

Performing humor: On the relations between self-presentation styles, gelotophobia, gelotophilia, and katagelasticism

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Abstract

This paper investigates relations of self-presentation styles with gelotophobia (fear of being laughed at), gelotophilia (joy of being laughed at) and katagelasticism (joy of laughing at others). It is argued that presentational capabilities are often necessary to effectively perform jokes and funny stories. Furthermore, humor may be used to convey self-images to interaction partners. Results of an online questionnaire study ($N = 643$) yielded the hypothesized associations between self-presentation styles and humor-related traits. In particular, the histrionic self-presentation style that is characterized by performing explicit As-If-behaviors in everyday interactions showed incremental validity in predicting gelotophilia and katagelasticism over and above gender, age and two other self-presentation styles. The same incremental validity in predicting gelotophobia emerged for the protective self-presentation style that aims at avoiding social disapproval. The acquisitive self-presentation style (guided by the desire to win social approval) only showed a low positive correlation with gelotophilia, was unrelated to katagelasticism and negatively correlated with gelotophobia. The discussion is focused on the possibility to apply the themes of agency and communion to humor-related traits and self-presentation styles and highlights that research on humor and self-presentation may cross-fertilize.

Key words: humor, histrionic self-presentation style, gelotophobia, gelotophilia, katagelasticism

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Self-presentation and humor

How is self-presentation related to humor? Intuitively, one may argue that people need presentational capabilities to produce humorous effects. Some people are more skilled in telling jokes and making puns than others. One and the same joke may produce more or less laughter depending on the person who presents or performs it. Thus, presentational skills may be related to humor production, one of three components that – according to Craik and Ware (1998) – constitute humor besides humor comprehension and humor appreciation. The performative aspect of joking is also referred to as non-verbal humor (Norrick, 2004) as compared with the purely verbal humor that is solely covered by Raskin's script theory (1985). In accordance with our intuitive reasoning, Norrick (2001, 2004) has stressed the difference between written joke text versus oral joke performance and demonstrated the importance of performative features like pantomime, gestures, voice shifts and timing for the effectiveness of jokes.

Another linkage between self-presentation and humor can be derived by considering what self-presentation and impression management is all about: Self-presentation is the attempt to communicate self-images to interaction partners (Laux & Renner, 2005; Leary, 1996; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Renner, Laux, Schütz & Tedeschi, 2004; Schlenker, 2003; Tedeschi, 1981). By conveying certain self-related information, people try to manage the attributions and impressions others form of them. In doing so, they also intend to control the anticipated reactions of others, e.g. how others treat them. Therefore self-presentation may be conceived of as a social influence technique. Influencing and managing the impressions others form of us and controlling their anticipated reactions can – among other things – be achieved by using humor and laughter (Rosenfeld, Giaccone & Tedeschi, 1983). Concerning humor *appreciation*, people can laugh about a joke in order to be perceived as friendly and agreeable. In an early experimental study (Davis & Farina, 1970) female experimenters of different attractiveness presented aggressive and sexual cartoons to male participants who were asked to evaluate the stimuli either orally to the experimenter (public condition) or on paper-and-pencil scales (private condition). The male participants rated the sexual cartoons funnier in the public than in the private condition. The authors argued that this effect is due to the attempt to convey an identity as “sexy” to the female experimenter, to attract her attention and become acquainted to her.

With regard to humor *production*, Cooper (2005) has proposed that humor expression has the power to ingratiate. Following initial considerations from the seminal book on ingratiation by Jones (1964), Cooper argues that an employee may amuse his or her boss by making a joke and thereby enhance his attractiveness. On the other hand, humor may also be used to indicate status differences: If persons with high status make – albeit poor – jokes, their subordinates are better to laugh even if they do not evaluate these jokes as funny. A boss may even take the right to make jokes at the expense of others in order to indicate that he or she is the one who has the power to do so. In sum, a certain degree of presentational abilities is necessary to effectively perform jokes and humor may be used to influence others which especially includes managing the images others form of a person.

Individual differences in self-presentation as predictors of humor

There are only a couple of studies that have addressed individual differences in self-presentation as predictors of humor. In these studies M. Snyder's self-monitoring scale (1974) was used that assesses individual differences in the ability and motivation to engage in self-presentational behaviors in social situations. For example in two studies, Turner (1980) showed that high self-monitors were assessed as more witty than their low self-monitoring counterparts. In another study by Bell, McGhee and Dufley (1986) self-monitoring turned out to be the superior predictor for humor compared with self-esteem, machiavellianism and gender role identity. An important shortcoming in these studies stems from the fact that only the total score of the self-monitoring scale was considered. In several factor-analytic studies, however, it turned out that Snyder's scale does not measure a single construct, but two or even three independent factors which have been termed "Acting", "Extraversion" and "Other-directedness" (Briggs & Cheek, 1986; Briggs, Cheek & Buss, 1980; Lennox, 1988; Lennox & Wolfe, 1984; Nowack & Kammer, 1987; Wolfe, Lennox & Cutler, 1986). In order to eliminate this lack of congruence between the multidimensionality of the self-monitoring scale and the unidimensionality of the self-monitoring construct, Lennox and Wolfe (1984) have developed the Revised Self-Monitoring-Scale (RSMS) and the Concern-for-Appropriateness-Scale (CAS) which measure the acquisitive and the protective style of self-presentation (Wolfe, Lennox & Cutler, 1986) initially introduced by Arkin (1981). Acquisitive self-presentation is guided by the desire to win social approval. By contrast, protective self-presentation is guided by the desire to avoid social disapproval. In addition, Lennox (1988) has demonstrated that Snyder's 25-item self-monitoring scale includes two factors that can be interpreted as the acquisitive and the protective style of self-presentation. To the best of our knowledge, these two self-presentation styles were not considered in humor research as yet.

In an attempt to further revise and go beyond the self-monitoring concept, Renner, Enz, Friedel, Merzbacher and Laux (2008) have introduced a new self-presentation construct that is especially related to humor: the histrionic self-presentation style. This construct will be described in some detail in the following sections.

The histrionic self-presentation style

Histrionic self-presentation is defined as a way of shaping everyday interactions by *explicit* As-If-behaviors. Histrionic self-presenters regard daily situations as opportunities for role playing and for transforming such situations into "dramatic scenes" (Renner et al., 2008, p. 1303). Histrionic As-If-behaviors range from subtle forms, e.g. ironic remarks up to small dramatic performances, e.g. imitating another person by changing one's voice, mimic, gestures or posture and trying to involve other people in such role plays. The most important characteristic of As-If-behaviors is that they are not meant seriously. Doing As-If is just playing around, joking, making fun and teasing. Renner and colleagues (2008) have shown that histrionic self-presentation may be conceptual-

ized as a rather stable *style*, i.e. a personality variable that concerns individual differences in using As-If-behaviors to shape everyday interactions.

Histrionic As-If-behaviors pervade our everyday life and are present in quite different areas. Of course, explicit As-If-behaviors are the domain of entertainers like Harald Schmidt, Thomas Gottschalk or David Letterman but may be historically identified with the figure of the court's jester. An illustrative example of histrionic self-presentation in the area of politics is provided by Peter Struck, the former German minister of defense. During a rock concert in the course of an election campaign event Peter Struck entered the stage with sun glasses and a black hat imitating a "Blues Brother" and thus a character from the cult movie of the same name by John Landis. Struck's behavior was explicit. Everybody realized at once: This is our minister of defense doing as if he would be a Blues Brother. A good example for doing as if in everyday life is playing air guitar (pretending to play guitar without a real guitar). Since 1996 Air Guitar World Championships are carried out every year (see www.airguitarworldchampionships.com). Other examples of concrete As-If-behaviors of different bandwidth are presented in Renner et al. (2008).

Histrionic self-presentation and humor

As already stated above histrionic As-If-behaviors are not meant to be taken seriously and often involve playing around, joking, making fun and teasing. But why do As-If-behaviors often produce humorous effects? Drawing on the "fictional theory of humor" introduced by philosopher A. Nyman, Renner et al. (2008) have suggested a theoretical explanation for the association between histrionic self-presentation and humor. Nyman defines the comical as a "... misleading but suddenly revealed As If..." (Nyman, 1986, p. 188, translated by the authors). According to Nyman, two conditions are involved in humor and laughter: (1) a person – if only briefly – succumbs to an illusion and is thereby perplexed by the As-If-mode, (2) the person abruptly sees through the illusion and realizes the As-If-mode. Applied to histrionic self-presentation, this would imply that the audience is, at first, perplexed by an ironic remark or a histrionic role play and afterwards realizes the As-If-mode all at once. Thus, the "doing-As-If" in histrionic self-presentation is also the key principle of the fictional theory of humor. In a similar way, Raskin (1998) defines humor as a non-*bona-fide* mode of communication (italics in the original) in his script-based semantic theory, "...that is, a mode in which the speaker is not committed to the truth of what is being said and the hearer is aware of this non-commitment" (Raskin, 1998, p. 99).

Another way to explain the link between (histrionic) self-presentation and humor is offered by an early social-psychological theory developed by Kane, Suls and Tedeschi (1977). This theory basically assumes that people use humor to reach certain interpersonal goals. In other words: Humor is conceptualized as a tool of social interaction. The most important characteristic of humor as a social tool is its ambiguity regarding meaning and the associated possibility to take back humorous accounts:

The reason for this is that humour carries with it a cue that it is non-serious, that it is play. This means that the source can communicate a message and then take

it back if need be by simply saying ‘it was only a joke’ (...) Thus, the ambiguity associated with the ‘real’ meaning assigned to humorous statements by the source allows him or her to take interpersonal initiatives that otherwise would be too risky. (Kane, Suls & Tedeschi, 1977, p. 13)

Thus, in social interactions humorous accounts and jokes may be interpreted as role-plays-not-to-be-taken-too-seriously that permit conveying risky messages. For example, it is safer and more face-saving to flirt and joke around with a desired mating partner than to directly say “I love you, let’s spend the night together”. This direct strategy is likely to lead to direct rejection. On the other hand, making jokes and flirting which may also be interpreted as doing As-If (Renner & Laux, 2003), offers the possibility to “test” or check the interest of a desired mating partner without being directly rejected or being rejected at once. Taken together, in this social psychological theory, again the As-If-mode is introduced as the central mechanism of humor.

On the empirical level, Renner et al. (2008) have shown that the histrionic self-presentation style markedly predicted the rated humorousness of a presentation task and a simulated talk show in which participants had to play different guests by quickly changing between the respective roles. Histrionic self-presentation was also related to the use of humor as a coping reaction. In addition, the histrionic self-presentation style showed incremental validity over and above self-monitoring (the gold standard with regard to the assessment of individual differences in self-presentation) concerning the humor ratings and the use of humor as a coping reaction.

Overall, the theoretical considerations and the empirical evidence show that histrionic self-presentation and humor are intertwined. However, the different forms, styles or types of humor that are used by histrionic self-presenters have not been investigated in detail up to now. Humor is not a monolithic unidimensional construct but rather a multifaceted and multidimensional phenomenon. Recent advances in the study of humor have yielded several differentiations concerning humor-related traits. One of these approaches that seems to be of special importance for histrionic self-presentation and also for the acquisitive and the protective style is the differentiation between gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism.

Gelotophobia, gelotophilia, katagelasticism and self-presentation styles

Based on clinical case studies, Titze (1996) has introduced the concept of gelotophobia to describe the pathological fear of appearing to others as a ridiculous object. This fear of being laughed at is assumed to be pathological because gelotophobes believe that they actually are ridiculous objects and therefore the laughter of others who constantly screen them for ridiculous cues is justified. In addition, gelotophobes misattribute even innocent laughter (not directed at or not meant to hurt them) as demeaning assaults. Although initially introduced as a clinical phenomenon related to social phobia, Ruch and Proyer

(2009a) have demonstrated that gelotophobia may be conceptualized as an individual difference variable that also applies to normal, non-clinical samples.

With regard to individual differences in self-presentation, gelotophobia should be especially associated with the protective self-presentation style. As stated above, protective self-presenters try to avoid social disapproval and enter social interactions with pessimism and the fear that even minimal false moves will lead to the catastrophe of social rejection. Being laughed at by others should be interpreted as social disapproval by protective self-presenters. Therefore, protective self-presenters should be characterized by gelotophobic tendencies.

Gelotophilia, the joy of being laughed at, and katagelasticism, the joy of laughing at other, are extensions of the gelotophobia concept (Ruch & Proyer, 2009b, p. 202). From a self-presentational view it is interesting that Ruch and Proyer have considered gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism within a role-theoretical framework:

Laughing at others might involve several people (or groups) but implies at least two persons (or roles) that need to be studied: the person (or group) ridiculing or laughing at and the person (or group) being laughed at. Furthermore, there might be bystanders/observers that may either join in the ridicule, or step in and interfere and help the target, or stay neutral. (Ruch & Proyer, 2009b, p. 184)

Being the target of laughter or observing ridicule are putative conditions for the development of gelotophobia. Within the role-theoretical framework, one may assume that persons prone to gelotophobia play the rather passive roles of being the target of laughter (probably not being able to defend themselves) or the witness in the audience that realizes how demeaning it is to be laughed at. By contrast, gelotophiles and katagelasticists play active or agentic roles in this drama of laughing. According to Ruch and Proyer (2009b), katagelasticists do not hesitate to compromise others or making fun of them whenever there is a chance to do so. Thus, katagelasticism defined as the joy of laughing at others also involves the active creation of instances that enable laughing at a target. Furthermore, katagelasticists believe that their "victims" should defend themselves if they do not like being laughed at. They also apply this attitude to themselves and strike back if their own person is the target of laughter. In doing so, they sometimes overshoot the mark and seriously hurt their opponent who may have started with only a harmless joke. Overall, the humor of katagelasticists may sometimes be rather rude and antisocial. Within the role-theoretical framework, katagelasticists can both act as laughing agents or transient targets of laughter that immediately strike back and may also be found in the audience. In our studies on histrionic self-presentation, we have found a lot of examples that parallel the katagelasticistic danger of overshooting the mark when making a joke that was probably not meant to harm the target (Renner, 2006, Renner et al., 2008). Thus, one may expect that histrionic self-presentation and katagelasticism are correlated.

Gelotophilia, the joy of being laughed at by others, also implies an active part in the play. According to Ruch and Proyer (2009b, p. 185) gelotophiles seek and establish situations in which they can make others laugh at their own expense. Gelotophiles like to tell funny stories in front of an audience that may also include embarrassing events that happened to them. Gelotophiles are not ashamed of such embarrassing events but rather use them

as acceptable material to be shared with others for the sake of laughter. In addition, they do not tell such embarrassing stories about themselves for self-defeating reasons but just to laugh and have fun with others. In our view, gelotophiles need presentational skills to perform their sometimes embarrassing stories effectively. Thus, acquisitive self-presentation and especially the “ability to modify self-presentation”-component is expected to be associated with gelotophilia. Furthermore, when gelotophiles tell others about their mishaps they are likely to sometimes imitate persons and/or replay the entire embarrassing event and thus exhibit As-If-behaviors. Therefore, gelotophilia should also be associated with the histrionic self-presentation style.

Aims of the current research

The primary aim of our research is to examine associations between self-presentation styles and the three humor related traits of gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism. Special attention is dedicated to the histrionic self-presentation style that has shown to be connected with humorous behaviors and the use of humor as a coping reaction in former studies (Renner et al., 2008). Based on the argumentation in the previous section, we expect that the histrionic self-presentation style is correlated with both gelotophilia and katagelasticism. We also expect a negative relation between the histrionic style and gelotophobia because it is likely that histrionic people with gelotophilic tendencies do not fear but may even enjoy the laughter of others. With regard to the other two styles, we especially hypothesize that protective self-presentation is connected with gelotophobia. As a consequence, gelotophilia, the joy of being laughed at, should be negatively associated with the protective style. In addition, protective self-presenters should not exhibit katagelastistic tendencies because these imply the danger of social disapproval. As already hypothesized above, we argue that acquisitive self-presenters could also show gelotophilic behaviors because the ability to modify self-presentation may be conceived of as a useful skill to effectively tell and perform funny stories. If this is true, one should also expect that acquisitive self-presentation is negatively related with gelotophobia. We do not have a specific hypothesis with regard to acquisitive self-presentation and katagelasticism. Since acquisitive self-presenters try to win social approval it may be reasoned that making jokes at the expense of and laughing at others could sometimes be an appropriate strategy to reach this goal and sometimes not.

In addition to the specific hypotheses regarding the bivariate associations of the three humor-related traits with each self-presentation style we also expect incremental validity of the histrionic and the protective style. Specifically, we hypothesize that histrionic self-presentation will predict gelotophilia and katagelasticism over and above the two other self-presentation styles. The reason for this is that former studies (Renner, 2006) have identified histrionic self-presentation as a superior predictor of humor compared with acquisitive and protective self-presentation. By contrast, the protective self-presentation style is expected to predict gelotophobia over and above histrionic and acquisitive self-presentation. Protective self-presentation has turned out to be a major predictor of constructs that are related to avoiding disapproval.

Method

Participants

This study is based on $N = 643$ participants (138 men and 505 women). The mean age of the sample is $M = 35.19$ years ($SD = 9.42$, $Mdn = 34$) with a range from 20 to 67. Men ($M = 36.74$, $SD = 10.65$) were older than women ($M = 34.76$ years, $SD = 9.03$, $t = -1.99$, $p = .048$, $df = 194.107$, corrected because of different standard deviation $F = 6.973$, $p = .008$). Participants were first-year undergraduate students of a distance learning program in psychology (B.Sc.). In contrast to other German B.Sc. programs in psychology the distance learning program does not have a Numerus Clausus as a restriction of admission. In addition, persons with no general qualification for university entrance are also allowed to begin their studies. However, these persons have to pass a special exam that qualifies them to continue their studies. As a result, our population differs regarding some decisive respects (e.g. age, occupation) from the common population of young, mostly female psychology freshmen: Apart from the higher mean for age, only 31 % of the participants in our sample study full time, but 55 % are part-time students (others are e.g. cross-registered or visiting students). Most of the participants, these are 71 %, are employed and an additional 21 % were currently not employed, but were in the past for at least 6 months. About 8 % of the sample never has been employed for a period longer than 6 months.

Procedure

All psychology students of the distance learning program were invited by email to take part in different online surveys (questionnaire studies). These surveys could be entered via Internet by a link provided in the emails and also on the website of the psychology department. In order to assure, that only freshmen in the long-distance program were able to take part, a user name and a password were administered. At the beginning of each survey, participants had to generate an individual six-digit code according to fixed specifications (e.g. second letter of own forename etc.). On the following introductory page the purpose of each survey and details on data protection were explicated. Thereafter, questions on demographic characteristics and questionnaires on different topics followed. At the end of each survey, students received a certification of participation. As in all psychology programs, students in our distance learning program also have to achieve credits for participation in psychological studies.

The 643 participants of our sample were matched out of three different surveys that included the measures described below. In the course of the matching procedure several steps of data cleaning were performed: Participants who did not enter an individual code, cases of multiple participations and cases that did not complete the surveys were eliminated.

Materials

As-If-Scale (AIS). The histrionic self-presentation style was measured by the As-If-Scale (Renner et al., 2008). The AIS is an 8-Item-Scale that covers subtle histrionic forms e.g. “I formulate my statements in such a way that they could have more than one meaning to others”, dramatic performances e.g., “I enjoy putting on a real show for others”, and As-If-behaviors that are especially related to changes in body language or nonverbal communication e.g., “When I tell stories I act out the roles of the different participants by imitating their body language and the way they talk.”. The AIS is available in German and English.

Revised Self-Monitoring Scale (RSMS). The German version (see Laux & Renner, 2002) of the RSMS (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984) is a 12-item scale designed to measure acquisitive self-presentation. It consists of two subscales (six items each) which are called “ability to modify self-presentation” (AMSP) and “sensitivity to expressive behaviors of others” (SEBO). The two subscales are correlated and load on a higher-order factor (for details see Laux & Renner, 2002). Therefore, it is possible to aggregate the two subscales.

Concern-for-Appropriateness-Scale (CAS). The German version (see Laux & Renner, 2002) of the CAS (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984) was used to measure protective self-presentation. Like the RSMS, the German version of the CAS also consists of two 6-item subscales that measure “cross-situational variability” (CSV) and “attention to social comparison information” (ASCI). Like the subscales of the RSMS, CSV and ASCI are also correlated and load on a higher-order factor. In their reinterpretation of the CAS, Wolfe and colleagues (1986) changed the names of the subscales to more accurately indicate the protective aspect: “cross-situational variability” was renamed to “protective variability” and “attention to social comparison information” was renamed to “protective social comparison”.

PhoPhiKat. The German version of the PhoPhiKat-45 (Ruch & Proyer, 2009b) was administered to assess gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism. The PhoPhiKat-45 measures these three humor-related traits with 15 items per dimension. Ruch and Proyer (2009b) reported internal consistencies of $\alpha = .88$ for gelotophobia, $\alpha = .87$ for gelotophilia and $\alpha = .84$ for katagelasticism. Sample items include “When I have made a fool of myself in front of others I grow completely stiff and lose my ability to behave adequately” (gelotophobia), “For raising laughs I pleurably make the most out of embarrassments or misfortunes that happen to me which other people would be ashamed of” (gelotophilia) and “Since it is only fun, I do not see any problems in compromising others in a funny way” (katagelasticism).

Results

Descriptive analyses and gender differences

In the second column of Table 1 overall means and standard deviations for the constructs assessed in the current study are presented. The following columns of Table 1 show gender-specific means and standard deviations, results of *t*-tests for gender differences and the internal consistencies of the scales.

Although means and standard deviations for gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism in our sample were a little bit lower than those reported by Ruch and Proyer (2009b), the values are quite comparable. Similarly, we also found that katagelasticism was associated with sex ($r = .26, p < .01$, 1 = females, 2 = males) and age ($r = -.16, p < .01$). In further accordance with Ruch and Proyer (2009b), gelotophobia was unrelated to sex and gelotophilia showed no association with age in our sample. Contrary to the Ruch and Proyer (2009b) results, however, a negative correlation between gelotophobia and age ($r = -.21, p < .01$) and a low positive correlation between gelotophilia and sex ($r = .13, p < .01$) were found. The positive correlations for katagelasticism and gelotophilia with sex are also reflected in significant *t*-values which indicate that men score higher than women on both of these humor-related constructs (see Table 1).

As in the Ruch and Proyer study, we also obtained a negative correlation between gelotophobia and gelotophilia ($r = -.24, p < .01$) and a positive correlation between gelotophilia and katagelasticism ($r = .38, p < .01$). Gelotophobia, however, was slightly correlated with katagelasticism in our sample ($r = .15, p < .01$).

The mean score for acquisitive self-presentation was higher and the mean score for protective self-presentation was lower than those reported in Laux and Renner (2002). In addition, the mean for the histrionic self-presentation style in our sample was quite similar to the respective means reported in Renner and colleagues (2008) study 1.

Relations of gelotophilia, gelotophobia and katagelasticism with self-presentation styles

Zero-order correlations of gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism with the three self-presentation styles are presented in Table 2. Since gelotophilia and katagelasticism are substantially correlated we also computed partial correlations between the self-presentation styles and katagelasticism controlling for gelotophilia and vice versa (gelotophilia controlling for katagelasticism). As expected, the histrionic self-presentation style was markedly associated with both gelotophilia and katagelasticism. Contrary to our expectation, however, we only found a low negative correlation between histrionic self-presentation and gelotophobia that did not reach significance at the prefixed level. In accordance with our hypotheses, the protective self-presentation style inclusive of the corresponding subscales showed a considerable high positive correlation with gelotophobia. Contrary to our hypotheses, protective self-presentation was only unrelated to gelotophilia. The partial correlation between protective self-presentation and

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, gender differences for the constructs and reliability of the scales of the study

Scale	Total (<i>N</i> = 643)	Women (<i>N</i> = 505)	Men (<i>N</i> = 138)	Sex differences		Internal consistency
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Δ	<i>t</i> (<i>df</i> = 641) <i>d</i>	
Humor						
Gelotophobia	1.83 (0.53)	1.85 (0.53)	1.77 (0.52)	0.09	1.701	0.16
Gelotophilia	2.22 (0.50)	2.19 (0.50)	2.35 (0.46)	-0.16	-3.417**	-0.34
Katagelasticism	1.79 (0.43)	1.73 (0.42)	2.01 (0.41)	-0.28	-6.956**	-0.67
Self-presentation						
AIS	1.92 (0.52)	1.88 (0.51)	2.05 (0.53)	-0.17	-3.464**	-0.33
RSMS	2.87 (0.48)	2.88 (0.48)	2.84 (0.48)	0.04	0.830	0.08
AMSP	2.81 (0.55)	2.79 (0.55)	2.85 (0.53)	-0.05	-0.963	-0.09
SEBO	2.93 (0.56)	2.96 (0.55)	2.83 (0.56)	0.13	2.391	0.23
CAS	2.04 (0.51)	2.04 (0.52)	2.02 (0.49)	0.02	0.367	0.04
CSV	1.96 (0.63)	1.95 (0.64)	2.00 (0.60)	-0.04	-0.684	-0.07
ASCI	2.11 (0.52)	2.12 (0.52)	2.04 (0.52)	0.08	1.573	0.15

Note. AIS = As-if-Scale; RMSMS = Revised Self-Monitoring Scale; AMSP = Ability to Modify Self-presentation; SEBO = Sensitivity to Expressive Behaviors of Others; CAS = Concern-for-Appropriateness-Scale; CSV = Cross-situational Variability/Protective Variability; ASCI = Attention to Social Comparison Information/Protective Social Comparison; Δ = absolute difference between women and men; *d* = effect size according to Cohen (1992). ** *p* < .01

Table 2:
Correlations between gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism with self-presentation styles and personality

Scale	Gelotophobia	Gelotophilia		Katagelasticism	
Self-presentation					
AIS	-.10	.38**	.27** ^a	.41**	.31** ^b
RSMS	-.23**	.15**	.16** ^a	.01	-.05 ^b
AMSP	-.26**	.14**	.13 ^a	.06	.01 ^b
SEBO	-.15**	.12	.15** ^a	-.04	-.10 ^b
CAS	.41**	-.04	-.11 ^a	.16**	.19** ^b
CSV	.40**	-.03	-.11 ^a	.20**	.23** ^b
ASCI	.32**	-.04	-.08 ^a	.07	.10 ^b

Note. $N = 643$. AIS = As-if-Scale; RSMS = Revised Self-Monitoring Scale; AMSP = Ability to Modify Self-presentation; SEBO = Sensitivity to Expressive Behaviors of Others; CAS = Concern-for-Appropriateness-Scale; CSV = Cross-situational Variability/Protective Variability; ASCI = Attention to Social Comparison Information/Protective Social Comparison.

^a Partial correlation controlled for katagelasticism

^b Partial correlation controlled for gelotophilia

** $p < .01$ (corrected using Bonferroni's method).

gelotophilia (controlled for katagelasticism) reached a low negative value at least which was, however, not significant at the prefixed level. Protective self-presentation was slightly associated with katagelasticism. The last result is especially attributable to the correlation between katagelasticism and the Protective Variability subscale of the CAS. As hypothesized, acquisitive self-presentation was slightly associated with gelotophilia and negatively correlated with gelotophobia. A zero-correlation was found for katagelasticism and the acquisitive style.

Incremental validity of self-presentation styles in predicting humor-related traits

In order to explore whether histrionic self-presentation shows incremental validity in predicting gelotophilia and katagelasticism, hierarchical regression analyses were carried out. Age and sex were entered in the first step, acquisitive and protective self-presentation were entered in the second step and the histrionic self-presentation style was included in the third step. Table 3 shows the results of these analyses. It turned out that the histrionic self-presentation style accounted for a significant additional degree of variance in gelotophilia and katagelasticism over and above age, sex, and the other two self-presentation styles ($\Delta R^2 = .12$ for gelotophilia and $\Delta R^2 = .13$ for katagelasticism).³

³ The incremental validity of the histrionic self-presentation style even holds when katagelasticism is included as another predictor for gelotophilia in addition to sex, age, acquisitive and protective self-presentation ($\Delta R^2 = .05$; $F = 42.50$, $p < .01$). Similarly, histrionic self-presentation still predicts katagelasticism after controlling for sex, age, the two other self-presentation styles and gelotophilia ($\Delta R^2 = .06$, $F = 55.28$, $p < .01$).

Table 3:
Regression models predicting gelotophilia and katagelasticism

Predictor	Gelotophilia			Katagelasticism		
	ΔR^2	ΔF	β	ΔR^2	ΔF	β
Step 1	.02	5.95**		.10	37.37**	
Sex			.14**			.28**
Age			-.02			-.19**
Step 2	.03	9.27**		.02	5.31**	
Sex			.14**			.28**
Age			-.03			-.15**
RSMS			.16**			-.01
CAS			-.07			.13**
Step 3	.12	92.80**		.13	106.55**	
Sex			.07			.21**
Age			.05			-.08
RSMS			.01			-.17**
CAS			-.12**			.08
AIS			.40**			.41**

Note. $N = 643$. RSMS = Revised Self-Monitoring Scale; CAS = Concern-for-Appropriateness-Scale; AIS = As-if-Scale.

** $p < .01$.

Furthermore, an additional hierarchical regression analysis aimed at exploring the incremental validity of the protective self-presentation style in predicting gelotophobia. Again, variables were entered in three steps with histrionic self-presentation being included in the second step along with the acquisitive style. The protective self-presentation style was entered in the third step. Results for this analysis are presented in Table 4. The protective self-presentation style predicted gelotophobia with a significant increment of $\Delta R^2 = .17$ over and above age, sex, and the two other self-presentation styles.⁴

⁴ One of the reviewers has suggested to use the humor-related traits as predictors of the self-presentation styles because this would be more appropriate from a conceptual point of view. It might, e.g., be argued that the assumed desire of gelotophobes to avoid social disapproval could stimulate them to present themselves in a protective way. In order to explore the predictive validity of the three humor-related traits with regard to the self-presentation styles we have carried out three additional hierarchical regression analyses. Age and sex were controlled for in the first step, the three humor-related traits were entered in the second step and self-presentation styles were used as criteria. Results show that the three humor-related traits predicted acquisitive self-presentation with an increment of $\Delta R^2 = .07$ ($F = 16.51$, $p < .01$), protective self-presentation with an increment of $\Delta R^2 = .14$ ($F = 37.54$, $p < .01$) and histrionic self-presentation with an increment of $\Delta R^2 = .20$ ($F = 56.84$, $p < .01$) after controlling for sex and age. The respective beta coefficients in predicting the acquisitive self-presentation style were $\beta = .10$ ($p < .05$) for gelotophilia, $\beta = -.23$ ($p < .01$) for gelotophobia and $\beta = .01$ (n.s.) for katagelasticism. The respective beta coefficients in predicting the protective self-presentation style were $\beta = .03$ (n.s.) for gelotophilia, $\beta = .37$ ($p < .01$) for gelotophobia and $\beta = .07$ (n.s.) for katagelasticism. Finally, the beta coefficients in predicting

Table 4:
Regression model predicting gelotophobia

Predictor	Gelotophobia		
	ΔR^2	ΔF	β
Step 1	.05	15.41**	
Sex			-.05
Age			-.20**
Step 2	.06	22.10**	
Sex			-.05
Age			-.22**
RSMS			-.20**
AIS			-.04
Step 3	.17	154.11**	
Sex			-.04
Age			-.13
RSMS			-.23**
AIS			.10
CAS			.42**

Note. $N = 643$. RSMS = Revised Self-Monitoring Scale; CAS = Concern-for-Appropriateness-Scale; AIS = As-if-Scale.

** $p < .01$.

Discussion

As hypothesized, histrionic self-presentation was positively associated with both gelotophilia and katagelasticism. Contrary to our expectations, we only found a low negative correlation between histrionic self-presentation and gelotophobia that was not significant. Furthermore, the histrionic style showed incremental validity with regard to gelotophilia and katagelasticism after controlling for gender, age, acquisitive as well as protective self-presentation. The histrionic self-presentation style thus turned out to be a superior predictor of gelotophilia and katagelasticism.

What do these findings mean? From a self-presentational view, gelotophilia and katagelasticism may be interpreted as specific types of humorous As-If-behaviors that are at the same time associated with different preferences regarding humor appreciation. Geloto-

the histrionic self-presentation style were $\beta = .23$ ($p < .01$) for gelotophilia, $\beta = -.13$ ($p < .01$) for gelotophobia and $\beta = .29$ ($p < .01$) for katagelasticism. In any case, the beta coefficients of the three humor-related traits in predicting self-presentation styles were lower than the beta-coefficients of the histrionic self-presentation style in predicting gelotophilia and katagelasticism as well as the beta-coefficient of protective self-presentation in predicting gelotophobia. From a conceptual point of view, we argue that gelotophobia and protective self-presentation are guided by the same motive: avoiding social disapproval. Furthermore, we would like to stress our claim that successful gelotophiles and katagelasticians will need certain presentational skills which are especially related to the histrionic ability of doing as if.

philes appreciate laughing about themselves together with their audience; katagelasticists appreciate laughing at others and probably prefer to make an audience laugh at others as well. Thus, gelotophilia and katagelasticism contribute to the elaboration of the nomological network of the histrionic self-presentation style with regard to humor production and humor appreciation.

From the point of view of humor research, the histrionic self-presentation style offers a possible mechanism (doing As-If) that is especially important concerning the performative (or non-verbal) aspects of making jokes about oneself or about others. In the introduction, we have pointed out that people obviously differ in the extent to which they are able to perform jokes or humor effectively. In our view, the ability to perform As-If-behaviors of different bandwidth (e.g. just imitating the voice of another person or imitating another person on different nonverbal and paraverbal channels) is a crucial ingredient for effectively making others laugh at one's own self or at others.

What about self-presentation styles and gelotophobia? As hypothesized, a marked positive association was found between the protective self-presentation style and gelotophobia. Furthermore, the protective self-presentation style predicted gelotophobia over and above gender, age and acquisitive as well as histrionic self-presentation. By contrast, acquisitive self-presentation showed a negative correlation with gelotophobia. Thus, our interpretation that protective self-presenters may fear being laughed at because this may indicate social disapproval was supported. In addition, a low positive correlation between gelotophobia and katagelasticism emerged in our study. This result may be interpreted according to Ruch and Proyer (2009b) who found a zero correlation between these constructs and concluded that at least some gelotophobes also like laughing at others although they know how harmful this might be. In our view, however, there is still another possible interpretation of the association between gelotophobia and katagelasticism. This interpretation is based on a distinction between active and passive katagelasticists which we would like to suggest. *Active katagelasticists* both create instances in which they can laugh at others and subsequently like to do so. By contrast, *passive katagelasticists* are also prone to laugh at others but do not create the respective situations by themselves because they are probably not able or willing to do so. Gelotophobes might only be prone to passive katagelasticism, i.e. laughing at others but not being able to create instances that allow laughing at others.

Furthermore, since self-presentation aims at conveying self-images and influencing interaction partners the question arises which kind of impressions may be communicated by gelotophilic and katagelastic humor. In a recent review chapter, Paulhus and Trapnell (2008) have proposed that the themes of agency and communion that provide a powerful framework for organizing the field of human personality also apply to self-presentation efforts. Paulhus and Trapnell (2008, p. 495) use terms like "strong, competent, clever" to characterize agentic self-portrayals; by contrast communal self-portrayals involve cooperativeness, warmth and dutifulness. How do agentic and communal images relate to gelotophilia and katagelasticism? Intuitively, one might assume that katagelasticists attempt to convey agentic images of power and assertion by making jokes at the expense of others. By contrast, it seems reasonable to link gelotophilia to the attempt to communicate communal images of union and solidarity by inviting others to laugh together

about one's own mishaps. However, a closer inspection of our empirical results reveals a different and more complex picture. Although agency and communion were not specifically assessed in our study, acquisitive and protective self-presentation may serve as proxies. These two styles and their underlying motives are interpreted to be self-presentational variants of agency (acquisitive self-presentation) and communion (protective self-presentation, see Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008, Wolfe et al., 1986). Contrary to what one might intuitively assume, the low positive relation between acquisitive self-presentation and gelotophilia seems to indicate that gelotophiles may attempt to convey agentic self-images of competence and power. Making jokes about oneself may be a subtle and indirect way to communicate that one is so competent and powerful that one can even afford to laugh about one's own mishaps and shortcomings. In addition, the pure fact to be able to make other people laugh may be used as an indicator of power and competence. Furthermore, one might also think of a narcissistic boss who is the only one who is allowed to make jokes about himself – and whenever this happens every subordinate does have to laugh.

The zero-correlation between acquisitive self-presentation and katagelasticism only allows the hypothesis that at least some katagelasticians try to convey images of power and competence. The finding, however, that protective self-presentation is positively associated with katagelasticism seems to indicate that also certain communal self-portrayals may be communicated by laughing at others. The differentiation between active and passive katagelasticism offers a tentative interpretation of this unexpected finding: In line with avoiding disapproval, it seems to make sense that protective self-presenters only join in laughing at others when everybody else is doing it. Thus, protective self-presenters might manage to communicate an image of an innocuously social and friendly person (see Leary & Kowalski, 1995) who laughs when everybody else is laughing and thus shows passive katagelasticism.

Altogether, our considerations about agentic and communal self images that might be conveyed via gelotophilic and katagelastiscistic humor are rather speculative. One reason for this indeterminacy is the fact that we could not base our interpretations on specific measures of agency and communion like, e.g., the Interpersonal Adjective Scales (Wiggins, Trapnell & Phillips, 1988). We are, however, convinced that it is worthwhile considering the agency-communion framework in further studies on gelotophilia, katagelasticism and other humor-related traits. From the very beginning, gelotophilia and katagelasticism were conceptualized as *interactive* forms of humor that are explicitly directed at others. Whenever people enter the stage of interaction, it is more than probable that themes of power, competence, mastery as well as cooperativeness, intimacy, union, and solidarity will play a decisive role.

Future research

The results of our study provide numerous avenues for future research. We have argued above that the histrionic self-presentation style offers a possible mechanism (doing As-If) that is especially important concerning the performative (or non-verbal) aspects of mak-

ing jokes about oneself or about others. This claim should, of course, be investigated on the behavioral level. Results of previous studies suggest that histrionic self-presenters not only self-report katagelastistic and gelotophilic tendencies in a questionnaire. For example, self-directed irony and parodying another person were directly observed in the Renner et al. (2008) study 2 and also in Friedel's (2007) study that encompasses content analyses of biographical interviews with histrionic persons. Self-directed irony may be interpreted as an instance of gelotophilia whereas parodying another person seems to indicate katagelasticism. These are, however, post-hoc interpretations which have to be validated in future studies that should explicitly observe gelotophilic and katagelastistic behaviors. As already pointed out in the last section, we also argue that considering the agency-communion framework and the interpersonal circumplex respectively may be useful in extending the nomological network of at least gelotophilia and katagelasticism. Furthermore, the distinction between active and passive katagelasticism might also prove useful in future research.

During the course of this study another humor-related fear came to our minds. In addition to the fear of being laughed at (gelotophobia) we suggest to consider *the fear of not being laughed at* or in general *the fear of not being able to produce humorous effects*. Making other people laugh is a very social desirable ability which, e.g., helps in attracting the attention of mating partners or to convey self-images of liveliness, creativity or just humorousness. Attempting, however, to tell jokes or perform funny stories which do not succeed can be a very shameful and defeating experience. Consider, you want to entertain others whom you do not know well at a party by telling a joke and nobody is laughing. Consider a comedian whose jokes do not work. In our view, it would be interesting to further explore this phenomenon.

Conclusion

This study shows that a joint consideration of humor and self-presentation may cross-fertilize research on both phenomena (see also, Radomska & Tomczak, 2010, this issue). Presentational capabilities are often necessary to effectively perform jokes and funny stories. Furthermore, humor may be used to convey certain self-images to interaction partners. On a more abstract and general level, the themes of agency and communion seem to be of special relevance for individual differences in both humor and self-presentation.

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