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Background and aims: Children’s social interactions with other children have a central role in their developing understanding of themselves and of others (Carpendale & Lewis, 2015). Shared humor is a form of playful, intimate, and warm interaction that is an integral part of children’s close relationships (Hoicka & Akhtar, 2012), which may reveal a great deal about children’s developing understanding of one another’s minds (Dunn, 1994). However, there is a dearth of research investigating the nature of children’s humor production beyond the preschool years and how humor is shared within children’s close relationships with other children (e.g., siblings).

Methods: In a sample of 86 7-year-old children (M age = 7.82 years, SD = 0.80), we investigated patterns and individual differences in spontaneous humor observed during free play with their older (M age = 9.55 years, SD = 0.88) or their younger sibling (M age = 5.87 years, SD = 0.96). We coded children’s instances, categories, and responses to humor. We investigated the nature of children’s humor on the dyadic and individual level.

Results: Humor was common, and siblings’ production of humor was highly interdependent between play partners. Dyadic humor differed according to structural features of the sibling relationship (age, gender composition), and 7-year-old focal children’s humor varied according to gender.

Conclusions: Our study addresses the need for observational studies investigating humor as an intimate form of dyadic communication shared between children and provides insight into how young children understand others’ minds. Moreover, our study provides a platform for future research investigating humor as an important marker of children’s social and cognitive development.