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Mums in Science



You must be joking

Is it possible to scientifically measure someone's sense of humour? Are there universally good or bad jokes that make people laugh no matter their gender, profession or cultural background? These are some of the questions tackled by new research carried out in Spain.



New findings suggest there are no universally bad jokes. We are not quite convinced

jokes.

"A particular person's momentary state of mind in a humorous situation, such as on hearing a joke, does not imply that the person finds that particular situation funny," explained Carretero Dios. "A person's taste in humour is rather an intellectual or aesthetic question, with emotion and state of mind being more related to physiological and behavioural factors than an opinion of what we think is funny."

Focussing on sexual humour, black humour, humour degrading to men, humour degrading to women, simple humour and complex humour, Carretto Dios analysed more than 1,500 people between the ages of 18 and 80.

The results showed a clear difference in the response to gender based humour for different age groups.

Carretero Dios said: "In people over 45-50, we observed that both men and women laughed more at jokes degrading to women than those degrading to men". At the same time, both men and women showed more rejection to jokes degrading to men.

However, among the participants between 18-25 years old, the trend was different and men and women had different reactions. Men laugh more at jokes degrading to women and reject those degrading to men. By contrast, women laugh more at jokes degrading to men and reject those degrading to women.

The results of the study were recently presented at the International Humour Conference, sponsored and organised by the International Society of Humor Studies, the world's leading scientific association on humour.

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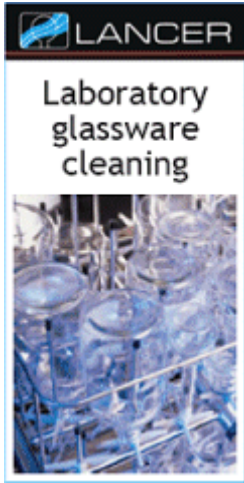
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