Use Of Humor And Relationship Intimacy

Laura Warrenchuk

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USE OF HUMOR

AND

RELATIONSHIP INTIMACY

by

Laura Warrenchuk
Bachelor of Arts Honors, 1997; Bachelor of Education, 1993

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
University of North Dakota
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

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1999
This thesis, submitted by Laura P. Warrenchuk in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

(Chairperson)

This thesis meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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Department Counseling

Degree Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Humor is a unique social interaction that is ubiquitous in everyday life. Humor can serve a number of functions, including ones that may either enhance or detract from social intimacy. The purpose of this study was to examine relationships between different uses of humor and intimacy in relationships. It was hypothesized that positive and expressive uses of humor would lead to increases in intimacy within the relationship, whereas negative uses of humor would lead to decreased levels of intimacy.

Undergraduate college students (N = 93) completed the Functional Uses of Humor Scale and the Miller Social Intimacy Scale. Analyses focused on female participants (N = 74) due to the small number of male participants (N = 19) in this study. The results showed that positive use of humor (e.g., cheering up their partner or having fun within the relationship) increased social intimacy. Surprisingly using humor for expressive purposes (e.g., talking about sensitive issues) decreased intimacy levels. There was not an observed relationship between intimacy and using humor for negative purposes (e.g., teasing or picking on each other).

Discrepancy scores between the participants’ own use of humor and their reports of their partners’ use of humor indicated that people who used humor for certain purposes also reported that their partner used humor in the same manner. Length and type of relationship also played an important role in discrepancy scores. As relationships progressed, partners had a tenancy to use humor less often for positive goals.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Do you often tell jokes to your partner or friends? Do you consider yourself to have a good sense of humor? Kiechell (1983) reported on a workshop where 60 executive bankers were asked if they had a sense of humor. Everyone raised their hand. "When the hands were up, everyone was looking around at his neighbors with shock on his face...like what the hell do you have your hand up for...I know you, forget it, put your hand down" (Kiechell, 1983, p.205). Essentially, having a sense of humor is seen by many as an important personality characteristic. Most people may think that they have a good sense of humor, even though in other’s eyes they may not.

Research on humor has typically examined the appreciation of humorous stimuli such as cartoons (Groch, 1974). Humor has been found to correlate with many personality variables such as extroversion, self-disclosure, creativity, and caring (Crawford & Gressley, 1991; Treadwell, 1970), as well as stressors, moods (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983), and gender (Brodzinsky, Barnet, & Aiello, 1981; Chapman & Gadfield, 1976). Humor has also been found to correlate with social skills such as social influence (O’Quin & Aronoff, 1981; Malpass & Fitzpatrick, 1959), and embarrassment (Fink & Walker, 1977).
Throughout our lives, we seek to be involved in personal relationships with others (Swartz, 1995). These relationships may range from deeply intimate ones to acquaintances in the workplace or classroom. These relationships provide some meaning to our lives and help us to become the people that we are. Consequently, it is important to understand how humor impacts these relationships.

However, few studies have examined the role of humor in relationships. Most of the empirical studies that examined humor as a means of enhancing relationships were published several decades ago (Coser, 1960; Radcliffe-Brown, 1940). Recently, the study of humor and relationships has regained popularity (Hampes, 1992, 1994; Marshall, 1991).

Of particular interest is the role of humor in intimate relationships. As I began to gain awareness of how important humor was in my relationships with friends and family, I became fascinated with peoples’ sense of humor and was interested in exploring the role that humor plays in our relationships. More specifically, this study will focus on the relationship between the utilization of humor and the level of intimacy experienced in a relationship. The general assumption of this study is that people who have a deeply intimate relationship will use humor differently than those who are in a less intimate relationship.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this inquiry, I am concerned with the role of humor in intimate relationships. I will start by defining and describing the nature of relationships. Next, I will define and describe what humor is; and finally, I will explore the literature pertinent to the impact of humor on intimate relationships.

Intimate Relationships

Intimacy is a term commonly used by both marriage counselors and the general population. Intimacy is often viewed as the ideal type of relationship whether it refers to family, friends, or marriage. Our culture places a high value on intimacy and its maintenance (Schaefer & Olson, 1981). Some studies indicate that a lack of intimacy may be a factor in the development of depression (Waring, 1985). Research on primates has indicated that without some degree of intimacy, humans cannot fully develop (Hinde, 1978). Many developmental theorists have also included intimacy in the hierarchy of human development, and view the achievement of intimacy as a critical task in making the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Schaefer & Olson, 1981).

There are many difficulties encountered in measuring close relationships. Waring (1985) noted the methodological and conceptual difficulties in studying such relationships. In his editorial, Waring (1985) questioned whose intimacy was measured
(Hers? His? or Theirs?) when the questionnaire method is used. Evaluations of relationships may be a product of the individual’s attitudes, or moods at that particular moment in time. Data which records the spouses or partner’s perceptions of their relationship may be essential to evaluate the perceived differences between partners. Ratings of relationships are often based on self-report measures of the respondent’s perception of the relationship.

Waring (1985) also questioned whether narrow operational definitions might be preferred over broader definitions. Waring (1985) also stated that intimacy can be conceptualized as a multifaceted dimension of interpersonal relationships which may be defined too narrowly by adequacy of close relationships.

Erickson (1963, cited in Swartz, 1995) described intimacy as a state of emotional closeness between the partners in a relationship, wherein each individual feels comfortable sharing personal thoughts and feelings (Swartz, 1995). Intimacy has also been defined as a mutual need satisfaction and a closeness to another human being on a variety of levels (Schaefer & Olson, 1981). Schaefer and Olson (1981) defined five types of intimacy: emotional, social, sexual, intellectual, and recreational and measured them with the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (PAIR). This multidimensional test is used with individuals, and married or unmarried couples, to describe their relationship in terms of how they currently perceive it and how they would like it to be.

Intimacy has been widely studied using the social psychological point of view to determine the relationship of intimacy to eye contact, distance, and verbal behavior, such
as self-disclosure (Schaefer & Olson, 1981). Some references to intimacy have equated this concept to self-disclosure (Waring, 1985). Gilbert (1976, cited in Schaefer & Olson, 1981) argued that there is a curvilinear relationship of intimacy with self-disclosure if relationship satisfaction is highly associated with intimacy.

In one study (Berschied, Sander, & Omoto, 1989, cited in Swartz, 1995) 47% of the participants nominated romantic relationships as their closest (deepest and most intimate) relationship; 36% chose friendships as their closest relationship. Family relationships were nominated by 14%, and 3% chose some other type of relationship (usually at work) as their closest relationship.

Miller and Lefcourt (1983) defined relationships as interactions with persons who have an effect on our lives. Miller and Lefcourt (1983) conceptualized intimacy as feelings that partners have for one another and about the relationship as a whole. The focus is primarily on warmth, affection, involvement, love, and deep feelings of acceptance between partners. For the purpose of this study, Miller and Lefcourt’s definition will be used. The Miller Social Intimacy Scale (Miller & Lefcourt, 1983) measures the maximum level of social intimacy presently experienced (Waring, 1985).

Several studies have indicated that intimacy is an important predictor of healthy psychological and physical functioning, especially in regard to relationships with others, marriage, and stress. Validation studies (Miller & Lefcourt, 1983) have further defined the construct assessed by the MSIS. Participants who scored high on intimacy also described their closest relationship as being characterized by high levels of trust and intimacy. Conversely, participants who scored low on the MSIS also described
themselves as being lonely on the UCLA Loneliness Scale. It has been found that participants who scored higher on the MSIS reported describing their closest friends rather than describing casual friends. The MSIS is used in the context of friendships, romantic dating, or marital relationships. The mean MSIS score for married students was significantly different than that for students in non-marital relationships (Miller & Lefcourt, 1983). For the purpose of this study the MSIS will be used to describe dating or marital relationships.

Summary

According to the literature, intimacy is an important component of human development and is highly valued by most people. However, the definition of intimacy can be difficult. The definition of intimacy as defined by Miller and Lefcourt (1983) will be used for the purposes of this study.

Humor

Humor has been studied “anthropologically and biographically, philosophically and physiologically, psychologically and sociologically” (Grayson, 1970). The nature of humor has been pondered by many well-known philosophers and scientists, including: Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hobbes, Kant, Schopenhauer, Darwin, Freud, Spencer, and Piaget (Kuhlman, 1984). Freud viewed humor as an attitude by which the ego converts potential distress into pleasure (Groch, 1974, p. 835). In addition to laughter, humor may evoke other behaviors and feelings. “Humor has been found to be associated with a variety of emotions such as love, joy, appreciation, sadness, embarrassment, fear, guilt, and envy” (Chapman, 1983, cited in Swartz, 1995, p.14).
There have also been attempts to specify different kinds of humor, which include cartoon, clowning, comedy, farce, jest, joke, parody, pun, riddle, ridicule, sarcasm, satire, and slapstick (Kuhlman, 1984; Malpass & Fitzpatrick, 1959). Mindess (1976, cited in Swartz, 1995) argued that what creates humor is comic perspective rather than inherent comic situations. Humor according to this viewpoint, is subjective and dependent on the perceptions and interpretations of the participants (Grayson, 1970). “Having a sense of humor” has been operationally defined as giving high ratings to cartoon and joke stimuli. However, this definition may have little relationship to the participants’ own “sense of humor” (Crawford & Gressley, 1991).

“What is humor?” is a question that many researchers have had some difficulty answering because proposing an exact definition differentiates between what humor is and is not (Grayson, 1970). Fry (1968, cited in Grayson, 1970) simply defined humor as all phenomena that are associated in an essential manner with amusement and fun. However, with this definition, humor is defined as an external phenomenon. Thorson and Powell (1993a) view humor as a way of looking at the world. This definition of humor differs from others in that it refers to the person’s sense of humor, which comprises many elements. Each individual is thought of as having a unique pattern of humor that may be strong in some elements, while being weak in others. The use of certain patterns is thought to vary according to mood, personality, situation, arousal level, importance of the situation, and the elements available to that person (Thorson & Powell, 1993a).

Some elements of an individual’s repertoire may include: recognition of oneself as a humorous person, recognition of others’ humor, appreciation of humor, laughing,
individual outlook or perspective of humor, and coping humor. People may view themselves as being humorous because of past successes (or failures) which motivated these individuals to develop their sense of humor. One may also seek to develop a sense of humor if they have been rewarded for “getting the joke.” The level of motivation varies as to how hard an individual may try to generate and/or appreciate humor.

Attitudes towards others’ humor are strongly linked with attitudes about humor. Laughter is also a response that is related to having a sense of humor. People who “get the joke” will most likely laugh at the joke, which may be indicative of humor recognition. An individual’s outlook is also an element of personal sense of humor, particularly when it involves life’s absurdities: for example, “I can often laugh at a silly situation.” The use of humor as an adaptive mechanism is considered by Thorson and Powell (1993a) as an element of a personal sense of humor. However, there are two different types of humor used for coping: self-deprecating humor, in which the individual faces the truth but can still smile through the tears; and humor at the expense of others, which is considered a less desirable form of humor. Humor can also be used an avoidance technique which is beyond the realm of a personal sense of humor (Thorson & Powell, 1993a).

Humor Facilitates Social Interaction

Humor results in a unique type of social interaction and is different from other kinds of communication because it “establishes incongruous relationships (meaning) and presents them to us with a suddenness (timing) that leads us to laugh” (Berger, 1976, p. 113, cited in Swartz, 1995). Chubb (1995) supported the idea that humor helps initiate relationships and manage interactions among children. Laughter, like all other behaviors,
is expected to be maintained by social rules and exhibited only when appropriate. To laugh invites others to become closer and share in the fun. Bergson (1911, cited in Coser, 1959) stated “To understand laughter, we must put it back into its natural environment, which is society, and above all must we determine that utility of its function which is a social one... Laughter must answer the certain requirements of life in common. It must have social signification” (p.172). Therefore, there are different degrees of laughter just as there are different types of humor that prevail in different situations (Coser, 1959).

The literature on humor suggests that using appropriate forms of humor increases the likability of the character. Some researchers have even suggested that humor may increase influence by increasing the communicator’s attractiveness (O’Quin & Aronoff, 1981). In the literature, the influence or persuasiveness of humor has not been demonstrated to exist when measured by paper and pencil tests. However, when face-to-face interactions have been studied, an increase in compliance has been observed in the laboratory setting, as well as in the amount of overt laughter and interpersonal negotiation (O’Quin & Aronoff, 1981).

When individuals were asked to generate traits they would like to seek in a potential romantic partner, having a sense of humor was frequently mentioned. In one study (Marshall, 1988, cited in Marshall, 1991) 71% of the respondents indicated that a sense of humor in a potential partner was either a very desirable characteristic or the most important characteristic. Furthermore, romantic partners who appreciated similar types of humor reported greater liking, loving, and possibility of marriage. Marshall (1991) proposed that relational satisfaction may be due to either actual similarity or perceived
similarity, and hypothesized that partners’ perceptions of one another (whether true or not) would have a greater impact on romantic attraction.

Creating Intimacy

Mutual laughter may serve as a bonding device that draws people together (Swartz, 1995). When people laugh together, “social barriers, such as those of status, are temporarily lowered” (Coser, 1960, p.81). Thus, by using humor, one can become more socially accepted within a group because humor helps promote the development of friendships and group membership (Chubb, 1995). Humor also promotes social intimacy (Swartz, 1995) and can nurture relationships through the display of empathy and caring (Chubb, 1995). Hampes (1992, 1994) found groups that showed a high degree of intimacy were associated with a high level of humor. Humor creates a greater level of intimacy and cohesiveness through increased honesty (Swartz, 1995), and in addition humor and trust have also been strongly correlated. They “are reciprocal, each less possible without the other and each building on the other” (Swartz, 1995, p. 29).

Humor provides a means of deeply and affectively connecting with others, and allows for the expression of warmth and affection (Swartz, 1995). Crawford and Gressley (1991) found that both men and women associate caring with a sense of humor. By creating a safe atmosphere, humor facilitates the reduction of interpersonal tensions, shyness, and conflict (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940).

Dealing with Difficult Issues

Humor is a unique form of communication, one which can convey risky information while allowing the sender to deny full responsibility for the intended
message. Due to the subjective nature of humor, humorous communications have several possible interpretations. (Swartz, 1995). The ambiguity of the message increases the likelihood of the receiver being less defensive in response to difficult messages. "Humor lets people receive difficult messages while appearing not to do so they can react to the humor itself in the immediate situation, and to the seriousness of the message in a more psychologically safe time and place" (Khan, 1989, cited in Swartz, 1995, p.29). Using humor can reduce the offensiveness of the message (Morreall, 1983, cited in Swartz, 1995), and convey emotional aspects of interpersonal relationships (Roy, 1960). Humor provides a socially acceptable means of expressing difficult emotions such as hostility, threatening interpersonal issues, and feelings and attitudes that may not be socially acceptable (Swartz, 1995, p. 30).

Humor has also been found to be a moderator between stressors and moods (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983). Martin and Lefcourt (1983) contend that a sense of humor reduces the negative impact of stressful experiences. A large number of studies have investigated the effect of life stressors on physiological (e.g., poor health, disease, and accidents) and psychological functioning (e.g., depression, anxiety, and other forms of maladaptation). Freud regarded humor as the highest defense mechanism (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983). Rollo May (1953) stated that humor preserves the sense of self and "is the healthy way of feeling the distance between one’s self and the problem, a way of standing off and looking at one’s problem with perspective" (cited in Martin & Lefcourt, 1983, p. 1314).
However, humor can also be conflict-initiating, such as when a joke is taken “too far” by an individual and the partner reacts unfavorably. Moreover, one partner may appreciate a joke in a situation that the other person may deem inappropriate. Marshall (1991) hypothesized that couples who scored similarly on the appreciation of humor measure experienced less humor based relational conflict and thus reported greater relationship satisfaction.

Humor’s Role in Developing Relationships

A person’s sense of humor has been associated with interpersonal competence, and a greater ability to attain and maintain intimate relationships. According to Marshall (1991), it is important to understand a partner’s sense of humor. Awareness of the partner’s sense of humor allows one to target their humorous messages towards this preference, which in turn enhances the relationship and may cause greater romantic attraction. Roberts and McClain (1972, cited in Marshall, 1991) suggest that a complimentary relationship (e.g., where one appreciates the humor that another generates) may be more satisfying.

Most of the research concerning intimacy has focused on the Eriksonian definition, which is committing oneself to an emotionally close relationship in which the individual feels comfortable sharing personal thoughts and feelings (Hampes, 1992). Hampes (1992) administered the Situational Humor Response Questionnaire, which measures the responses of college aged subjects in a variety of situations. The Measures of Psychosocial Development assess the resolution of the Eriksonian crisis, in which the Intimacy verses Isolation score can be computed. Results indicated that there was a
significant main effect of intimacy on humor, with the high intimacy group scoring
significantly higher than the low intimacy group. There were not any significant gender
differences. However, the Situational Humor Response Questionnaire has been criticized
for not being a multidimensional scale, but rather “a tool to assess the likelihood of
laughing:” (Thorson & Powell, 1991). This argument is used to provide support for high
scores reflecting high levels of intimacy. If a person can laugh at stressful situations that
arise in intimate relationships, it may allow the person to release tension which would
make it easier for intimate relationships to form (Hampes, 1992).

In a related study, Hampes, (1994) examined the relationship between intimacy
and the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS). This scale is a broader and
more comprehensive measure of humor, which measures the production of humor or
creativity, uses of humor as a coping mechanism, appreciation of humor, and attitudes
towards humor and humorous persons. Results indicated that there was a positive
correlation between the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale and levels of intimacy.
However, the relationship was not as strong as that found by Hampes (1992) using the
Situational Humor Response Questionnaire. Hampes (1992) explained that intimacy, a
social variable, is related more strongly to scores on the Situational Humor Response
Questionnaire, which measures humor in social situations, than to scores on the MSHS,
which measures both social and nonsocial aspects of humor.

Marshall (1991) suggested that the production dimension of humor was important
for determining the use of humor in a relationship. In Marshall’s study (1991)
participants were administered the Sense of Humor Questionnaire, which measures three
factors of humor (appreciation, conformity, and production of humor), the Romantic Attraction Questionnaire (Bessell, 1984, cited in Marshall, 1991), which compares the responses of couples, the Appreciation of Humorous Stimuli Questionnaire, which assesses the content and situational factors that individuals would perceive as being humorous, and the Functional Uses of Humor Measure. Individuals who scored high on the production of humor were significantly more likely to use humor to pick on their partners, settle conflicts, relieve stress, have fun, cheer up and/or tease their partners, express affection and other feelings, break the ice, and laugh at problems. Individuals who scored high in humor appreciation were significantly more likely to use humor to relieve stress, have fun, and cheer up their partners. Further, individuals who scored high in conformity were significantly less likely to use humor to pick on their partners or use humor to stimulate conflict in their relationships.

Humor and Gender.

In older studies, the typical female is viewed as lacking both the ability to appreciate humor and the desire to create humor (Crawford & Gressley, 1991). Many pioneering studies confirmed this stereotype and may have perpetuated it. Gender has not been the focus of research on humor even though the majority of studies have used both male and female participants. Sometimes, exclusively male samples have been preferred because women were classified as being “inconsistent” (Crawford & Gressley, 1991).

In addition to biases in sampling, there have also been biases in the stimuli chosen for research. Women and the elderly have been the ‘butt’ of many jokes. Palmore (1986, cited in Crawford & Gressley, 1991) analyzed jokes concerning the aged and found that
three-quarters of all jokes about older women were primarily negative. Cartoons in humor research have used either sexist or sexually suggestive stimuli that are not well received by women. Sexual and aggressive humor have received higher ratings of funniness from male participants, whereas female participants have preferred humor that is based on the absurd (Chapman & Gadfield, 1976). Female students judge anti-male jokes as being funnier than anti-female jokes. Thus, jokes that are disparaging to the other gender are preferred by each gender (Chapman & Gadfield, 1976).

Recent studies have begun to focus on how humor is created. McGhee (1971) reviewed the literature concerning how humor was created in adolescent boys and girls. Researchers are now beginning to examine the work of women comedians. Crawford (1989, cited in Crawford & Gressley, 1991) has studied women’s humor in ordinary conversational contexts by asking participants to write about a person they thought had an outstanding sense of humor. Content analysis of the written narratives revealed that four out of ten personality dimensions showed significant gender differences. Men were found to enjoy hostile humor, jokes, and cartoons more than women, while women preferred anecdotal humor. Interestingly, 75 percent of the participants describe a man as someone with an outstanding sense of humor (Crawford & Gressley, 1991).

Humor has also been found to be augmented by the physical attractiveness of the experimenter. When the researcher was “sexily” dressed and flirtatious, men laughed more than when the same experimenter was dressed properly and acted polite (Chapman & Gadfield, 1976).
Appreciation of humorous cartoons was examined according to the four gender identity groups (masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated) contained on the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Results indicated that males preferred sexual humor more than did females. Feminine females preferred absurd humor, while masculine and androgynous females appreciated sexual humor (Brodzinsky, Barnet, & Aiello, 1981). Groch (1974) found that gender differences existed only in cartoon media, with women preferring the more absurd, while men more readily identified with masculine characters or cartoons with a masculine orientation.

Gender Differences in the Use of Humor in Relationships

Women and men use humor differently in their relationships. For example, males produced more humorous remarks whereas women exhibited more laughter. Research shows that men are more likely to use prepared jokes, and humor which involves sexual or aggressive elements than women. This may also include jokes that ridicule some identifiable group. Men have also been shown to prefer sexual humor more than women (Groch, 1974; Malpass & Fitzpatrick, 1959). In addition, women are more frequently the objects of sexual humor (Brodzinsky, Barnet, & Aiello, 1981; Cantor & Zillman, 1973).

In Marshall’s (1991) and Graham’s (1988, cited in Marshall, 1991) studies, “females were significantly more likely to report using humor for fun and relaxation, teasing their partner, bonding, and laughing at their own or their partner’s mistakes; whereas males reported that they were significantly more likely to use humor to cause conflicts or appear attractive to their partner” (Marshall, 1991, p. 3).
Marshall (1991) found a significant tendency for males to produce more humor in their relationships. There were not any significant differences found between males and females in their appreciation for humorous stimuli. However, significant sex differences were obtained for a number of functional uses of humor in relationships. Males were significantly more likely to use humor to talk about sensitive topics, to avoid talking about sensitive issues, to break the ice, to cheer up their partners, and to cause conflict in the relationship. On the other hand, females showed a tendency to use humor more for bonding purposes rather than males.

Summary

"What is humor?" This question has been proposed by many researchers in the last decade. Operationally defining this term differentiates between what humor is and is not. Having a sense of humor has been operationally defined as giving high ratings to cartoon stimuli, but does not account for the participant's own "sense of humor." The literature on humor suggests that humorous individuals may be well liked which may promote greater social intimacy. Humor has been associated with nurturing relationships which show more empathy, trust, caring, and honesty. The literature also provides evidence that humor serves many functions in a relationship. The examination of gender preferences for humorous stimuli have been well documented. Women and men seem to prefer different humorous stimuli and react to different types of humor. In addition, there are also differences in how humor is used in intimate relationships. Humor has been studied using the Situational Humor Scale, the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale, the Measures of Psychosocial Development, and various scales to assess relationship
satisfaction and level of intimacy. From these studies there have been significant findings on how humor is used in relationships.

The Present Study

Due to the sparse literature pertaining to humor and intimate relationships, there is a need to study humor and its role in intimate relationships. To date there have been only a handful of studies that have examined the uses of humor in intimate relationships. The need for the present study has arisen from some of the limitations encountered in studying humor and intimacy. In past studies, intimacy has been operationally defined in various ways. For the purpose of this study intimacy, as measured by the Miller Social Intimacy Scale, is defined as a mutual need satisfaction and a closeness to another human being on a variety of levels. This is a social definition of intimacy which can pertain to significant others. The Functional Uses of Humor Scale will be employed so that humor can be examined as it is used in relationships in order to gain a better understanding of humor and relationships which may contribute to the existing knowledge base.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Statement of the Problem

Intimate relationships are an important component of healthy psychological functioning. Humor is believed to facilitate social interactions and intimacy in relationships. The purpose of this study is to examine how humor is used in intimate relationships.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study.

1. There is a relationship between use of humor and social intimacy.
   A. Participants who use humor for negative purposes will report less social intimacy in their relationship.
   B. Participants who use humor for positive purposes will report greater social intimacy in their relationship.
   C. Participants who use humor for expressive purposes will report greater social intimacy.

2. Relative amounts of positive uses versus negative uses of humor will significantly affect social intimacy.
3. Participants who perceive their partner as being more similar to themselves in terms of how they apply humor in the relationship will report greater social intimacy.

4. Humor will be used differently across the span of the relationship and level of commitment.

   A. Participants who are in more committed and longer relationships will experience a greater level of social intimacy.

   B. Relationship type will influence social intimacy and use of humor.

Participants

Participants were undergraduate college students enrolled in either child or adolescent development, personality, or career decision making classes at the University of North Dakota. Some of the students were given an incentive to participate in this study. Approximately 185 students ages 18 and older who were in a relationship were asked to volunteer their time to take part in the “Humor and Relationships” study. Of the 97 (78 women and 19 men) participants in this study, four cases were excluded due to illogical and undifferentiated response patterns on the Miller Social Intimacy Scale. However, due to the small number of males who participated in this study, data obtained on males were excluded and gender differences were not examined. Age (M = 21.5, SD = 5.9) and relationship characteristics for the 74 female participants are reported in Table 1.

Measures and Variables

All participants provided demographic information (See Appendix 3) by recording their age, gender, current relational status (single, dating, or married), and the length of their current relationship.
Table 1

Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casually Dating</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusively Dating</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Together</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Relationship Length</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2 months</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 4 months</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 8 months</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - 12 months</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 4 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Functional Uses of Humor Scale (FUHS; Graham, 1988)

Through a literature review and pilot project, the FUHS was generated from a list of 27 functions of humor in interpersonal relationships. These items were loaded on three factors: (a) positive effect (e.g., entertainment), (b) expressiveness (e.g., feelings), and (c) negative effect (e.g., belittling others). Marshall (1988, cited in Marshall, 1991) also found similar data and produced a list of 16 unique functions that humor serves in romantic relationships.

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they used a strategy, how frequently this strategy was used in an average month, and the outcome from using this type of humor. The respondents evaluated themselves and their partners. Humor discrepancy between partners was calculated by comparing the participant’s response with their report of their partner’s response to the same item.

Exploratory principal axes factor analysis was used to identify items reflecting humor used for positive, negative, and/or expressive purposes and scales for each of the three facets were constructed. The positive facet of humor scale comprised questions 1C, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 12 (question 1C was reverse scored). The alpha reliability estimate was .81 for this scale. The negative facet of humor scale included questions 1A, 15, and 16, and had an estimated reliability (alpha coefficient) of .86. The expressive component of humor facet scale included questions 7, 11, and 14. The alpha reliability estimate was .69 for this scale.

Reliability analyses were conducted for the participants’ report of their partners’ use of humor. Positive, negative, and expressive functions were analyzed using the
questions for each facet cited above. Reliability estimates for the positive and negative facets of humor scales were .78 and .65, respectively; an alpha coefficient of .68 was computed for the expressive component of humor.

**Miller Social Intimacy Scale (MSIS: Miller and Lefcourt, 1982)**

The MSIS is a 17 item instrument which measures closeness to others. Miller and Lefcourt (1982) conceptualize intimacy as focusing primarily on the feelings that partners have for one another and about the relationship as a whole. The focus is primarily on warmth, affection, involvement, love, and deep feelings of acceptance between partners. Of the 17 items, 11 measure the intensity of the relationship, and six are frequency items. This scale was developed from an initial item pool of 30 questions that were generated from interviews with university undergraduates. The original instrument used a 10-point scale which has been modified to a 5-point scale. Items 1, 2, 3, 21, and 22 are not scored, while items 5 and 17 are reverse scored. The individual items are summed (A =1, E=5) to produce an overall score, with higher scores indicating a greater degree of social intimacy.

The MSIS has good reliability, with reported alphas of .86 and .91, in addition to two month test-retest correlations of .96 and .84. Internal consistency reliability (coefficient alpha) of the MSIS for this study was estimated to be .90 (for questions 4 through 20). In previous research, MSIS has demonstrated validity because it significantly distinguishes between married and single students, and between couples who are seeking marital therapy and those who are not. The MSIS also has a good level of convergent validity based on expected correlations with other measures such as the
UCLA Loneliness Scale, the Interpersonal Relationship Scale, the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, and the Personality Research Form.

**Relationship Type**

Cross tabulations of relationship length (e.g., months and years) and relationship status (e.g., casually dating, exclusively dating, engaged, living together, and married) identified the following five subtypes of relationships: (1) participants who were casually dating for eight months or less; (2) people who were exclusively dating and involved for less than a year; (3) participants who were exclusively dating for more than a year, but less than five years; (4) people who were either engaged and/or living together and were involved for approximately a year or more; and (5) married participants.

**Procedure**

Undergraduate participants were tested in class over the spring semester. Participants were given a booklet which contained the consent form (see Appendix 1), and a list of instructions (see Appendix 2). The experimenter asked the participants to read the consent form and affirm their agreement to participate in the study by signing the form. The consent form reminded the participants of their right to withdraw from the experiment at any time without penalty, if they found the study to be objectionable. The participants were reminded that their results would be kept confidential, and would in no way be associated with their names. Information about counseling services and phone numbers and e-mail of the investigator was provided.

Participants first completed the demographic information form (see Appendix 3). After opening the questionnaire booklet, participants were asked to complete the Miller
Social Intimacy Scale (see Appendix 4) and the Functional Uses of Humor Scale (see Appendix 5). Upon completion of the study, participants were asked to hand the questionnaire booklet to the investigator which included the consent form.

Data Analysis Procedures

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 6.1 (SPSS Inc, 1995) was used for all data analysis. Data were verified by an independent person who checked the data and coding procedures. "Infinite" and "too many times" responses to the question "How many times in a month do you use humor in your relationship?" were coded as missing in 13 cases. Also, responses that were incomplete were coded as missing in four cases. Average values were entered for responses that had two adjacent numbers circled in approximately 5 cases.

Means and standard deviations were computed for all of the scales. Reliability analyses were conducted in order to assess the reliability of the measures. Product-moment correlations were computed between the scores on the Functional Uses of Humor subscales and the Miller Social Intimacy Scale. The relationship of relational status, length, and type to MSIS and FUHS scores were tested using ANOVA.

Regression analyses addressed the relationship of uses positive and expressive forms of humor to scores on the MSIS. These components were compared with participants' reports of their partners' use of these components. Discrepancy scores between the participants' own and their partners' use of humor were computed.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS
Use of Humor and Intimacy

Means and standard deviations of the scores on the MSIS and FUHS three facets of humor (positive, negative, and expressive) for females and their report of their partners' use of humor were found and are reported in Table 2. In Table 2 it is observed that participants reports of their uses of the three facets of humor were similar to their reports of their partners' use. The means and standard deviations for the expressive and negative facets of humor were almost identical between self reports and predictions of partners responses.

In Table 2, absolute values of self-partner discrepancies indicated the highest discrepancy was on the positive use of humor, which was expected given the means of the self and partner scores on the MSIS.

There were substantial positive correlations between the three facets of humor for the participants and their report of their partners' behaviors (see Table 3). There were significant correlations between self reported use of humor (e.g., positive), and reports of the partners' use of the same facet (e.g., positive). Only the expressive facet of humor was unrelated to self-reports and reports of partners use on the other two facets. Participants who reported using humor for one facet also reported using humor to some degree for the
other two facets which was indicated by the substantial correlations between all three facets. This indicated that all facets of humor were used in different situations.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Scores on MSIS and FUHS Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSIS</td>
<td>75.23</td>
<td>7.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUHS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>36.72</td>
<td>6.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>13.72</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>10.37</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>34.86</td>
<td>6.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>13.22</td>
<td>6.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>10.57</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Partner Discrepancies (Absolute Values)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>4.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9.90</td>
<td>7.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table 3, results indicated that positive uses of humor by the participant and their partner were positively related to (MSIS) intimacy scales. However, the hypothesized relationships between negative uses of humor and expressive uses of humor and scores on the MSIS were not supported.

Table 3

**Correlations of the Three Facets of Humor and Scores on the MSIS for Females**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facets of Humor</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MSIS</strong></td>
<td>.29*</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td></td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FUHS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td></td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < 0.01 (two-tailed).**

* **p < 0.05 (two-tailed).**

† **p < 0.01 (one-tailed).**
When all three facets of humor for self were entered simultaneously in regression, the participants' reports of their positive ($t = 3.26, p < .002$) and expressive ($t = -2.04, p < .05$) uses of humor were significantly related to scores on the Miller Social Intimacy Scale (see Table 4).

Regression analysis indicated that the relative amounts of positive use of humor were significant predictors of scores obtained on the MSIS, while negative uses of humor were not significant. Use of humor for expressive purposes was related to lower scores on the MSIS.

Similar results were obtained for partner facet scores. Positive ($t = 4.07, p < .001$) uses of humor were significantly related to scores on the MSIS, while negative uses of humor were not (see Table 5). Participants' who perceived their partners as using humor for expressive purposes scored lower on the MSIS ($t = -3.50, p < .001$).

Table 4
Regression of MSIS on Self-Reported Use of Humor Facets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUHS Facets</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>&lt;.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-1.25</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>-2.04</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($R^2 = .09, p < .001$)
Table 5

Regression of MSIS on Reported Partners’ Use of Humor Facets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUHS Facets</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>-3.50</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(R^2 = .17, p < .001\)

Table 6

Regression of MSIS on All Facets of Humor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUHS Facets</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>-.51</td>
<td>-3.38</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Partner     |      |       |       |
| Positive    | .37  | 2.35  | <.02  |
| Negative    | .19  | 1.56  | ns    |
| Expressive  | -.29 | -2.00 | <.05  |

\(R^2 = .27, p < .001\)
However, when all six facets of humor (self and partner) were entered simultaneously in regression, the self reported positive and expressive facets of humor became nonsignificant while the negative facet of humor reached a significant level ($t = -3.38, p < .001$). Reported partners’ uses of positive and expressive facets of humor remained significant (see Table 6) when compared to those facets previously reported.

**Discrepancy of the Couple’s Use of Humor**

Perceived similarity was measured by comparing the participants’ responses to their report of their partners’ behaviors on the same items. Discrepancy scores (the absolute value of the participants’ self report subtracted from their partner) were computed on the three primary facets of humor (positive, negative and expressive). These discrepancy scores were correlated with scores obtained on the MSIS. Correlations of the discrepancy scores and scores obtained on the MSIS are reported in Table 7. As anticipated, differences between the couples’ positive ($r = -.33, p < .01$) and expressive ($r = -.24, p < .05$) uses of humor were significantly negatively correlated with scores obtained on the Miller Social Intimacy Scale. Total difference across all FUHS terms was significantly negatively related ($r = -.29, p < .05$) to scores obtained on the MSIS. As couples became more discrepant on their use of humor for positive and expressive purposes, scores on the MSIS decreased.

**Relationship Length and Uses of Humor**

As relationships progressed from casually dating to marriage and the length of the relationship increased, scores obtained on the MSIS also changed. Means and standard deviations of the MSIS by relationship length and status are reported in Tables 8 and 9.
Correlations of Self-Partner Discrepancy Scores on the Three Facets of Humor with MSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>MSIS</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Expressive</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSIS</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.33**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td>-.29*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>-.33**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.70**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.66**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.75**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-.29*</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td>.75**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < 0.01 (2-tailed).
* p < 0.05 (2-tailed).

It is observed in Table 8 that participants who were involved in a relationship for three or more years scored lower on the MSIS, however, these differences between the groups did not reach significance (F = 2.49, p = .07).

Relationship length was significantly associated with positive and expressive facets of humor and MSIS scores (see Table 8). There was a noticeable decrease of participants’ using humor for positive purposes across the length of the relationship (F = 2.93, p = .04). Negative uses of humor also showed significant differences based on relationship length (F = 3.67, p = .02). Reports of partners use of humor indicated that
partners tended to use more humor over time to express themselves ($F = 3.67, p = .02$) and less humor for positive purposes ($F = 3.26, p = .03$). As observed in Table 8, scores on the MSIS were not significantly related to relationship length ($F = 2.49, p = .07$).

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Length of Relationship</th>
<th>&lt;1 yr.</th>
<th>1-2 yrs.</th>
<th>3-4 yrs.</th>
<th>5 + yrs.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSIS</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>76.00</td>
<td>77.91</td>
<td>73.27</td>
<td>71.00</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(SD)</td>
<td>(6.39)</td>
<td>(7.85)</td>
<td>(8.44)</td>
<td>(8.60)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUHS</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive M</td>
<td>39.04</td>
<td>36.89</td>
<td>35.07</td>
<td>33.18</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(SD)</td>
<td>(5.07)</td>
<td>(6.18)</td>
<td>(6.44)</td>
<td>(6.66)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative M</td>
<td>15.72</td>
<td>12.61</td>
<td>12.67</td>
<td>12.91</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(SD)</td>
<td>(3.14)</td>
<td>(3.58)</td>
<td>(4.70)</td>
<td>(3.75)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Express. M</td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>10.27</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(SD)</td>
<td>(2.62)</td>
<td>(4.03)</td>
<td>(4.59)</td>
<td>(3.87)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive M</td>
<td>37.40</td>
<td>35.30</td>
<td>30.87</td>
<td>33.64</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(SD)</td>
<td>(5.52)</td>
<td>(7.31)</td>
<td>(6.92)</td>
<td>(6.62)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative M</td>
<td>14.24</td>
<td>13.83</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>12.64</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>ns</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(3.85)</td>
<td>(8.49)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td>(5.78)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Express. M</td>
<td>10.36</td>
<td>9.39</td>
<td>10.47</td>
<td>13.64</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(SD)</td>
<td>(3.20)</td>
<td>(3.62)</td>
<td>(3.11)</td>
<td>(4.48)</td>
<td></td>
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Results indicated that there were some changes in how humor was used as commitment increased and the relationship changed (see Table 9). As relational status changed, there was a significant effect on MSIS scores. Post-hoc contrasts (Student-Neuman-Keuls) revealed that participants in casually dating and marital relationships, scored lower on the MSIS ($F = 13.15, p < .001$) than participants who were either exclusively dating, engaged, and/or living together. These results were in contrast to earlier reports by Miller and Lefcourt (1983).

Self reported uses of humor for positive purposes reached significance using ANOVA ($F = 2.58, p = .05$). However, participants’ prediction of their partners’ uses of humor did not reach significance on any of the three facets of humor (see Table 9).

Results of the ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences between relationship type groups on the MSIS (see Table 10). Positive and negative uses of humor reported by the participants were significantly related to the type of relationship. Participants who were involved for a longer period of time and were either exclusively dating for approximately a year or more, engaged, living together, or married used humor less for negative ($F = 3.78, p = .01$) and positive purposes ($F = 3.39, p = .01$) than participants who were casually dating. Furthermore, significant differences were observed for participants’ reports of their partners positive use of humor as a function of the relationship type ($F = 3.31, p = .02$).
Table 9
Means and Standard Deviations on MSIS and FUHS by Relationship Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Casually Dating</th>
<th>Exclus. Dating</th>
<th>Living Together</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSIS</td>
<td>M 65.60 (SD 8.30)</td>
<td>78.44 (SD 4.19)</td>
<td>79.60 (SD 4.16)</td>
<td>76.60 (SD 5.32)</td>
<td>68.82 (SD 10.03)</td>
<td>13.15 &lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUHS</td>
<td>Self Positive M 36.70 (SD 6.93)</td>
<td>38.15 (SD 5.32)</td>
<td>36.60 (SD 7.02)</td>
<td>34.60 (SD 7.09)</td>
<td>31.70 (SD 6.39)</td>
<td>2.58 .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative M 15.60 (SD 2.68)</td>
<td>14.19 (SD 3.93)</td>
<td>13.6 (SD 2.30)</td>
<td>11.40 (SD 4.56)</td>
<td>11.27 (SD 4.08)</td>
<td>2.41 ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Express. M 12.10 (SD 2.38)</td>
<td>10.17 (SD 3.68)</td>
<td>11.20 (SD 4.60)</td>
<td>7.60 (SD 3.58)</td>
<td>10.46 (SD 4.32)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner Positive M 33.60 (SD 9.09)</td>
<td>36.19 (SD 6.49)</td>
<td>34.20 (SD 6.14)</td>
<td>36.20 (SD 4.66)</td>
<td>30.55 (SD 6.12)</td>
<td>1.69 ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative M 13.30 (SD 3.43)</td>
<td>14.23 (SD 6.65)</td>
<td>12.40 (SD 3.21)</td>
<td>10.80 (SD 7.05)</td>
<td>10.64 (SD 6.71)</td>
<td>.98 ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Express. M 11.10 (SD 2.81)</td>
<td>9.98 (SD 3.75)</td>
<td>10.20 (SD 3.89)</td>
<td>11.60 (SD 4.16)</td>
<td>12.09 (SD 4.08)</td>
<td>.89 ns</td>
</tr>
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Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations on MSIS and FUHS by Relationship Type*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Type</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSIS</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>68.67</td>
<td>78.29</td>
<td>78.69</td>
<td>78.10</td>
<td>68.82</td>
<td>9.06</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(SD)</td>
<td>(6.80)</td>
<td>(3.38)</td>
<td>(4.59)</td>
<td>(4.77)</td>
<td>(10.03)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FUHS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>39.67</td>
<td>39.50</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>35.60</td>
<td>31.70</td>
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<td>.01</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(SD)</td>
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<td>(4.55)</td>
<td>(5.62)</td>
<td>(6.74)</td>
<td>(6.39)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>16.21</td>
<td>13.21</td>
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<td>(3.33)</td>
<td>(3.87)</td>
<td>(3.59)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>10.96</td>
<td>9.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>38.00</td>
<td>38.86</td>
<td>34.89</td>
<td>35.20</td>
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<td>(7.08)</td>
<td>(5.25)</td>
<td>(6.12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>14.67</td>
<td>14.79</td>
<td>13.97</td>
<td>11.60</td>
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<td>(7.57)</td>
<td>(5.23)</td>
<td>(6.71)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>10.36</td>
<td>9.79</td>
<td>10.90</td>
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<td>(SD)</td>
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<td>(3.13)</td>
<td>(4.05)</td>
<td>(3.87)</td>
<td>(4.09)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Relationship types are: 1 = casually dating <9 months, 2 = exclusively dating <1 year, 3 = exclusively dating 1-5 years, 4 = engaged and/or living together >1 year, 5 = married.
Post hoc tests of mean difference on the MSIS indicated that participants who were either casually dating for less than eight months or married differed significantly from the other groups (exclusively dating, engaged, or living together). The married group also differed significantly from the participants who were either casually dating or exclusively dating for less than a year for positive \((F = 3.39, p = .01)\) and negative \((F = 3.78, p = .01)\) uses of humor and participants' reports of their partners' positive uses of humor. No other significant differences between groups were detected for the other three facets of humor.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study was undertaken with hopes of gaining insight into how humor is used in relationships. The first hypothesis predicted there would be a significant relationship between using humor for positive purposes and higher reported levels of intimacy. Results indicated that positive uses of humor were significantly associated with higher reported levels of intimacy in the relationship.

There are many possible explanations for these results which are supported in the literature on humor and relationships. Couples who used humor in more positive ways may have done so in order to strengthen their relationships. Humor was found to promote social intimacy such as honesty and trust (Swartz, 1995), and nurture relationships through the display of empathy and caring (Chubb, 1995; Crawford & Gressley, 1991). Humor has been thought to provide a means of deeply and affectively connecting with others, through the expression of warmth and affection (Swartz, 1995). Humor may create a safe atmosphere, which may reduce interpersonal tensions, shyness, and conflict (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940) and promote self-disclosure (Treadwell, 1970). All of these studies lend support to the idea that humor used for positive purposes will strengthen the relationship.
It was predicted that people who used humor for negative purposes would report lower levels of intimacy in their relationship. Correlations of the negative uses of humor and intimacy scores indicated that there was not a significant relationship between the two constructs. The current study indicated that negative use of humor did not harm relationships. Many participants reported that when they picked on their partner their relationship was strengthened rather than weakened. Since these results were not statistically proven it can only be speculated that using small amounts of humor to tease or pick on each other may add fun and thus produce positive gains for the relationship.

The first hypothesis also proposed that using humor for expressive purposes would increase feelings of closeness in the relationship. Results indicated that there was not a significant correlation between using humor for expressive purposes and reported levels of intimacy. The direction of the relationship indicated that people who used humor when expressing their feelings or talking about sensitive issues had less intimate relationships. This study indicated that using humor less often for expressive purposes coincided with higher reported intimacy scores.

There is evidence in the literature of how the expressiveness facet of humor may impact intimacy. Treadwell’s (1970) study indicated that humor aided self-disclosure and increased relationship satisfaction and intimacy. Some additional studies have found that using humor can reduce the offensiveness of a message, and can convey emotional aspects of interpersonal relationships (Roy, 1960). Even though humor may provide a socially acceptable means of expressing difficult emotions and attitudes which may not be socially acceptable (Swartz, 1995, p. 30), humor must be used tactfully. Due to the
subjective nature of humor several interpretations are possible (Swartz, 1995). If a person uses humor inappropriately to express themselves there may be a undesirable repercussion. One explanation for this is that people who use humor to discuss a serious topic may not use humor tactfully. Thus, if a person used humor inappropriately when dealing with difficult issues within the relationship, they may be perceived as not being serious, which could have negative consequences for the relationship.

It is evident from the current study that participants who used humor for specific purposes (positive, negative, or expressive) perceived their partner as also using humor for the same purposes. Participants who reported their positive use and their partners’ positive use of humor reported that they felt more intimate with their partner. However, it was unclear whether one’s own use of humor or their partners’ use of humor affected how intimate the relationship was perceived. One explanation is that the participants’ use of humor may have been the only type of humor remembered and thought of as an ideal way to use humor in their relationship. An alternative explanation is that participants may wish their partner used humor in a certain way in their relationship and may feel less intimately towards their partner if humor is not used in the desired way.

The second hypothesis predicted that relative amounts of positive uses of humor would significantly reflect higher levels of intimacy. When self and reported partners’ uses of humor were entered separately in regression, relative amounts of positive and expressive uses of humor significantly affected intimacy scores. However, when all six facets of humor were entered in regression, negative uses of humor affected intimacy in the relationship. This indicated that the negative facet of humor could have acted as a
suppressor variable which may have affected the predictive strength of the other variables.

There are many explanations for this finding. Partners may focus on (or remember) the positive or negative uses of humor. When participants evaluated their own relationship they may have known that negative uses of humor would contribute to lower levels of intimacy. The participants may have under reported using humor for negative purposes because of hypothesis guessing or replying in a socially acceptable manner. In the current study, reported partner uses of negative humor did not reach significance. Another explanation is that people who use humor for negative purposes may employ this strategy knowing that they create dissatisfaction and conflict within their relationship.

Based upon the literature, humor can be used as an avoidance technique (Thorson & Powell, 1993), which would decrease levels of intimacy.

The third hypothesis predicted that couples’ discrepancy in their use of humor would decrease intimacy experienced. The data collected in this study suggested that participants who used humor for certain purposes (positive, negative, or expressive) also perceived their partner as using humor for the same purpose. Differences between the positive and expressive factors of humor and total differences (positive, negative, and expressive combined) were significantly correlated with intimacy. Couples who differed significantly in their positive and expressive use of humor reported having lower levels of reported closeness. The couples’ overall difference in their use of humor was also related with lower levels of intimacy. An explanation for this finding is that one partner may become dissatisfied with how the other partner uses humor in the relationship. This in
turn would affect intimacy and relationship satisfaction if they wanted their partner to increase or decrease using humor for specific purposes (e.g., positive or expressive). For example one partner may use humor to express their feelings while the other partner may view this use of humor as a coping or avoidance mechanism.

Discrepancy of positive and expressive uses of humor in the relationship was supported by Marshall's study (1991). In her study couples who scored similarly on the appreciation of humor measure experienced less humor based relational conflict and reported greater relationship satisfaction. This finding was supported by other studies which have found that mutual laughter has been shown to communicate unity (Seckman & Couch, 1989), and may serve as a bonding device (Swartz, 1995).

The fourth hypothesis focused on the length, status, and type of relationship and the relationship of these factors to intimacy. It was predicted that people who were in more committed (e.g., exclusively dating, engaged, etc.) relationships of longer duration would experience a different level of social intimacy. The data indicated that partners were less likely to use humor more positively as relationships progress. One explanation is that intimacy may naturally decrease as relationships progress.

As relationships progressed, intimacy also changed, but not in the predicted direction. Participants who were casually dating or married reported feeling less intimate with their partner in comparison to the other three groups (exclusively dating, engaged, and living together). However, due to the small number of participants in this study who were married, these effects may have become magnified. These results are contrary to what was previously found by Miller and Lefcourt (1983).
In the second part of the fourth hypothesis it was predicted that humor would be used differently across the span of the relationship. However, relationship length was found to be barely significant with intimacy. One explanation is that as the relationship duration increases, partners may use humor differently but do so in a way that does not affect levels of intimacy. Alternatively, intimacy in relationships may be more directly related to the status of the relationship than its length.

The data in this study suggested that people used humor less for positive and negative purposes, as relationship length progressed. One explanation is that couples may find less positive things to laugh about in their relationship as the length of time they have known one another increases. Another explanation for this finding is that people try to get acquainted with each other in new relationships and are more likely to employ functions of humor that may enhance each others attractiveness and likability.

In this study, relationships were grouped into five different types. Results indicated that there was a strong significant difference between these group types with regards to intimacy. Married participants were found to differ significantly from participants who were dating in positive and negative uses of humor and partners’ positive uses of humor. One explanation for this finding is that there was an under representation of participants who were married which may have caused these results to be significant.

The results from this study have yielded some significant and interesting results about how humor is used in relationships. However, these results must be interpreted with caution because of the limitations encountered.
Limitations of the Study

1. The results of this study should not be generalized to other populations without caution. The sample population for this study was predominantly college students. Given the diversity of individuals who are involved in relationships, this sample may not be representative of the general population.

2. The sample size of nineteen men did not allow this study to examine gender differences. A sample size limits the power of the statistical tests. A larger sample size of males may have yielded stronger significant differences and increased the power of the statistical tests.

3. The reliance on self-report measures allows one to infer factors that individuals may have. When using self-report measures there is the possibility that participants may enhance their responses in order to make themselves look better in the eyes of the researcher. Also, participants may try to figure out the hypothesis being studied and may alter their responses in order to meet their perceived expectations of the researcher.

4. Response bias may have occurred. It may be difficult for a person to admit that their relationship is not the “ideal” relationship. Even though many respondents reported that they felt less close with their current partner, they may have misread the question due to it’s ambiguity in wording and organization.

5. Waring (1985) noted that evaluations of relationships may be a product of the individual’s attitudes, or moods at that particular moment in time, which may have affected intimacy scores.
Suggestions For Future Research

1. A study with a larger sample size would have allowed specific correlations to be conducted for each item on the FUHS. As well, a larger sample size would have increased the validity and statistical power of the research.

2. A study which had a larger sample of males would have allowed gender differences to be computed on each of the measurement devices used in this study.

3. A study which examined each partner within the relationship may yield more meaningful results as in the Marshall (1991) study. A comparison of each partner’s perceived uses and their actual uses of humor in their relationship may yield significant information about how humor is applied in the relationship. These results could be combined with the results of the Miller Social Intimacy Scale in order to determine how similar each partner viewed their relationship.

4. The Multidimensional Sense of Humor Questionnaire could be applied in the future to ascertain if people who use humor differently in their relationships also enjoy humor differently in their everyday lives.

5. A study which examines the aged population using these questionnaires may yield different results than the sample used in the current study. With the increase in the aged, it would be beneficial for psychologists to examine how humor is used in these relationships.

6. A larger sample of married couples could provide information about happy versus unhappy relationships and the role of humor in increasing or decreasing marital satisfaction could be examined.
Conclusion

The current study demonstrated that humor plays an important function in relationships and may impact the level of closeness that one feels towards their partner. Clearly this study has indicated that positive facets of humor aid in creating a closer relationship. Also important is how humor usage changes overtime as the relationship progresses. However, other functions that humor plays in relationships still remains a mystery. Perhaps in the future, more answers will be discovered as to the role that humor plays in relationships.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1

CONSENT FORM
Consent Form

Students age eighteen years and older at the University of North Dakota who are currently in a dating or marital relationship are invited to participate in a study examining humor and dating relationships. Participants will be asked to provide demographic information about themselves (e.g. age and gender) and will then complete two questionnaires about humor and relationships. The session will last for approximately 15 minutes. It is believed that there is minimal risk associated with participating, however, if you feel any discomfort please talk to the investigator, Laura Warrenchuk. One of the benefits of this study is that you may think about your relationships in a different way or think about the use of humor in your life. Statistical analysis will be aggregate in nature and will not identify participants’ responses. Your decision to participate is entirely voluntary and will not change your future relations with the University of North Dakota. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without it being held against you.

I agree to participate in the following study which is being conducted by Laura Warrenchuk and Dr. George Henly and has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Dakota. The investigators involved are available to answer any questions you have concerning this study. In addition, you are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have in the future concerning this program. Questions may be asked by e-mailing Laura Warrenchuk at warrench@badlands.nodak.edu or telephoning (204) 338-3896, or telephoning Dr. George Henly at 777-2729. You may also contact the Counseling Center at 777-2127.

DATE: _______________ PARTICIPANT’S SIGNATURE: ___________________________
INSTRUCTIONS

1) Do not write your name anywhere on the booklets. This will ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of your responses.

2) PART ONE: Please fill out the demographic form about your own personal life, as completely as possible.

3) PART TWO: Please fill out the MSIS as honestly and completely as you can in regards to your partner.

4) PART THREE: Please fill out the FUHS as honestly and completely as you can in regards to yourself and your perception of how your partner would answer.

5) When you are finished, you may hand in the booklet to the principal investigator.
APPENDIX 3

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

Please answer the following questions.

1. How old are you? _____

2. What is your gender? (Please circle one) Male   Female

3. How would you classify your current relationship? (Please check the correct answer)
   Casually dating ____________
   Exclusively dating __________
   Living together ________
   Engaged __________
   Married __________
APPENDIX 4

MILLER SOCIAL INTIMACY SCALE
A number of phrases are listed below that describe the kind of relationships people have with others. Indicate by checking (V) the appropriate space in the answer field how you would describe your current relationship with your partner. Remember that you are to indicate the kind of relationship you have now.

1. Sex of your partner: M____ F____

2. Please describe the relationship you have now with your partner. We are interested in knowing how long this person has been your partner. Please check the appropriate category:

   - less than 2 months____ 2-4 months_____ 5-8 months ______
   - 9-12 months ________ 1-2 years_______ 3-4 years ________
   - 5 years ________ more than 5 years ______

3. Is the person you describe your spouse? Yes____ No____

   Is the person you describe someone who you are dating? Yes ____ No _____

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<th></th>
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<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Some of the time</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
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<td>4. When you have leisure time how often do you chose to spend it with him/her alone?</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. How often do you keep very personal information to yourself and not share it with him/her?</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How often do you show him/her affection?</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How often do you confide very personal information to him/her?</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
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<td>****</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. How often are you able to understand his/her feelings?</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
9. How often do you feel close to him/her? 

10. How much do you like to spend time alone with him/her? 

11. How much do you feel like being encouraging and supportive to him/her when he/she is unhappy? 

12. How close do you feel to him/her most of the time? 

13. How important is it to you to listen to his/her personal disclosures? 

14. How satisfying is your relationship with him/her? 

15. How affectionate do you feel towards him/her? 

16. How important is it to you that he/she understand you feelings? 

17. How much damage is caused by a typical disagreement in your relationship with him/her? 

18. How important is it to you that he/she be encouraging and supportive to you when you are unhappy? 

19. How important is it to you that he/she show you affection? 

20. How important is your relationship with him/her in your life? 

21. Recall your previous partner. Are you: 
   less close 
   just as close 
   or closer 
   with the current person you described on this scale.
APPENDIX 5

FUNCTIONAL USES OF HUMOR SCALE
A number of phrases are listed below that describe the kind of relationships people have with others. Indicate, by circling the appropriate number in the answer field, how you would describe your current relationship with your partner (e.g., 1 = never and 7 = constantly).

1a) How often do you use humor to pick on your partner?
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

b) How many times in the average month do you use humor to pick on your partner?
   ____ times.

c) How does your using humor in this way affect the relationship?
   Makes it much stronger 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Makes it much weaker

2. How often do you use humor to settle conflicts in your relationship?
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

3. How often do you use humor to relieve stress in your relationship? (E.g., during exams or after a fight)
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

4. How often do you use humor for fun and enjoyment in your relationship?
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

5. How often do you use humor to cheer up your partner?
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

6. How often do you use humor to express affection?
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

7. How often do you use humor to talk about sensitive topics? (E.g., sex)
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly
8. How often do you use humor to break the ice or silence? 
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

9. How often does your use of humor cause conflict in your relationship? 
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

10. How often do you use humor to laugh at problems and mistakes that occur in your relationship? 
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

11. How often do you use humor to avoid talking about sensitive topics? (E.g., sex, feelings) 
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

12. How often do you use humor for bonding with your partner? 
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

13. When you are with your partner, how often do you use humor to make fun of people outside of your relationship? 
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

14. How often do you use humor to express your feelings to your partner? 
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

15. How often do you use humor to tease your partner? 
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

16. How often do you use humor to insult your partner? 
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly
Items in part two of this questionnaire ask about identical topics, but require participants to report the degree to which their partner uses humor for these functions. Please answer as best as you can by circling the appropriate number.

1a) How often does your partner use humor to pick on you?
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

b) How many times in the average month does your partner use humor to pick on you? ___times.

c) How does your partner using humor in this way affect the relationship?
   Makes it much stronger 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 much weaker

2. How often does your partner use humor to settle conflicts in your relationship?
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

3. How often does your partner use humor to relieve stress in your relationship?
   (E.g., during exams or after a fight)
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

4. How often does your partner use humor for fun and enjoyment in your relationship?
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

5. How often does your partner use humor to cheer you up?
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

6. How often does your partner use humor to express affection?
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

7. How often does your partner use humor to talk about sensitive topics? (E.g., sex)
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly
8. How often does your partner use humor to break the ice or silence?
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

9. How often does your partner’s use of humor cause conflict in your relationship?
   never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

10. How often does your partner use humor to laugh at problems and mistakes that occur in your relationship?
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

11. How often does your partner use humor to avoid talking about sensitive topics? (E.g., sex, feelings)
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

12. How often does your partner use humor for bonding with you?
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

13. When you are with your partner, how often does he/she use humor to make fun of people outside of your relationship?
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

14. How often does your partner use humor to express his/her feelings to you?
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

15. How often does your partner use humor to tease you?
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly

16. How often does your partner use humor to insult you?
    never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 constantly
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