent to influence or audiences can disclaim awareness of norms, then reasons for influence are absent. It is precisely this wiggle room that may make it difficult for researchers to analyze the persuasive effects of political humor, especially in contexts where both sources and receivers may be able to plausibly deny a serious intent and discount a message as just an entertaining joke, and where they are not held accountable for living up to obligations and norms that design strategies bring to bear in a situation. This is not to say that such deployments of humor do not influence individuals’ attitudes, beliefs, values, and so on. But our account explains how speakers make special efforts to design political humor to forestall discounting and influence public action, and provides a theory-based rationale for designs of political humor. Future research could investigate contemporary political humor designed to influence audiences to perform other kinds of actions, and triangulating our account. For example, it would be possible to collect interview data to ascertain whether and to what degree social actors hold and deploy the tacit knowledge and

principles comprising a normative pragmatic account of the persuasive force of political humor.

Our study best accounts for political humor where speakers actually make arguments, and has theoretical and analytical implications for addressing the broader challenge of influencing listeners to scrutinize arguments in natural environments where various factors may interact in significant ways (Becker, 1971; Jeong & Hwang, 2012; Weber, Westcott-Baker, & Anderson, 2013), and where manipulating factors in order to influence may backfire if listeners feel manipulated by messages that do not respect their autonomy (Burgoon et al., 2002; Quick et al., 2013). Rather than assuming situations comprise stable factors, normative pragmatic theories explain how social actors communicatively design the very grounds of transactions to mitigate the influence of unfavorable motivational and ability factors, and respect listeners' autonomy. Strategies create *reasons*: "a local 'normative terrain'" (Goodwin, 2007, p. 85) communicatively designed to "enhance people's capacity to *choose* when to engage in such argumentative scrutiny" (O'Keefe, 1995, p. 13). In contrast to communication theories that predict what message factors may influence humans generally or what broad functions strategies may perform for some listeners, normative pragmatic theories analyze ordinary, ingenious ways social actors address and solve communication problems.

## References

- 5,000 women picked for work at polls. (1915, November 2). *New York Times*, p. 4.
- 45,000 march for suffrage, braving wind and darkness in greatest woman's parade. (1915, October 24). *New York Tribune*, p. 1.
- Aakhus, M. (2007). Communication as design. *Communication Monographs*, 74(1), 112-117.
- Aakhus, M., & Laureij, L. V. (2012). Activity, materiality, and creative struggle in the

- communicative constitution of organizing: Two cases of communication design practice. *Language and Dialogue*, 2(1), 41-59. doi: 10.1075/ld.2.1.03aak
- Anna Howard Shaw, inveterate optimist of the woman suffrage movement. (1915, December). *Current Opinion*, 59(6), p. 398.
- Anna Howard Shaw makes plea for equal suffrage. (1915, June 22). *The Ogdensburg Journal*, p. 3. nyshistoricnewspapers.org
- Are women people? (1915, October). *The Bookman; a review of books and life*, 42(2), p. 225.
- Baker, R. (1915, February 14). Men follow old ideas. Thus why should women be asked for new ones? *New York Times*, p. xx6.
- Baruch, B. S. (1915, February 14). Much courage shown. *New York Times*, p. xx1.
- Beadle, R. C. (1915, February 14). Wage statistics cited. Large numbers of women working side by side with men. *New York Times*, p. xx6.
- Becker, S. L. (1971). Rhetorical studies for the contemporary world. L. F. Bitzer & E. Black (Eds.), *The Prospect of Rhetoric* (pp. 21-43). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Beerbower, G. M. (1915, February 14). Only best women vote. *New York Times*, p. xx6.
- Bing, J. (2004). Is feminist humor an oxymoron? *Women and Language*, 27(1), 22-33.
- Bing, J., & Heller, D. (2003). How many lesbians does it take to screw in a light bulb? *Humor*, 16(2), 157-182. doi: 10.1515/humr.2003.009
- Bjorkman, E. (1915, February 14). 'Anti' cause is hopeless. *New York Times*, p. xx6.
- Bugbee, E. (1915, December 12). Suffrage diners given war talk. *New York Tribune*, p. 8.
- Burgoon, M., Alvaro, E., Grandpre, J., & Voulodakis, M. (2002). Revising the theory of psychological reactance: Communicating threats to attitudinal freedom. In J. P. Dillard & M. Pfau (Eds.), *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice* (pp. 213-232).

Thousand Oaks: Sage.

- Burke, K. (1969). *Grammar of motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Campbell, K. K. (1989). *Man cannot speak for her*, vol. 1. Westport: Praeger.
- Case, C. E., & Lippard, C. D. (2009). Humorous assaults on patriarchal ideology. *Sociological Inquiry*, 79(2), 240-255.
- Catt, C. C. (1915, October 11). Woman Suffrage Must Win. *The Independent*, 84, p. 58.
- Cowan, D. E. (2005). Episode 712: South Park, ridicule, and the cultural construction of religious rivalry. *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 10.
- Craig, R. T. (2005). How we talk about talk: Communication theory in the public interest. *Journal of Communication*, 55(4), 659-667. doi: 10.1080/03637750701196383
- Dr. Anna H. Shaw coming. (1915, June 12). *The Newark-Union Gazette*, p. 1.  
nyshistoricnewspapers.org
- Dr. Anna Shaw makes strong suffrage plea. (1915, June 30). *The Norwood News*, p. 10.  
nyshistoricnewspapers.org.
- Dr. Shaw declares U.S. is aristocracy. (1914, December 30). *New York Times*, p. 9.
- Dubois, E. C. (1997). *Harriot Stanton Blatch and the winning of woman suffrage*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Dunning, W. B. (1915, February 14). Business no bar to men. *New York Times*, p. xx3.
- Eemeren, F. H. van (1990). The study of argumentation as normative pragmatics. *Text*, 10(1/2), 37-44.
- Eemeren, F. H. van, Grootendorst, R., Jackson, S., & Jacobs, S. (1993). *Reconstructing argumentative discourse*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- George, A. N. (1915, October 11). Woman suffrage must fail. *The Independent*, 84, p. 59.

- Gilpcke, M. (1915, February 14). Shifted it to voters. *New York Times*, p. xx5.
- Gilson, A. E. F. (1915, February 14). The suffragists slandered. *New York Times*, p. xx6.
- Goodwin, J. (2002). Designing issues. F. H. van Eemeren & P. Houtlosser (Eds.), *Dialectic and rhetoric: The warp and woof of argumentation analysis* (pp. 81-96). Amsterdam: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Goodwin, J. (2007). Argument has no function. *Informal Logic*, 27(1), 69-90.  
<http://www.informallogic.ca>
- Goodwin, J. (2011). Accounting for the appeal to the authority of experts. *Argumentation*, 25(3), 285-296. doi: 10.1007/s10503-011-9219-6
- Hariman, R. (2008). Political parody and public culture. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 94(3), 247-272. doi: 10.1080/00335630802210369
- Harman-Brown, H. S. (1915, February 14). Two things to consider. *New York Times*, p. xx6.
- Harper, I. H. (ed.). (1922). *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 5. New York:
- Hart, R. P., & Hartelius, J. (2007). The political sins of Jon Stewart. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 24(3), 263-272. doi: 10.1080/07393180701520991
- Holbert, R. L. (2013). Developing a normative approach to political satire: An empirical perspective. *International Journal of Communication*, 7, 305-323.
- Innocenti, B. (2011). A normative pragmatic model of making fear appeals. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 44(3), 273-290.
- Jackson, S. (1998). Disputation by design. *Argumentation*, 12(2), 183-98.
- Jackson, S., & Aakhus, M. (2014). Becoming more reflective about the role of design in communication. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 42(2), 125-134.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2014.882009>

- Jacobs, S. (2000). Rhetoric and dialectic from the standpoint of normative pragmatics. *Argumentation*, 14(3), 261-286.
- Jacobs, S. (2006). Nonfallacious rhetorical strategies: Lyndon Johnson's Daisy ad. *Argumentation*, 20(4), 421-442. doi: 10.1007/s10503-007-9028-0
- Jacobs, S., & Jackson, S. (1993). Failures in higher-order conditions in the organization of witnessing and heckling episodes. F. H. van Eemeren, R. Grootendorst, S. Jackson, & S. Jacobs (Eds.), *Reconstructing argumentative discourse* (pp. 142-169). Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Jeong, S., & Hwang, Y. (2012). Does multitasking increase or decrease persuasion? Effects of multitasking on comprehension and counterarguing. *Journal of Communication*, 62(4), 571-587. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01659.x
- Kauffeld, F. J. (1998). Presumptions and the distribution of argumentative burdens in acts of proposing and accusing. *Argumentation*, 12(2), 245-266. doi: 10.1023/A:1007704116379
- Kauffeld, F. J. (2001). Argumentation, discourse, and the rationality underlying Grice's analysis of utterance-meaning. In T. E. Németh (Ed.), *Cognition in language use* (pp. 149-163). Antwerp: International Pragmatics Association.
- Kauffeld, F. J. (2009). Grice's analysis of utterance-meaning and Cicero's Catilinarian apostrophe. *Argumentation*, 23, 239-257. doi: 10.1007/s10503-008-9123-x
- Kuhlmann, J. (2012). Zimbabwean diaspora politics and the power of laughter: Humour as a tool for political communication, criticism and protest. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 4(3), 295-314. doi: 10.1386/jams.4.3.295\_1
- Laineste, L. (2013). Can the 'stripping of the boss' be more than a joke. *Integrative Psychological & Behavioral Science*, 47(4), 482-491. doi: 10.1007/s12124-013-9251-1

- LaMarre, H. L., Landreville, K. D., Young, D., & Gilkerson, N. (2014). Humor works in funny ways: Examining satirical tone as a key determinant in political humor message processing. *Mass Communication and Society*, 17(3), 400-423. doi: 10.1080/15205436.2014.891137
- Lengbeyer, L. (2005). Humor, context, and divided cognition. *Social Theory and Practice*, 31(3), 309-336.
- Like the “limelight.” (1915, February 14). *New York Times*, p. xx6.
- Local items. (1915, June 18). *Chateaugay Record and Franklin County Democrat*, p. 5. nyshistoricnewspapers.org.
- Lynch, O. H. (2002). Humorous communication: Finding a place for humor in communication research. *Communication Theory*, 12(4), 423-445.
- Martin, D. M. (2004). Balancing on the political high wire: The role of humor in the rhetoric of Ann Richards. *Southern Communication Journal*, 69(4), 273-288. doi: 10.1080/10417940409373300
- Mass meeting in Newark. (1915, June 17). *The Newark Courier*, p. 1. nyshistoricnewspapers.org.
- Mass meeting to-night. (1915, June 24). *The Newark Courier*, p. 1. nyshistoricnewspapers.org.
- Mayor sure suffrage will win. (1915, October 23). *New York Times*, p. 4.
- Meddaugh, P. M. (2010). Bakhtin, Colbert, and the center of discourse: Is there no ‘truthiness’ in humor?” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 27(4), 376-390. doi: 10.1080/15295030903583606
- Men illogical with women. (1914, December 14). *The Washington Post*, p. 4.
- Merrill, L. (1988). Feminist humor: Rebellious and self-affirming. *Women’s Studies*, 15(1-3), 271-280. doi: 10.1080/00497878.1988.9978732



- Meyer, J. C. (2000). Humor as a double-edged sword: Four functions of humor in communication. *Communication Theory*, 10(3), 310-331. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2885.2000.tb00194.x
- Mrs. Blatch pours out wrath on root. (1915, November 4). *New York Times*, p. 3.
- Nabi, R. L., Moyer-Gusé, E., & Byrne, S. (2007). All joking aside: A serious investigation into the persuasive effect of funny social issue messages. *Communication Monographs* 74(1), 29-54. doi: 10.1080/03637750701196896
- O'Keefe, D. J. (1995). Argumentation studies and dual-process models of persuasion. In F. H. van Eemeren, R. Grootendorst, J. A. Blair, & C. A. Willard (Eds.), *Perspectives and approaches: Proceedings of the Third ISSA Conference on Argumentation*, vol. 1 (pp. 3-17). Amsterdam: Sic Sat.
- O'Keefe, D. J. (2002). *Persuasion: Theory and research*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1981). *Attitudes and persuasion: Classic and Contemporary Approaches*. Dubuque, IA: Brown.
- Polk, J., Young, D. G., & Holbert, R. L. (2009). Humor complexity and political influence: An elaboration likelihood approach to the effects of humor type in *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 17(4), 202-219. doi: 10.1080/15456870903210055
- Quick, B. L., Shen, Lijiang, & Dillard, J. P. (2013). Reactance theory and persuasion theory. In J. P. Dillard and L. Shen (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Persuasion: Developments in Theory and Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (pp. 167-183). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Rhea, D. M. (2012). There they go again: The use of humor in presidential debates 1960-2008. *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 49(2), 115-131.

- Rossing, J. P. (2012). Deconstructing postracialism: Humor as a critical, cultural project. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 36(1), 44-61. doi: 10.1177/0196859911430753
- Scott, L. P. (1915, October 27). If apologies are in order, let the most disagreeable begin. *New York Times*, p. 10.
- Shaw, A. H. (1915a). The Fundamental Principle of a Republic. In K. K. Campbell (Ed.), *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, vol. 2 (pp. 433-460). Westport: Praeger.
- Shaw, A. H. (1915b). The other half of humanity. In W.A. Linkugel (Ed.), *The speeches of Anna Howard Shaw: Collected and edited with introduction and notes*, vol. 2 (pp. 207-246). Diss. University of Wisconsin, 1960.
- Shaw, A. H. (1915c). *The Story of a Pioneer*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Shugart, H. A. (2001). Parody as subversive performance: Denaturalizing gender and reconstituting desire in *Ellen*. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 21(2), 95-113.
- Suffrage calendar. (1915, April 19). *New York Tribune*, p. 5.
- Suffrage campaign closes at midnight. (1915, October 31). *New York Times*, p. 4.
- Suffrage day by day. (1915, April 18). *New York Tribune*, p. 12.
- Sykes, L. R. (1915, February 14). Voting in 'feminine way.' *New York Times*, p. xx6.
- The woman suffrage crisis. (1915, February 7). *New York Times*, p. C2.
- The Times's suffrage symposium. (1915, February 14). *New York Times*, p. C2.
- Tracy, K. (2012). Public hearings about same-sex marriage: How the context 'makes' an argument. *Qualitative Communication Research* 1(1), 83-107.
- Turton-Turner, P. (2007). The role of ridicule in naked charity calendars. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 21(3), 419-432. doi: 10.1080/10304310701460706
- Vast majority opposed. (1915, February 14). *New York Times*, p. xx6.

- Vote fight camp in beauty parlor. (1915, January 12). *New York Tribune*, p. 4.
- Weber, R., Westcott-Baker, A., & Anderson, G. (2013). A multilevel analysis of antimarijuana public service announcement effectiveness. *Communication Monographs*, 80(3), 302-330. doi: 10.1080/03637751.2013.788254
- Wheeler, E. P. (1915, February 14). The bee in their bonnet. *New York Times*, p. xx1.
- Women ask vote help from labor. (1915, August 30). *New York Tribune*, p. 4.
- Women raise \$100,000 for new suffrage fight. (1915, November 5). *New York Tribune*, pp. 1, 7.
- Women start triple drive to win vote: Referendum, presidential suffrage and amendment their new trinity. (1915, November 4). *New York Tribune*, p. 1.
- Young, R. (1915, September 13). Right or expedient or both? *The Medina Daily Journal*, p. 1. nyshistoricnewspapers.org
- Young, D. G. (2008). The privileged role of the late-night joke: Exploring humor's role in disrupting argument scrutiny. *Media Psychology*, 11, 119-142. doi: 10.1080/15213260701837073
- Zaeske, S. (1995). The 'promiscuous audience' controversy and the emergence of the early woman's rights movement. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 81(2), 191-207.

---

<sup>1</sup>See Lynch (2002) for an introduction to the place of communication research within humor research more generally.

<sup>2</sup> See also *Commercial Advertiser*, 14 September 1915, p. 8; *Cape Vincent Eagle*, 16 Sept. 1915, p. 4; *The Adirondack News*, 25 September 1915, p. 4; *Altamont Enterprise*, 1 Oct. 1915, p. 3.