

Abstract

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The present thesis investigates the importance of humor in early adolescence. Part 1 focuses on the correlation between humor production and humor preference, suggesting that peers tend to use humor when facing actual life tasks during the transition from childhood to adulthood. The assumption is made, that developmental changes in form and function of humour for children aged 12-16 years may be influenced by their actual environmental settings and their actual tasks. Finally, this part of the thesis considers the importance of children's sense of humour in problem solving and social interaction during the period 12-16 years. Part 2 introduces the Children Coping Humor Strategy Survey (CCHSS) measuring children's ability to use humor as a coping tool in various life situations. In opposite to earlier research, the concept of coping humor appears to be multidimensional, as the three factor solution found in this study, reveals evidence for the use of humor when facing stress and uncertainty; sexuality and aggression; and finally to get cheered up. Where the study overall provides evidence for the concept of coping humor in early adolescence, significant gender and age differences were found. Where boys tend to use more aggressive and sexual related strategies in coping humor, girls prefer to get cheered up by humor and this tendency increased with age for girls but not for boys. The use of humor as a coping tool when focusing uncertain and stressful situations shows an overall significant increase at the age of 12 for both genders. Part 3 investigates the applicability of the Danish version of the GELOPH<15> (Führ, Proyer & Ruch, 2009). The instrument used, GELOPH <15> measures the fear of being laughed at in a 15 item self report questionnaire and yielded good psychometric properties in terms of a high internal consistency of the items and the factorial structure (one-dimensional solution) was highly similar to data for the adult version. As in the adults higher bullying experiences were well predicted by the individual expression of the fear of being laughed at. The actual number of absent days from school during the last year, was widely unrelated to gelotophobia. Part 4 investigates the possible correlation between gelotophobia, coping humor and various personality variables, as loneliness, self-esteem, positive future expectation, outward appearance and self-reflection. The ability to use humor as an attitude towards life turned out not to be a protector against gelotofobia. Where humor turned out to be positively related to a positive self-concept, participants with high scores on the Geloph <15> turned out to be more lonely. Overall the thesis underlines the importance of humor when facing developmental tasks and actual life situations. Suggestions for necessary further research are given.