Research update: Zurich humor studies (incl. resilience)

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Humor and Laughter, Playfulness and Cheerfulness: Upsides and Downsides to a Life of Lightness

Submission closed.

Overview 22 Articles 85 Authors Impact Comments

About this Research Topic

The emergence of Positive Psychology has contributed to the identification of many of the components leading to happiness, life satisfaction, well-being, and how a good life can be attained. This impetus has brought together many diverse research fields that have been established for a long while in their own ...

Topic Editors

Willibald Ruch
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223 publications

Special Issue of *HUMOR*: Festschrift for Paul McGhee – Humor Across the Lifespan, Theory, Measurement, and Applications

Willibald Ruch / Jeffrey Goldstein

Online erschienen: 06.04.2018

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/humor-2018-0036

The special issue of Humor touches on the many areas in which Paul McGhee was a pioneer. This Festschrift begins with an intellectual biography of Paul McGhee (by Goldstein & Ruch), with reminiscences by Peter Derks, followed by issues that emerge out of his work. Contributions are from academics and practitioners from psychiatry, nursing, education, and psychotherapy highlighting research and practice that has profited from Paul’s influence. These include the role of humor in children’s development and education (Doris Bergen; Joyce
18th International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications

University of Wolverhampton, Telford, UK

2nd-7th July 2018

Course Director: Professor Willibald Ruch

Local Organisers: Josiane Boutonnet  Dr. Tracey Platt

http://humoursummerschool.org/18/
Psychometric Comparisons of Benevolent and Corrective Humor across 22 Countries: The Virtue Gap in Humor Goes International

Broadening Humor: Comic Styles Differentially Tap into Temperament, Character, and Ability

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Humor and other character strengths & wellbeing:
Origins of Positive Psychology

1999 Cayman meeting
The Roots of A Positive Life

2000 Glasbern meeting
Via Taxonomy of Strengths and Virtues

2004
Character Strengths and Virtues
Handbook and Classification

24 strengths
6 core virtues
21 strengths/virtues
5 clusters
Six ubiquitous virtues

- **Wisdom and Knowledge**
  - Creativity
  - Curiosity
  - Judgment & Open-Mindedness
  - Love of Learning
  - Perspective

- **Courage**
  - Bravery
  - Perseverance
  - Honesty
  - Zest

- **Humanity**
  - Capacity to Love and Be Loved
  - Kindness
  - Social Intelligence

- **Justice**
  - Teamwork
  - Fairness
  - Leadership

- **Temperance**
  - Forgiveness & Mercy
  - Modesty & Humility
  - Prudence
  - Self-Regulation

- **Transcendence**
  - Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence
  - Gratitude
  - Hope
  - Humor
  - Religiousness & Spirituality

Assessed with the VIA-inventory of strengths
“The manual of the sanities”


- Classifies 24 specific strengths under 6 broad virtues that consistently emerge across history and culture.

- Each strength is thoroughly examined in its own chapter, with special attention to its meaning, explanation, measurement, causes, correlates, consequences, and development across the life span, as well as to strategies for its deliberate cultivation."
The start: Wellbeing

From “happiness” to subjective well-being (SWB)

“happiness” (0-10) Cantril

Positive Affect (PA)

Negative Affect (NA)

Life Satisfaction (global; domains)

Balance PA – NA

Happiness = mehr positive Emotions than negative, cognitive evaluation of Life as good (general, or. work, leisurue time, healthetc)

Happiness= unidimensional
Predictors of life satisfaction in a large sample

Figure 1. Predictors of life satisfaction (rank ordered by size of correlation with SWL; n = 15,588)
Humor and satisfaction with life

Fig 2. Increase in life satisfaction as a function of humour (N = 17,479) (from 2.3 onward: 100 < n per cell < 1,223) (Ruch, Proyer, Weber, 2009)
Seligman (2011) proposes a new theory of well-being. It does not contain happiness as the main outcome but well-being, and "flourishing“ is brought about by PERMA.

In particular, five domains of well-being are distinguished, namely

– Positive Emotions (P)
– Engagement (E)
– Positive Relationships (R)
– Meaning (M)
– Achievement (A)
Flourishing: PERMA
(Seligman, 2011)

Flourishing:
Happiness: positive emotions + engagement + positive relationships + meaning + accomplishments
Flourishing: PERMA (Seligman, 2011)

The 24 strengths contribute to PERMA (5 studies). Humor is among the top 5 enabler for
- P (beauty, gratitude) &
- R (love, teamwork)
## Online positive Interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>1 month after</th>
<th>3 months after</th>
<th>6 months after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gratitude visit</td>
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<td>3 good things</td>
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<td>using signature strengths</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 good things (2 weeks)</td>
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<tr>
<td>gratitude visit &amp; 3 good things</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 funny things</td>
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<td>counting kindness</td>
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<tr>
<td>gift of time</td>
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<td>one door opens</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** An effect is displayed if the comparison between pretest and the respective time period differed from the placebo control group (Gander, Proyer, Ruch & Wyss, 2013).
Humor-based interventions...

**Results:**

- **Depressive Symptoms:**
  - Placebo control: consistently high levels across all time points.
  - 3 funny things: decrease from pretest to 6 months.
  - Collecting funny things: slight decrease from pretest to 1 month, then increases.
  - Counting funny things: stable across all time points.
  - Applying humor: decrease from pretest to 6 months.
  - Solving stress with humor: decrease from pretest to 6 months.

- **Happiness:**
  - Placebo control: consistently high levels across all time points.
  - 3 funny things: increase from pretest to 6 months.
  - Collecting funny things: slight increase from pretest to 1 month, then decreases.
  - Counting funny things: stable across all time points.
  - Applying humor: increase from pretest to 6 months.
  - Solving stress with humor: increase from pretest to 6 months.

**Note:**

- Error Bars: 95% CI

**N = 632.** (Wellenzohn, Proyer, & Ruch, 2016)
Humor and Resilience

Cross sectional and longitudinal
Humor & resilience
Questionnaire study

• **Rationale and research question:**
  – Virtuous behavior is associated with resilience (Hutchinson et al., 2011)
  – Resilience, in turn, is associated with six protective factors (i.e., self-efficacy, positive affect, self-esteem, life satisfaction, optimism, and social support; Lee et al., 2013)
  – What is the association between character strengths and resilience with respect to those six protective factors?

• **Design:**
  – Cross-sectional online study
  – \( N = 363 \) German-speaking adults
Humor & resilience
Questionnaire study

- **Humor** (VIA-IS: “I am known for my good sense of humor.”)
- **Resilience** (CD-RISC: “Tend to bounce back after illness or hardship” or “Not easily discouraged by failure”)
- **Self-efficacy** (GSE: “I can usually handle whatever comes my way”)
- **Positive affect** (PANAS: e.g., “interested”, “excited“)
- **Self-esteem** (RSES: “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself”)
- **Life satisfaction** (SWLS: “The conditions of my life are excellent”)
- **Optimism** (LOT-R: “Every cloud has a silver lining”)
- **Social support** (F-SozU: „[There are people, who share happiness and sorrow with me]“)
**Humor & resilience**

**Results**

- **Overall - Humor & resilience:** $r = .51$
  (controlled for age, gender, and educational level)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GSE</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>RSES</th>
<th>SWLS</th>
<th>LOT-R</th>
<th>F-SozU</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.36</td>
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</table>

*Note:* All correlations are significant with $p < .001$.

- **High scores in humor go along with high scores in**
  - Positive Affect
  - General self-efficacy
  - Optimism
  - Social support
  - Self-Esteem
  - Life satisfaction
The NCCR LIVES aims to better understand the phenomenon of vulnerability as well as the means to overcome it so as to contribute to the emergence of innovative social policy measures.
IP 7 – Professional Trajectories

Goal of Project

• Study the direct and moderating impacts of individuals’ characteristics (e.g. personality, justice beliefs), cultural background and other resources (e.g. social support) on individuals’ professional trajectories and their career development

• Follow during 7 years (longitudinal approach) a large sample of employed and unemployed individuals living in Switzerland, to identify the individual strengths and vulnerabilities that predict positive or negative career evolution

  – Psychological processes, inter-individual differences and intra-individual variability involved in transitions and work experiences
IP 7 – Professional Trajectories

Aim of the Project

• Hypothesis

Unemployment

Employment

Individual characteristics & resources
Social support
Cultural background

Job conditions

Job related outcomes
Sample

Planified vs Realized

- T1: 2469
- T2: 1920
- T3: 1725
- T4: 1632
- T5: 1469
- T6: 1322
- T7: 1190

Planned:

- T1: 2469
- T2: 1920
- T3: 1632
- T4: 1469
- T5: 1322
- T6: 1190
- T7: 1071

Realized:

- T1: 2469
- T2: 1920
- T3: 1632
- T4: 1469
- T5: 1322
- T6: 1190
- T7: 1071
1. Overall findings

- Meaning
- Engagement
- Social support
- Quality of life
- Self-rated health
- Negative affect
- Positive affect
- Occupational self-efficacy
- Gelotophobia
- Gelotophilia
• **Humor (playfulness):** People with this strength like to laugh, tease and bring smiles to other people. They try to see the light side in various situations.

• Please use the following rating scheme: 1 = *very much unlike me*, 2 = *rather unlike me*, 3 = *somewhat unlike me*, 4 = *slightly unlike me*, 5 = *neither nor*, 6 = *slightly like me*, 7 = *somewhat like me*, 8 = *rather like me*, and 9 = *very much like me*

• **CSRF: Humor: Wave 2 & 4**
  - High scorer: 8 or 9 at both waves
  - Low scorer 2 & 4 (1, 2 agree, fully agree)

• **Wave 1 – 5 (Results across all waves)**
NCCR-LIVES
Work-related issues

- Unemployment
- Discrimination
- Job insecurity

- Life satisfaction
- Positive affect
- Negative affect
- General stress
- Job satisfaction
- Stress at work
Humor buffers the effect of unemployment on SWB.
NCCR-LIVES
Work-related issues

Humor ameliorates the effects of discrimination on stress
Humor buffers the effect of job insecurity on PA, NA
BUT lowers job satisfaction and enhances stress even more!
NCCR-LIVES
Life events – selected findings
Life stressors

- Open answer format
- Grouped into 5 different (hassle-) categories
  - Illness, accident, surgery, disorder
  - Death of a close relative
  - Separation or divorce
  - Problems within the family; problems of close relatives or children
  - Problems at work

- Investigated moderating role of humor with respect to the dependent variables within each group
NCCR-LIVES
Life events – selected findings

Positive affect
Social support

- High humor group (compared to low humor) has more PA and SS when confronted with illness..... Controlled for personality
NCCR-LIVES
Life events – selected findings

Positive emotions

Negative affect

Quality of life

Job satisfaction
NCCR-LIVES
Life events – selected findings

Stress at work
Social support

Positive emotions

relationship
loss
partner
girlfriend
we
last
husband
wife
divorce
problem
situation
separation
negative
NCCR-LIVES
Life events – selected findings

Occupational self-efficacy

- family
- son
- negative
- accident
- surgery
- child
- illness
- situation
- problem
- daughter
- unemployment

37
NCCR-LIVES
Life events – selected findings

Positive affect

Negative affect

employment
work
professional
job change
supervisor
workplace
problem
end
unemployment
company
change
notice
employer