

## Humor, identities, ideology and conflict: a multidisciplinary approach

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Humor plays an important role in human societies and everyday life. It manifests itself in many dimensions and is a process of socialization itself. It is usually seen as a means of relieving tensions, being optimistic or strengthening bonds between people. However, as Michael Billig points out, approaches to humor tend to ignore a crucial element in its working: *ridicule*. Humor can be seen as a derision of things that do not work as expected, and of people who do not behave as they are supposed to behave. In this sense, humor can be a subversive tool (as a disruption of assumed ideas) or a means of disciplinary social control (Plato and Bergson). Most of all, we can understand why people can get offended by humor, leading, in some cases, to serious conflicts.

The PhD Project (“Humor as a discursive construction of social identities and ideological conflict: Constructivist Rhetoric and Social Discourse Analysis”) that I will present aims to explore how humoristic discourse works in the construction and representation of masculinity and gender stereotypes. Taking a literary cross-cultural perspective the data consists of American sitcoms such as *Friends* or *The Big Bang Theory* and the work of Spanish contemporary novelists and humorists (such as Eduardo Mendicutti and Ignatius Farray). I also focus on cases of controversial humoristic discourse and argumentational aspects of positive and negative framing in different ideological and interpretive contexts.

In its theoretical aspects this work in progress relies on prominent approaches to humor (from Bergson and Freud to Bakhtin). It takes perspectives from Constructivist Rhetoric (an introduction to which it also will be given) and social cognition (e.g., Bartlett, Goffman, Lakoff), literary theory (comedy, parody, satire...) and linguistic approaches (Attardo, Raskin). It has a basis in Critical Discourse Analysis and the study of Social Cognition and Ideology (Goffman, Van Dijk) to clarify the links between social representations, cognitive frames and discourses and their interpretative affordances.

## References

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