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AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF THE PRODUCTION OF HUMOUR

operated as a factor in humour production, the dull groups of the distortion. It was also found that intelligence were determined by considering humour as a function of the distortion. Thresholds for the experimental method of studying humour. It was found that the production technique is a use-

by means of a distortion index. points during the production and the distortion calculated the humorous production. Photographs were taken at four faces and were then asked to rate the humorous quality of to produce humour by distorting the reflection of their own and a dull female group. These subjects were first required bright male group, a bright female group, a dull male group intelligence scores (SCAT), so that four groups resulted--a

the research. These were selected on the basis of intelligence scores (SCAT), so that four groups resulted--a forty high school students served as subjects for able, the roles of intelligence and sex were investigated. In addition to determining whether such a method was work- wards the production of humour rather than appreciation. study adopted a new approach in that it was directed to- all as the criterion for a sense of humour. The present Such studies have used the appreciation of humorous stimuli as the criterion for a sense of humour. The present personality characteristics has not with little success. Experimental research relating humour to various

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

showing a great deal of stereotypy in production while the bright group was extremely variable. Sex appeared to be a less important factor in the production of humour.

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CHAPTER I

THE INTRODUCTION AND THE PROBLEM

I. THE INTRODUCTION AND THE APPROACH

A sense of humour is possibly one of the most highly valued attributes an individual in our Western culture can possess. The social emphasis on this quality is apparent, not only in the vast sums of money which are spent to provide forms of humorous entertainment, but also in the emphasis on it for the development of a socially pleasing personality.

Psychologists have been interested in the sense of humour because it is a behavioural phenomenon. The fact that individuals possess this trait in varying degrees gives it practical application in personality study. However, its use as a diagnostic tool is hampered by the fact that too little is known at present about the nature, mechanisms and function of the phenomenon.

For the most part, humour has been considered as an internal appreciative experience and the sense of humour inferred from the frequency and extent of appreciation. This study, however, proposes the importance of the perceptual or creative aspect of humour and will focus on the area of humour production. The approach will be psychophysical inasmuch as attempts will be made to relate the

Because the common connotation of the term "humour" is not necessarily consistent with its psychological meaning, a specific definition is required. Brewer has described it as a "complex situation which combines an element of the comic and a sympathetic appeal" (8). A humorous situation then, is similar to a comic one with one important addition--it must involve some emotional component. The ability to perceive and appreciate such a situation we refer to as a "sense of humour." To understand the process by which humorous appreciation occurs within an individual, however, the eclectic definition formulated by Selye (41) will probably be most helpful. He states that it consists of the imaginal or emotional projection of the self upon a social scene in which affects are displaced. When these affects are subsequently actively re-structured by means of substitution or fusion, the whole spectacle can be slowly contemplated in perspective and followed with a tender mollifying smile.

Definition of Humour

experience of humour to a physical continuum. An attempt will also be made to determine whether intelligence and sex are factors influencing humorous production. Since the approach and technique employed are relatively new and untested, the research will take the form of an exploratory study.