

What happens next?



Play offers protection



Inquiry through Conflict & Comedy

exploring the epistemological roles of
humor & play

In a classroom with mixed metamesages...



...we want
students to
engage in
scientific
inquiry...

pruning
ideas



blossoming
ideas

But how can they disagree without
dissing each other?



Humor & play mediate the danger of conflict



The epistemology of humor, play, and fantasy



What is play?

the instantiation of behaviors that resemble other functional behaviors but occurring within a nonfunctional context and with no apparent extrinsic goals.



How do I recognize it?

Behaviorally:

smiling, laughing, fidgeting, erratic gaze

Content & Context:

I know it when I see it

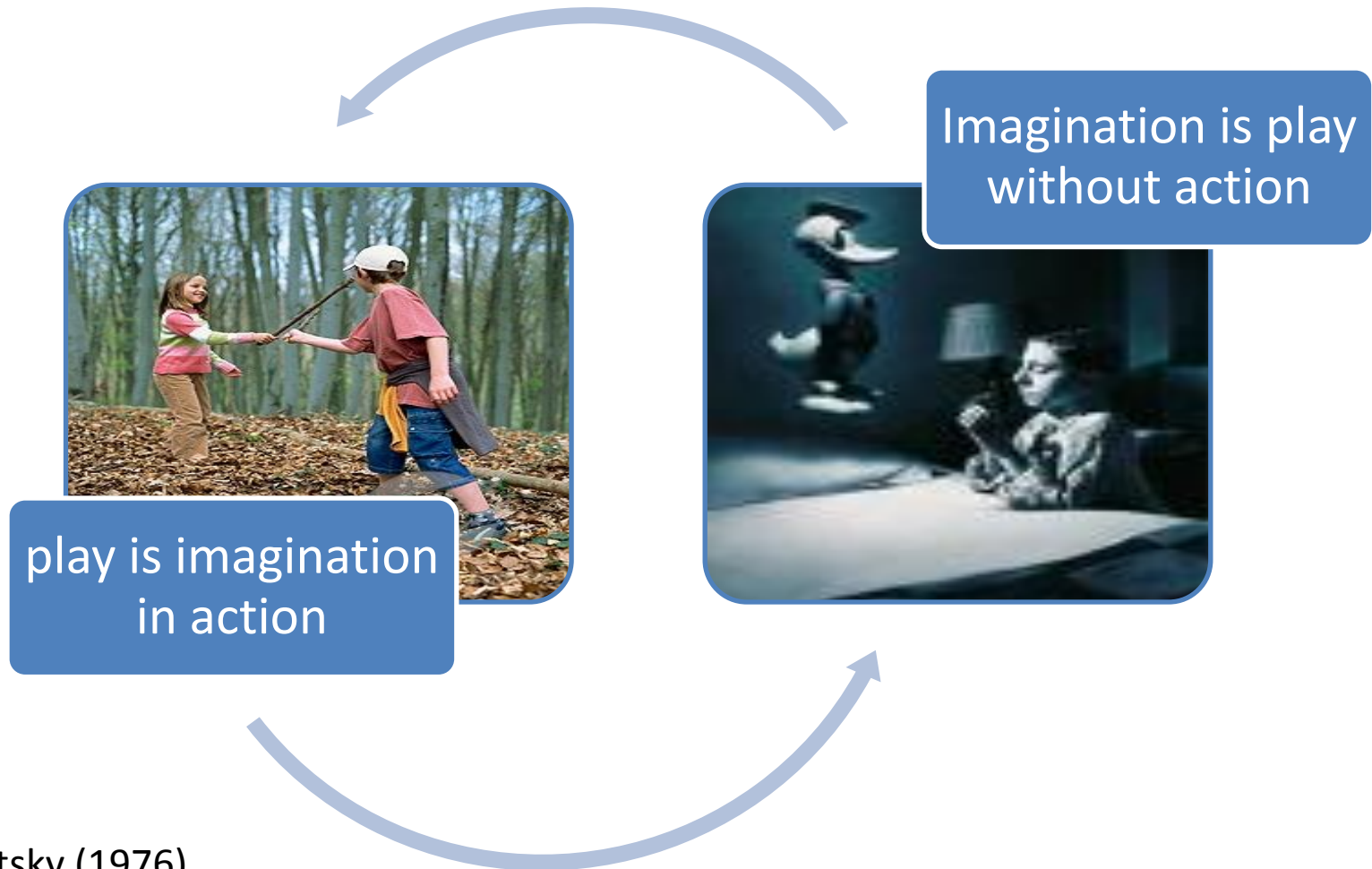


How does it affect the epistemological dynamics of a group?

can take them off task

can lead to new ideas

What is Fantasy?



Vygotsky (1976)

What is Humor?



Relief

- humor arises from tension and release



Incongruity

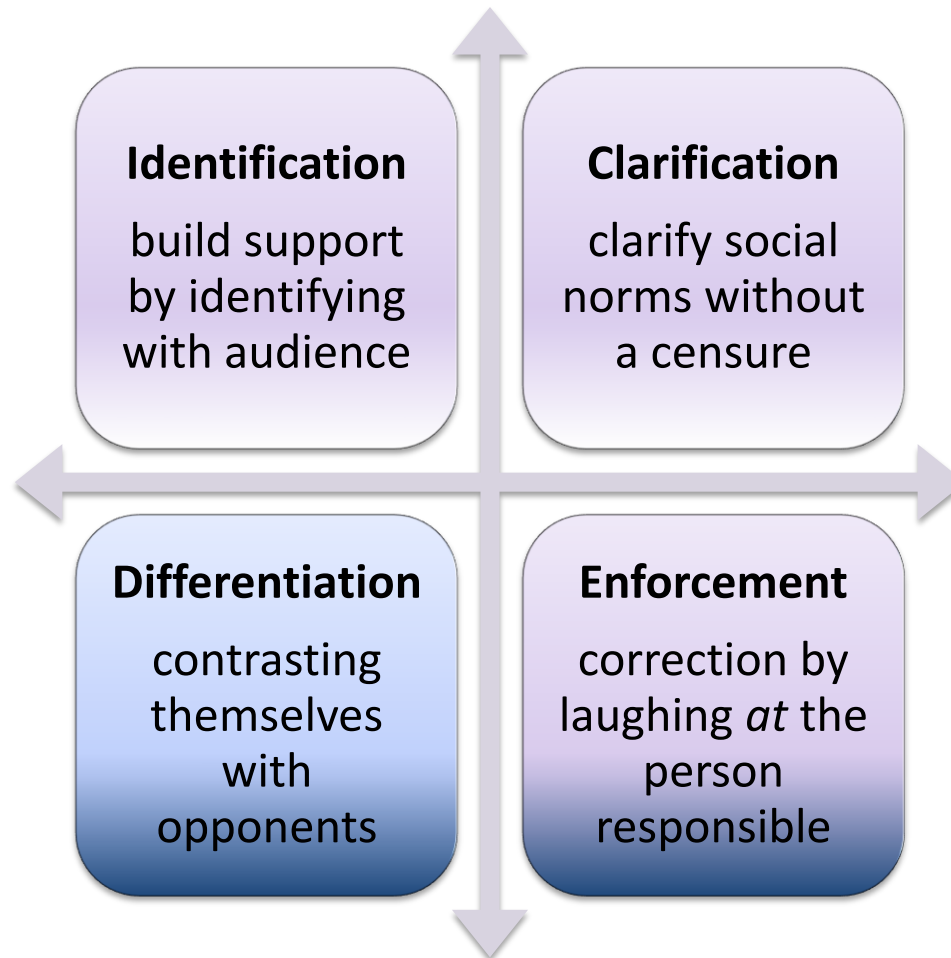
- People laughs at what surprises them



Superiority

- people laugh at others because they feel some sort of triumph over them or feel superior to them

Functions of humor



Humor can have functions without
being used strategically

“The goal of discourse analysis is to render
even Discourses with which we are familiar
"strange"..." Gee (2005)

Generative Functions of Humor

Humor Can Introduce Ideas



Humor Can Influence Framing

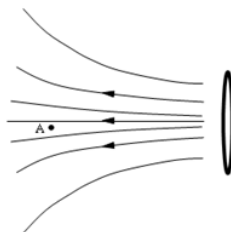




Example: humor introduces ideas



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3. A student says,

The wind *itself* is equally strong at point *A* no matter which kite you hold there—or even if you *don't* hold a kite there. The large kite feels more *force* than the small kite because it has more area and therefore catches more wind, not because the wind itself is stronger.

Does this student agree with the answers you just gave? If not, do you think the student makes good points? In what ways do you disagree?



Example: humor introduces ideas



fasterFaster_captioned.mov





Example: humor influences framing



youDontKnow_captioned.mov





Example: humor influences framing



projectileVomit_captioned.mov



Reductive Functions of Humor

**Humor Can Point out the
Ridiculous**



humor can point out the ridiculous



sparksHands_captioned.mov



II. How do things get charged?

You have probably already started to wonder how it is that objects become charged, or uncharged. To explore how something happens, it's often useful to think about when it *doesn't* happen, or when you think it might not.

A. Have you ever noticed an electric charge when you rub your hands together? How about if you rub someone else's hands? Try it if you're not sure, using your test for charge from part I. Why do you think this is the case?

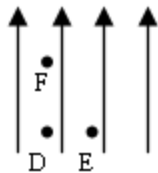
humor can point out the ridiculous



rightHere_captioned.mov



5. So, going from D to E, does the charge gain potential energy, lose potential energy, or neither? Does this agree with your reasoning in question 1 above?



play allows
our curiosity
to lead us to
new horizons



"within the realm of laughter...light
and darkness merge"

-Tom Robbins



Things I am worried about

- Vocabulary ('conflict', 'inquiry', 'debate')
- Identifying humor & play
- How often does humor play an epistemological role—enough for a dissertation?
- Connection with affect?
- Connection with play & fantasy?

References

- Gee, J. P. (1999). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*. Routledge.
- Meyer, J. C. (2000a). Humor as a Double-Edged Sword: Four Functions of Humor in Communication. *Communication Theory*, 10(3), 310-331.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1967). Play and its role in the mental development of the child. *Soviet Psychology*, 5(3), 6-18.