

A USTRALASIAN HUMOUR STUDIES NETWORK

27<sup>th</sup>  
**AHSN CONFERENCE**

HUMOUR AT WORK

MASSEY UNIVERSITY, WELLINGTON, AOTEAROA / NEW ZEALAND

FEBRUARY 3-5, 2021



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# HŌTAKA RUNNING SCHEDULE

## WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 3

(all activities in EXECUTIVE SEMINAR SUITE [ESS])

12.15pm	Registration Open
1.15pm	Welcoming Remarks
1.30pm	<b>KEYNOTE:</b> Context, complexity and Covid-19: Workplace humour in troubled times
	Dr Barbara Plester
3.00pm	Afternoon Tea
3.30 – 5.00pm	PANEL SESSION ONLINE HUMOUR
6.30pm	Conference Dinner

## THURSDAY FEBRUARY 4

9.00am	<b>KEYNOTE:</b> Comedy Festivals in the 21st Century: More Essential than We Thought (A Year Ago)  Dr Christelle Paré,
10.30am	Morning Tea
11.00am	<b>PARALLEL SESSIONS</b> (Media Humour @7C09) (Humour, Inclusion & Exclusion @ESS)
12.30pm	Lunch
1.30pm	<b>PARALLEL SESSIONS</b> (Humour in/and Art @7C09) (Humour and Linguistics @ESS)
3.00pm	Afternoon Tea
3.30pm	Closing Remarks
4.30pm	Opening of ART EXHIBITION <i>the stories of five to ten people</i> <i>(comedy in art)</i>

## PARALLEL SESSIONS

Wednesday 3.30 – 5.00pm

Room: ESS

Online Humour

(Chair: Nicholas Holm)

Reuben Sanderson	Building Communities with Babish: the bonding function of humour in the YouTube workspace
Sofia Morrell and Meredith Marra	A New Zealander online: Using humour to signal national belonging
Yeram Cho and Stephen Skalicky	Super easy, barely an inconvenience! Humorous vari-directional double voicing in the YouTube series <i>Pitch Meetings</i>

Thursday 11am – 12.30pm

Room: 7C09

Media Humour

(Chair: Nicholas Holm)

Maria Celina Bortolotto	Gente Rota (Broken People): from your phone to fame and fortune
Kyra Clarke	Humour and Ambivalence in "Booksmart"
Lucas Haley	Technology is Boring: And That's Funny

Thursday 11am – 12.30pm

Room: ESS

Humour, Inclusion and Exclusion

(Chair: Stephen Skalicky)

Nicholas Hugman	Football Banter: Balancing Identities through Humour
Janet Holmes, Bernadette Vine and Meredith Marra	What makes you think you're one of us? Humour, teams and exclusion
Carmen Dalli, Anna Strycharz-Banaś and Miriam Meyerhoff	Humour in young children's conflict and peace-making interactions

Thursday 1.30 – 3.00pm

Room: 7C09

Humour in/and Art

(Chair: Nicholas Holm)

Tristan Bunn	The Lonely Artists: Creating Comics as Catharsis
Bryce Galloway	No Laughing Matter: Contemporary Art vs Humour
Martin Patrick	Lessons from an art non-movement: Reconsidering humour, leisure, and play in Fluxus

Thursday 1.30 – 3.00pm

Room: ESS

Humour and Linguistics

(Chair: Meredith Marra)

Stephen Skalicky	Which is more creative: metaphor, sarcasm, or wordplay?
Koenraad Kuiper	Humour in sports commentary: a quantitative micro analysis
Bryer Oden	Humour as power: The tangible consequences of misinterpreting humour as a professional migrant

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## NAU MAI Welcome

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Kia ora tātou,

Welcome to Massey University, Wellington for the annual Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN) conference, *Humour at Work*. This conference is hosted by the School of Humanities, Media and Creative Communication at Massey University with the support of the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington and the College of Creative Arts at Massey University. The organisation of this conference has been particularly difficult in light of the event of the last twelve months and we are grateful for your presence here and your contributions to the study of humour at this perplexing and worrying time.

On behalf of the conference committee and our institutional partners, we extend our sincere thanks and welcome for your contribution to our conference. We hope you find the events thought-provoking and activating.

Nau mai, haere mai ki Te Whanga-nui-a-Tara.

Mauriora,

Conference Committee,  
Nicholas Holm, Meredith Marra, Stephen Skalicky and Bryce Galloway

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## HE MIHI ATU **Acknowledgements**

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We are indebted to the generosity of the invited speakers: Barbara Plester and Christelle Paré for contributing their time, and commitment to the conference.

The conference committee is grateful to the School of Humanities, Media and Creative Communication at Massey University, the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington, the College of Creative Arts at Massey University, the Massey University W.H. Oliver Humanities Research Academy for continuing funding and support throughout this conference's development.

We are especially grateful to an anonymous donor whose generous support funded the participation of a number of graduate students in both the in-person and online sections of the conference.

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## HE PĀRONGO

### Conference Information

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#### VENUE

The conference is being held at the Wellington Campus of Massey University. The Wellington Campus is located on a small hill at the South end of Wellington's central Te Aro suburb. The main entrance to the campus is off Wallace Street (confusingly, Wallace Street is a continuation of Taranaki Street). It can also be accessed off Tasman Street or through the Pukeahu National War Memorial Park.

#### GETTING TO CAMPUS

For those conference delegates staying in downtown Wellington, the campus is best reached on foot. Massey University is a 15-minute walk from the top of Cuba Street. If you are staying elsewhere in Wellington, there are a number of frequent buses that run past the campus. The particular bus will depend on what direction you are arriving from. If you are travelling from the Railway Station, the #3 bus travels past the campus.

#### REGISTRATION DESK

The Registration Desk will be located in Executive Seminar Suite [ESS] which is centrally located on the campus and most easily accessed from the Wallace Street entrance. There should be someone on hand to answer queries at all times during the conference.

#### ACCESSIBILITY

Wellington is a hilly city, although a comparatively compact one, and the Massey campus is likewise spread across a hilly area. The campus itself provides accessibility measures wherever possible, but cannot entirely circumvent the hilly nature of the campus that results in many sets of stairs. If you have any accessibility or mobility questions, please ask at the Registration Desk or contact us at: [2021AHSN@gmail.com](mailto:2021AHSN@gmail.com) so that we can work with you on finding convenient alternatives.

#### CONFERENCE DINNER

The conference dinner will take place on Wednesday February 3 at 6.30pm at the Southern Cross (<https://www.thecross.co.nz/>). Delegates will be able to choose from a (slightly reduced) menu and pay for their own meals at the restaurant. Please signal your attendance when registering onsite, so that we can confirm numbers. The restaurant is a short walk from the campus on the corner of Cuba and Abel Smith Streets.

#### PRINTING

Should you need to print any documents, please enquire at the Registration Desk. Please ensure that you leave plenty of time to allow for printing.



## MORNING TEA, LUNCH & AFTERNOON TEA

Your conference registration includes morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea, which will be served in ESS. Lunches will be provided by on-site caterer, Tussock. Vegetarian and vegan options will be available as a matter of course.

Dairy-free and gluten-free options will be available for those who have requested them. Please leave these options for those who have made special requests.

## INTERNET ACCESS

Details for accessing Massey University's WiFi network will be available the Registration desk.

## SECURITY & MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Please ensure that you report any security or medical concerns to Registration and we will do our best to assist.

- Campus Security (24 Hours): 0274963681
- Campus Facilities Helpdesk (07:30 – 17:00)
  - [rfmwnhelpdesk@massey.ac.nz](mailto:rfmwnhelpdesk@massey.ac.nz)
  - Extension 63333 for on-campus phones, or 04 979333

## INSTRUCTIONS TO PRESENTERS

Please keep panel presentation to 20 minutes. Please be aware that when you speak for longer than your allotted time you are depriving other panellists of the opportunity to present their work and for discussion and questions following the presentations.

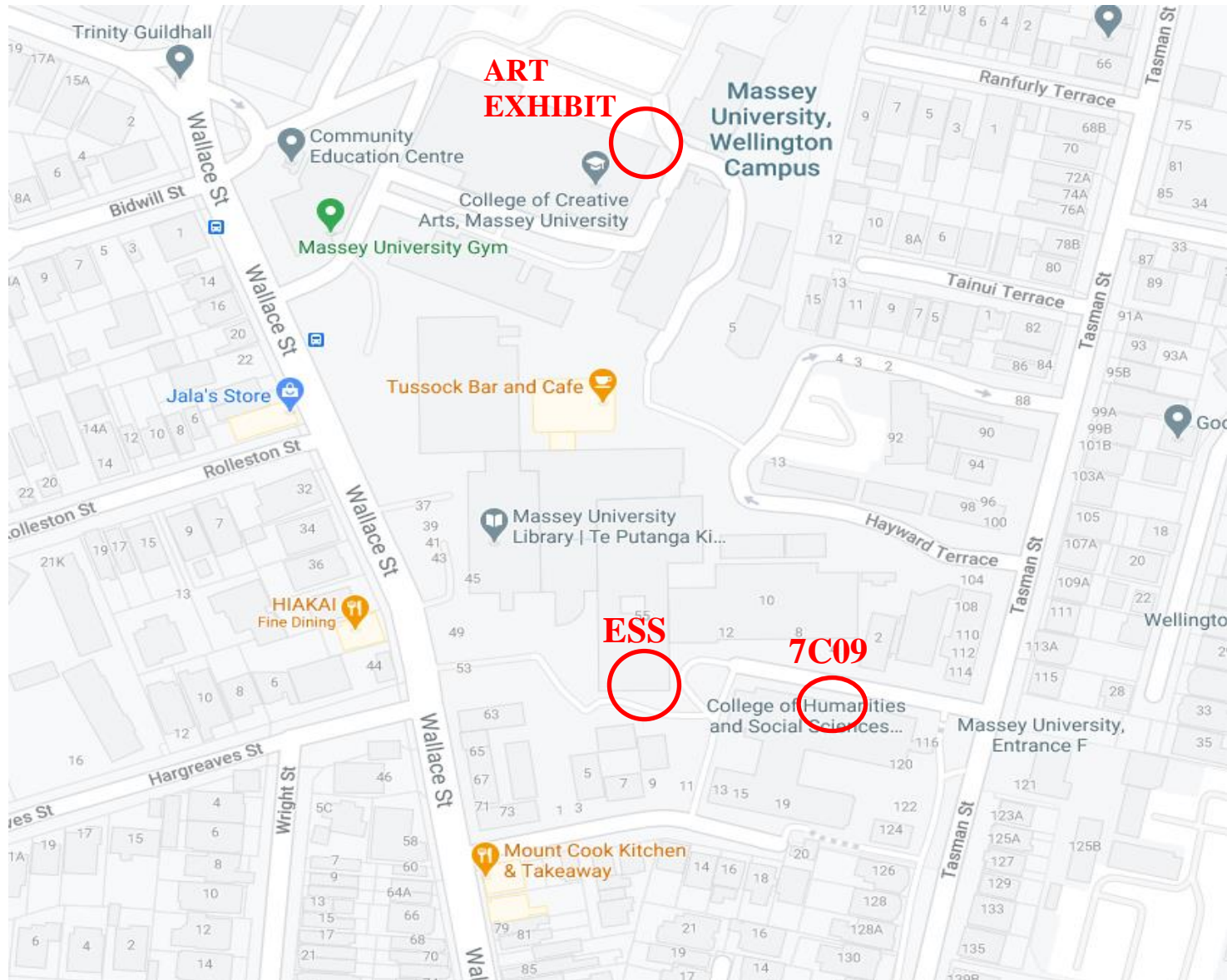
Standard sessions are 90 minutes. Papers should be 20 minutes long with 30 minutes for shared question time at the end of the session. Panel chairs will time each session and provide 5 and 2 minute warnings.

When you are presenting, please arrive 10 minutes early to ensure that everything is ready to go on time.

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## KEI HEA TĀTOU Map

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## Keynote Speakers

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**Dr Barbara Plester**  
University of Auckland

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### ***Context, complexity and Covid-19: Workplace humour in troubled times***

‘May you live in interesting times’

Thought to be an ironic Chinese quote or curse, the statement above is certainly pertinent to our current global situation and our recent lived experiences in the tumultuous year that was 2020. Humour may have sustained many of us through such worrying, anxious days and workplace humour seems particularly relevant, interesting and changeable when in the grips of a global pandemic - especially now many of us are regularly working from home. Drawing on research examples from participants' lockdown experiences as well as seventeen years of workplace humour research, I will explore the changing context for workplace humour. Workplace humour is complex with additional layers of complexity added as we try to joke over Zoom, Facetime and email in order to maintain our 'good humour' and fun in our work lives. Although electronic communications can be less favourable for humour exchanges, humour is still a popular coping mechanism and essential for our psychological well-being in our rapidly changing workplaces.

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:**

Barbara Plester is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Management and International Business (MIB). She completed her PhD in management at Massey University Albany campus in 2008 and was awarded the Top Achievers Doctoral Scholarship (TAD) by the Tertiary Education Commission. Barbara is a member of the Organisation Studies group in MIB and teaches papers on communication, organisational behaviour and HRM. She is an enthusiastic teacher and received a "Teaching Excellence Award" from the Business School in 2012 as well as a further "Teaching Excellence Award" from the University of Auckland in 2013. Barbara is a social science researcher with particular interest in the social aspects of organisational behaviour and organisational culture associated with humour, fun, small talk and sharing food and drink. She is the author of numerous articles addressing the role of fun and humour in the workplace and her most recent book is *Laugh Out Loud: A User's Guide to Workplace Humour*, which she co-authored with Kerr Inkson (Palgrave MacMillan, 2019).

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## Dr Christelle Paré

Adjunct Professor, Department of Communication, University of Ottawa, Canada  
Director, Research and Analysis, Groupe Juste pour rire/ Just for Laughs Group, Montreal, Canada  
Professor, National School of Comedy (École nationale de l'humour), Montreal, Canada

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### ***Comedy Festivals in the 21st Century: More Essential than We Thought (A Year Ago)***

Looking at the cultural industries and their history, we could easily consider that the comedy industry is emerging from its teenage years. It has learned how to work with its big brothers and sisters (television, radio, music, cinema), inherited a lot from its parents the performing arts, had a few (not always well understood) growth spurts, but nevertheless has learned to dance to the beat of its own drum. It has its own personalised sets of rules and ways of doing things, and is still learning, experiencing with others (ex: Web, social networks, streaming services, etc.).

A specific aspect of the industry has been under pressure during the last couple of years. After growing rapidly in number during the early 2000s, comedy festivals were challenged in terms of innovation for multiple reasons: sometimes originating from the festivals themselves, sometimes from governments (and their cultural policies), sometimes from their sponsors and their audiences who were craving more and more “wow factors”. Going from being “cool” to “ok”, numerous comedy production companies were asking themselves how much time, energy and investments comedy festivals were worth when so many other vehicles were accessible for audiences and artists alike to access and distribute comedy in a creative fashion. And then came the coronavirus, putting live shows and comedy festivals on hold for a large part of the international market... or so we thought.

This lecture will explore how the comedy industry corresponds to Hesmondhalgh's (2003, 2007, 2014, 2019) characteristics of the cultural industries, its sets of rules and its general ecosystem. From there, we will overview different types of comedy festivals (private, non-profit, cooperative, etc.) and their *modus operandi* prior to the COVID-19 crisis. Finally, we will check into a few initiatives born from the public health crisis and their potential impacts on the comedy industry's future.

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:** Christelle Paré holds a Masters degree in Communication Studies (*Université Laval*, Quebec), and a PhD in Urban Studies (INRS, Montreal). She was the first Canadian to join the Centre for Comedy Studies Research (Brunel University London, UK) as a postdoctoral fellow. In addition to continuing her research with the *Groupe de recherche sur l'industrie de l'humour* (Comedy Industry Research Group - Carleton University) and the *Observatoire de l'humour* (Humour Observatory- *École nationale de l'humour*, Montréal), she acts as a consultant for the comedy industry, and as a part-time professor at the Department of Communication of University of Ottawa (Ottawa, Canada). She is currently the Research & Analysis Director for the *Juste pour rire/Just for Laughs* Group.

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## Presentation Abstracts (Alphabetical Order)

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Maria Celina Bortolotto,  
Massey University (Palmerston North)

### ***Gente Rota* (Broken People): from your phone to fame and fortune**

In 2017 Argentinian illustrator, animator and scriptwriter Gabriel Lucero launched a series of animations using real life audios from the digital platform WhatsApp. Under the label *Gente Rota* (Broken People) Lucero creates 45 to 60-second long humorous videos where the characters recreate visually the voices of real people on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Frustrated and angry invective is given life in simple animations which quickly became a social media sensation in Argentina. In a private-public dynamics with demands for authenticity, emotionality and celebrity reminiscent of the rules of reality TV, Lucero's followers rush to send him audios of friends, family and acquaintances, hoping to watch what he does with their audios, and to see and follow the comments that ensue. During the last few months, under the strict COVID-19 lockdown, these videos seem to act as a therapeutic tool for viewers, who thank the creator for saving them from lunacy. The popularity of this collaborative product created by an artist and his "prosumers," has enabled Lucero to move from the lower stratum of social media to the upper spaces of radio and television, in a visibility trajectory that, according to the animator, has resulted in more and better paid employment opportunities. The focus of our reflection is on Lucero's original product and the new manners in which humour is being imagined, created and shared in contemporary Argentina, as well as on how virtual horizontal networks contribute to carve a space of recognition and economic viability for online creators.

Tristan Bunn,  
Massey University (Wellington)

### **The Lonely Artists: Creating Comics as Catharsis**

This paper explores the means through which comic books can serve as cathartic outlets for their creators. Mulholland (in *Comics as Art Therapy*, 2004) discusses how, nearing the end of the 20th century, comic creators turned to their own experiences of joy, pain, fear, and envy to channel them into comic works. In this way, the medium adopts aspects of its creator(s), at the same time extending beyond art into a form of cathartic therapy. Through a discussion of the short comic series *The Lonely Artist*, created by myself and Mary Guo, I explore how we were able to turn to our frustrations and insecurities for inspiration. *The Lonely Artist* focuses on two characters – a shy artist and a frustrated geek – anthropomorphised as an otter and honey badger. I discuss the inspirations for the work, how we blended my poor illustration skills with Guo's highly polished artwork in the same pages for comedic effect, and the impact of creating humorous work as opposed to consuming it. In 1992, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* became the first-ever comic to win a Pulitzer Prize, demonstrating the influence of comics on culture and on the creators; yet many people overlook this impact. In this paper, I provide an insight into the creative world of that comic book authors inhabit – our frustrations of sharing studio space, the challenges faced by artists who are bad at self-promotion, and powerlessness to fix the world because you don't rule it.

Yeram Cho and Stephen Skalicky,  
Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington

### **Super easy, barely an inconvenience! Humorous vari-directional double voicing in the YouTube series *Pitch Meetings***

*Pitch Meetings* is a YouTube series that emulates a conversation between a producer and a television or movie writer. The conversation is a pitch, wherein the writer proposes a new script to the producer. Each episode highlights a different real television show or film and echoes known criticisms levelled against that show or film. The same person plays both the writer and the producer in each episode. As such, we argue *Pitch Meetings* is an example of humorous vari-directional double voicing (Vásquez, 2019), which occurs when a speaker plays with two opposing voices. As Vásquez(2019) has shown, this strategy is used in many different types of internet humour, including novelty Twitter accounts and a variety of memes. In this form of humour, stereotypes and other shared knowledge are embedded in different voices, the recognition of which allows for humour to act as a “connective device” Yus (2018, p. 259) between the audience and the author. We analysed *Pitch Meetings* to identify strategies used to invoke humorous vari-directional voicing. We found *Pitch Meetings* employs vari-direction voicing in order to convey a shared opinion towards a particular film or show, similar to other forms of internet humour (Vásquez, 2019). We also found elements unique to *Pitch Meetings*, such as specific catchphrases which are played with and repeated by both the host and the audience. Thus, we demonstrate voicing is used intentionally to convey humour through in-group marking, thereby functioning as a connective device for the creator and its viewers.

Kyra Clarke,  
Massey University (Palmerston North)

### **Humour and Ambivalence in *Booksmart***

In the 2019 teen film *Booksmart*, directed by Olivia Wilde, Molly (Beanie Feldstein) and Amy (Kaitlyn Dever), two ambitious and motivated girls set out to prove they are both “smart” and “fun” by attending a party the night before high school graduation. While humour has long been a part of teen film, traditions of vulgarity are generally gendered masculine. While *Booksmart* corresponds to conventions of teen film in the embodied moments of horror, pleasure and awkwardness (both imagined and experienced) that accompany their night out, in this paper I consider one scene to explore some of the ways the film perpetuates and challenges these conventions. Midway through the film, Molly and Amy catch a Lyft only to be greeted by their school principal supplementing his income with a second job. I situate this moment in relation to histories of humour in the teen film, and particularly, humour in teen films directed by women. I contemplate the uses of silence and vulgarity, to explore how the film both perpetuates and contests cultural norms. Teen film is traditionally a space of liminality and becoming for youth, and for girls, this is often a space of ambivalence. Considering the awkward humour of the scene, alongside the awkward encounter with a teacher out-of-place enables us to reflect on the presence of such ambivalence and its place in the teen film.

Carmen Dalli, Anna Strycharz-Banaś and Miriam Meyerhoff,  
Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington

### **Humour in young children's conflict and peace-making interactions**

This paper focuses on the use of humour as part of conflict negotiations and peace-making by children aged 2;6 - 4;11 who attended a multi-ethnic early childhood centre in a major NZ city. It draws on 18 months of data collected within a project whose full title is 'War and Peace in the Nursery: How young children negotiate conflict to establish belonging and wellbeing in a multi-ethnic NZ early childhood setting.' Using sociolinguistic interactional analysis, we examine children's use of humour in its various forms (e.g., teasing; physical humour; clowning) and place of occurrence (within a conflict sequence; immediately after conflict termination; after conflict inducted separation). We argue that while in any specific interaction humour can be seen as an act to resolve or mitigate conflict, considered more broadly within the context of existing relationships, it simultaneously works to negotiate power and hierarchy. In this way "humour cannot really be understood without placing it in the framework of social exchange" (McGhee, 1989, p. 19).

Bryce Galloway,  
Massey University (Wellington)

### **No Laughing Matter: Contemporary Art vs Humour**

In contemporary art, comedy remains something of an interloper. Contemporary artists use comedy at their peril, running the risk of being deemed less than committed in a field that aims for currency, gravitas and depth. While many artists persist in making comedic art, exhibition reviewers will find other things to talk about. Artist/comedian Michael Portnoy even suggests the joke's resolved tension is antithetical to contemporary art's reliance on the unresolved tensions that keep an audience engaged. NZ artist Tom Kreisler offers a case in point. Surveys of Kreisler's work followed his death in 2002, prompting artists and critics to ponder the middling success Kreisler enjoyed while alive. In 2016, Christchurch Press reviewer Warren Feeney paraphrases Wystan Curnow on Kreisler "...New Zealand art has demonstrated little appetite for any serious artist revealing a sense of humour in their work." Comedic artists also find themselves up against the solemnity of the 'white cube' art gallery, described by artist/academic Brian O'Doherty as a place where, "...one does not speak in a normal voice; one does not laugh, eat, drink, lie down, or sleep; one does not get ill, go mad, sing, dance, or make love." A strange list of no-noes for a field otherwise celebrated as bohemian. With a focus on art in NZ, this paper offers critique of contemporary art contexts that congratulate themselves on being open to all narratives of currency without acknowledging systemic biases against comedy.

Lucas Haley,  
Massey University (Wellington)

## **Technology is Boring: And That's Funny**

As technology becomes increasingly pervasive throughout daily life, it becomes increasingly overlooked; high technology from a decade ago is now mundane. In a similar way, the adoption of video game play has also matured to a point that the performance of playing a game is also relatively mundane – user controls, visual perspectives, and narrative arcs are standardised. These expectations and mundanities can become powerful fulcrums to create points of humour in unexpected places: automated systems, workplace technologies, and the performance of video game play. Through the presenter's own work and that of other practitioners, including Molle Industria, Robert Yang, and Davey Wreden, this presentation explores how technology creates structures and expectations in both the everyday and in digital play that can be subverted to create surprise, humour, and joy; and how that humour can reveal truths about the way those structures and technologies impact our lives.

Janet Holmes, Bernadette Vine and Meredith Marra,  
Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington

## **What makes you think you're one of us? Humour, teams and exclusion**

Humour is often praised for its inclusionary effects, but sociolinguistic research has regularly noted the 'othering' and discrimination that can also be achieved through the use of humour. The plausible deniability inherent in its off-record nature means humour can be used as an invidious strategy for excluding those who are not part of the ingroup. To explore how this exclusion is discursively accomplished, we focus on teams in New Zealand workplaces in which an outsider is given a temporary work role. The data comprises recordings of interactions involving migrants completing six week workplace internships as part of Victoria University of Wellington's Workplace Communication Programme for Skilled Migrants. We compare attitudes identified in these interactions with evidence from interactions involving migrants who are established members of their workplace teams. Skilled migrants have the potential to enrich New Zealand workplaces in a variety of ways and this potential is more likely to be realised if it is supported by positive attitudes and behaviours by New Zealand colleagues. Close analysis offers opportunities to make explicit strategies which could be experienced as patronising, enacting benevolent patronage. As a result, these might go under the radar while still operating as barriers to belonging. By identifying the strategies used to exclude, especially those which when couched in humour become more subtle and nuanced, we have the opportunity to challenge insiders and equally to arm newcomers with counter-strategies.



Nicholas Hugman,  
Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington

## **Football Banter: Balancing Identities through Humour**

Despite the recognised relationship between humour and sport (Clayton and Humberstone 2006), and particularly football (Hugman 2018), scholarly research into the role of language in this context is limited (but see Wolfers, File and Schnurr 2017). This paper provides an analysis of how footballers use humour to construct identities, and how the negotiation of these identities make apparent a complex matrix of micro/macro social structures, including but not limited to football, the gender order and wider society. I take a social constructionist approach (Lazarro-Salazar 2017), conceptualising identities as multifarious, dynamic, and ephemeral, having no form prior to their construction in discourse. The analysis draws on recorded examples of footballers' dressing room interactions, collected using an ethnographic approach to help 'warrant' interpretations. The linguistic findings based on style of humour (e.g. supportive vs contestive, maximally vs minimally collaborative) demonstrate that the players skillfully balance multiple identities when co-constructing humour sequences. While they align themselves with local identity categories, such as the team and the wider club, they also construct themselves as members of global groups, like the imagined communities of footballers and New Zealanders. The presence of these identity categories relates to the social structures in which the team sits, and these can be seen manifesting themselves in the players' humour. Building on this, I discuss how the discourse genre in which one interacts (banter in this instance) offers rich opportunities for examining the identities and wider social structures which shape and are shaped by interaction (Blommaert 2005).

Koenraad Kuiper,  
University of Canterbury

## **Humour in sports commentary: a quantitative micro analysis**

Two sets of rugby union football commentaries are assessed for their instances of humour. The commentary teams are British and New Zealand teams performing radio broadcast commentaries of the same three British vs New Zealand internationals. The speakers are skilled professional commentators. The two commentary teams are compared for their use of humorous colour commentary on a number of parameters: How often per game is humour in evidence? When in the progress of the game does humour appear? Which member of the commentary team 'does' humour? Is the humour created individually or cooperatively? Each case of humorous by-play is also analysed for the source of its humour. Commentators, for example, use hyperbole, bathos, caricature and euphemism, provide humorous anecdotes and quotations and base these on players and their moves. The conclusion to be drawn from this account of humour in a professional space is that its use depends on local cultural traditions even though rugby union radio commentary is itself a high restricted micro genre.

Sofia Morrell and Meredith Marra,  
Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington

## **A New Zealander online: Using humour to signal national belonging**

Whenever we interact we offer signals of who we are and where we belong. In negotiating our identities with others, humour is an important part of the linguistic toolkit. In this paper we explore how we both explicitly and implicitly signal our national identity through language choices: How do we claim the status of 'New Zealander' through our use of and responses to humour? Existing linguistic literature on the role of humour in identity construction (e.g. Holmes 2000, Schnurr 2009), and the role of humour in the construction of a New Zealand identity in particular (e.g. Hugman 2018, Wilson 2019), has overwhelmingly relied on face-to-face interactions amongst people who know each other well and who interact in 'private' settings. Here we turn to public fora and interactions between relative strangers. Our data is taken from vlogs uploaded by New Zealand YouTube creators for whom the platform is their work, alongside the comments from the viewers on whom the creators ultimately rely for their success. In this context, humour is clearly a serious business. The goal is to consider national community alignment and the embedding of identity categories within this asynchronous, written context. To supplement our analysis, and to provide further support for our interpretations, we explore an emerging trend for making use of metapragmatics and metadiscourse (talk about language use). We identify the discursive clues and comments that signal we are New Zealanders or that we have privileged access to 'New Zealand humour' (itself a debatable concept).

Bryer Oden,  
Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington

## **Humour as power: The tangible consequences of misinterpreting humour as a professional migrant**

Humour is a serious business with tangible, and potentially detrimental, consequences for outsiders. Researchers describe the ambivalence of humour which can function 'as solidarity,' and also 'as power' (Hay 1995). As noted by Plester and Sayer (2007), humour is used to access a sense of belonging within a group, and can therefore define those who are recognised as insiders and those who are excluded. In my research, I explore the boundary marking function of humour to mark outsiders as reflected in the experiences of professional migrants, noting in particular the varying cultural understandings which can result in misinterpretations. Using data from Victoria University of Wellington's Language in the Workplace project, specifically data involving incomers to New Zealand and outbound New Zealanders, I address the ways in which pragmatic understanding is central to the navigation and maintenance of successful workplace relationships. A series of transcribed interactions will demonstrate the use of humour as power, alongside reflections on experience with humour at work. As a meta discussion on this topic, my paper will conclude with a short video to summarise the motivations of this research, illustrating how failing to understand humour has tangible effects on the social and hierarchical status of an individual, rendering them as either unable to be included, or unaware of the social dynamics that are actively contributing to their exclusion. The paper outlines how humour can be a powerful tool to uphold the hegemony of workplace power relations.

Martin Patrick,  
Massey University (Wellington)

### **Lessons from an art non-movement: Reconsidering humour, leisure, and play in Fluxus**

The Fluxus (non-)movement in art in its attempts to subvert both longstanding and vanguard notions of art practice reinvented models for making and distributing art objects and for collectively performing and writing. But their stance of continually questioning received assumptions raised institutional scepticism of the significance of Fluxus works, much argumentation (especially among its members) regarding best ways forward, and much general dismissal of Fluxus works and artists as “unserious” or “unimportant”. However, with the burgeoning amount of scholarship and exhibitions today, it is clear that Fluxus is a topic for renewed examination. As artist George Maciunas stated in an interview shortly before his death: “I would say I was mostly concerned with humour, I mean like that’s my main interest, is humour. ... But generally most Fluxus people tended to have a concern with humour”. In this context, I would particularly like to focus on Fluxus’ indebtedness to slapstick, vulgarity, Dadaist pranks, and the blatantly ridiculous. But perhaps even more resonant today is the fact that most Fluxus artists led relatively precarious existences, and that their shunning of dominant modes of materialist artmaking in favour of small gestures and contingent actions offers much to (re-)consider regarding ongoing paradigms of work/leisure, seriousness/play. In this presentation I will cite works by such artists as George Brecht, Robert Filliou, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Ben Vautier, and Emmett Williams as background for some wide ranging notes on humour and Fluxus.

Reuben Sanderson,  
Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington

### **Building Communities with Babish: the bonding function of humour in the YouTube workspace**

Workplace discourse analysts have long recognised the role of humour as a discursive tool for negotiating community boundaries. In-group members make use of humour to maintain their insider identity, while out-group members are often kept at the periphery through lack of familiarity with how to appropriately utilise or understand humorous utterances. Early workplace research explored these ideas with a focus on internal interactions amongst existing teams using the Community of Practice (CofP) model (Wenger 1998). This paper aims to expand this focus, addressing a trend in the field which calls for more attention to ‘frontstage’ interactions and online workspaces (Vine & Marra, 2017). Identifying YouTube as one such site of interest, this paper draws on data from a popular professional YouTube channel, Binging with Babish, analysed using a Multi-Modal Interactional Analysis approach (Norris, 2011). I argue that by observing the strategies Babish uses to produce humour, we can identify multiple, overlapping layers of imagined communities within his intended audience. This sense of community helps ensure that Babish’s viewers feel encouraged to return and continue to financially support his channel. Exploring the ‘modes of belonging’ to a community reveals how shared humour norms can develop amongst people who do not necessarily share ‘interactive co-presence’ (King, 2019). These findings open the door to exploring the different ways in which humour can be used to create a sense of community in other online workspaces.

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## **Which is more creative: metaphor, sarcasm, or wordplay?**

The relationship among creativity, humour, and figurative language is often taken for granted, with the assumption that figurative language is naturally also creative and also humorous. This assumption is not necessarily incorrect, as many scholars have drawn theoretical and empirical links among these three phenomena (Gerrig and Gibbs, 1988; Huang, Gino, & Galinsky, 2015; Silvia & Beaty, 2012). Regardless of what the researchers say, what do we know about common, folk perceptions of creativity as they relate to figurative language, such as metaphor and sarcasm? The purpose of this study was to test those perceptions as they relate to metaphor and sarcasm. To do so, over 400 participants took part in an online production and rating task. In the task, participants were asked to create two reactions to real yet difficult to believe news stories. The participants then compared their reactions to one of four pre-constructed reactions. These four pre-constructed reactions contained no figurative language, metaphor, sarcasm, or metaphor and sarcasm. Participants answered whether their reaction was more, equally, or less creative than the pre-constructed response. The results demonstrate that participants consistently rated answers containing metaphor as more creative than their answers, but this result did not hold for answers containing sarcasm. The one exception to this was that some participants included humorous wordplay in their responses. In these cases, participants almost always rated their answers as more creative than the pre-constructed answers. As such, these results further highlight connections between perceptions of creativity, humour, and figurative language.