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Let's entertain others: the relationship between comic styles and the histrionic self-presentation style in Polish, British, and Canadian samples

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Abstract: People who have the histrionic self-presentation style (HSP) demonstrate certain As-If-behaviors, involving pretense and role play, in their daily interactions to seek attention and amuse others. Doing As-If may be closely related to humor behaviors, so we examined this relationship in greater detail by using the Comic Style Markers (CSM) in Polish, English, and Canadian samples ($N = 285, 383, \text{ and } 305$, respectively; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.85, SD = 5.35$). We expected that the HSP might be related to fun, wit, and satire due to their pretense-based characteristics. We confirmed configurational, metric, and scalar invariance for the As-If-Scale (AIS) and the CSM in the three samples, which allowed for cross-cultural comparisons. As expected, the HSP was positively associated with fun, wit, and satire. Additionally, men scored higher on the AIS, but no cross-country differences were found.

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1 Introduction

Consider the following situation. A group of colleagues are having dinner and one person mentions their favorite movie, *The Big Lebowski*. Peter is astounded that his colleague Sue cannot recall anything from this film. Peter attempts to help Sue recall the film for 45 solid minutes by mimicking the movie's protagonist, citing humorous lines from the film, and recreating famous funny scenes from the movie. Peter is oblivious to the fact that no one else is interested in this movie and no one else is laughing at his antics. Peter is demonstrating the *histrionic self-presentation style* (HSP), a set of behavioral traits related to self-presentation (rather than a personality disorder) first described by Renner et al. (2008). The purpose of the current study was to examine how the HSP is related to self-reported preferences of humor behaviors associated with the *comic styles* of fun, wit, and satire (measured using the Comic Style Markers, CSM; Ruch et al. 2018). This is because the HSP is linked to extraverted and often humorous behaviors (Fanslau et al. 2021; Renner et al. 2008), which are represented by these three comic styles. Additionally, to follow up on Renner et al.'s (2008) suggestion about the pervasiveness of histrionic As-If-behaviors in the western cultural sphere, we measured samples of participants from Poland, England, and Canada – all considered western cultures, although differing to some degree in their national cultural characteristics (see <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=canada%2Cpoland%2Cunited+kingdom>). Our goal was to examine the HSP-humor relationship by focusing on potential individual differences and cross-country differences (see Fanslau et al. 2021).

2 The histrionic self-presentation style

Self-presentation denotes deliberate “processes by which individuals attempt to control how they are perceived by other people” (Leary 2001: 7245) or “behaviors which are intended to manage the impressions that [others have of the individual]” (Lee et al. 1999: 701). Accordingly, self-presentation frequently involves communicating impressions of power or weakness/submissiveness on the one hand, and positive impressions of, among others, competence on the other. Thus, self-presentation contributes to a variety of positive social outcomes, such as finding a romantic partner, a desirable job, or gaining sympathy, admiration, and respect

(Baumeister 1982; Dupree and Fiske 2019; Leary 1995). It thereby facilitates achieving short- and long-term social goals. Accordingly, a range of taxonomies of self-presentation styles has been proposed in the literature. For example, expanding on the traditional distinction between assertive or acquisitive and defensive self-presentation (Arkin and Shepperd 1990), Schütz (1998) lists the assertive (“active, but not aggressive efforts to build positive interactions,” p. 614), offensive (“an aggressive way of establishing a desired image,” p. 615), protective (“avoiding damage to social identities already established or assumed,” p. 617), and defensive (“necessary to minimize the damage that has been done after desired identities have been threatened or damaged,” p. 618) styles. In addition to general self-presentation styles, tactics, or more specific, situation-bound behaviors are also distinguished, for example, praising, doing favors, expressing similarity, emphasizing humility, humblebragging, or even complaining (Jones and Pittman 1982; Jones and Wortman 1973; Kowalski 1996, 2002; Sezer et al. 2018). Lee et al. (1999: 704) divided self-presentation tactics into two groups: defensive (comprising such tactics as making excuses, justifications, or apologies in order to “defend or restore an identity which has been spoiled”) and assertive (comprising ingratiation or supplication towards others on the one hand, and intimidation, self-enhancement, basking [in others’ status], or exemplification of oneself in a positive light in order to “develop or create identities”).

In the current study, we sought to examine the HSP (Fanslau et al. 2021; Renner et al. 2008).

Histrionic self-presentation is defined as “a way of shaping everyday interactions by explicit As-If-behaviors” (Renner et al. 2008: 1303). Renner et al. (2008) posit that the main motivation behind the HSP is attracting attention (*tension creation*) and defusing negative emotions (*tension reduction*) in order to entertain the audience. Importantly, despite the similarity in name, the HSP is a non-pathological construct separate from the histrionic personality disorder (Fanslau et al. 2021; Renner et al. 2008). As a result, people engage in HSP willingly and for socially adaptive reasons rather than due to uncontrollable processes of emotional deficits, dysregulation, or overcompensation, as would be characteristic for personality disorders (see Fassbinder et al. 2014; Ferguson and Negy 2014). Rather, histrionic As-If-behaviors involve non-serious, humorous pretense of varying degree, for example, parodying others or engaging others in small role-plays, using both verbal, paraverbal, or nonverbal means. Accordingly, they can differ in intensity, from prosodic shifts to exaggerated body language and behaviors. Thus, humor behaviors appear especially suited to the HSP (Renner and Heydasch 2010). Indeed, Renner et al. (2008: 1305) observed that “due to the fact that histrionic role plays are not meant to be taken seriously, doing As-If often involves playing around, joking, making fun and teasing”. Research results systematically confirm gender differences in histrionic self-presentation (Fanslau et al. 2021; Renner et al. 2008; Renner and Heydasch 2010).

This means that men both rate themselves higher on the As-If-Scale, and that their histrionic performances are rated as more humorous by observers compared to analogous acts by women. The evolutionary concept that emphasizes different strategies for acquiring a partner (producing humor by men and appreciating it by women) is still the most prevalent in explaining these differences.

Humor behaviors are also important for self-presentation overall, as humorous performance can be feasibly located in many of these self-presentation tactics. For example, within Lee et al.'s (1999) classification, affiliative or self-defeating humor may occur in self-handicapping, ingratiation, or supplication, while self-enhancing or aggressive humor may occur in enhancement, basking, or blasting. Conversely, HSP and As-If-behaviors seem particularly congruent with the assertive self-presentation tactics. Moreover, humor can also accomplish numerous functions in various contexts, such as impression management (Kuiper and Leite 2010), signaling intelligence (Greengross and Miller 2011), underscoring similarities or differences between interactants (Meyer 2000), defusing interpersonal tension (Martin et al. 2004), or conducting organizational communication, including business negotiations (Bitterly and Schweitzer 2019; Tan et al. 2020). Humor also plays an important role in establishing and maintaining relationships, including romantic ones (Bressler and Balshine 2006; Cowan and Little 2013; Hall 2017; Ross and Hall 2020; Wilbur and Campbell 2011).

Thus, it can be expected that different self-presentation strategies will employ humor differently. For example, Renner and Heydasch (2010) found that the protective self-presentation style (i.e., seeking to avoid social disapproval) was linked with more negative views of humor than the acquisitive self-presentation style (i.e., seeking to gain social approval). However, they also found that the HSP was especially related to positive views on humor. Similarly, Renner and Manthey (2018) showed that the HSP was positively correlated with the ability to produce funny punchlines to cartoons. However, studies on the HSP overall, and in the context of humor preferences and behaviors specifically, remain sparse.

Thus, we sought to further examine this relationship in the current study. On the one hand, the HSP is a positive and affiliative style which is aimed at winning the admiration of others. However, successful histrionic As-If performers also take the risk of being perceived as too theatrical or inappropriate. Moreover, some forms of humor can sometimes be perceived as an attempt to maliciously tease others (see Ruch et al. 2018). Therefore, to accurately understand the relationship between humor and As-If-behaviors, we used the Comic Style Markers (CSM) questionnaire (Ruch et al. 2018). It distinguishes eight comic styles (i.e., varieties of humor behaviors) based on aesthetic content: sarcasm ("aims at hurting others [...], being hostile and derisive"), cynicism ("aimed at devaluing commonly recognized values"), satire ("involves not only deprecating the bad and foolish, but also the intention of

improving the world and correcting fellow humans”), and irony (“aims at creating a mutual sense of superiority towards others by saying things differently than [the ironists] mean it,” Ruch et al. 2018: 3), together termed as the *dark* comic styles, and fun (“aimed at spreading good mood and good comradeship”), benevolent humor (“aims at arousing sympathy and an understanding for the incongruities of life”), nonsense (“intellectual and playful, cheerful fun”) and wit (“intends to illuminate like a flashlight, typically with a surprising punchline,” Ruch et al. 2018: 3–4), or the *light* comic styles.

Considering the comedic nature of the HSP and histrionic As-If-behaviors, we were interested in examining their relationships with the comic styles of fun, wit, and satire, since they appear to correspond the most closely to the playful pretense of the HSP. For example, the construct of fun is considered to involve practical jokes, “acting clownish” (Ruch et al. 2018: 3), and reducing tension. Consider Item 9, “I like to make mischievous jests and thus spread good mood in my group,” or Item 41, “I like to make jests and to be silly”. In contrast, benevolent humor is more focused on understanding human flaws, which may map less accurately on the HSP motives (e.g., Item 13, “When my humor is aimed at human weaknesses, I include both myself and others”). In turn, a more corrective function may be evinced in satire, however, it emphasizes pretense (e.g., Item 30, “I caricature my fellow humans’ wrongdoings in a funny way to gently urge them to change”). At the same time, it avoids the negativity and hostility that Ruch et al. (2018) ascribe to irony and sarcasm in their model (e.g., Item 18, “My irony unveils who is smart enough and understands something and who does not,” and Item 36, “I am often malignant and critical if I decry the corruption, depravity, vice, or evil,” respectively). Likewise, Ruch et al.’s (2018) description of the nonsense comic style does not highlight the As-If elements (e.g., Item 23, “Humor doesn’t have to make sense; the opposite holds true for me: the more absurd, the funnier”). Instead, we considered the comic style of wit to correspond with the attention-capturing motives of histrionic As-If-behaviors more closely (e.g., Item 27, “I surprise others with funny remarks and accurate judgments of current issues, which occur to me spontaneously,” Item 43, “I can make relationships between disconnected ideas or thoughts and thus create quickly and pointedly a comical effect”). Finally, it bears mentioning that fun, wit, and satire are correlated with one another within the CSM ($r = 0.28\text{--}0.40$; Ruch et al. 2018) so examining them together in relation to the HSP is theoretically warranted.

Accordingly, our hypotheses were:

H1: the HSP will correlate positively with fun,

H2: the HSP will correlate positively with wit,

H3: the HSP will correlate positively with satire.

H4: Men will score higher on the As-If-Scale than women.

While we expected positive associations between the HSP and the three CSM comic styles, we also carried out exploratory regression and correlation analyses, and an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine the effects of age, gender, and country on the HSP and the comic styles.

3 Method

3.1 Participants and procedure

The study was conducted online, via Qualtrics, as part of a larger cross-cultural project. The study and the hypotheses were not preregistered. A total of 973 participants, 728 women, 234 men, 11 other; age range: 17–55 years, $M_{\text{age}} = 20.85$, $SD = 5.35$ (Polish: $N = 285$, 173 women, 108 men, 4 other; age range: 18–55, $M_{\text{age}} = 24.14$, $SD = 1.41$; British: $N = 383$, 316 women, 62 men, 5 other; age range: 17–52, $M_{\text{age}} = 19.41$, $SD = 3.54$, and Canadian: $N = 305$, 239 women, 64 men, 2 other; age range: 17–42, $M_{\text{age}} = 19.47$, $SD = 3.76$) completed the study. Most of them (95 %) were undergraduate students of various universities, who received no monetary compensation. However, they received course credit for participation. Five participants were excluded from further analysis due to missing data. For each sample, IRB approval was obtained from researchers' respective institutions and informed consent was obtained from all participants. They were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their data. Participants completed a set of questionnaires, including the two analyzed for in the current study: the CSM and the As-If-Scale (AIS), together with a demographic data form. Polish and English versions of the questionnaires were used. Participants took approximately 20 min to complete the surveys.

3.2 Materials

The Comic Style Markers (CSM; Ruch et al. 2018), in English and in Polish (in a version prepared using the back-translation procedure), is a 48-item questionnaire which distinguishes eight comic styles (wit, fun, benevolent humor, nonsense, irony, satire, sarcasm, and cynicism). Six items correspond to each comic style. Items are answered on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Only the comic styles of fun (e.g., “I am a funny joker”), wit (e.g., “I have a sharp wit and intellect and can tell stories with many punchlines”), and satire (e.g., “I parody

people's bad habits to fight the bad and foolish behavior") were analyzed in the current study. Cronbach's α s coefficients were as follows: 0.80, 0.83, 0.77, and 0.78 for fun in the total sample, Polish sample, British sample, and Canadian sample, respectively; 0.82, 0.83, 0.83, and 0.79 for wit, respectively, and 0.75, 0.73, 0.76, and 0.78 for satire, respectively. These are broadly comparable with α s of 0.86, 0.87, and 0.75 for fun, wit, and satire, respectively, in the original CSM study by Ruch et al. (2018).

The As-If-Scale (AIS; Renner et al. 2008) an 8-item measure covering various forms of histrionic self-presentation, from subtler (e.g., "I formulate my statements in such a way that they could have more than one meaning to others") to more dramatic ("I enjoy putting on a real show for others"). It was originally validated in German and English (Renner et al. 2008, Polish adaptation and validation by Fanslau et al. 2021). The AIS score is related to humor and wit, and predicts several specific As-If-behaviors in role playing assignments (Renner et al. 2008). Cronbach's α s were 0.79, 0.79, 0.79, and 0.78 for the total sample, the Polish sample, British sample, and Canadian sample, respectively. Again, these values are comparable to 0.79 in the original AIS study by Renner et al. (2008).

4 Results

To determine whether the Polish and English versions of the AIS and the CSM subscales of fun, wit, and satire retain their psychometric properties in the three compared groups, we assessed cross-country equivalence using the multigroup confirmatory factor analysis (MCFGFA). Three levels of invariance are usually estimated: they are defined by parameters that are constrained to equality across samples (Vandenberg and Lance 2000). Configural invariance is designed to test whether the constructs have the same pattern of fixed loadings across groups (in this case the three countries). Metric invariance requires that the factor loadings are equal in all groups (each item contributes to the latent construct to a similar degree). By contrast, scalar invariance requires that factor loadings and all thresholds (in the case of categorical confirmatory factor analysis) are equal across groups (for more theoretical implications and practical considerations of measurement invariance, see Putnick and Bornstein 2016).

We used *R* (R Core Team 2020) and the *lavaan* package (Rosseel 2012) to conduct categorical confirmatory factor analysis (CCFA) using MLM (robust maximum likelihood) estimator. Table 1 shows the global fit coefficients for three levels of measurement invariance (configural, metric, and scalar) for the AIS in Polish, British, and Canadian samples. The AIS displayed configural, metric, and scalar invariance across the three countries according to the cut-off criteria suggested by Chen (2007). Based

on the results, it can be concluded that the AIS meets the requirements of measurement invariance in the three surveyed countries.

Table 2 shows the global fit coefficients for three levels of measurement invariance (configural, metric, and scalar) for CSM (fun, wit, and satire subscales) in Polish, British, and Canadian samples.

The three CSM subscales displayed configural, metric, and scalar invariance across the three countries according to the cut-off criteria suggested by Chen (2007). We therefore concluded that the CSM meets the requirements of measurement invariance in the three surveyed countries.

Next, a correlation analysis was performed for the results of the AIS and the CSM, including age and gender. Spearman's ρ correlation coefficients were calculated. Table 3 shows the results of this analysis.

As expected, the AIS correlated positively with the three CSM subscales of wit, fun, and satire, confirming our H1–H3. A weak correlation with the male gender was observed as well (H4). No correlation with age was found.

Table 1: Global fit measures in measurement invariance tests for the As-If-Scale.

Level of variance	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA	ΔCFI	$\Delta RMSEA$
Total sample	111.0017	19	0.95	0.070	–	–
Configural	159.3250	57	0.94	0.074	–	–
Metric	176.0226	71	0.94	0.067	0.002	<0
Partial scalar (3 free)	191.0520	77	0.93	0.067	0.005	0.000
Scalar	252.6168	85	0.90	0.078	0.031	0.011
Residual	278.0147	101	0.90	0.073	0.006	0.005

Note. $N_{\text{Total}} = 973$; $N_{\text{Polish}} = 285$; $N_{\text{British}} = 383$; $N_{\text{Canadian}} = 305$. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; ΔCFI = change in comparative fit index; $\Delta RMSEA$ = change in root mean square error of approximation.

Table 2: Global fit measures in measurement invariance tests for the CSM scale (wit, fun, satire subscales).

Level of variance	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA	ΔCFI	$\Delta RMSEA$
Total sample	504.3352	131	0.91	0.054	–	–
Configural	743.2583	393	0.92	0.052	–	–
Metric	796.2565	423	0.91	0.052	0.005	0.000
Partial scalar (4 free)	848.5126	441	0.90	0.053	0.008	0.001
Scalar	1,005.1651	453	0.87	0.061	0.034	0.008
Residual	1,132.2157	489	0.85	0.063	0.021	0.002

Note. $N_{\text{Total}} = 973$; $N_{\text{Polish}} = 285$; $N_{\text{British}} = 383$; $N_{\text{Canadian}} = 305$. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; ΔCFI = change in comparative fit index; $\Delta RMSEA$ = change in root mean square error of approximation.

Next, to test the possibility of predicting AIS scores based on CSM fun, wit and satire scores, we performed a regression analysis. Therefore, the three comic styles (fun, wit, and satire) as well as gender were entered as predictors. The results are presented in Table 4. Based on the adjusted R^2 coefficient, these variables together explained 32 % of the variance in AIS scores. Moreover, the relationships between the predictors and the dependent variable were moderately strong and positive (from 0.44 to 0.50). No interactions with gender were found.

Additionally, a two-way ANOVA was used to investigate potential gender and country differences. The main effect for country and the effect of the country \times gender interaction were not statistically significant (country: $df = 2$, $F = 0.777$, $p = 0.460$; interaction: $df = 2$, $F = 1.231$, $p = 0.292$). The main effect for gender was statistically significant ($df = 1$, $F = 10.509$, $p = 0.0012$). Male participants, regardless of nationality, scored higher on the AIS ($M = 0.046$, $SD = 0.25$) than female participants ($M = -0.015$, $SD = 0.24$). The results of this analysis show that, despite consistent gender differences (Fanslau et al. 2021; Renner and Heydasch 2010), there are also great similarities between Western countries in the level of self-reported HSP. This

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and correlations.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. As-If	2.15	0.57	–					
2. Fun	4.57	1.12	0.46 ^a	–				
3. Wit	4.59	1.07	0.50 ^a	0.56 ^a	–			
4. Satire	4.05	1.06	0.44 ^a	0.47 ^a	0.47 ^a	–		
5. Age	20.79	5.34	–0.04	–0.12 ^a	0.05	0.04	–	
6. Gender	–	–	0.11 ^a	0.10 ^a	0.08 ^b	0.15 ^a	–	–

Note. Gender was coded as 1 = Female, 2 = Male. $N_{\text{Total}} = 973$, $N_{\text{Male}} = 234$, $N_{\text{Female}} = 728$, $N_{\text{Other}} = 11$. ^a $p < 0.001$. ^b $p < 0.01$.

Table 4: Results of the multiple regression analysis.

<i>Y</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Adjusted R^2	Predictor	Estimate	Standard error	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
As-If	7, 954	65.47 ^a	0.32	Intercept	–0.01	0.01	–0.75	0.45
				Fun	0.04	0.02	3.24	0.02 ^b
				Wit	0.10	0.02	5.29	0.001 ^a
				Satire	0.07	0.02	3.87	0.001 ^a
				Gender	0.02	0.02	1.55	0.12
				Gender \times fun	0.06	0.04	1.61	0.11
				Gender \times wit	–0.04	0.04	–1.08	0.28
				Gender \times satire	–0.02	0.04	–0.47	0.64

Note. Gender was coded as 1 = Female, 2 = Male. $N_{\text{Total}} = 973$, $N_{\text{Male}} = 234$, $N_{\text{Female}} = 728$, $N_{\text{Other}} = 11$. ^a $p < 0.001$. ^b $p < 0.05$.

finding suggests that cultural background may not play a significant role in the perception of this type of humorous behavior in young people.

5 Discussion

Humorous behavior is an important part of self-presentation in various social contexts. We focused on the HSP, a specific type of self-presentation involving As-If behaviors closely related to humor. Its basic motives are creating tension and reducing it by attention attraction and mood manipulation. Histrionic As-If performers seem to enjoy role-playing and perceive most social situations as great opportunities to do so. They are unconventional and creative, and they view themselves as enthusiastic, sociable, and active (Fanslau et al. 2021). Notably, despite the similarity in their names and in the presence of attention-seeking behaviors, HSP is unrelated to the histrionic personality disorder and is not considered pathological (Renner et al. 2008). Accordingly, we hypothesized that the HSP would be related to more frequent humor behaviors representing fun, wit, and satire, as they also tap into cheerful, extraverted humor that aims at drawing attention.

Our hypotheses were fully confirmed. Moreover, when entered as predictors of the HSP, CSM fun, wit, and satire explained as much as 32 % of its variance. This means that individuals who enjoy and produce fun, wit, and satire tend to engage in the HSP more frequently and use these comic styles to engage in role-playing to create and/or reduce tension, and as a result, entertain others. Of the three comic styles, fun is the lightest – its purpose is primarily to spread a positive mood and to socialize. Therefore, joking and jesting, playing tricks and acting clownish, which are the core features of fun, correspond closely to the HSP. Similarly, wit, which “intends to illuminate like a flashlight, typically with a surprising punchline” (Ruch et al. 2018: 3–4) may stem from the need to arouse the interest of others and create tension. Previous research (Renner and Manthey 2018) confirmed that the HSP was associated with wit and fantasy. Playing with words and thoughts, connecting distant ideas, or finding relationships in seemingly unrelated ideas generate a comical effect, and are in the verbal repertoire of histrionic As-If-behaviors. Satire, on the other hand, which “involves not only deprecating the bad and foolish, but also the intention of improving the world and correcting fellow humans” (Ruch et al. 2018: 3) usually alarms the audience through the use of a variety of satire-specific markers. These can include tag questions, interjections, or tropes such as hyperboles and metaphors (Burgers and Van Mulken 2017). Their use emphasizes the playful pretense that characterizes the HSP, since the basic premise of histrionic As-If-behaviors is not to be taken seriously.

Ruch et al. (2018) examined the relationships between the comic styles, personality traits, and so-called character strengths in a German/Austrian/Swiss sample. They showed that fun, wit, and satire were correlated with extraversion as well as with openness to experience to a low-moderate degree. These results were replicated by Dionigi et al. (2021) in an Italian sample. Ruch et al. (2018) also reported that fun, wit, and satire were correlated with emotions (“zest, hope, bravery, but also humor,” p. 14) and character strengths. Finally, wit and satire were also correlated with the intellectual (“love of learning, creativity, open-mindedness, but also appreciation of beauty and excellence,” p. 14) character strengths. Thus, our results taken together with the above studies and with the confirmed correlation between the HSP and extraversion and openness to experience (Fanslau et al. 2021; Renner et al. 2008) paint a more detailed picture of the personality traits associated with HSP.

We also found gender differences in our cross-country comparison: regardless of nationality, men scored higher on the AIS than women. This is consistent with the results of previous studies (see Fanslau et al. 2021; Renner and Heydasch 2010), and may be the result of different courting strategies used by heterosexual young men and young women. In other words, when choosing a partner, men use their imagination to attract women while women are more receptive to men who can produce high quality humor (Bressler and Balshine 2006). The effective use of humor in courtship means signaling warmth and friendliness on the one hand, and social competence on the other (Montoya and Horton 2014). Good As-If performers can achieve this, especially through fun (i.e., they spread a good mood) and wit (i.e., they construct effective jokes which signal intelligence).

In our study, we found no differences between countries in the HSP levels. Although Poland scores very low on the cultural dimension of indulgence (which is related to humor, enjoying life and having fun) compared to Canada and the UK (see <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=canada%2Cpoland%2Cunited+kingdom>), the level of self-reported HSP was similar in all groups. It seems that as representatives of Western cultures, they similarly value humorous behaviors (to which the HSP undoubtedly belongs), and associate humor itself with positivity, talent, and the ideal personality trait of an average person (Jiang et al. 2019).

In sum, people high in HSP have personality traits of optimistic and happy people, that is, extraversion, openness to experience, and emotional stability (Fanslau et al. 2021). Our research shows that they also like fun, wit, and satire. The preference for these styles together with the personality traits mentioned above predispose them to look for certain situations and opportunities in which these traits and styles can emerge – circumstances that could allow to maintain a playful and parodic view of the world, and in which the quality of social relationships could also be skillfully enriched. In turn, this can be achieved through surprising ways of

breaking daily routines, communicating, and mood regulation in both themselves and in others.

6 Limitations and future directions

Our study is not free from limitations. First, we relied heavily on data from Western, industrialized, and democratic countries, where the view of humor and the perception of it in others and in oneself are similar. It is regarded as a positive and desirable feature of an individual, proving their intelligence, creativity, and interpersonal attractiveness. In contrast, Eastern societies (e.g., China) have a more ambivalent attitude towards humor – they do not perceive it as a necessary element of creativity, friendliness (they tend to attribute it to experts, but not friends) or personal talent (see e.g., Yue 2011). Therefore, studies comparing Eastern and Western countries would deepen our knowledge and understanding of the HSP and its correlates. Importantly, it would be pertinent to also use measures of individual-level cultural values in such studies (e.g., the CVScale; Yoo et al. 2011) rather than assuming that samples equally represent a given national culture (see Kałowski and Banasik-Jemielniak 2022 for a discussion of this distinction).

Second, our study was based only on self-report measures. Using samples of specific behaviors from the As-If repertoire, and not relying solely on self report would be particularly desirable. Playing different roles in interpersonal contexts would more accurately reflect real-life situations and make the study more ecologically valid. In addition, because the participants were mostly young and educated (most of them were at least high school graduates), generalizing our results can only be tentative. Given that the above can influence the results, we posit that future studies require the inclusion of groups more diverse in terms of age, education and cultural background. On the other hand, comparing individuals of various age in terms of the HSP would be an attempt to answer the question whether this particular self-presentation style persists with age as a relatively stable trait-like style, and what forms it takes (perhaps less dramatic performances in favor of more subtle forms of As-If-behaviors such as funny word games or metaphors). Finally, including other variables, such as personality traits, into more comprehensive analyses (e.g., structural equation modeling) would be valuable and pertinent in light of the available data. A particularly interesting direction may involve the aforementioned tendency for people high in HSP to enrich their social interactions with playfulness and parody. On the one hand, the CSM styles of wit and satire are associated with moral, corrective humor (Ruch et al. 2018). On the other, they carry a risk of misunderstanding or inappropriateness, similar to As-If-behaviors. However, people high in HSP are also high self-monitors (Snyder 1974), meaning that they are proficient at

estimating the social appropriateness and impact of their behaviors. Therefore, examining the motivational determinants of HSP and comic styles more accurately, their associations with moral values or character strengths (see Ruch et al. 2018), or their specific, situational impacts on mood regulation all appear valuable.

Above all, expanding the current study to include an analysis of a full spectrum of humor behaviors, for example, by using all eight scales of the CSM or by using other fine-grained questionnaires such as the Dual Self-Directed Humor Scale (Tsukawaki and Imura 2020) is warranted.

Nevertheless, such horizontal expansions in terms of included variables are naturally limited, as “in taxonomic models, traits capture stable patterns of qualities in which people differ from one another but not the psychological processes underlying those traits within persons” (Moreira et al. 2022: 6). For these reasons, the conclusions of the current study require validation and extension by considering HSP, comic styles, and a range of potential additional variables in a deeper nomological network. For example, Moreira and Inman (2021) and Moreira et al. (2022) have recently employed the CSM alongside the Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI; Cloninger 2004) and found that general humor production ability and specific comic style preferences were differentially related to temperamental traits. For example, in Moreira and Inman (2021), wit was negatively correlated with harm avoidance and positively correlated with persistence (i.e., determination in behavior), self-directedness (i.e., autonomy), and self-transcendence, while satire was negatively correlated with harm avoidance, reward dependence, and cooperativeness. In turn, Moreira et al. (2022) found that wit was characteristic of so called steady (low novelty seeking, harm avoidance, and reward dependence; high persistence) and passionate (high novelty seeking and reward dependence, low harm avoidance and persistence) temperamental profiles. On the other hand, highest wit was reported by participants belonging to the creative-reliable profile (high self-directedness, cooperativeness, and self-transcendence; low novelty seeking, harm avoidance, and high reward dependence). Such analyses allow for more substantial lateral (causal) explanations about where individual differences in humor come from and what are their underlying mechanisms.

7 Contributions

Our study sheds light on the concept of HSP, specifically on its connection with humorous behavior. We confirmed the hypotheses that fun, wit, and satire are positively related to the HSP. This finding highlights the importance of these comic style markers and possibly provides insights into how individuals use humor as a

means of attracting attention and reducing tension within their self-presentation strategies.

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