The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Workplace Humor

Amanda M. Wolcott, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Management, Lynn University
Academy of Business Research Conference Fall 2018
Benefits of Workplace Humor

- Creativity
- Socialization
- Communication
- Stress
- Boredom
- Frustration

Clouse & Spurgeon, 1995; Duncan, 1982; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Lippitt, 1982; Malone, 1980; Martin et al., 2003; Romero & Cruthirds, 2006; Roy, 1960; Sherman, 1988; Sykes, 1966
A Crisis of Laughter

Photo Credit: https://memegenerator.net/instance/46889873/frowning-cat-there-will-be-no-laughing-no-laughing-do-you-hear
A Crisis of Laughter

- Depression
- Emotional exhaustion
- Leadership performance
- Self-esteem

Kuiper et al., 2004; Tumkaya, 2007
ARE YOU MOCKING ME?
CUZ I FEEL LIKE I'M BEING MOCKED.

Thanks for making others feel better about themselves by being that self-denigrating person who always predicts personal failure prior to overachievement.

Photo Credit: https://www.someecards.com/usercards/viewcard/077997753b7743d2d41d2f2147d9d76ca5/?tagSlug=encouragement

Photo Credit: https://www.forgevalleyfitness.com/good-versus-bad-teasing.html
Emotional Intelligence

• Perceiving Emotion
• Use of Emotion
• Understanding Emotion
• Managing Emotion
• Social Management

Photo Credit:
https://memegenerator.net/instance/62088410/ancient-aliens-basically-emotional-intelligence
The Current Study

• Does emotional intelligence affect the way that a listener will interpret an ambiguous humor statement?

• Vignette videos, Self-Rated Emotional Intelligence Scale, Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale, funniness, appropriateness, perceived attribution, response

• N=859

• Repeated measures ANOVA and multiple regression
Self-Denigration Example
Teasing Example
Results - Teasing

- *Understanding of emotions* demonstrated a marginally significant relationship with respondent perceptions of the appropriateness of teasing at work ($\beta=.064$, $t=1.85$, $p<.10$) and how funny teasing at work was found ($\beta=.062$, $t=1.68$, $p<.10$).

- *Use of emotions* accounted for a significant amount of variance in how appropriate teasing is for outside of work ($\beta=.068$, $t=1.96$, $p<.05$).
Results – Self-Denigraion

• *Understanding of emotions* demonstrated a significant relationship with respondent perceptions of how funny the self-denigration was \((\beta=.201, t=5.44, p<.000)\) and how appropriate it was for both work \((\beta=.104, t=2.81, p<.01)\) and outside of work \((\beta=.096, t=2.58, p<.01)\).

• *Perception of emotions* accounted for a significant amount of variance in how appropriate teasing is for in \((\beta=.084, t=2.16, p<.05)\) and outside of work \((\beta=.077, t=1.94, p<.10)\).
Supplemental Analyses

- Males find teasing funnier than females
- Males are more likely to return the joke than females, while females are more likely to ignore or ask the speaker to stop than males
- Females are more likely to perceive they are being insulted with teasing than males
- Self-Denigration is considered more appropriate for work than teasing by both sexes
So What?

- Training has a positive effect on emotional intelligence
- Avoid lectures
- Coaching, experiential learning, feedback

Mattingly & Kraiger, 2018

Photo Credit: https://memegenerator.net/instance/57255745/one-does-not-simply-one-does-not-simply-dismiss-emotional-intelligence-training
The Funniest Joke in the World

OH DEER
YOU SO SILLY

Photo Credit: https://sayingimages.com/deer-hunting-meme/
Encore

You Know You’re A Business Professor When…

Employer: why do you wanna be a college professor?

Me: it's in the syllabus

Employer: holy shit when can you start?

Thank you.
Questions?