

Sense of humor and how to learn more about it
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Overview



- Dolphin test
- Defining humor
- Humor and laughter in evolution
- A functional humor model
- Humor styles
- Autism
- Break
- Comedians & clowns
- Humor production
- How to acquire a PhD
- Questions?



Introducing myself

1. Humor & autism



- Sibe Doosje
- 1956
- Lecturer, co-founder of the TAUU
- PhD (2010) Clinical and health psychology
- Humor & science: a nerd smurf studying a fun smurf
- Humor Lab

3. Comedians - personality and life

2. Hospital clowning effects



The Dolphin Test



- The picture you are about to see, shows two dolphins.
- The more differences you observe between these two dolphins, the more intelligent you are.
- Look at the picture and search for differences between the two dolphins.

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Defining humor

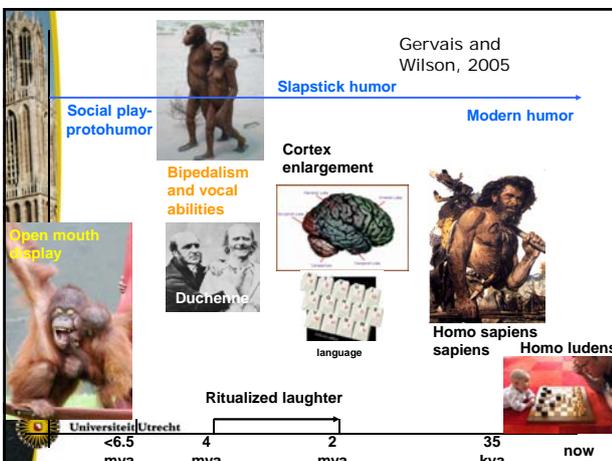
Main definition

- Humor is nonserious social incongruity (Gervais and Wilson, 2005)

Functional definition

- Humor is used to creatively express hidden concerns, emotions, thoughts and intentions (Doosje, 2013)

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Gervais and Wilson, 2005

Social play- protohumor → Slapstick humor → Modern humor

Open mouth display

Bipedalism and vocal abilities

Duchenne

Cortex enlargement

language

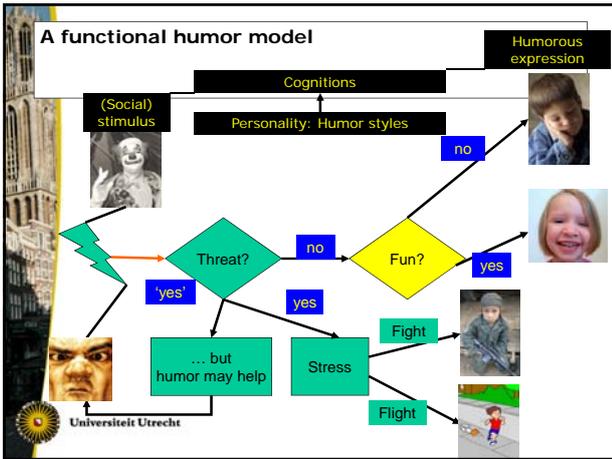
Homo sapiens sapiens

Homo ludens

Ritualized laughter

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<6.5 mva 4 mva 2 mva 35 kva now



Assignment A: Humorous taste and humor purposes

- Think of the importance of humor in your life
- Humorous taste
 1. Remember the last time you laughed about something funny
 2. What was it?
 3. What type of funny material was it?
 4. Buzz (compare)
- Humor purposes
 - A. How do you use humor in everyday life?
 - B. What purposes does it have for you?
 - C. Buzz (compare)

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Assignment B: Fill out the HSQ (How to measure a sense of humor)

- Please follow the lecturers' instructions

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The self-enhancing humor style

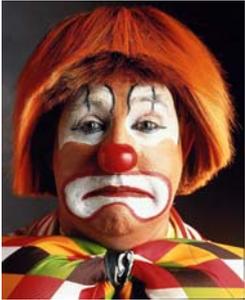


- Score 8-23: You use humor hardly to make yourself feel better. Problems are there to be solved, not laughed about
- Score 24-40: You do use humor to feel better. You use it to downsize problems with it
- Score 41-56: You use humor a lot of the time to feel better. A downside to this is that you may tend to take problems not very seriously



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The self-destructive humor style



- Score 8-23: You use humor hardly or not to bring yourself down, you think that humor is not made for that
- Score 24-40: To you, humor is a way to show that you are not very valuable and that your accomplishments are little
- Score 41-56: You have a strong tendency to use humor to picture yourself in a black, depreciating or even cynical way



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The affiliative humor style



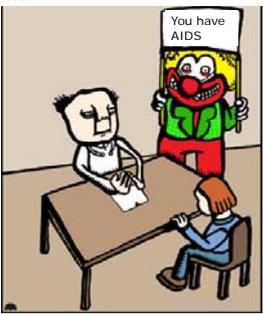
- Score 8-23: You use humor sparsely as a way to stimulate pleasurable social contact and laughter in others
- Score 24-40: Humor is an important tool for you to reinforce social connections and stimulate a positive social atmosphere
- Score 41-56: Humor is an excellent way for you to stimulate fun and joking in a group. The danger is that some people might see you as a fool who is not interested in serious business



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The aggressive humor style

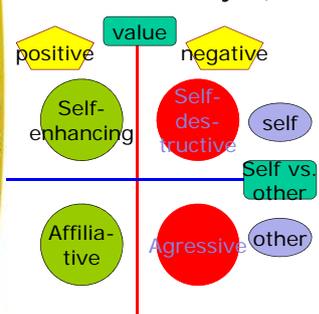
General practitioners start using clowns, too



- Score 8-23: You would rather not use humor as a way to tease or bully others
- Score 24-40: You use humor to cross, tease or to put someone in his/her place
- Score 41-56: You have a strong tendency to use humor to let others know that they are not doing well, that they are failures and losers

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The four humor styles, conceptually



- Empirical research shows that:
- Positive humor styles are associated with higher well-being
- Negative humor styles are associated with lower well-being
- Employees suffering from burnout use positive humor styles less than normals, but do not show an increase in negative humor styles

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Measuring a sense of humor

- Advantages of the HSQ:
 - High reliability, high construct validity, high (positive) correlations between the scales
 - Other advantages?
- Disadvantages of HSQ as a measure
 - Can you think of other ways to measure a sense of humor?
 - Discuss

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Sense of humor in ASDs and comedians

- Low or different sense of humor: autism spectrum disorders (study 1)
- High sense of humor: hospital clowns (study 2) and stand-up comedians (study 3)



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Study 1: Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) - Essence

- Autistic Disorder (AD)
- Asperger Syndrome (AS)
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)
- Usually there are significant disturbances in social interaction, communication and imagination



Rain man (Levenson, 1988)



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Autism and a sense of humor

- Review by Lyons & Fitzgerald (2004):
- Sense of humor is limited in ASD, although there are exceptions
- Explanations by at least two theoretical paradigms: Theory of Mind (ToM) and Weak Central Coherence (WCC)



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Explanations: Theory of Mind

- Theory of Mind (ToM) = 'cognitive skills in attributing thoughts, feelings, ideas and intentions to oneself and others. Also, the possibility to anticipate others' behavior using these skills'.
- Application to a sense of humor: For many forms of humor it is necessary to read the mind of someone else, thus predicting how he or she will behave. When there are serious mind reading deficits, it may become difficult to understand certain forms of humor



Assignment B: Theory of Mind

- Try to assess the cognitive skills needed to understand the following three examples of humor, using a Theory of Mind perspective



Example 1: ToM-skills?



Example 2: ToM-skills?



Example 3: ToM-skills?



Discussion

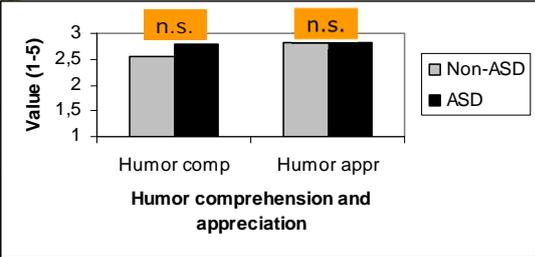


Empirical study 1: Autism and a sense of humor

- N=103 non-ASD en 56 ASD high school children
- 103 boys, 50 girls
- Mean age 13.9 years (SD=1.1)
- Humor test with:
 - Complex versus simple humor
 - Verbal versus non-verbal humor
- Intelligence
- Educational level
- Humor comprehension and humor appreciation



Empirical study 1: Primary results



Category	Non-ASD	ASD
Humor comp	~2.7	~2.7
Humor appr	~2.7	~2.7

Humor comprehension and appreciation



Empirical study 1: Additional results

- Participants with both language impairments and ASD showed significantly lower humor comprehension than the other groups
- Higher level of education was related to higher humor comprehension, whereas verbal intelligence was not
- Participants with ASD appreciated non-funny stimuli significantly higher than participant without ASD. Also, ASD participants were less likely to understand that the non-funny stimuli were not intended to be funny, than those without ASD



Questions? Need2NoMo?



- What questions do you have so far?



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Break



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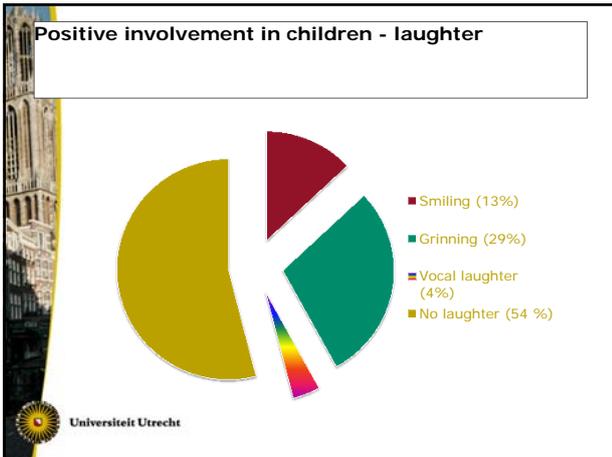
Study 2: Hospital clowning - Purpose and rationale

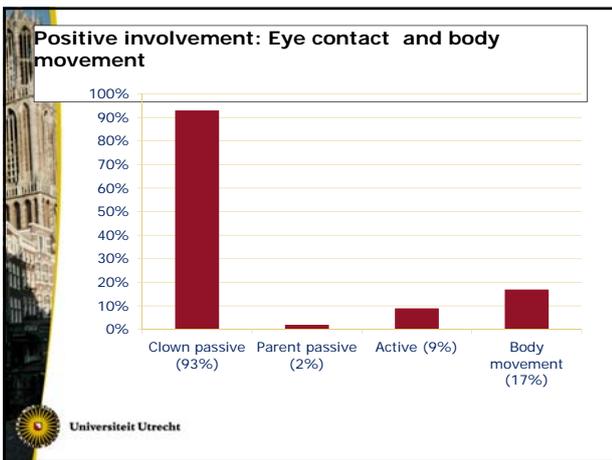


- To assess the interactions between hospital clowns and sick children
- Testing out measures for these interactions
- Find out about important elements in hospital clowning and its effects on children
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion



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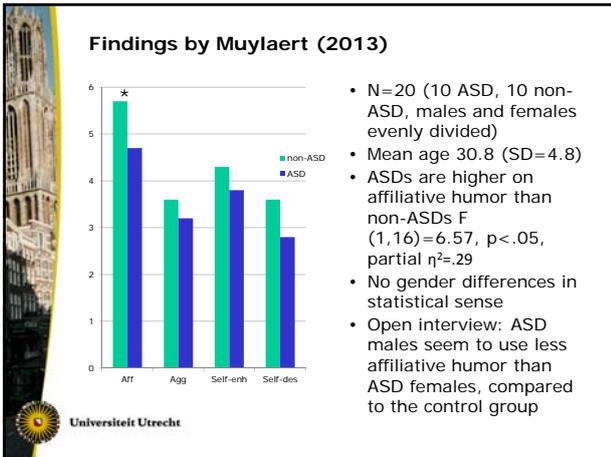


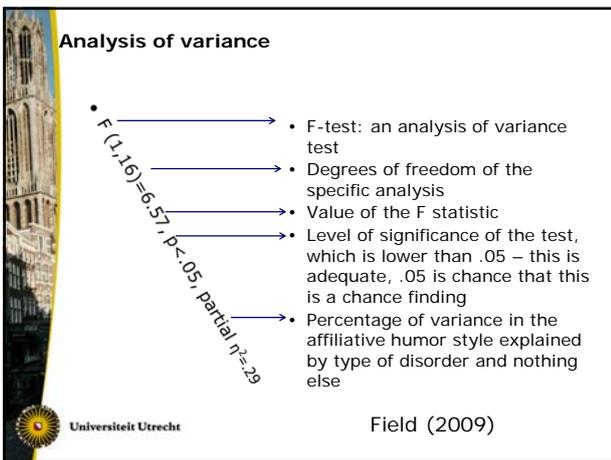


Current research on humor in autism (2012-2013)

- What humor styles do ASDs and normal controls use
- Gender differences
- 10 ASDs, 10 age, gender and educational level-matched controls
- HSQ, open interview
- Special difficulties with HSQ

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Comedians

<h4>Types of comedians</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand-up comedians • Cabaretiers (typically Dutch) • Clowns 	<h4>Function of humor for comedians</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comedians are more introverted, less neurotic and more conscientious than normal controls (Greengross et al.) • Stand-up comedy starts with personal concerns and problems
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Current studies of comedians

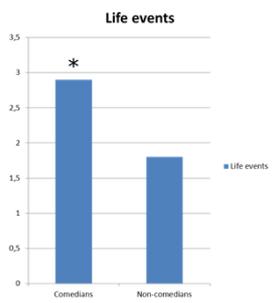
Personality and biography

- Do comedians differ in their life events, compared to controls?
- Do comedians differ with regard to their personality or humor styles, compared to controls?

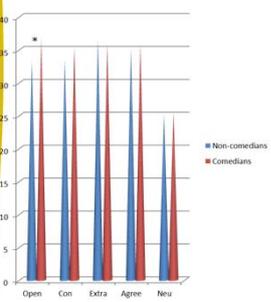



Study 3a - Life events: findings by Draaisma (2013)

- N=36 comedians, 84 non-comedians
- Comedians experience more life events than non-comedians
- However, this is mainly explained by an age difference between comedians (M=41.2, SD=8.5) and non-comedians (M=31.2, SD=11.6)




Study 3b: Comedians and personality (De Graaf, 2013)



- Previous study (Greengross et al., 2012): comedians have lower extraversion and higher openness to new experiences than non-comedians
- Comedians have a higher openness to new experiences than non-comedians
- Conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism are comparable



Study 3c: Comedians and humor styles (De Graaf, 2013)

- Previous study (Greengross et al., 2012): comedians score higher on all humor styles than college students
- Comedians use humor to affiliate somewhat more than non-comedians
- No differences with regard to the other humor styles

Humor Style	Non-comedians	Comedians
Aff	~5.5	~5.8*
Agg	~3.5	~3.5
Self-esth	~4.5	~4.8
Self-des	~3.2	~3.5

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How is humor created?

- Humor is nonserious social **incongruity** (Gervais and Wilson, 2005)
- Assignment: How do humor and misery relate?

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Eleven
ten men
enough
them w
They we
woman
would v
she was
kids, an
anything
the mer

JOHN:
FREE YOUR BODY
UNFOLD YOUR PO
CLIMB UP THE H
KICK YOUR FEET
YOU MAY NOW LI
OR RETURN TO T
UNLESS YOU FEEL
MISSED-I

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Incongruity and misery combined

Incongruity

- 'Fuck you' on a grave stone
- Eloquent statement forming the words 'fuck you'

Misery

- The man's dead
- After his death, he still fucks you



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Incongruity and misery combined

Incongruity

- Fake bottom and own bottom combined

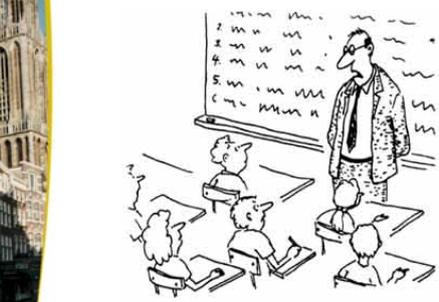
Misery

- Sitting on such a chair makes you feel ridiculous (in a mild way)



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Cartooning: An example



"I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say!"

Misery?
Incongruity?

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Producing humor: What are these people thinking?



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What was your answer?



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Part of the Thematic Apperception Test (Bellak, 1968)

What do you think this outcome means?



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- Hypotheses: These responses are an indication of
- A sense of humor
- Creativity
- Extraversion
- Something else

What is needed for a PhD?

- Passion
- Inquisitiveness
- Stamina
- Membership of a professional or scholarly association (in my case International Society of Humor Studies, ISHS)
- 7-11 July 2014 Yearly conference of ISHS in Utrecht, The Netherlands



www.humor.nl



References according to the style of the American Psychological association (2006)

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Thank you for your attention!



Questions? Need2NoMo?



- What questions do you have?
- Humorous material, questions? Mail me at S.Dooosje@uu.nl
- <http://ppservices.uu.nl/medewerkers/SDooosje>
- <http://humorlab.nl>

May the Humor be With You!



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