

The Influence of Intergroup Context on the Appreciation of Controversial Humour

Fé Douven – 6240461

University of Utrecht

Words: 5.909

Abstract: 119

This manuscript should be made publicly accessible after 01-08-2018

## Abstract

This research tested the influence of source (ingroup/outgroup) on the appreciation of controversial humour with Cavalier Humour Beliefs (CHB) as moderating variable. One hundred and three left-wing students participated in an online research where they read a humorous controversial column and answered scales on funniness, acceptability and CHB. Half of the participants were led to believe the humour was written by someone from their ingroup (left-wing), the other half were led to believe the humour was written by someone from their outgroup (right-wing). Results showed that controversial humour from the ingroup was more appreciated than controversial humour from the outgroup. No moderating effects were found for CHB on the relation between intergroup context and the appreciation of controversial humour.

A debate on controversial humour is emerging in the Netherlands. The debate appears to be about *what* is being said, but also on *who* says it (Brunswijk, 2018). A popular Dutch TV show captured TV fragments and asked its viewers; ‘are people allowed to make every joke, or can things go too far?’ (DWDD, 2016). The attitude about ‘when things go too far’ is different for a lot of people. Something found funny by one, can be considered harsh and hurtful by another (Saucier, O’Dea, & Strain, 2016). The discussion in the Netherlands lately rose through TV, where some programmes are perceived as left-wing, and others as right-wing. The subject of making politically incorrect jokes flamed due to an item in the television programme ‘Voetbal Inside’, which is broadcasted on a commercial channel and perceived to be more right-wing oriented. One of the main characters of the show presented himself wearing a dress and a wig, to mimic a Belgian TV presenter that just came out for being transgender. This joke evoked a lot of reaction in the Netherlands. Sponsorships were almost withdrawn and the presenter including the programme were accused of being sexist and homophobic (Takken, 2018; Van Wijk, 2018). At that same time, another TV show called ‘De Luizenmoeder’, also made multiple political incorrect jokes, for example about gay parenting. This show was broadcasted on a public channel and perceived to be more left-wing oriented. Interestingly enough, there was hardly any negative response to this controversial humour, on the contrary, ‘De Luizenmoeder’ was at that time the biggest hit with 3 million viewers (ANP, 2018).

In response to this debate, an infamous Dutch column writer asked society: why can a left wing-oriented TV show make controversial jokes, whereas another right wing-oriented TV show cannot? (Borst, 2018). The idea arises that the source of humour matters in the appreciation of humour. Mostly since controversial humour on left-wing TV is perceived differently in comparison to controversial humour on right-wing TV. The question however is: is this true? This question is not yet being given much attention in scientific research, therefore the current research will examine whether the appreciation of controversial humour is influenced by the source of humour, that is, ingroup or outgroup.

In the current research controversial humour can be defined as humour that does not obey the social codes and norms people have about what can be joked about (Hietalahti, 2016). Although humour is often viewed as positive, controversial humour can also be viewed as negative when it goes against the norm of what is found acceptable in society. Controversial humour can be on edge, and people may have various opinions about it. In this research, I

investigate the circumstances under which controversial humour is appreciated or not, focusing on the source of the humour (the person providing the humour). I define humour appreciation as a combination of two aspects: funniness and acceptability.

#### *Content of controversial humour*

Most previous studies on controversial humour focused on its' content. Humour can be controversial for various reasons. The content of controversial humour can be about taboos, be harsh on politics or it can use cursing and swearing (Boskin, 1990; LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam, 2009; Stone, McMillan, & Hazelton, 2015). Another form of controversial humour is humour with a disparaging content, meaning that it puts down other people or social groups (Zillmann, 1983). Disparaging humour can have different, positive and negative, effects on the appreciation of humour (Saucier et al., 2016). Humour with disparaging content can increase the appreciation, as measured by funniness of a joke (Abrams, Bippus, & McGaughey, 2015; Braun & Preiser, 2013), and it is perceived as funnier when the disparaging content is about another group than when the content is about your own group (Abrams & Bippus, 2011). On the other hand, controversial humour with disparaging content can decrease the appreciation when the content is about your own group (Abrams & Bippus, 2011) or goes against one's beliefs. Something that is found for pre-existing gender attitudes (Thomas & Esses, 2004), as well as for political preference (Braun & Preiser, 2013).

#### *Source of controversial humour*

While content matters, this research tests whether the *source* of humour is also important for the appreciation of controversial humour. Scientific evidence for the importance of the source of humour on appreciation, can be found in studies with gender. People appreciate humour differently dependent on gender of the source. Mickes, Walker, Parris, Mankoff, & Christenfeld (2012) showed that people disproportionally misattribute funniness to men. This bias is also found in attributing male authorship to funniest jokes and female authorship to least funny jokes, even when the content of the joke is exactly the same (Hooper, Sharpe, & Roberts, 2016). Inferences made about the person displaying the humour, in this case sex, change the amount of appreciation of humour, measured by funniness. These results imply that regardless of content, the source of humour can determine the appreciation of humour.

Another aspect readers of humour focus on, besides gender, may be the social group the source belongs to. When judging other people, people make a distinction between members of

their ingroup and their outgroup. Ingroup is a group that people feel they belong to, and outgroup is a group that people feel they do not belong to (Stangor, 2015). Previous research on the relation between ingroup/outgroup membership and controversial humour is mostly about the influence of controversial humour on intergroup context. It shows how controversial humour can lead to tolerance of discrimination towards the outgroup (Ferguson & Ford, 2008), that controversial humour is mostly appreciated (most amusing) when it enhances your own social identity or ingroup (Ferguson & Ford, 2008) and that controversial humour may facilitate solidarity and cohesion within people's ingroup (Terrion & Ashforth, 2002). There is however hardly any research done on the reversed effect; *the influence of intergroup context on the appreciation of controversial humour*. Since people derive inferences about others based on the social group they belong to (Stangor, 2015), it is of interest to see how social groups influence the appreciation of humour.

### *Social Identity Theory*

An important theory for the current research is the Social Identity Theory (SIT) because it provides an explanation for the influence of the source of humour being an ingroup or outgroup member on the appreciation of controversial humour. SIT states that individuals categorize themselves as a member of a group. This might cause an ingroup bias, in which people show ingroup favouritism (Tajfel, 1974). This preference for the ingroup results in more positive feelings towards the ingroup and a preferential treatment of ingroup members (Brewer, 1999). People favour their ingroup in the distributions of rewards, indicating that more positive behaviour is shown towards the ingroup than towards the outgroup (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). This positive feeling and favouritism towards the ingroup over the outgroup is therefore also expected with the appreciation of controversial humour. People will appreciate controversial humour more when it comes from a member of their ingroup, than when it comes from a member of their outgroup. Therefore, the first hypothesis for this research is that controversial humour generated by a member of the ingroup will score higher on appreciation than humour generated by a member of the outgroup.

### *Cavalier Humour Beliefs Scale*

People have different opinions on humour, and whether they do or do not believe that 'a joke is just a joke'. Based on research done by Hodson, Rush and MacInnis (2010) it is expected that some people will have the opinion that everything is acceptable in humour and will therefore

generally appreciate controversial humour, whereas other people do not share this opinion and will not generally appreciate controversial humour. This difference in general perception of humour can be measured with the Cavalier Humour Beliefs Scale (CHB). CHB is an important variable to measure in the current research, since people who have the general perception of humour that everything is acceptable, might not be susceptible for the influence the source has on the appreciation of controversial humour. It is probable that these people will not be influenced by whom the controversial humour is coming from and whether controversial humour is made by someone from the ingroup or someone from the outgroup. Mostly because they have the general opinion that everyone can say anything. It is expected that CHB is a moderator for the appreciation of controversial humour. Therefore, the second hypothesis is that for participants who score high on CHB, a smaller effect will be found of group membership of the source on the appreciation of controversial humour.

In the current research, participants read a short profile introducing the author of a humoristic controversial column. The ingroup condition read a profile in which the author belonged to their ingroup whereas the outgroup condition read a profile in which the author belonged to their outgroup. The appreciation of humour was measured by funniness and acceptability and general perception of humour was measured by CHB. It was expected that participants in the ingroup condition would score higher on appreciation of controversial humour than participants in the outgroup condition. Furthermore, it was expected that participants who score high on CHB would score high on appreciation of controversial humour, irrespective of ingroup or outgroup condition.

## Method

### *Participants & Research design*

In this research 106 students participated in an online survey conducted through social media. All students were left-wing on the political spectrum. This selection was made by an audit question at the start of the survey. Participants were not proceeded through to the survey when they indicated to not be a student and/or perceived themselves to be right-wing on the political spectrum. Participants had a chance of winning a coupon of €10 as a reward for participation. Participants were 20 men and 83 women, with a minimum age of 17 and a maximum age of 29 ( $M = 22.94$ ,  $SD = 1.91$ ). Consent from an ethical commission was not necessary, since the content of the research was not in any way damaging to the participants'

wellbeing. This study had a 2 (source: ingroup vs. outgroup) between-participants design with humour appreciation as dependent variable and CHB as moderating variable.

### *Materials*

*Controversial column.* All participants read the same controversial column. The usage of this column was based on a pilot. A preselection was made by the author, out of multiple Dutch websites, newspapers and magazines. From this preselection, four columns, from both left-wing and right-wing oriented newspapers, were selected. These four columns were presented to 21 left-wing students without identifying the source. The pilot measured content funniness and acceptability with two questions; ‘I find this column...’ with answers on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not funny at all*) to 5 (*very funny*) and ‘I find this column...’ with answers on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not acceptable at all*) to 5 (*completely acceptable*). The selection criteria were relatively high funniness and low acceptability, and a relatively high standard deviation on both. A high standard deviation was desirable since it implies that participants disagreed on whether the column is funny or acceptable, and hence, the column could be considered controversial.

Based on the values found in Table 1, Column 1 was selected. Even though several columns scored higher on funniness than Column 1, these columns did not score low on acceptability nor have a high standard deviation on both funniness and acceptability. Column 1 was thus chosen for its relatively high score on funniness and lowest score on acceptability.

The chosen column is about breeding disabled people and scorns the way society breeds animals in the current bio-industry. The column is called ‘Gehandicapten fokken’ (breeding disabled people) and is written by the comedian Tim Fransen.

Table 1

*Minimum scores, maximum scores, means and standard deviations for funniness and acceptability on the four columns of the pilot for controversial columns*

	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Funniness</b>		
Column 1	1.43	1.36
Column 2	1.05	.97
Column 3	1.86	1.01

Column 4	1.95	1.24
<b>Acceptability</b>		
Column 1	2.00	1.14
Column 2	2.48	1.08
Column 3	3.14	.73
Column 4	2.48	.75

*Cavalier Humour Beliefs Scale (CHB)*. General perception of humour was measured with the CHB scale, designed by Hodson, Rush, & MacInnis (2010). This scale exists of six questions with answers on a 7-point Likert scale varying from 1 (*totally not agree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). Examples of questions on the CHB scale are ‘Sometimes people need to relax and realise that a joke is just a joke’, ‘People get too easily offended by humour’ and ‘Society needs to lighten up about jokes and humour generally’. The reliability of the CHB scale was acceptable with a Crohnbach’s Alpha of .77.

#### *Procedure*

Participants completed the research online with computer or smartphone. At the welcome page they were thanked for their participation and informed about the procedure of the research. Participants were informed they would first answer demographic questions, based on which they would or would not proceed to the other scales of the survey. Participants were told they would read a humorous column, receive information on the author of this column and to fill in scales about their opinion on the column. Participants then received an informed consent and were told that the research would last approximately 10-15 minutes. Lastly, participants were given an email address which they could contact in case they had any questions. To start the research, participants were asked to agree they had read and understood all information and agreed to participate.

After agreeing, participants were forwarded to the demographic scale. Participants were asked about their age, sex, whether they were a student and considered themselves to be left- or right-wing on the political spectrum. Based on this information, participants were either thanked for their participation (when they were not a student and/or considered themselves to be right-wing) or proceeded further to the other scales.



*Ingroup/outgroup manipulation.* Participants were randomly divided into two conditions: an ingroup condition and an outgroup condition. Before reading the controversial column, the author of the column was introduced by a profile. Participants received the instruction to pay attention and read the next part carefully. Both conditions read a profile about a guy called 'Bas'. Bas was introduced as a student at the University of Amsterdam, having lots of friends, who enjoys playing football and likes to drink beer and joke around with friends. Participants were then told that Bas had always voted on the same political party as his parents, but now believed that this party lately had weak arguments and started to look more like a centre-party, which is why he changed his voting behaviour. They were told Bas established a club with five friends with whom he visits secondary schools to convince youngsters to vote because he believes it is important for the younger generation to not screw up and realise how important it is to vote. The story also contained a photo of the author, to make the image more vivid. Conditions differed in political preference of the author (source of the humour) and the way the author of the column practiced politics. In the ingroup condition the source was very active in left-wing politics, trying to convince others to vote, without necessarily wanting them to vote left-wing or right-wing. In the outgroup condition the source was very active in right-wing politics, trying to convince others to vote right-wing. The profile was designed to keep differences between groups as small as possible but to maximize the negative associations with the outgroup and positive associations with the ingroup. By presenting the outgroup source as a bit extreme in behaviour (trying to convince others to vote right-wing), I hoped to evoke a negative reaction towards the outgroup source, which would manifest in not wanting to identify with the outgroup source. To make sure participants had actually read the story, they could not continue to the next page until 40 seconds had passed. See Appendix 2 for the profiles provided to both ingroup and outgroup participants.

Then, participants read the column and had to answer the funniness scale, the acceptability scale, the CHB scale, the manipulation check scale and exit scale.

*Appreciation of controversial humour.* This dependent variable was measured by two constructs; funniness and acceptability. Funniness of the column was measured by a 5-question scale with the questions 'I find this column funny', 'I find this column entertaining', 'This column made me laugh', 'I enjoyed reading this column' and 'I do not find this column funny' (reverse-coded). Participants rated to what extent they agreed with these statements on a 7-point

Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*totally do not agree*) to a maximum score of 7 (*totally agree*). The reliability of the funniness scale was good with a Cronbach's alpha of .93.

Acceptability of the column was measured with a 4-question scale with the questions; 'I find this column acceptable', 'I think this column is okay', 'I find this column offensive' (reverse-coded) and 'This column evoked resistance in me' (reverse-coded). Participants rated to what extent they agreed with these statements on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*totally do not agree*) to a maximum score of 7 (*totally agree*). The reliability of the acceptability scale was acceptable with a Cronbach's Alpha of .86.

*Manipulation checks.* Three questions checked whether participants indeed identified less with the outgroup source than with the ingroup source. These three questions were; 'How nice do you think the author is?' containing answers on a 7-point Likert scale with a minimum of 1 (*not nice at all*) to 7 (*very nice*), 'To what extent can you identify with the author?' containing answers on a 7-point Likert scale with a minimum of 1 (*not at all*) and a maximum of 7 (*very much*) and 'Could the author be your friend?' containing answers on a 7-point Likert scale with a minimum of 1 (*definitely not*) to a maximum of 7 (*definitely*). The reliability of the manipulation check scale was good with a Cronbach's Alpha of .91.

*Exit scale.* Questions about the column were; 'Can you explain the meaning of the column?' 'What was the underlying message?' and 'Have you read this column before? If yes, where?'. Answering options were open text boxes to be filled out by the participant.

After filling out all scales, participants were thanked for their participation and given an email address to contact when there were any questions about the research. The complete survey can be found in Appendix 3.

## Results

The manipulation check scale showed a significant effect of source on identification  $F(1,101) = 36.87, p < .001, \eta^2 = .27$ . Participants in the ingroup condition scored higher on identification with the author ( $M = 4.42, SD = 1.12$ ) than participants in the outgroup condition ( $M = 2.85, SD = 1.50$ ). The manipulation was successful. Out of 128 participants, 23 participants did not reach the end of the survey, these participants were excluded from the data analysis. Out of the remaining 105 participants, 2 reported to have read the column before and were therefore also excluded from the data analysis. This left 103 participants of which 53 participants in the ingroup condition and 50 in the outgroup condition.

The first hypothesis tested whether controversial humour made by a member of the ingroup scored higher on funniness and acceptability than humour made by a member of the outgroup. Two (source: ingroup or outgroup) between participants analyses of variance (ANOVA) were performed, one on funniness and one on acceptability. The first analysis of variance yielded a significant effect of source on funniness,  $F(1, 101) = 7.02, p = .009, \eta^2 = .26$ , where mean scores on funniness were higher for participants in the ingroup condition than for participants in the outgroup condition (mean scores and standard deviations can be found in Table 2). The second analysis of variance yielded a significant difference of source on acceptability,  $F(1, 101) = 13.63, p < .001, \eta^2 = .35$ , with higher mean scores on acceptability for participants in the ingroup condition than participants in the outgroup condition. These results imply that source affects the appreciation of controversial humour. Specifically, humour made by someone from the ingroup is found funnier and more acceptable than humour made by someone from the outgroup. With this result, the first hypothesis was confirmed.

Table 2

*Mean and standard deviation scores on funniness and acceptability in ingroup and outgroup conditions*

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Funniness</b>	Ingroup	3.91	1.43
	Outgroup	3.14	1.51
<b>Acceptability</b>	Ingroup	4.50	1.23
	Outgroup	3.53	1.44

To test the second hypothesis and check the moderating effect of CHB on appreciation of controversial humour, two linear regression analyses were conducted. A smaller effect of source on funniness and appreciation was expected for participants with a high score on CHB, compared to participants with a low score on CHB. The hypothesis predicted an interaction effect between source and CHB on funniness and appreciation. Participants scored high on CHB

with a low standard deviation in both the ingroup ( $M = 5.14, SD = .12$ ) and in the outgroup ( $M = 4.67, SD = .11$ ). Two regression analyses were conducted with source, CHB and the interaction of source and CHB as independent variable and funniness or acceptability as dependant variable. The results showed a main effect of source on funniness (as mentioned in the first paragraph) ( $b = .64, p = .035$ ), no effect of CHB on funniness ( $b = .38, p = .169$ ) and no interaction effect of source and CHB on funniness ( $b = -.23, p = .513$ ). The second regression analysis showed a main effect of source on acceptability ( $b = .75, p = .005$ ), no effect of CHB on acceptability ( $b = .25, p = .295$ ) and no interaction effect of source and CHB on acceptability ( $b = .44, p = .152$ ). This suggests that the effect of the source manipulation is stable and shows that participants who scored high on CHB, did not show a smaller effect of source on appreciation of controversial humour. Therefore, the second hypothesis was not confirmed. The pattern of results can be found in Figure 1 and 2.

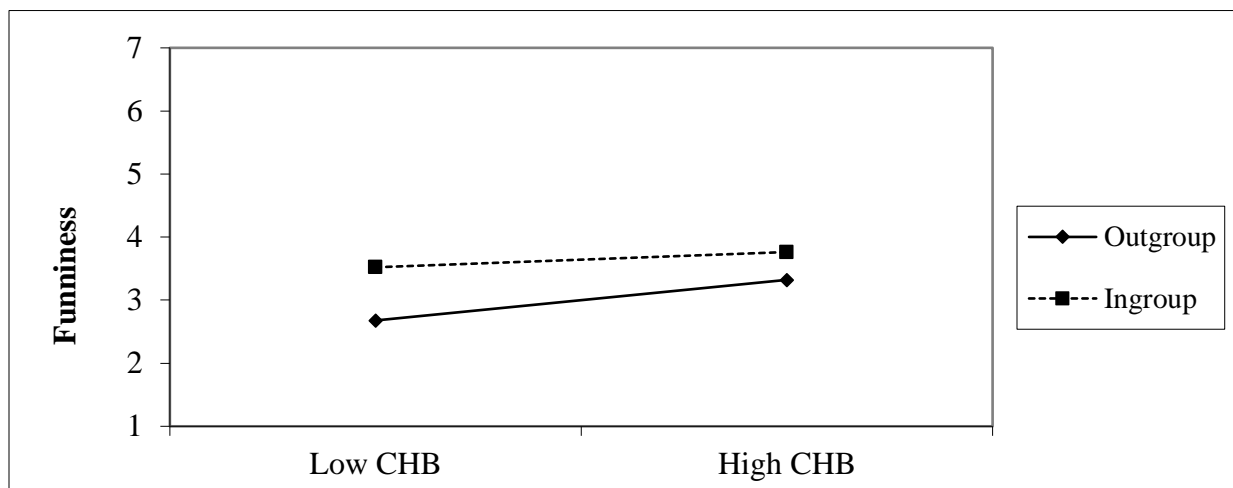


Figure 1. Non-significant interaction effect between CHB and source for ingroup and outgroup on funniness

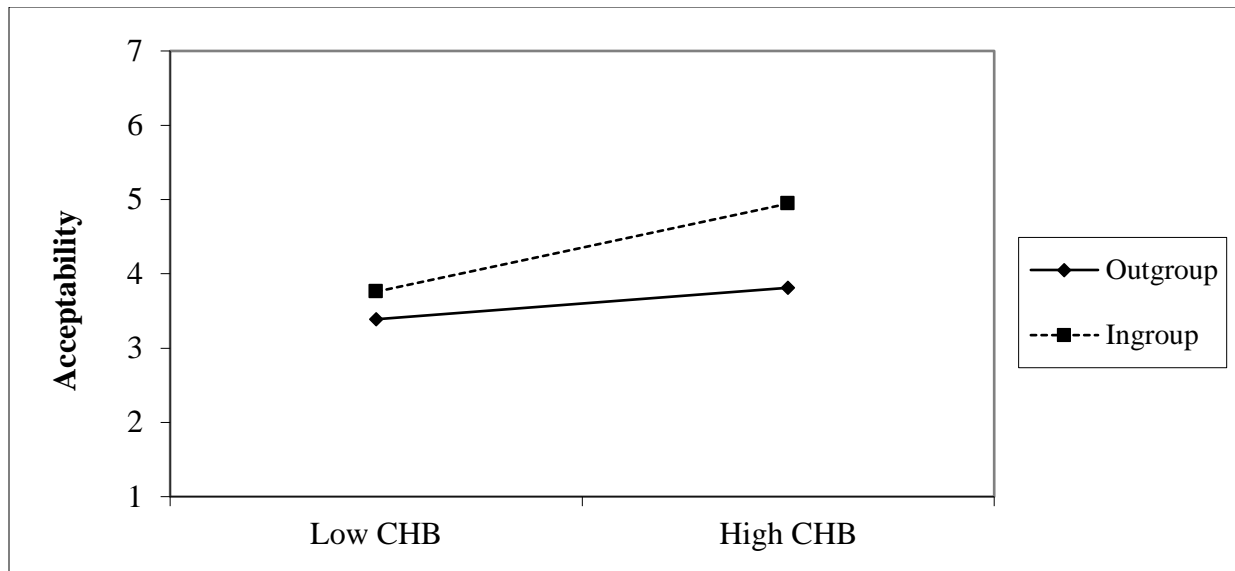


Figure 2. Non-significant interaction effect between CHB and source for ingroup and outgroup on acceptability

#### *Explorative analysis*

To gain more insight in the possible explanations for the found significant effect of source on humour appreciation, an explorative analysis was conducted on understanding the underlying message of the controversial column. One possible explanation could be that participants in the outgroup condition interpreted the controversial humour differently than participants in the ingroup condition, that is, understanding the underlying message or not. When participants in the ingroup condition would understand the underlying message better than participants in the outgroup condition, it would provide a possible explanation for why they appreciated the controversial humour more. When participants in the outgroup condition would show less understanding of the underlying message than participants in the ingroup condition, it would be a possible explanation for why they appreciated the controversial humour less. On the other hand, it was possible that participants in the ingroup and outgroup condition interpreted the humour in the same way. I explored this by analysing the open exit question; ‘Can you explain the meaning of the column? What was the underlying message?’.

Answers to the question were scored on whether participants understood that ‘breeding handicapped people’ was not to be taken literally; there was an underlying message. The underlying message was that the author used handicapped people as a metaphor for the cruelty

and ease with which we humans deal with the bio-industry (due to our intelligence level).

Answers were scored based on the following protocol with three different values:

0. Understood: under this category, all answers related to how humans treat animals in a negative way or how humans believe they are more intelligent and can thus justify their negative behaviour towards animals were classified. Example: ‘I feel sad when I think about what we as humans do to animals, and that this is not acceptable’.

1. Not understood: under this category, all answers related to how (negatively) the writer thinks about handicapped people, that the column is about how society treats handicapped people, stating they did not get the message or when indicated there was no underlying message were classified. Example: ‘Insulting. The underlying message was that intelligent creatures (in this case humans) can do everything with creatures that are less intelligent’. In this example the participant is talking about animals and handicapped people as less intelligent, which is why this example is scored as not understood.

2. Not providing information about what the participant understood or not understood. Example: left blank or ‘I thought it was funny, could not take it seriously’.

Answers were scored by myself and one other scientist blind to source condition during coding. The interrater reliability score was a substantial Kappa= .71 with  $p < 0.001$  (Viera & Garrett, 2005). I counted how many participants did or did not understand the message in each source condition. Findings can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

*Frequency of humour understanding in each source condition*

	<b>Understood</b>	<b>Not understood</b>	<b>No information</b>
<b>Ingroup</b>	23	20	10
<b>Outgroup</b>	17	23	10

A chi-squared test of independence was computed to compare the frequency of understanding the controversial column for participants in the ingroup condition and outgroup condition. No significant interaction was found ( $\chi^2(2) = 1.02, p = .600$ ). Understanding of the column did not differ between the ingroup condition and outgroup condition. Thus, it appears that the effect of source on appreciation was not due to a difference in humour understanding.

## Discussion

Previous research on controversial humour mostly focussed on the content of humour. The current research looked at the influence of the source of humour on the appreciation of controversial humour. The first hypothesis of this research was confirmed, suggesting that controversial humour made by a member of the ingroup was more appreciated than controversial humour made by a member of the outgroup. The second hypothesis of this research was not confirmed, suggesting that people who have a high CHB (the general perception that everything is acceptable in humour) do not show a smaller effect of group membership of the source on the appreciation of controversial humour. Thus, controversial humour made by a member of the ingroup is more appreciated than controversial humour made by a member of the outgroup, irrespective of CHB. Explorative analyses were conducted by looking at understanding of the underlying message of the controversial humour, to gain more insight in possible explanations for the found effect on the first hypothesis. Results did not show significant effects, implying that understanding the underlying message is most likely not an explanation for the found results of source on the appreciation of controversial humour.

Previous research found results for the influence of source on the appreciation of controversial humour, when source differs on gender (Hooper et al., 2016; Mickes et al., 2012). Findings of the current research support this minor amount of previous research, only now with a difference in source based on intergroup context. Furthermore, existing research demonstrated that disparaging humour can amplify group differences and discrimination (Ferguson & Ford, 2008; Terrion & Ashforth, 2002). The current research examined the opposite direction: that intergroup differences can affect the appreciation of controversial humour. Therefore, the current research extends existing literature on controversial humour and intergroup context.

Explanations for findings on both hypotheses support the influence of the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974) applied on controversial humour. The confirmation of the first hypothesis and the disconfirmation of the second hypothesis confirm the stable effect of the manipulation. They propose a good explanation for the idea that due to participants' preference for people from the ingroup, participants appreciate controversial humour more from a source in the ingroup. Participants non-preference for people from the outgroup, explains that participants appreciate controversial humour less from a source in the outgroup. Until now SIT was applied

on a broad scope of subjects, but not necessarily on humour. This research broadens the scope of SIT by finding supporting outcomes for controversial humour.

The current research had several limitations. First, the controversial humour used in this research was rated as not very funny (below 4 on a 7-point Likert scale). Even though I already knew there were low scores on funniness based on the outcome of the pilot, I decided to choose the current text. Future research may use a video with controversial humour instead of a written text. It is likely that a video with controversial content that includes intonation, facial expression and emotion, would be rated as more funny than written text. Even though it might be difficult to find usable stimulus material that would contain a neutral author/presenter of the controversial humour (to manipulate the source), one possible solution can be to use a video of a comedian who is not well known. That being said, higher scores on funniness might not be necessary to replicate the current findings, given the significant effect found in the current research.

Another limitation was the used group of participants. The current research only included left-wing students. Therefore, results of source on the appreciation of controversial humour can only be generalized to students who perceive themselves as being left-wing. Moreover, as seen in the results, left-wing students score high on CHB in general with low standard deviations. This low variation in CHB might be an explanation for not finding any effects of CHB on the appreciation of humour. It would be interesting to replicate this research with a group of participants that vary more on CHB and have different political backgrounds, in order to examine whether CHB does have an influence in a different population and to establish findings for a wider audience.

Results of the explorative analysis provide an additional point for future research. Where SIT provides a theory, it would be interesting to further explore the mechanism, the *why*, behind the found results. Since understanding the underlying message might not be a plausible explanation for the effect of source on the appreciation of controversial humour, the strength of the current manipulation might be. Found results exclude the idea that participants in the ingroup condition appreciate controversial humour more because they understand the humour better and participants in the outgroup condition appreciate controversial humour less because they understand the humour less well. Found results do however gain reason to believe that participants *say* they appreciate the controversial humour more, due to the fact that the source of humour belongs to their ingroup or that they *say* they do not appreciate it, since the person



displaying the humour belongs to their outgroup. It would be interesting to test this with an implicit association test (Greenwald, McGhee & Schwartz, 1998) to detect whether participants in the ingroup condition appreciate humour explicitly and implicitly and whether participants in the outgroup condition would not appreciate controversial humour explicitly but would appreciate controversial humour implicitly. Researching this underlying mechanism would contribute to the current scope of literature on controversial humour.

The emerging debate in the Netherlands on controversial humour is often about *what* is being said, but more and more about *who* says it. The importance of the influence of source in intergroup context, irrespective of content, is established by the current research. It proves that controversial humour made by a member of the ingroup is more appreciated than controversial humour made by a member of the outgroup.

## References

- Abrams, J. R., & Bippus, A. (2011). An intergroup investigation of disparaging humor. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 30*(2), 193-201.
- Abrams, J. R., Bippus, A. M., & McGaughey, K. J. (2015). Gender disparaging jokes: An investigation of sexist-nonstereotypical jokes on funniness, typicality, and the moderating role of ingroup identification. *Humor, 28*(2), 311-326.
- ANP. (2018). Kijkcijfers luizenmoeder voor het eerst omlaag. *Het Parool*. Retrieved June 15, 2018 from <https://www.parool.nl/kunst-en-media/kijkcijfer-luizenmoeder-voor-het-eerst-omlaag~a4569150/>.
- Borst, H. (2018). Stop alsjeblieft met de hysterie over Gijp. *AD*. Retrieved June 15, 2018 from [https://www.ad.nl/nederlands-voetbal/stop-alsjeblieft-met-de-hysterie~af274842/?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing\\_web](https://www.ad.nl/nederlands-voetbal/stop-alsjeblieft-met-de-hysterie~af274842/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=social_sharing_web).
- Boskin, J. (1990). American political humor: Touchables and taboos. *International Political Science Review, 11*(4), 473-482.
- Braun, A., & Preiser, S. (2013). The impact of disparaging humor content on the funniness of political jokes. *Humor, 26*(2), 249-275.
- Brewer, M. B. (1999). The psychology of prejudice: Ingroup love and outgroup hate?. *Journal of social issues, 55*(3), 429-444.
- Brown, R., & Gaertner, S. (Eds.). (2008). *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Intergroup processes*. John Wiley & Sons.

Brunswijk, S. (2018). Wie mag tegenwoordig nog grappen maken over Surinamers?. *NPO Radio 1*. Retrieved June 15, 2018 from <https://www.nporadio1.nl/achtergrond/8125-wie-mag-tegenwoordig-nog-grappen-maken-over-surinamers>.

DWDD (2018). Grenzeloos grappen maken? *DWDD Extra*. Retrieved June 15, 2018 from <https://dewerelddraaitdoor.bnnvara.nl/nieuws/grenzeloos-grappen-maken>.

Ferguson, M. A., & Ford, T. E. (2008). Disparagement humor: A theoretical and empirical review of psychoanalytic, superiority, and social identity theories. *Humor-International Journal of Humor Research*, 21(3), 283-312.

Greenwald, A. G., McGhee, D. E., & Schwartz, J. L. (1998). Measuring individual differences in implicit cognition: the implicit association test. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 74(6), 1464.

Hietalahti, J. (2016). Humor and disobedience: Understanding controversial humor. *Filosofiska Notiser*, 3.

Hodson, G., Rush, J., & MacInnis, C. C. (2010). A joke is just a joke (except when it isn't): Cavalier humor beliefs facilitate the expression of group dominance motives. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 99(4), 660.

Hooper, J., Sharpe, D., & Roberts, S. G. B. (2016). Are men funnier than women, or do we just think they are?. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, 2(1), 54.

LaMarre, H. L., Landreville, K. D., & Beam, M. A. (2009). The irony of satire: Political ideology and the motivation to see what you want to see in The Colbert Report. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 14(2), 212-231.

- Mickes, L., Walker, D. E., Parris, J. L., Mankoff, R., & Christenfeld, N. J. (2012). Who's funny: Gender stereotypes, humor production, and memory bias. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, *19*(1), 108-112.
- Saucier, D. A., O'Dea, C. J., & Strain, M. L. (2016). The bad, the good, the misunderstood: The social effects of racial humor. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, *2*(1), 75.
- Stangor, C. (2015). *Social groups in action and interaction*. Routledge.
- Stone, T. E., McMillan, M., & Hazelton, M. (2015). Back to swear one: A review of English language literature on swearing and cursing in Western health settings. *Aggression and violent behavior*, *25*, 65-74.
- Tajfel, H. (1974). Social identity and intergroup behaviour. *Information (International Social Science Council)*, *13*(2), 65-93.
- Tajfel, H., Billig, M. G., Bundy, R. P., & Flament, C. (1971). Social categorization and intergroup behaviour. *European journal of social psychology*, *1*(2), 149-178.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (2004). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior.
- Takken, W. (2018). RTL en sponsors vinden grap smakeloos, VI verandert niet. *NRC*. Retrieved June 15, 2018 from <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2018/02/06/rtl-en-sponsors-vinden-grap-smakeloos-vi-verandert-niet-a1591088>.
- Terrion, J. L., & Ashforth, B. E. (2002). From 'I' to 'we': The role of putdown humor and identity in the development of a temporary group. *Human Relations*, *55*(1), 55-88.
- Thomas, C. A., & Esses, V. M. (2004). Individual differences in reactions to sexist humor. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *7*(1), 89-100.

Viera, A. J., & Garrett, J. M. (2005). Understanding interobserver agreement: the kappa statistic. *Fam Med*, 37(5), 360-363.

Van Wijk, L. (2018). RTL in gesprek met VI-mannen na 'transfobe' grap Van der Gijp. *AD*. Retrieved June 15, 2018 from <https://www.ad.nl/show/rtl-in-gesprek-met-vi-mannen-na-transfobe-grap-van-der-gijp~ac7ca080/>.

Zillmann, D. (1983). Disparagement humor. In *Handbook of humor research* (pp. 85-107). Springer, New York, NY.