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A Study of Reader Attitudes

Toward Satirical Newspaper Columns

presented by

William Aidan Lancaster

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M.A. degree in Journalism

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A STUDY OF READER ATTITUDES TOWARD SATIRICAL
NEWSPAPER COLUMNS

By

William Aidan Lancaster

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF READER ATTITUDES TOWARD SATIRICAL NEWSPAPER COLUMNS

By

William Aidan Lancaster

The objective of this study was to examine reader attitudes toward satire in order to obtain a compilation of those elements which readers deem essential to well written satire. Such elements were acquired by factor analyzing reader responses to well written and poorly written satirical newspaper columns. Analysis of data suggested that readers evaluate satire along the dimensions of Amusement, Reality, Provocation and Mockery. It is possible that varying degrees of these four factors could be the components of an effective satirical composition.

This is dedicated to my parents,
Marian and Bill Lancaster, to
my brother Brian and to Paul Todisco,
four people who share and encourage
the author's appreciation of humor.

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Unfortunately, the limits of space make it impossible to properly recognize all of the people in Massachusetts and Michigan who have provided me with the professional and academic training which made this study possible. My various reporting jobs in Massachusetts and my studies at Michigan State University have proved invaluable. Among those who assisted me in innumerable ways, I would like to single out for special thanks Richard Hurst, a statistician at the MSU Computer Center and Dr. Maurice R. Cullen Jr., an historian of the MSU School of Journalism. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Larry Landrum for his perspectives on popular literature and to Dr. Judee Burgoon for her advice on the construction of attitude measuring instruments. Finally, my thanks to Dr. George A. Hough 3rd for his guidance in the writing of this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	v
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
II JUSTIFICATION	5
III REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	9
IV METHOD AND PROCEDURES	27
V FINDINGS OF STUDY	32
VI DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	45
APPENDICES	
A DICTIONARY TREATISE TEST	50
B SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL SCALE	51
BIBLIOGRAPHY	53

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Overall Rating of Panel and Student Article Evaluations	32
2. Means and Standard Deviations of Six Satiric Articles	33
3. Analysis of Variance	34
4. Means of 27 Variables and Standard Deviations	35
5. Varimax Rotated Factor Matrix After Rotation with Kaiser Normalization	36
6. Associated Relevant Items of Four Factors . .	37
7. Rotated Factor Loadings for Four-Factor Solutions	38
8. Items with Highest Loadings on the Four Retained Factors	39
9. Factor Loadings for Final Four-Factor Solution	41
10. Wilks Lamda Statistic	42
11. Wilks Lamda and Univariate F-Ratio	42
12. Rank Ordering of Final Four Factors	42
13. Classification of Cases	43
14. Multiple Regression Analysis	44

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From Ben Franklin's "Silence Dogood" to the contemporary columns of Art Buchwald, journalists have long used satire to ridicule vice and folly and to hold up the shortcomings of man to public contempt.

A review of relevant literature shows that satirical essays were among the first printed works of the American colonists and that over the decades, satire was developed and refined as a journalistic device.

During the Revolutionary period, for example, colonists read satires penned by Benjamin Franklin, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, William Livingston and John Trumbull. The tense Federalist era was satirized by William Cobbett, Joseph Dennie, Philip Freneau and John Fenno. Similarly, major figures and events of the Civil War and post-Civil War periods were poked and jabbed at by Artemus Ward, David Ross Locke, Charles H. Smith, and Ambrose Bierce. The Twentieth Century press provided America with satire by Frank McKinney, Finley Peter Dunne and Franklin P. Adams.

Commenting on the historical impact of the satirists,

Henry Ladd Smith said that in their day the satirists were often more effective in their persuasion than were Greeley, Raymond, Godkin, Watterson, or Grady.¹ "Long before there were syndicated editorials, the humorous critics of our customs had national followings," Smith said.²

Besides attracting large newspaper audiences, the satirists drew the attention of scholars who attempted to study the lives and works of these journalists. Some of the better known efforts include: Walter Blair, Horse Sense in American Humor,³ Jeannette Tandy, Crackerbox Philosophers in America,⁴ Kenneth Lynn, The Comic Tradition in America,⁵ James Aswell, Native American Humor,⁶ Bruce Granger, Political Satire in the American Revolution,⁷ and H. R. Haweis, American Humorists.⁸

¹Henry Ladd Smith, "The Needlers: Our Journalistic Satirists," Journalism Quarterly 39 (Summer 1962):309-316.

²Smith, "The Needlers," p. 309.

³Walter Blair, Horse Sense in American Humor (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1945).

⁴Jeannette Tandy, Crackerbox Philosophers in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925).

⁵Kenneth Lynn, The Comic Tradition in America (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1958).

⁶James Aswell, Native American Humor (New York: Graden City Publishing Co., 1949).

⁷Bruce Granger, Political Satire in the American Revolution (New York, Cornell Press, 1960).

⁸H. R. Haweis, American Humorists (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1882).

In examining the role of satirical composition in American history, students of satire have theorized about how satirical prose should be written. Some conclude that it should involve some ridiculing of society's contemporary ills. Gilbert Highet, for example, suggests that, "To write good satire, the satirist must describe, decry and denounce the here and now."⁹ Marie Collins Swabie says that effective satire "excites anger in human misdeeds and cruelties."¹⁰ David Worcester suggests that, "Poignant satire is an expression of an author's disapprobation of the political, social or personal actions, conditions or qualities of the time."¹¹

In these scholarly attempts to analyze the elements of effective satirical writing, these authors and the others have relied on their own impressions and evaluations to define the components of satire. Few have asked readers how they defined good satire.

A study of reader reactions could help explain why critics have disagreed on what makes satire effective. Although no such study has been conducted, Charles R. Gruner used the columns of Art Buchwald to examine the

⁹Gilbert Highet, The Anatomy of Satire (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 17.

¹⁰Marie Collins Swabie, Comic Laughter: A Philosophical Essay (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 60.

¹¹David Worcester, The Art of Satire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), p. 161.

persuasive impact of satire on newspaper readers.¹²

Gruner found that satire produced no statistically significant opinion changes. He concluded that studies of reader attitudes toward satire are needed "before we will know a small fraction of what we might believe or hope about the phenomena."¹³

The purpose of this study is to examine reader attitudes toward satire in an attempt to obtain a compilation of those dimensions which readers use in judging satirical composition. Such an analysis might provide journalists with evidence of what readers perceive to be good satire and perhaps provide a base of knowledge upon which the skill of satirical writing can be built.

¹²Charles H. Gruner, "Ad Hominem Satire as a Persuader: An Experiment," Journalism Quarterly 49 (Spring 1971):128-131.

¹³Gruner, "Ad Hominem Satire," p. 131.

CHAPTER II

JUSTIFICATION

A review of scholarly journals indicates that the surveying of reader attitudes is becoming an increasingly important practice among newspaper editors.

Grotta, Larkin and Carrell examined reader attitudes to see if readers distinguished between advertising and news content in newspapers.¹ They report that: "It is interesting that readers perceive no distinction between news and advertising while many newspaper editors clearly distinguish between the two."² They suggest their research "supports an emerging realization that the mass media--and perhaps particularly newspapers--need to continue serious efforts to more clearly define their products in terms of the consumer."³

In a study of how readers perceive and use a small

¹Gerald L. Grotta, Ernest F. Larkin and Robert Carrell, "News vs. Advertising: Does the Audience Perceive the Journalistic Distinction?" Journalism Quarterly 53 (Autumn 1976):448-456.

²Grotta, Larkin and Carrell, "News vs. Advertising," p. 448.

³Grotta, Larkin and Carrell, "News vs. Advertising," p. 456.

daily newspaper, Grotta, Larkin and De Plois affirmed the assumption that quantity of local news is a valid measure of a small town daily newspaper performance:

The function of a small daily newspaper, as perceived by the subscribers, is to report local information.... Metropolitan newspapers offer detailed information to those readers who wish to pursue issues beyond television and radio coverage. But the local newspaper is the source of local information for persons not living in metropolitan areas.⁴

Percy H. Tannenbaum examined the writing of general science news in newspapers and said that an obstacle facing the communication of science news to the public is that editors may misperceive the interests and/or capabilities of their audiences.⁵

Other studies reflect the interest of examining reader attitudes. Some of these efforts include: Schweitzer and Goldman. "Does Newspaper Competition Make a Difference to Readers?"⁶ Baker and Macdonald, "Newspaper Editorial Readership and Length of Editorials."⁷

⁴Gerald L. Grotta, Ernest F. Larkin and Barbara De Plois, "How Readers Perceive and Use a Small Daily Newspaper," Journalism Quarterly 52 (Winter 1975):715.

⁵Percy H. Tannenbaum, "Communication of Science Information," Science 140 (May 1973):579-583.

⁶John C. Schweitzer and Elaine Goldman, "Does Newspaper Competition Make a Difference to Readers?" Journalism Quarterly 52 (Winter 1975):706-710.

⁷Donna Baker and James MacDonald, "Newspaper Editorial Readership and Length of Editorials," Journalism Quarterly 38 (Autumn 1961):473-479.

Patterson, Booth and Smith, "Who Reads About Science?"⁸
 McCombs and Mauro, "Predicting Newspaper Readership from
 Content Characteristics."⁹ Root and Schrock, "Reader Inter-
 est Research with Children."¹⁰

The employment of survey research companies by metro-
 politan newspapers also reflects this concern about exam-
 ining reader attitudes. The hiring of Market Opinion Re-
 search by the Detroit News is one such example.

In the examination of newspaper humor, some studies
 have analyzed the persuasive effect of satire. One study
 measured reader responses to the satire of Art Buchwald.¹¹
 Another study used a radio audience to see if satirical
 radio drama was persuasive.¹² Four studies used audiences
 to examine the effect of humor in persuasive speech¹³ and

⁸Joyce Patterson, Laurel Booth and Russell Smith, "Who Reads About Science?" Journalism Quarterly 46 (Autum 1969):599-602.

⁹Maxwell McCombs and John Mauro, "Predicting Newspaper Readership from Content Characteristics," Journalism Quarterly 54 (Spring 1977):3-7, 49.

¹⁰Robert Root and Paul M. Schrock, "Reader Interest Research with Children," Journalism Quarterly 41 (Summer 1964):443-444.

¹¹Charles R. Gruner, "Editorial Satire as Persuasion: An Experiment," Journalism Quarterly 44 (Fall 1967):727-730.

¹²David Berlo and Hidea Kumata, "The Investigator: The Impact of a Satirical Radio Drama," Journalism Quarterly 33 (Spring 1956):287-298.

¹³For a synopsis of these studies see: Charles R. Grunner, "Editorial Satire as Persuasion: An Experiment," Journalism Quarterly 44 (Fall 1967):727-730.

one study employed editorial cartoons to measure the persuasiveness of satire.¹⁴

While these studies show that the inclusion of satire in a message does not significantly change opinion, they provide little insight concerning how audiences perceive and understand satiric stimuli. Gruner, who conducted investigations with Buchwald's columns, says that an examination of reader attitudes towards satire "could help define the components and dimensions of persuasiveness in satire."¹⁵ "It is obvious that more research on the impact of satire and other wit-forms is needed," Gruner said.¹⁶

Through the use of such attitude measuring devices as the Likert Scale and the semantic differential, the proposed study will attempt to generate a compilation of those dimensions which readers use in judging satirical newspaper columns. Possibly it could increase the journalistic understanding of this art form.

¹⁴LeRoy M. Carl, "Editorial Cartoons Fail to Reach Many Readers," Journalism Quarterly 45 (Summer 1968): 533-535.

¹⁵Telephone interview with Dr. Charles Gruner on 2/15/79.

¹⁶Gruner, "Satire as Persuasion," p. 730.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of historical literature shows that satirical essays appeared in the American Colonies as early as 1722. Writing in the New England Courant under the pen name "Silence Dogood," Benjamin Franklin published a series of satires which ran from April 2, 1722, to October 8, 1722. The "Dogood" essays philosophized on the evils of drunkenness, the squandering of money, the merits of knowledge and other moral issues.

Franklin chose a pen name because he feared the editor of the Courant, his older brother James, would not have printed the essays of a sixteen-year-old boy. This decision by Franklin was recorded in his autobiography:

Hearing the Couranteer's Conversations and their Accounts of the Approbation their Papers were received with, I was excited to try my hand among them. But being still a boy, and suspecting that my Brother would object to printing any Thing of mine in his Paper if he knew it to be mine, I contriv'd to disguise my hand, and writing an anonymous Paper I put it in at night under the Door of the Printing House. It was found in the morning and Communicated to his Writing Friends when they call'd in as usual.¹

¹James A. Sappenfield, A Sweet Instruction (Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois Press, 1973), p. 31.

In these essays, Franklin copied the style of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, creators of London's satirical Spectator. In his autobiography, Franklin wrote:

I thought the writing of the Spectator excellent, and wish'd if possible to imitate it. With that View, I took some of the Papers, and making short hints of the Sentiments in each Sentence, laid them by a few days and then without looking at the book, try'd to compleat the papers again, by expressing each hinted Sentiment at length and as fully as it had been expressed before. Then I compar'd my Spectator with the Original, discover'd some of my faults and corrected them.²

Typical of Franklin's satire was his eleventh "Do-good" essay on providing widows with insurance. (Records indicate that in the early 1720s, one-fifth of the female population in Boston were widows, yet the government had little desire to provide them with any type of assistance.) Franklin satirized this situation by suggesting that the government provide insurance for any women who was a virgin.

I suggest whereby every single women, upon full Proof given of her continuing a Virgin for the Space of Eighteen years, (dating her Virginity from the age of Twelve) should be entuled to 500 pounds in ready cash. Among the conditions to be Observed: No Woman, who after claiming and receiving, shall entertain company above the space of one hour at a Time, upon Pain of returning one half the Money into the Office for the First Offence; and upon the Second Offence to return the Remainder.³

Russel B. Nye said that Franklin's satires were

²Sappenfield, A Sweet Instruction, p. 177.

³Carl Van Doren, Benjamin Franklin (New York: Viking Press, 1939, p. 22).

successful because he wrote in the vernacular and appealed to Boston's working class while simultaneously jabbing at Boston's highbrow intellectuals, especially the members of the Harvard community.⁴ In one satirical account of Harvard, "Silence" told of a dream she had in which she mysteriously found herself at a "Temple of Learning which was reach'd by climbing difficult steps."⁵

At the great Gate sat Riches and Poverty and Poverty rejected all those whom Riches did not recommend. Most of the worshipers that regularly attended this Temple sat at the foot of Madam Ignorance. They were Beetle-skulled and each seemed well satisfied with his own portion of Learning, though perhaps he was e'en just as ignorant as ever. Once out of the Temple, some I perceived took to merchandising, others to traveling, and some to nothing; and many of them for want of patrimony, lived as poor as church mice, being unable to dig and ashamed to beg, and to live by their wits it was impossible. I reflected on the extreme folly of those parents who, blind to their children's ignorance and insensible of the solidity of their skulls ... would send them to this temple from which they learned little more than how to enter a room genteely which might as well been acquired at a dancing school.⁶

Although the last "Dogood" essay appeared in the fall of 1722, Franklin continued writing satires throughout the American Revolution. Walter Blair has said that Franklin's Revolutionary essays were his satirical masterpieces.⁷

⁴Russel B. Nye, Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1958), p. 68.

⁵Nye, Franklin, p. 22.

⁶Nye, Franklin, p. 23.

⁷Walter Blair and Hamlin Hill, America's Humor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 83.

Franklin said that he owed much of the success of his Revolutionary satire to his examinations of Jonathan Swift's writing.⁸ In "An Essay Upon Quieting the Disturbances in America," Franklin (like Swift in "A Modest Proposal") scorned England by providing the aristocracy with ludicrous solutions to its foreign policy problems. Franklin wrote in part:

I hereby humbly propose that we let General Gage lead five battalions through several towns, accompanied by a hundred sow-gelders. In every town or village, assemble the males and have them all castrated. Thus we will achieve three ends: 1) In the course of fifty years it is probable we shall not have one rebellious subject in North America. 2) Instead of importing castrati from Italy at great cost, managers of opera can use our own more cheaply and keep the money at home. 3) As a service to the Levant trade, we can furnish seraglios and harems with eunuchs and with handsome women for which America is as famous as Circassia ... undoubtedly, emigration from England, far too popular, will halt.⁹

Throughout the Revolution Franklin used satire to chastise, correct and chronicle all that he saw. His satire, in addition to attracting a large audience, managed to aid the development of humor as an important tool of the newspaper editor. As Howard Long said:

The printers of Franklin's time were a humorless lot and the people who wrote tracts about the issues of the day took themselves too seriously to employ whatever wit they had. Fortunately they were able to read the writings of Franklin ... who never feared to turn a joke upon himself, never hesitated to employ innuendo, or even to resort to slapstick

⁸ Blair and Hill, America's Humor, p. 201.

⁹ Blair and Hill, America's Humor, p. 79.

if it served his purpose.¹⁰

As Franklin used satire to support Colonial American independence, Philip Freneau applied his to sustain the efforts of the Revolution and to carry on its purposes and aims once freedom had been won. Edwin Emery summarizes the sentiments of many journalism historians: "Freneau was the most zealous patriot of the lot."¹¹ Emery adds that Freneau's satirical poems and essays "did as much to fire up the morale of the patriots as did the prose of Thomas Paine."¹² So biting were the essays of this man that George Washington once referred to him as "that rascal Freneau."

Freneau's first collection of satiric Revolutionary poems were written between June and November of 1775. Most poked fun at the Tories and British officials. One of these works, "The Midnight Consultations," mocked General Gage.

Is he to conquer--he subdue our land
This buckram hero, with his lady's hand?

Freneau went on to describe Gage as a feminine fellow who could not take warfare:

Three weeks, cried Gage,
Three long years it seems,
Since roast beef I have touched,
except in dreams.

¹⁰Sappenfield, A Sweet Instruction, p. XIV.

¹¹Edwin Emery, The Press and America (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1972), p. 108.

¹²Emery, The Press and America. p. 109.

In sleep choice dishes to my view repair
Waking I gaze and chomp the empty air.¹³

Many historians cite the morale-boosting effect that these works had on America during the Revolution. One historian, referring to two of Freneau's poems, said, "The Prison Ship" whipped apathetic patriots into renewed efforts against the enemy. His account of the exploits of John Paul Jones instilled pride into a dejected nation."¹⁴

Throughout the Revolution Freneau ridiculed and portrayed as folly every aspect of the British war effort. One poem, "Fair Science Never Called the Wretch Her Son," even mocked British army doctors.

He on his charge the healing work begun
With antimonial mixtures by the ton
On the refusing he bestowed a kick
Or menaced vengeance with his walking stick.¹⁵

Carl Holliday reflects on the effects these poems had on the Tories during the Revolution:

After reading Freneau's poems, we may well imagine what furor they made among the Tories of New York, Philadelphia and Boston. They were already sorely aggrieved at the stubbornness of these plebian colonists and the lack of perserverance in the character of the English regulars; and Freneau's satire was acid poured upon their smarting wounds.¹⁶

Even as the Revolution was drawing to a close, Freneau maintained a constant volley of satire. One of his

¹³Carl Holliday, The Wit and Humor of Colonial Days (New York: Ungar Pub. Co., 1960), p. 184.

¹⁴Emery, The Press and America, p. 109.

¹⁵Holliday, Wit and Humor, p. 180.

¹⁶Holliday, Wit and Humor, p. 180.

last Revolutionary poems, published in 1782, mocked King George for thinking he could conquer the colonies.

When a certain King, whose initial is G
Shall force stamps upon paper, and folks to
drink tea;
When these folks burn his tea and stamp paper,
like stubble,
You may guess this King is coming to trouble.

O King, my dear King, you shall be very sore
The Stars and the Lily shall run you on shore,
And your Lion shall growl, but bite never more!¹⁷

In 1791 Freneau's old school chum James Madison offered him a subsidy as a State Department translator with the proviso that he launch an anti-Federalist newspaper, Freneau seized upon the opportunity and as editor of the newly founded National Gazette lost no time in attacking Federalist leaders and their policies. So dangerous were these attacks to the Secretary of the Treasury's plans, that in July of 1792, Hamilton tossed aside the dignity of his office to crudely attack Freneau. Hamilton charged that as a paid translator of the government, Freneau had no right to criticize the Federalists. Writing under the pen name Brutus, Freneau responded with even more accusations of Hamilton's practices and charged that the party editor, John Fenno, carried on illegal business deals with the Bank of the United States.

In addition to stirring up public sentiment in the nation's capital, Freneau's wit and brashness encouraged numerous anti-Federalist editors in other states to take

¹⁷ Holliday, Wit and Humor, p. 180.

up the fight. This they did either by reprinting exchanges from the National Gazette or by writing their own essays. Whichever method they chose, the result was a torrent of anti-Federalist abuse aimed at the United States government.

The culmination of this "war" occurred during the summer of 1792 when Freneau began attacking President Washington. In the Gazette of August 8th, Freneau satirized Washington as a king living in a fantasy world unaware of his subject's needs. "We have given him the powers of a king. He gives out proclamations like a king, he receives congratulations on his birthday like a king and like a king, he forgets his old friends," Freneau wrote.¹⁸ He went on to satirize Washington's private carriage as a symbol of wealth and decadence.

Cast your eye on that huge and glittering machine, drawn by six horses. I see three fellows, called footmen stationed behind it ... gorgeously attired indeed, but slaves ... some great idol was within.¹⁹

Shortly after this essay appeared, Washington reprimanded Jefferson and Hamilton for their vicious journalism. Jefferson denied that he had ever written for the Gazette, but Hamilton was forced to admit that he had penned some of the bitter essays against Jefferson. Jefferson staunchly defended the right of the Gazette to

¹⁸ Philip M. Marsh, The Works of Philip Freneau (Minneapolis: Dillon Press, 1967) p. 201.

¹⁹ Marsh, The Works of Philip Freneau, p. 222.

print the truth as it saw it and uttered his famous statement:

If the government is virtuous, it need not fear the free operation of attack and defense. Nature has given to man no other means of sifting out the truth, either in religion, law or politics.²⁰

Freneau, of course, was not to be checked by any such official meeting nor by any statement of the president. He continued satirizing the Federalist party with as much vigor as before. Only when Jefferson left the Cabinet in 1793 and the National Gazette began to die of financial malnutrition did Freneau's satire cease to be heard in the nation's capitol.

Freneau had capitalized on the innovative printing techniques of his time and on a more politically aware and literate public to advance his journalistic device. After Freneau's death another journalist came along who attracted the largest newspaper audience of any satirist up to his time and lead all satirists in developing this art form in the press. His name was Seba Smith and his down-home, earthy satirical character was Major Jack Downing.

Seba Smith wrote his earliest satires while assistant editor of a Maine weekly newspaper, the Eastern Argus. Allan R. Miller said that "While at the Argus, Smith showed independence of character and courage of conviction. his satire was a thorn in the side of local politicians."²¹

²⁰Marsh, The Works of Philip Freneau, p. 111.

²¹Allan R. Miller, "America's First Political Satirist: Seba Smith of Maine," Journalism Quarterly 47 (Autumn 1970):488.

Following his employment at the Argus, Smith established the first daily newspaper north of Boston, the Portland Courier. Miller describes Smith's journalism at the Courier "as objective as possible in viewing local and national matters and presented in a way that was candid, independent and nonpartisan."²² Smith, however, was printing a nonpartisan sheet even though he knew the Maine people were partial to cantankerous political journals. In a matter of months Smith's objectivity began to cost him and he was desperate to find a way to keep the paper alive. Smith wrote in his memoirs that he pondered this question for some time until he remembered how Ben Franklin had made up characters that spoke for him. Smith reread Franklin's essays and soon hit on an idea which he later described in these words:

... the author ... wishing to show the ridiculous position of the legislature in its true light, and also, by something out of the common track of newspaper writing, to give increased interest in popularity to his little daily paper, bethought himself of the plan to bring a green, unsophisticated lad from the country into the town with a load of axehandles, hoop-poles, and other notions for sale, and while waiting for the movements of a rather dull market, let him blunder into the halls of the legislature, and after witnessing for some days their strange doings, sit down and write an account of them to his friends at home in his own plain language.²³

The character Smith was referring to was Major Jack

²²Miller, "Seba Smith," p. 490.

²³Walter Blair, Horse Sense in American Humor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 57.

Downing, a figure who spoke in the vernacular and who was able to relate to the masses in a personal, homely fashion. As Major Jack said himself: "Readin all this high folutin nonsense of theze other editors sets my dander to rize. I don't like it when anybody talks to me in a lingo that I don't understands and I'm damned to do somethin about it."²⁴

Walter Blair said that, "The style of the satire was as homely and snappy as a cold mug of hard cider. Readers delighted in the audacity and unconventionality of it."²⁵

With this literary invention, Smith's Portland Courier prospered and the fame of Downing spread throughout New England.²⁶ So convincing was Smith's character that many New Englanders began to regard Major Jack as a real person. One literary historian said:

Some Maine legislators cast their good votes for him to make him speaker pro tem and major general. Some of the people of Portland gave him votes for Mayor. Ballots for him were counted all over New Hampshire when the state elected a governor, and one town went unanimously for him. Newspapers were always saying he was the man for one office or another--some even came out for him as president. More than one daily considered that a ticket with him for president and Crockett for vice-president would be hard to beat. And newspapers everywhere in the East were glad to reprint Downing letters. Sometimes instead of shouting the news, newsboys would yell that their sheet had a new Downing piece that day.²⁷

²⁴ Blair, Horse Sense in American Humor, p. 50.

²⁵ Blair, Horse Sense in American Humor, p. 50.

²⁶ Blair, Horse Sense in American Humor, p. 53.

²⁷ Blair, Horse Sense in American Humor, p. 64.

One of Smith's most famous satires was written in the spring of 1833, when he felt that President Jackson was beginning to lose touch with the needs of the people. The essay was entitled "Shaking Hands for the President," and it satirized Jackson's behavior while greeting thousands of well wishers at a large convention hall in Philadelphia. Smith wrote:

... Federalists and all it made no difference. There was such a stream of 'em comin in that the hall was full in a few minutes, and it was so jammed up around the door that they couldn't get out if they were to die.

The President shook hands with all his might an hour or so, till he got so tired he couldn't hardly stand it. I took hold and shook for him once in awhile to help him along, but at last he got so tired that he had to lay down on a soft bench and shake as well as he could, and when he couldn't shake he'd nod to 'em as they come by. And at last he got so beat out, he couldn't only wrinkle his forehead and wink. Then I kinda stood behind him and reached my arm round under his and shook for him about an hour as tight as I could spring.²⁸

The point, of course, was that to have Downing shake hands for the president implied the insincerity of Jackson's relationship to the people. Furthermore, to depict Jackson as so weak that he had to rest, portrayed him as a slow, crumbling man of sixty-six who was quickly losing his clout.

Satires of this genre gave Smith his national reputation. As one historian put it: "By the middle of 1831, Major Jack Downing was known throughout the country. He

²⁸ Patricia Rickels, Seba Smith (Boston: Twayne Pub., 1977), p. 53.

had become famous wherever newspapers were sold. Plays were written about him and presented on the New York stage and Jack Downing songbooks and collected essays flourished."²⁹

Unfortunately for Smith, his works suffered the fate of all the popular writings of his time--plagiarism. Columnists throughout the country, unchecked by copyright laws, began imitating Smith's style and signing their essays "Major Jack Downing." By 1836 Smith was disheartened by the flood of imitators and in the spring of that year he killed off Major Jack and afforded him a grand funeral in a town called "Downingsville." The effectiveness of his works is best described by Miller:

From his humble beginnings, Seba Smith became a creative pioneering editor. His contribution to American journalism was made when he introduced the American newspaper reader to gentle, subtle, political satire. Its merit was evidenced by the copyists who tried to follow his example during the mid 1800s and the development of the art of political satire in the media.³⁰

Complementing the efforts of those historians who have examined the lives and works of America's early satirists, another school of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century scholars have investigated the effectiveness of satire and have theorized about how satirical prose should be written. Gilbert Highet suggests:

²⁹Rickels, Seba Smith, p. 60.

³⁰Allan R. Miller, "America's First Political Satirist: Seba Smith of Maine," Journalism Quarterly 47 (Autumn, 1970):488.

In nearly all good satire two special methods or attitudes are essential. The first is to describe a painful or absurd situation, or a foolish or wicked person or group, as vividly as possible. The satirical writer believes that most people are purblind, insensitive, perhaps anaesthetized by custom and dullness and resignation. He wishes to make them see the truth--at least that part of truth which they habitually ignore. Second, when a satirist uses uncompromisingly clear language to describe unpleasant facts and people, he intends to do more than make a statement. He intends to shock his readers. By compelling them to look at a sight they had missed or shunned, he first makes them realize the truth, and then moves them to a feeling of protest. Most satirists enhance those feelings by careful choice of language. They employ not only accurate descriptive words, but also words which are apt to startle and dismay the average reader. Brutally direct phrases, taboo expressions, nauseating imagery, callous and crude slang--these are parts of the vocabulary of almost every satirist.³¹

Highet also contends that effective satire is composed of eleven essential devices: irony, paradox, antithesis, parody, colloquialism, anticlimax, topicality, obscenity, violence, vividness and exaggeration.³²

Percy H. Whiting, author of How to Speak and Write Humor, suggests that to write satire the author must employ exaggeration, anti-climax, understatements, asides, irreverance, over-ornate language, mutilated quotations and mangled cliches.³³ Whiting contends that a mastery of a certain, mechanical, step-by-step approach will enable a writer to produce all kinds of humorous material.

³¹ Gilbert Highet, The Anatomy of Satire (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 19.

³² Highet, The Anatomy of Satire, p. 18.

³³ Percy H. White, How to Speak and Write Humor (Boston: Twayne Pub. Co., 1968), p. 28.

His six steps are:

- Step 1. Write out--or think out--your topic.
- Step 2. Decide on the spots that need a dash of humor.
- Step 3. Put your list of humorous devices on the desk in front of you.
- Step 4. Select a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph at or near the spot that needs humorizing and write down all the associated words, phrases, or ideas that pop into your head.
- Step 5. Select a humorous device and check it against the associations you have recorded.
- Step 6. When you get a humorous idea, even if it is not too promising, write it down. Then polish it.³⁴

Robert Elliott and David Worcester, while not detailing how satirical prose should be written, have theorized on the necessary elements of effective satire. Elliott³⁵ stresses the importance of violence and combativeness in satire, while Worcester³⁶ emphasizes the inclusion of burlesque and Rabelais humor in effective satire.

In addition to these content analyses of satire and humor, attempts have been made at empirically studying the persuasive effect of satire.

One study measured reader responses to the satire of

³⁴White, How to Speak and Write Humor, p. 34.

³⁵Robert Elliott, The Power of Satire (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960).

³⁶David Worcester, The Art of Satire (Cambridge, England: Cambridge Press, 1940).

Art Buchwald.³⁷ Another study used a radio audience to see if satirical radio drama was persuasive.³⁸ Four studies used audiences to examine the effect of humor in persuasive speech³⁹ and one study used editorial cartoons to measure the persuasiveness of satire.⁴⁰

Dr. Charles Gruner, who has conducted six studies on the persuasiveness of satire, has examined all of these studies and sums up his findings as follows:

There exist but few experimental studies of satire's persuasive impact, but their findings suggest that oral satire directed against a concept, such as "censorship" may be ineffective largely because of misunderstanding of it by the listeners. And when the satirist's thesis is misunderstood, persuasion can hardly result. But the studies hint that satire may be persuasive if the audience does perceive the satire's thesis. Gruner found that professional satire (written by Art Buchwald) produced statistically significant attitude shifts when the reader's were told the writer's thesis. The same kind of inability to fathom a writer's intent has been well documented for the political cartoon, also.

The studies cited above concerned satire directed against an abstract concept. Only two known studies have used what the writer calls "ad hominem satire," that is, satire directed against persons (or types of persons). One study indicates that bigoted

³⁷Charles Gruner, "Editorial Satire as Persuasion: An Experiment," Journalism Quarterly 44 (Fall 1967):727-730.

³⁸David Berlo and Hideya Kumata, "The Investigator: The Impact of Satirical Radio Drama," Journalism Quarterly 33 (Spring 1956):287-298.

³⁹For a synopsis of these studies see: Charles Gruner, "Editorial Satire as Persuasion: An Experiment," Journalism Quarterly 44 (Fall 1967):727-730.

⁴⁰LeRoy M. Carl, "Editorial Cartoons Fail to Reach Many Readers," 45 Journalism Quarterly (Summer 1968):533-555.

people react to cartoons ridiculing bigots with a variety of defense mechanisms. And Berlo and Kumata found that a radio program satirizing senate investigating committees in general and Senator McCarthy in particular, succeeded in lowering attitudes toward investigating committees but tended to increase regard for McCarthy.⁴¹

In addition to this synopsis, Gruner included in this report the results from a study which was a follow-up from his 1967 investigation on the persuasiveness of Buchwald's satire. This time Gruner used a Buchwald column which satirized Richard Nixon, however, he did not inform the test subjects as to Buchwald's thesis. He reported:

It cannot be concluded from this study that varying amounts of satire directed against a public official produces varying amounts of decrement to ratings of that official's character or authoritative-ness.⁴²

In conclusion, Gruner said:

It is evident that a great deal more research on the effects of humor and wit must be done before we will know a small fraction of what we might believe or hope about the phenomena.⁴³

In investigating reader attitudes towards satire, research studies by Osgood,⁴⁴ Kaplan,⁴⁵ Selltitz,⁴⁶

⁴¹Charles Gruner, "Ad Hominem Satire as a Persuader: An Experiment," Journalism Quarterly 48 (Spring 1971):128.

⁴²Gruner, "Ad Hominem Satire," p. 129.

⁴³Gruner, "Ad Hominem Satire," p. 130.

⁴⁴Charles Osgood, Measurement of Meaning (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1957).

⁴⁵Abraham Kaplan, The Conduct of Inquiry (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing, 1964).

⁴⁶Claire Selltitz, Research Methods in Social Relations (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1951).

Likert,⁴⁷ and Beals⁴⁸ will be used. Their works trace the construction of attitude measuring experiments from the development of the original drafts and questionnaires to the assessment of the data by way of t-tests, multiple regression analysis and various combinations of analysis of variance.

⁴⁷Rensis Likert and Gardner Murphy, Public Opinion and the Individual (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967).

⁴⁸Ralph Beals, Statistics for Economics (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972).

CHAPTER IV

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to scientifically obtain a compilation of those descriptive and evaluative dimensions which readers use in judging satirical newspaper columns. The objective was to 1) acquire a list of those elements and qualities which newspaper readers deem essential to well written satire and 2) develop a scientific instrument which journalists could use to examine reader attitudes toward newspaper satire.

Knowledge of the attitudes of readers toward satirical newspaper columns was obtained by having 210 subjects rate well written and poorly written satirical newspaper columns on a semantic differential scale. The subjects were asked to rate poorly written articles to provide the researcher with a cross check on their evaluations of well written articles. Responses on the semantic differential scale were factor analyzed so as to isolate those responses which formed factors. A multiple discriminate analysis and multiple regression analysis were performed using factor scores to determine what judgments the subjects made in arriving at their conclusions.

Subjects

The subjects were 210 Michigan State University undergraduates who were enrolled in a journalism news writing class during the spring term of 1979.

Selection of the Satiric Articles

The selection of the well written and poorly written satiric articles was based on a method devised by Gruner in his study on the persuasive effects of satire.¹ To represent the well written articles, the researcher selected three columns from March, 1979, issues of the Washington Post written by Art Buchwald, a nationally syndicated satirist. To represent the poorly written satires, the researcher selected three satires written during March, 1979, by students for various Michigan State University campus newspapers.

To validate all the articles as satiric, the researcher applied Gruner's Dictionary-Treatise Test.² This test consists of analyzing the content of satiric essays to determine if they meet the definitions of satire established by the scholarly treatises of Swabie,³ Highet⁴ and

¹Charles Gruner, "An Experimental Study of Satire as Persuasion," Speech Monographs 23 (June 1965):149-153.

²Gruner, "Satire as Persuasion," p. 150.

³Marie Collins Swabie, Comic Laughter: A Philosophical Essay (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951).

⁴Highet, Anatomy of Satire.

Johnson,⁵ and by the dictionary definitions of Oxford,⁶ Webster⁷ and Funk and Wagnalls.⁸ A panel of six Michigan State University journalism professors read the six articles to see if they met the Dictionary-Treatise Test. The professors agreed unanimously that the articles were satiric. For an example of the Dictionary-Treatise Test, see Appendix A.

To further validate the articles as well written and poorly written, the same panel of six Michigan State University journalism professors read all six articles and then ranked order them from "best written" to "worst written" The professors rated the three columns by Buchwald as the best written and the three columns by the student satirists as the worst written.

Creation of the Semantic Differential Scale

To discern what elements readers use in evaluating satire, it was necessary to create a semantic differential

⁵Edward Johnson, A Treasury of Satire (New York: Barton Press, 1945).

⁶The Oxford Illustrated Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

⁷Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam Co., 1965).

⁸Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of the English Language Vol. 2 (New York: Funk and Wagnall's Publishing, 1974).

scale. Selltitz,⁹ Osgood,¹⁰ Backstrom¹¹ and Fishbein¹² state that the semantic differential scale is one of the most valid and reliable attitude measuring devices used in social science research. "The semantic differential scale is one of the most effective means for understanding people's perceptions," said Selltitz.¹³ "The use of the semantic differential scale to measure attitude is probably one of the most distinctive and indispensable concepts in American social psychology," said Fishbein.¹⁴

Selltiz said that when constructing a semantic differential scale, it is important to provide statements that are targeted at the test subjects' attitudes and definitions.¹⁵ Thus, in constructing the semantic differential scale, the researcher had 60 journalism students, representative of the 210 test subjects, write as many evaluative antonyms, synonyms and adjectives for the word satire as they could think of. This data was then edited

⁹Selltiz, Research in Social Relations, p. 177.

¹⁰Charles Osgood, The Measurement of Meaning (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1957).

¹¹Charles Backstrom and Gerald Hursh, Survey Research (Evansville, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1963).

¹²Martin Fishbein, Readings in Attitude Theory and Measurement (New York: Wiley Co., 1967).

¹³Selltiz, Research in Social Relations, p. 178.

¹⁴Fishbein, Readings in Attitude, p. 75.

¹⁵Selltiz, Research in Social Relations, p. 101.

to omit repititious responses and used to create the items in the semantic differential scale. See Appendix B for a copy of this semantic scale. The scale also served as a manipulation check on the classification of the good and bad articles and as a dependent measure.

Administration of the Semantic Differential Scale

On April 13, 1979, the researcher distributed the semantic scale and one of the six satires to each one of 210 students enrolled in a Michigan State University news writing class. The students were instructed on how to use the scale and were given 15 minutes to evaluate the article.

Analysis of the Data

A factor analysis was performed on the subjects' semantic responses to generate items which formed factors. A multiple discriminant analysis was then performed using factor scores to determine what elements the subjects deemed as integral to well written satire. Finally, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to see if the same factors would emerge as predictors of the overall rating subjects gave the satire they read.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS OF STUDY

Panel and Subject Rating of Articles

Analysis of the panel's and subjects' rank ordering of the articles shows the two groups to be identical in their evaluations of good and bad satire. Table 1 provides the means for these ratings on the combined data from the expert panel and subjects and the rank ordering of the articles by each group.

Table 1. Overall Rating of Panel and Student Article Evaluations

Well Written Articles	Means	Sample Size	Panel Rankings	Student Rankings
Art. 2	2.34	35	1	1
Art. 6	2.74	35	2	2
Art. 4	2.88	34*	3	3
Poorly Written Articles				
Art. 5	4.74	35	4	4
Art. 1	3.77	35	5	5
Art. 3	4.91	35	6	6

*One case missing from data.

Articles were numbered one through six and rated on a seven point "superior to terrible" semantic differential scale. The similarity between the rank orderings of the panel with those of the subjects suggests that the subjects were capable of distinguishing well written satire from poorly written satire.

Analysis of Variance

To identify the amount of variability for each of the six articles, standard deviations were computed for each article. A one-way analysis of variance was also run to confirm that the good and bad articles were different to a statistically significant degree. Table 2 provides the computation of the standard deviations and Table 3 provides the variance between groups and within groups in the analysis of variance summary.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Six Satiric Articles

Article	Number of Subjects	Standard Deviation
1	35	1.0596
2	35	1.2113
3	35	1.2689
4	34	.9775
5	35	1.3793
6	35	1.5213

Table 3. Analysis of Variance

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	P
Between Groups	5	205.5432	41.1086	26.2670	<.001
Within Groups	203	317.7008	1.5650		
Total	208	523.2440			

Table 3 shows that there is a significant statistical difference between the means. Such a statistical difference further supports the concept that subjects were able to distinguish between well written and poorly written articles.

Factor Analysis of Variables

A factor analysis was run to explore how the 27 variables could be grouped so as to reveal certain dimensions in the data. In short, factor analysis is a linear combination technique which groups the variables (linear combinations) into relevant categories (factors). Table 4 shows the means and the standard deviations for these 27 variables.*

Factor analysis was performed on the 27 variables using a Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization. This process yielded six factors, which are presented in Table 5. The decision rule for determining which items were

*See Appendix B for a list of these variables.

Table 4. Means of 27 Variables and Standard Deviation

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
3 fair, unfair	2.97	1.37
4 unjust, just	4.88	1.53
5 valuable, worthless	3.87	1.54
6 ineffective, effective	5.02	1.55
7 sensible, ridiculous	4.17	1.44
8 funny, not funny	3.38	1.75
9 dull, interesting	4.71	1.61
10 useful, useless	3.99	1.63
11 not witty, witty	4.92	1.70
12 ridiculing, not ridiculing	3.18	1.61
13 humorous, not humorous	3.08	1.66
14 sarcastic, not sarcastic	3.11	1.68
15 illogical, logical	4.35	1.43
16 ironic, not ironic	3.77	1.52
17 mocking, not mocking	2.72	1.59
18 irrational, rational	4.43	1.46
19 truthful, untruthful	3.28	1.56
20 bitter, not bitter	4.60	1.30
21 antagonistic, not antagonistic	4.05	1.51
22 persuasive, not persuasive	4.07	1.65
23 exaggerated, not exaggerated	3.10	1.51
24 silly, not silly	3.33	1.44
25 not critical, critical	4.41	1.54
26 hostile, not hostile	4.83	1.52
27 unrealistic, realistic	4.48	1.56

Table 5. Varimax Rotated Factor Matrix After Rotation with Kaiser Normalization

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
3	.45	-.12	-.07	.14	.05	.60
4	-.32	.49	.03	-.06	-.02	-.10
5	.59	-.13	.16	.27	-.08	.38
6	-.69	.20	-.07	-.29	-.11	-.04
7	.21	-.33	.15	.18	-.11	.55
8	.79	-.09	.08	.11	.08	.24
9	-.77	.31	.05	.00	.00	-.00
10	.55	-.18	.19	.30	-.07	.14
11	-.81	.16	.04	-.15	-.01	-.09
12	.30	.04	.43	.10	.26	-.03
13	.86	-.14	-.05	.10	.09	.15
14	.45	-.02	.38	-.07	.38	.12
15	-.13	.69	.22	-.28	.14	-.19
16	.40	.02	.35	.09	.04	-.06
17	.21	-.34	.24	.19	.61	-.06
18	-.26	.55	-.02	-.34	.23	-.12
19	.19	-.17	.10	.79	-.08	.14
20	-.16	-.12	.66	-.01	-.22	.09
21	.01	-.01	.64	-.02	.10	.02
22	-.41	.49	-.22	.06	.17	-.07
23	.05	.15	.02	-.11	.56	.04
24	-.10	.17	-.12	-.08	.61	-.08
25	-.24	.30	-.45	-.36	-.16	-.05
26	.01	.11	.58	.09	-.05	.01
27	-.35	.35	-.13	-.46	.23	-.12

significantly relevant for each factor was to retain only those variables with loadings of greater than .50 on the primary factor and loadings on all secondary factors that were at least .20 or lower. Additionally, only those factors which had at least two items with adequate loadings were retained. Using this decision rule, it was possible to identify 4 factors. The items loading on each factor appear in Table 6.

Table 6. Associated Relevant Items of 4 Factors

Factor 1: valuable, effective, funny, interesting, dull,
usefull, witty, humorous, superior

Factor 2: logical, rational

Factor 3: bitter, antagonistic, hostile

Factor 4: mocking, exaggerated, silly

It was then necessary to perform additional factor analysis to obtain the best solution. Using an Eigenvalue of 1.0, and a Scree test as criteria, it appeared that a four-factor solution would be best. To check this conclusion, analyses specifying a four-factor, three-factor and two-factor solution were run. The four factor solution was clearly the strongest. The factor loadings appear in Table 7; those items selected for the final solution appear in Table 8.

These 17 variables were then factor analyzed to produce the final solution factor scores. The factor loadings

Table 7. Rotated Factor Loadings for Four-Factor Solution

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
3	.53	-.27	-.04	.00
4	-.32	.44	.06	-.07
5	.63	-.34	.19	-.07
6	-.67	.33	-.09	-.17
7	.28	-.43	.13	-.11
8	.82	-.17	.09	.08
9	-.74	.26	.06	-.06
10	.55	-.37	.21	-.03
11	-.80	.24	.03	-.04
12	.27	-.01	.44	.28
13	.88	-.19	-.05	.11
14	.45	.02	.36	.38
15	-.13	.75	.25	.07
16	.36	-.05	.36	.08
17	.17	-.31	.22	.67
18	-.25	.69	-.01	.16
19	.22	-.55	.15	-.04
20	-.14	-.14	.63	-.21
21	.00	.00	.63	.11
22	-.36	.40	-.18	.08
23	.07	.24	.02	.51
24	-.09	.27	-.13	.57
25	-.21	.46	-.45	-.23
26	.00	.02	.59	-.05
27	-.34	.60	-.15	.16

Table 8. Items with the Highest Loadings on the Four Retained Factors

<u>Factor 1 - Amusement</u>	<u>Factor 2 - Reality</u>
3 fair, unfair	15 illogical, logical
5 valuable, worthless	18 irrational, rational
6 ineffective, effective	19 truthful, untruthful
8 funny, not funny	27 unrealistic, realistic
9 dull, interesting	
11 not witty, witty	
13 humorous, not humorous	
 <u>Factor 3 - Provoking</u>	
20 bitter, not bitter	
21 antagonistic, not antagonistic	
26 hostile, not hostile	
 <u>Factor 4 - Mockery</u>	
17 mocking, not mocking	
23 exaggerated, not exaggerated	
24 silly, not silly	

appear in Table 9. Factor scores were computed from these loadings and these scores became the data for the independent variables in the subsequent discriminant and regression analysis.

Multiple Discriminant Analysis

A multiple discriminant analysis was run using the four factors as independent variables and the two groups, good and bad articles, as the dependent variable. This procedure analyzed how well the subjects discriminated on the four factors in terms of the well written and poorly written articles.

According to the Wilks Lamda test statistic in Table 10 the subjects were able to discriminate on 4 factors at the .001 level of significance. However, Table 11 shows that only three of the four factors were significant predictors; factor 3, provocation, was not. Table 12 shows the rank order of importance of the factors (humor, rationality, mocking, antagonism) and Table 13 shows that using the discriminant coefficients to predict classification, overall 71 percent of all cases were correctly classified. This is a very satisfactory classification rate.

Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis using variable 28,* as the dependent variable and the 4 factors as the

*Variable 28 allowed subject to rate article from superior to terrible.

Table 9. Factor Loadings for Final Four-Factor Solution

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
3	.56	-.19	-.04	-.02
5	.63	-.30	.13	-.07
6	-.69	.29	-.03	-.14
8	.85	-.11	.09	.08
9	-.76	.19	.07	-.05
11	-.83	.19	.07	-.02
13	.89	-.13	-.05	.10
15	-.20	.65	.21	.07
17	.20	-.29	.17	.78
18	-.29	.68	-.01	.14
19	.26	-.58	.14	.01
20	-.09	-.12	.69	-.16
21	.03	.00	.71	.19
23	.08	.29	-.02	.46
24	-.08	.31	-.13	.54
26	.03	.04	.58	-.02
27	-.37	.62	-.13	.11

Table 10. Wilks Lamda Statistic

Canonical Correlation	R_c^2	Wilks Lamda	Chi- Square	D.F.	Significance
.49586	.25	.75412	56.43951	4	.0001

Table 11. Wilks Lamda (U-Statistic) and Univariate F-Ratio with 1 and 202 Degrees of Freedom for Four Factors

Variable	Wilks Lamda	F	P
Fac. 1	.8209	44.0564	< .05
Fac. 2	.9339	14.2982	< .05
Fac. 3	.9996	.0879	> .10
Fac. 4	.9806	3.9981	< .05

Table 12. Rank Ordering of Final Four Factors

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Amusement	Reality	Provoking	Mockery
humorous	rational	antagonistic	mocking
funny	logical	bitter	silly
witty	realistic	hostile	
interesting	truthful		
effective			
valuable			
fair			

*Factors are rank ordered from most important to least important.

Table 13. Classification of Cases

Actual Group		N of Cases	Predicted Group Membership	
Name	Code		Bad	Good
Bad	1	101	72.	29.
			71.3 PCT	28.7 PCT
Good	2	103	30.	73.
			29.1 PCT	70.9 PCT

71.1 percent of known cases correctly classified.
 Chi-Square = 36.255; Significance = .0001

independent variable showed how the 4 factors predicted along a continuum. Table 14 shows that factor 1 and factor 2 accounted for most of the variance. Overall, the 4 factors accounted for 60 percent of the variance.

Table 14. Multiple Regression Analysis

<u>Dep. Var.</u>	<u>Mean Response</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>
28	3.6	1.6
Multiple R	.77644	
R Square	.60286	
Adjusted R Square	.59488	
Std. Dev.	1.01124	
<u>Analysis of Variance</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>
Regression	4.	308.91
Residual	199.	203.50
Coefficient of Variability 28.5 PCT		
<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Significance</u>
77.	75.	.0001
1.0226		

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was undertaken to examine reader attitudes toward satire in order to determine those elements which readers deem essential to well written satire. Evaluation of the data showed that four factors could be integral to well written satire.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal that readers evaluate satire along four dimensions labeled respectively as 1) Amusement, 2) Reality, 3) Provocation and 4) Mockery. According to the multiple regression tests and the discriminant analysis, the amusement factor and the reality factor appear to be important elements of satirical composition. It appears that the more these two elements appear in a satire, the better the satire will be. The mockery factor was found to be important only in the discriminant analysis. This suggests that while mockery may not be as significant as amusement and reality, it still should be considered by satirists when constructing a satirical essay. Neither the discriminant analysis nor the

regression analysis found any importance in the provocation factor in discriminating between good and bad satire. However, the fact that it emerged in the factor analysis indicates that it is an element of satire that readers recognize. One possible reason it was not a significant predictor of effectiveness is that its relationship may be curvilinear.

The conclusion is that a well written satire should be amusing, humorous, funny and witty. Such elements appear to serve the function of sugarcoating the antagonistic, hostile tone of satires. Thus, it would appear that a writer is more likely to win over his reader in an essay that is humorous, and entertaining. As Benjamin Franklin, the first newspaper satirist in America, said: "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." The high ranking of the "interesting" variable also supports the notion that a satire should be lively, amusing and entertaining.

However, because rationality, logic, reality and truth ranked high, it is probable that the satirist should not include too much humor, funniness and wittiness in his essay since too much of these might violate the rationality factor and make the article appear as if its sole purpose were to entertain, rather than to persuade. Also, overplaying humor might decrease the credibility of the author. It is possible that the satirist would be seen more as a comedian, than as a writer with a serious

message. Finally, the reality factor suggests that the satirist is better off jabbing at real people and events, rather than at abstractions.

Although neither the multiple regression nor the discriminant analysis showed the provocation factor (antagonism, bitterness and hostility) to be significant, the review of the literature suggests that effective satire is composed, in part, of these elements. For example, Hight said that, "The purpose of satire is to punish evil."¹ Swabie stated that, "To ridicule the vices and follies of mankind is the purpose of satire."² It appears that a well written satire, while being amusing, should subtly antagonize its victim in a bitter, hostile manner. The result being that the victim is made a laughing stock while he is simultaneously being held up to public ridicule. As Mark Twain said, "It's difficult for any man to stand in the face of laughter."³

The high statistical ratings of mockery and silliness suggest that these too may be elements of effective satire. It follows that if a satirist desires to antagonize his victim, he might succeed by making his target appear to look silly through mockery. The fact that readers cited the well written articles as effective and

¹Hight, Anatomy of Satire, p. 177.

²Swabie, Comic Laughter, p. 201.

³Blair, Horse Sense, p. 56.

valuable suggests that the essays served a worthwhile function for the reader. Such a finding also serves as a crosscheck that all the elements in the 4 factors are very likely to be essential to well written satire.

The reality factor, (containing the fairness and truth variables) suggest that the satirist be honest in his essay. That is, if it is the satirist's job to jab and poke at wrongdoings, he should write in a straightforward style. The inclusion of the fairness factor is also likely to increase the credibility of the author. The fairness element also suggests that the subjects understood the point of the satires in this study. It is unlikely that they could have made such ethical decisions if they did not understand the authors' intentions.

Finally, the logic factor implies that the satirist should write in a logical, lucid manner. For surely if the meaning of a satire is misinterpreted by the reader, it can hardly be effective.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has illustrated that certain elements could be integral to well written satire. It is possible that the newspaper satirist could create more effective essays if he considers the inclusion of these elements.

Secondly, the attitude measuring device used in this study appears to be a useful tool for measuring reader reactions toward both amateur and professional satire.

And it is possible that satirists could employ this instrument, or a more refined one, to examine reader reactions toward their own work.

Recommendations

This study provides support that the amusement, reality, provoking and mocking factors are necessary for well written satire. Additional studies could employ more complex statistical procedures to further test the applicability of these factors to well written satire. Of special interest would be an analysis of the provoking factor which was supported strongly by the review of the literature, but received no statistical support under the discriminate analysis or multiple regression tests.

Furthermore, it is recommended that other forms of popular satire be explored. Little is known about the construction or effectiveness of the satirical political cartoon, the satirical magazine, or the satirical radio or television show. Possibly some attitude measuring devices could be constructed, similar to the one used in this study, to assess reader and audience reactions to these other satirical art forms. Such research could continue to provide more specificity concerning audience attitudes toward this phenomenon we call humor.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DICTIONARY TREATISE TEST

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DICTIONARY TREATISE TEST

INSTRUCTIONS: Below are six traditionally accepted definitions of satire. Please read each satiric article and indicate in the check box on the top of the article whether or not these meanings define the type of prose you just read.

Poem or prose composition ridiculing vice or folly; a branch of literature containing such compositions; use of ridicule, sarcasm or irony to expose folly.

--Oxford Dictionary

The use of sarcasem, irony or keen wit in denouncing abuses or follies; A written composition in which vice, folly or incapacity is held up to ridicule.

--Funk and Wagnall's Standard
Dictionary of the English
Language

Topical literary composition holding up human or individual vices, folly or abuses or shortcomings to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque or irony.

--Webster's Third New International
Dictionary

To ridicule the vices and follies of mankind is the business of satire.

--Marie Collins Swabie

The purpose of satire is, through laughter and invective, to cure folly and to punish evil.

--Gilbert Highet

The one thing common to all satire is criticism.

--Edgar Johnson

APPENDIX B

SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL SCALE

APPENDIX B

SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL SCALE

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read the attached satirical article and carefully rate it on the semantic differential scale provided below.

How would you best describe the satirical article that you just read? (Indicate choice by circling the number. Please do not omit any items.)

variable 3*	fair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unfair
variable 4	unfair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	just
variable 5	valuable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	worthless
variable 6	ineffective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	effective
variable 7	sensible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	ridiculous
variable 8	funny	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not funny
variable 9	dull	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	interesting
variable 10	useful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	useless
variable 11	not witty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	witty
variable 12	ridiculing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not ridiculing
variable 13	humorous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not humorous
variable 14	sarcastic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not sarcastic
variable 15	illogical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	logical
variable 16	ironic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not ironic

*Variable 1 was the number of the semantic differential scale and variable 2 was the number of the article.

variable 17	mocking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not mocking
variable 18	irrational	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	rational
variable 19	truthful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	untruthful
varialbe 20	bitter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not bitter
varialbe 21	antagonistic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not antagonistic
variable 22	not persuasive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	persuasive
variable 23	exaggerated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not exaggerated
variable 24	silly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not silly
variable 25	not critical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	critical
variable 26	hostile	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not hostile
varialbe 27	unrealistic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	realistic

Overall, how would you rate this piece of satire?

(variable 28)

superior	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	terrible
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