

Humor: Does the artist label affect how people appreciate morally ambiguous Art?

— Effect regarding Standup Comedy

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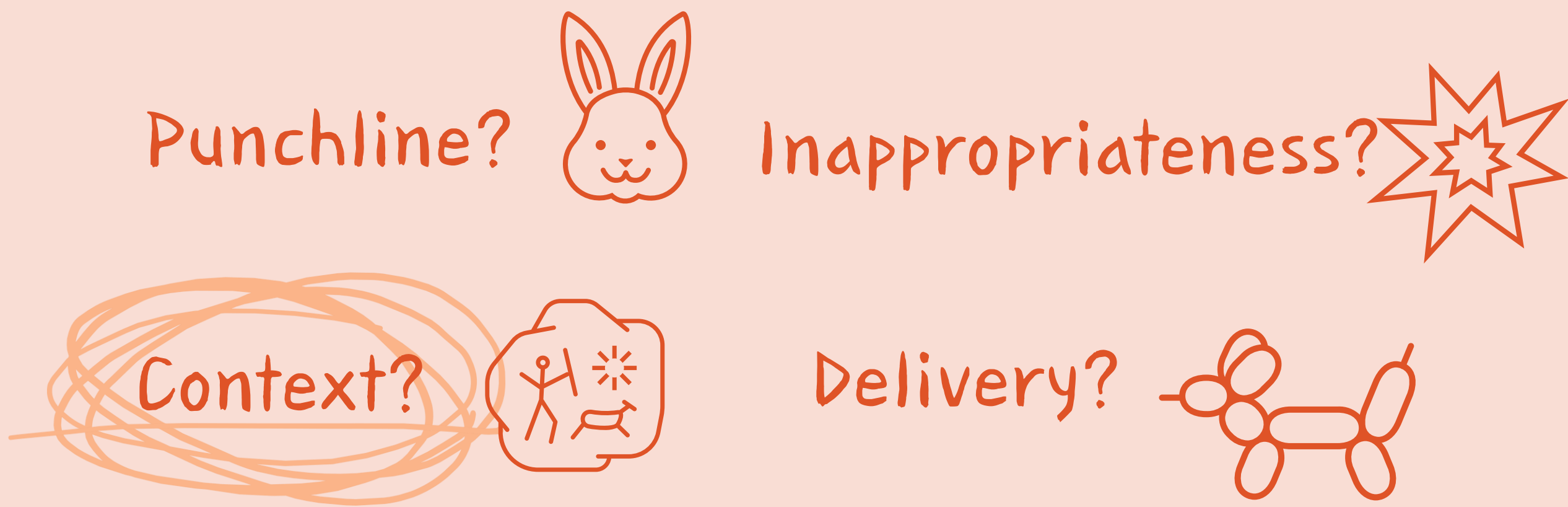
Why?

The art of entertaining people with the most offensive jokes has been a symbol of successful comedians (Butler, 2023). The fine line between offensive / not offensive, funny / not funny, is the trapeze on which the standup artists walks on for livelihood (Nicolai & Maesele, 2024). We are fascinated by the fact that in a social community so heavily censored, a lot of comedy artists are still able to get away and even get viral with presenting a lot of borderline offensive topics, even ones that closely neighbor sexism, racism, etc.

Rational

Expectation/Context effect: Participants in the comedy context group will be more likely to perceive the jokes as funnier or more acceptable because they are delivered by a comedian. The "comedian" label will put Comedy participants in the mood to laugh, whereas non-comedy participants might be more likely to focus on the ethical implications of the jokes since they are framed within a more formal context, leading to a more critical response.

What makes a controversial joke funny?



Study Design:

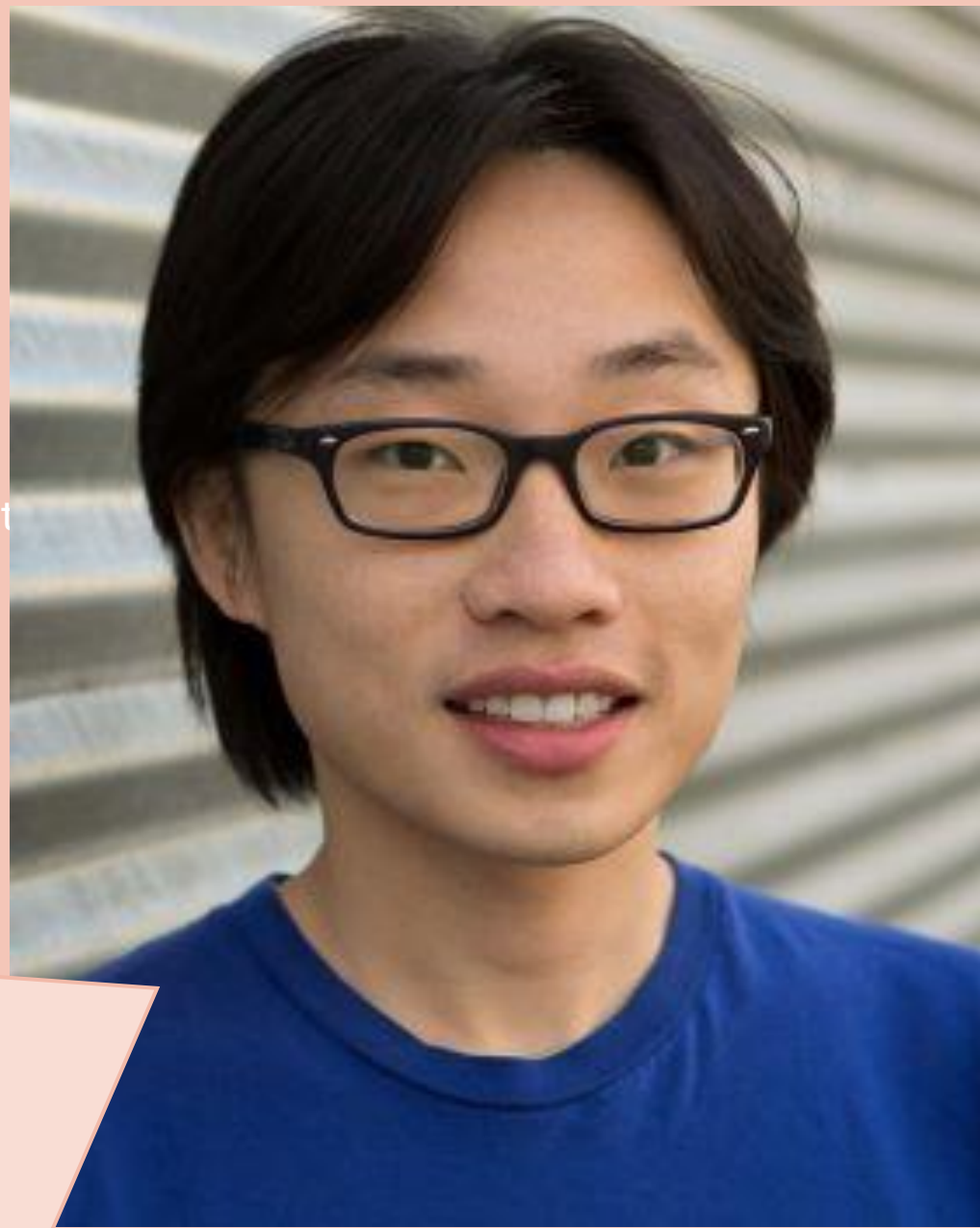
Participants will be randomly assigned into one of two experimental groups: comedy and non-comedy. All participants will read the same jokes (chosen from real stand-up comedy shows)

The rating is based on statements (six in total) assessing how funny, relatable, likable, ethical, and contextually appropriate the jokes are, using a Likert scale ranging from "Strongly agree" (1) to "Strongly disagree" (5).

Non-Comedian Group

Comedian Group

" I love the BTS (K-Pop Group). Even white people know BTS now, that's progress! I had a 15-year-old white kid come up to me trying to explain to me, the different members of BTS, 'Oh this is Jungkook, he's the lead singer, that's Jimin. He's cool and he raps.' I'm like, 'Dude... They look the same to me!' I couldn't say it...but they all look completely the same with pink hair... You guys probably heard in the news, they got to go to mandatory Korean army. Right? The most popular people in the world! They got to go sign up for Korean military. That's some gangster sh*t! Imagine, how scared you'll be, when you encounter BTS on the battlefield? ...You're in battle...You're already kind of shook... You're in a field of grass and... A little puff of pink hair pops up! You're like, yo what the hell was that???... Is that a unicorn??? ...And then six more pink hair pop up... You're like, 'we're surrounded!' And the last thing you see is just...This.... That's some gangster stuff! "



My girl asked me, she was like, 'babe, what's your love language?' I'm like, 'what?' She's like, 'you know, your love language. Like how do you convey love to your partners and loved ones? Like, for example, a love language could be words of affirmation.' Words of affirmation? I was raised by Asian parents! I've never heard one word of affirmation in my life. Nobody ever told me, 'XXX, you're so great. You can do it. ' They're like, 'DON'T F*CK IT UP!!!' Their love language is VERBAL ABUSE!

Future Studying Direction

- Emotional state and humor appreciation:** Participants with a more positive emotional state (through the PANAS questionnaire) might be more likely to find the jokes enjoyable, regardless of content. In contrast, participants in a negative or neutral emotional state may be less receptive to the jokes(may become offended or critical of the same joke/speech).
- Perception based on humor style:** The type of humor (e.g., ethnic or culture-based) might be appreciated differently depending on the participant's own cultural context. For example, jokes targeting a specific culture could be more appreciated by someone familiar with that culture, while others might not relate to or understand the joke as well.
- Cultural sensitivity in study context:** Participants from the targeted ethnic group may find jokes about their culture more offensive, potentially leading to lower appreciation(vice versa). Those from different cultural backgrounds may either find the jokes less offensive or might appreciate them differently, depending on their personal experiences and attitudes towards humor.

Limitations

Text format eliminates important aspects of humor, such as timing, tone, facial expressions and proper performance style.

social desirability effect and reliance on self-reports. Future studies might measure participants' facial expressions and volume of laughter.

The artists quoted in this study are all male. Controversial jokes might be perceived differently when delivered by women (although these were much harder to find...)

Jokes were chosen based on our subjective evaluation. A pre-study might be needed to make more effective and empirically informed choices

References

1. Butler, N. (2023). *The trouble with jokes: Humour and offensiveness in contemporary culture and politics*. Policy Press. <https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781529232523.001.0001>

2. Nicolai, J., & Maesele, P. (2024). Stand-up in the age of outrage: how comedians negotiate the repoliticisation of humor . *The European Journal of*