

The radical power of becoming a funny girl

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Women in comedy are having a moment. But spend five minutes watching Issa Rae on [Insecure](#), Ali Wong in [Hard Knock Wife](#), or Samantha Bee on [Full Frontal](#), and it becomes clear that their comedy isn't just about getting laughs—it's also a full-scale rebellion.

Cracking jokes about post-pregnancy bodies or awkward sex, these women lure you into loving them—while forcing yourself to question whether you, too, might share certain qualities with the racist, sexist jerks they're making fun of. They snatch back their imperfections from a society that wants women to apologize for everything. They refuse to let anyone, themselves included, off the hook. In their hands, it becomes clear that comedy is a weapon, enabling them, as gender expert [Gina Barreca](#) explains, to “see life's absurdities and laugh, while dismantling and reassembling them in a more inclusive and reasonable way.” When women wield this weapon effectively, the rest of the world has no defense.

Contemporary society doesn't want girls to think of themselves as funny, and often punishes them when they do. At as early as six years old, boys begin initiating humor [significantly more often than girls](#). “They haven't already figured out patriarchy, but they're already understanding that comedy is what boys do and girls laugh at,” says Harris.

Ample research shows that both men and women are significantly [more likely to laugh at men](#), and to perceive men as funnier. In one [study led by Laura Mickes](#), a psychology professor at University of California, San Diego, male and female students were asked to write captions for the same *New Yorker* cartoons. Not only were men more likely to rate their own captions as funny, but 89% of the women and 94% of men responded that men, in general, are funnier.