

A Thesis Presented to
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Interactions Between Personality Traits and Humor Styles

by
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Abstract

The goal of this study was to examine whether there is a relationship between personality traits and humor styles. Although previous research has been conducted on humor and its relationship to personality traits, there is a noticeable gap in studies using appropriate methodologies for measuring humor styles. Prior studies conducted on interactions between personality traits and humor have focused on the likelihood to laugh or appreciation for humor instead of examining the elements that make up one's personal sense of humor (Thorson & Powell, 1993). The present study attempted to measure sense of humor and used more theoretically appropriate measures to assess humor styles, as opposed to humor appreciation or laughter. This study utilized an online questionnaire containing personality inventories, the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ), and the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS). A correlational analysis identified relationships between personality traits and humor styles. It was hypothesized that there would be significant interactions between various humor styles and personality traits; in particular, it was expected that narcissism and aggressive humor would have a significant relationship. Per the results, aggressive humor is positively correlated with narcissism. Multiple other significant relationships also exist between personality traits and humor styles. For example, aggressive humor is also negatively correlated with empathy. Self-defeating humor is positively correlated with Machiavellianism and psychopathy and negatively correlated with self-esteem, conscientiousness, and extraversion. Affiliative humor is negatively correlated with extraversion. Self-enhancing humor is positively correlated with empathy, extraversion, and high MSHS scores.

Introduction

Although I cannot believe it is time for me to graduate, I feel a great deal of satisfaction that I am finally done with this thesis! It has been a very exciting project for me to work on this past semester, and I am grateful for all the lessons and skills it has taught me along the way. I was inspired to choose my thesis topic by the Honors Program Director, Dr. Gordon Atlas. Dr. Atlas and I were talking about his upcoming book on humor when he made the observation that peoples' personality traits and sense of humor seem to be very much related. I am interested in humor research, so I thought this would be an interesting and worthwhile way to fulfill my thesis requirement.

I initially started my project by reviewing the current psychological research on humor and personality. I found that, although there were a good amount of studies focusing on humor, many of them were not measuring sense of humor in the way that I wanted to. Many of the studies and existing measures that I found looked at humor appreciation and laughter instead of truly measuring an individual's sense of humor. This means that most studies either asked participants to rate a series of jokes on a 1-5 scale on how much they enjoyed the jokes and found them to be humorous, or they presented participants with jokes/humorous materials and counted the number of time they laughed at these jokes. While these studies are perfectly valid and have contributed much to the field of psychology, I wanted to look more closely at true sense of humor—how individuals formulate jokes and humor, why they formulate jokes/humor, and how they use humor in their daily lives.

My project really started to take shape when I stumbled across the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003). The authors of this measure wrote in their introduction that they developed the questionnaire in order to assess the intent behind which individuals formulate humor and use it. The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) split humor into four intents/styles: affiliative humor, where individuals use humor benignly with the intent to bond with others; self-enhancing humor, where humor is used benignly with intent to bolster one's own mood; aggressive humor, when individuals use humor maliciously to hurt/make fun of others; and self-deprecating humor, where individuals maliciously use humor to put themselves down. Of these humor styles, affiliative and

self-enhancing humor are seen as positive, beneficial humor styles; aggressive and self-deprecating humor are seen as maladaptive and negative. I thought this measure would be perfect in my study because I wanted to assess intent to measure sense of humor, and the Humor Styles Questionnaire was brilliant in its simplicity—I liked how they broke humor intent down into just four main categories. I also found the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (Thorson & Powell, 1993). This scale looked at overall sense of humor in a variety of different areas—using humor to cope with adversity, recognizing oneself as a humorous person, appreciating humorous people, and humor creativity are all assessed with the MSHS in addition to overall sense of humor. I thought that these two measures combined would be a comprehensive, well-rounded way to truly assess sense of humor.

I wanted to look at a wide range of personality traits, so I set out to choose a variety of measures that examined many facets of personality. I found the HEXACO assessment (Ashton, Lee, & DeVries, 2014), which was designed to measure the traits of Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience. This in itself was a way to measure personality fairly comprehensively, so I elected to add a few more trait measures to make my examination thorough. I also chose to look at self-esteem, empathy, and subjective happiness. As these traits are all seen as fairly positive to have, I also chose to examine a trio of “negative” or “socially undesirable” traits known as the Dark Triad. These traits are Machiavellianism (using deception, manipulation, and exploitation to achieve one’s own goals), narcissism (excessive interest in oneself and disregard for others), and psychopathy (persistent levels of antisocial behavior with low empathy and remorse and high levels of selfishness and impulsivity). I thought that, overall, this blend of trait measures would be comprehensive and thorough enough to assess personality.

As I was designing this study, I thought about what I wanted to hypothesize (which traits and humor styles would be related and may have significant relationships). I hypothesized that, overall, I expected there to be some relationships between personality traits and humor styles. I also hypothesized that high scores on subjective happiness would correlate with affiliative and self-enhancing humor on the HSQ because I thought subjective happiness is a positive trait and may have some sort of relationship

with the two positive humor styles. I expected high scores on subjective happiness to correlate to high levels of coping humor on the MSHS because I thought that happier individuals would cope well with adversity and may turn to humor to get them through tough times. I also believed self-esteem would correlate with high levels of affiliative and self-enhancing humor—again, self-esteem is highly beneficial, and I thought it may have relationships with the two beneficial humor styles. Finally, I thought the Dark Triad traits would have a relationship with aggressive humor because these traits involve disregard for others/low levels of empathy, so I figured individuals scoring highly on these traits may use aggressive humor to hurt others.

I decided to make my study an online questionnaire, so I created my survey using esurveyspro.com. I first had participants sign a debriefing form, then asked them a few background questions about themselves (e.g., age, sex, year in school, major). Participants then filled out all the personality trait measures and the HSQ and MSHS. They were then debriefed (given information as to why I was conducting the study) and asked to keep the details of the study private. The questionnaire took participants about 15 minutes to complete, and they received course credit in Introduction to Psychology and other psychology courses in exchange for their participation. Participants were between ages 18-22, were split evenly between both sexes, and came from a wide variety of majors.

I had 62 college students participate in my study, so I then imported their responses from esurveyspro.com and performed a Pearson correlation to look for relationships between personality traits and humor styles (measured by the HSQ and MSHS). The only one of my hypotheses supported by the data was that narcissism and aggressive humor were positively correlated. As levels of narcissism increased, so did levels of aggressive humor. This could be explained by the fact that narcissistic individuals are categorized as being very self-absorbed, so they may simply use aggressive humor because they disregard the feelings of others. Although this was the only initial hypothesis supported by the data, many relationships between other personality traits and humor styles were discovered in this study. It was found that high scores on self-esteem were related to low use of self-defeating humor, which may be because individuals with high self-esteem may view themselves as valuable and not feel the need

to put themselves down in front of others, even for the sake of humor. It was found that high conscientiousness related to low use of self-defeating humor as well. This result may have occurred because those high in conscientiousness may be aware that self-defeating humor can sometimes be uncomfortable for the audience, so very conscientious individuals may avoid this humor style altogether in order to avoid making their audience feel awkward. Additionally, high levels of extraversion correlated to low levels of self-defeating humor. One explanation is that extroverted individuals enjoy making connections with others, so they may use other humor styles that are more facilitative to bonding with people. A significant relationship was also found between Machiavellianism and self-defeating humor; individuals high in Machiavellianism reported high use of self-defeating humor. It may be that individuals high in Machiavellianism use self-defeating humor to manipulate others into praising/comforting them after they have put themselves down. Additionally, high psychopathy was related to high use of self-defeating humor. As both the trait and the humor style are considered to be maladaptive, there may be some characteristics/behaviors that make individuals high in psychopathy more likely to use self-defeating humor.

High scores on extraversion correlated to low use for affiliative humor. This is a surprising result because this humor style is positive and typically used to bond with others, so it seems as though extroverts should use it often. However, it may be that extroverts use self-enhancing humor to bolster their own mood while also connecting with others. High scores for empathy were related to high self-enhancing humor scores, which could be explained by the fact that empathic individuals understand and share the feelings of others—this may lead them to use self-enhancing humor so they can improve their own moods and share them with others. Additionally, high scores on extraversion were tied to high levels of self-enhancing humor; again, this could be that extroverts formulate humor for themselves while using it to connect with others as well. High levels of empathy were also correlated to low levels of aggressive humor, which can be explained by the fact that empathic individuals are sensitive to hurting others' feelings.

Overall, I am very pleased with how my study turned out. I am excited that I found multiple significant results and glad that I could fill a gap in the current literature by finding more theoretically appropriate and comprehensive ways to measure sense of humor. I had an excellent time this past semester learning more about the interactions between personality traits and humor styles, as well as developing and practicing psychological research methods and techniques.

Interactions Between Personality Traits and Humor Styles

The purpose of this study is to assess relationships between personality traits and humor preferences in college-aged individuals. As humor is a prominent part of daily life, it is essential that it be studied to increase our understanding and awareness of how it functions. Examining the link between personality and humor is crucial to our understanding because it may indicate who formulates, enjoys, and understands specific types of humor; this could be very helpful in determining how to use humor in advertising to target and reach specific groups of people. Learning about interactions between personality and humor styles could also be helpful by allowing individuals to tailor the humor they use to align more with their intent and the purpose they want their humor to serve. In turn, this could lead to more optimal use of humor and allow individuals to relate better with others and themselves. Additionally, by using measures designed to assess humor styles that examine both positive and negative psychological humor functioning, this study may be able to provide insight regarding the relationship between mental health, emotions, and humor (Mendiburo-Seguel, Páez, & Martínez-Sánchez, 2015).

This study is important because, although previous studies have been conducted on humor and its relationship to various personality traits, there is a noticeable gap in studies using appropriate methodologies for measuring a sense of humor. Most of the previous studies conducted on humor and personality interactions have “equated sense of humor with humor appreciation and humor appreciation with laughter” (Thorson & Powell, 1993, p. 799). While this has led to much groundbreaking research, using the amount of participants’ laughter or their enjoyment of different types of humor does not specifically measure the individual characteristics that make up an individual’s sense of humor. This means that the majority of studies in this field have focused on an individual’s likelihood to laugh instead of examining the elements and facets that make up his or her own personal humor, including his/her intent for the humor he/she formulates.

The present study attempts to focus on measuring participants’ senses of humor and uses more theoretically appropriate measures in order to properly assess sense of humor, as opposed to humor appreciation or laughter. This study will use the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS), which

was designed to examine multiple facets of sense of humor, including recognizing oneself as a humorous person, understanding the humor of others, appreciation/attitudes towards humor, and formulating humor (Thorson & Powell, 1993). As opposed to measuring laughter, this scale focuses on how individuals are able to understand, formulate, and recognize humor—it is designed to measure the core dimensions that truly make up an individual's sense of humor.

Additionally, the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) is utilized in this study to examine humor and personality traits (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003). The scale aims to concretely measure the styles of humor people implement in their daily lives and how they use humor as a tool to relate to others and themselves (interpersonal vs. intrapersonal). It also examines how individuals use humor to enhance positive feelings and/or use humor to mock, ridicule, or injure (benign vs. malignant) others. The four categories in this scale are using humor to: affiliate with others, enhance their own individual mood, put down or disparage others, and/or put themselves down. By utilizing these two measures specifically designed to measure sense of humor in relation to personality traits, a gap in the current literature will be filled by the present study. Sense of humor will be more accurately and comprehensively measured than studies that have previously been conducted.

Personality traits are also important to study in relation to humor because they can be an indicator of psychological and physical health. The health behavior model suggests that personality factors can, in fact, have a positive impact on physical well-being (Kubzansky, Martin, & Buka, 2009). Personality traits can also impact psychological well-being and mood, so happiness is an important trait to measure in this study in relation to humor styles. The Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) is a good indicator of an individual's subjective happiness. It is an excellent scale to use in this study because it identifies which individuals have higher levels of subjective happiness, and this in turn could denote which styles and facets of humor these individuals prefer. This may indicate that the types and styles of humor they use and enjoy are healthy and beneficial to happiness. Studies have shown that humor has many health benefits, from acting as a coping mechanism to reducing blood pressure (Godfrey, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial to examine how humor and personality traits interact to get a better picture of how

psychologically healthy individuals use, formulate, and enjoy humor. However, it is not often realized that there can be a negative psychological impact of humor as well (Mendiburo-Seguel et al., 2015).

Humor can be used with the intent to harm both oneself and others, which can have a damaging impact on psychological health. It is important to also examine the negative aspects of humor styles and how they can have detrimental effects on individuals, along with which personality traits may have relationships with negative humor styles. The implications from this study could suggest which humor styles and traits are most beneficial to individuals' happiness and health, and which humor styles and traits may have harmful impacts on happiness and psychological health.

It is hypothesized that there will be correlations between certain personality traits and scores on the HSQ and MSHS. It is hoped that many relationships will emerge between personality traits and humor styles. For example, it is expected that those who receive high scores in subjective happiness on the SHS will also score highly for affiliative and self-enhancing humor on the HSQ because subjective happiness is a positive trait and may have a relationship with the two positive humor styles. It is also expected that those who score highly for subjective happiness will have high levels of coping humor on the MSHS; this is hypothesized because typically, individuals who are happy tend to cope well with adversity and may use humor to do so. High scores for the trait of self-esteem are expected to correlate to high levels of affiliative and self-enhancing humor. This is hypothesized because self-esteem, a positive and psychologically beneficial trait, may have a relationship with the two positive and psychologically healthy humor styles. It is expected that those who score highly in the traits of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (also known as "Dark Triad" traits) will score highly for aggressive humor.

Machiavellianism is characterized by being so focused on one's own interests that one is willing to use deceit, manipulation, and exploitation. Narcissism is excessive interest in oneself, and psychopathy refers to antisocial behavior paired with low empathy and high impulsivity. The Dark Triad traits are known for being psychologically unfavorable, and this is why they may interact with aggressive humor, a negative and harmful humor style.

Method

Participants

A total of 62 individuals participated in this study. These participants were recruited from Introduction to Psychology and other psychology courses and offered course credit in exchange for participating. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 22 years, and approximately half were male and half were female. In keeping with university demographics, 59% of participants were white, 21% were black, 13% were Hispanic/Latino, 5% were Asian, and 2% answered "other." The majority of participants were in their first year of college, but there were a sizeable number (39%) of participants who were sophomores, juniors, and seniors as well. Participants came from a wide variety of majors.

Materials

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is a four-point Likert-type questionnaire consisting of ten statements about self-esteem (e.g. "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself"). This scale is utilized to assess participants' levels of self-esteem (Appendix A). Participant scores are determined by reverse-scoring five of the items, then summing the scores of all ten items. This scale has good internal consistency (0.77-0.88), test-retest reliability (0.82-0.85), and criterion validity (0.55).

HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised

The HEXACO-PI-R (Ashton, Lee, & DeVries, 2014) is also included in this study to assess Big Five personality traits (i.e., Openness to Experience, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness) and the trait Honesty-Humility (Appendix B). The scale is a 100-item measure that asks participants to read a statement and rate on a 5-point Likert-type scale how much the statement applies to them. For example, the first item is "I would be quite bored by a visit to an art gallery." To assign participant scores, a handful of the items are reverse scored, then 16-17 items each are summed for each trait (e.g., 17 items are summed for a Conscientiousness score, another 16 items are for an Extraversion score, etc.). As this scale was created primarily for research study purposes, no validity and reliability

data are available. However, this scale has been used in several studies in the past (Farrell, Brook, Dane, Marini, & Volk, 2015); given its use and theoretical backing, it is likely a valid measure of personality.

Dirty Dozen Scale

An assessment called the Dirty Dozen (Jonason & Webster, 2010) is included in this study. This assessment is a 12-item measure designed to examine participants' Dark Triad (i.e., narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism) personality traits. The Dirty Dozen asks participants to read through each statement and rank how applicable each one is to them on a 5-point Likert-type scale (Appendix C). To score participants, four items from this scale are summed to assign psychopathy scores, another four are summed for Machiavellianism scores, and the remaining four are summed to get a narcissism score. There is not specific validity and reliability for this measure; however, it has been used multiple times in a variety of research and has been described as "a valid and psychometrically sound measure of the Dark Triad" (Jonason & Luévano, 2013, p. 79).

Toronto Empathy Questionnaire

The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009) is also included as a way to measure participants' levels of empathy. This questionnaire includes 16 items and asks participants to read each statement and rate how applicable it is to them on a 5-point Likert-type scale (Appendix D). As an example, the first item on this measure is "When someone else is feeling excited, I tend to get excited too." Eight items on this scale are negatively scored, then all item scores are added up to get a total empathy score. The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire has been studied for validity and reliability. In a three-part study by the questionnaire's original authors, the measure had strong convergent validity and "good internal consistency and high test-retest reliability" (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009, p. 67).

Subjective Happiness Scale

The Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) is included in this study to examine participants' levels of subjective happiness. This scale consists of four items and asks participants to rank how much they agree with each statement on a five-point Likert-type scale (Appendix

E). The final item of this scale is reverse coded, then all four item scores are summed for a total subjective happiness score. This scale was developed and validated in 14 studies with over 2700 participants. Results indicated that this scale has good to excellent reliability, and construct validation studies have demonstrated that this scale does, in fact, measure subjective happiness (O'Connor, Crawford, & Holder, 2015).

Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale

The Multidimensional Sense of Humor scale (Thorson & Powell, 1993) is also used to assess how participants formulate humor, appreciate humor, and use humor as a coping mechanism. This scale contains 24 items and asks participants to rate each on a 5-point Likert-type scale (Appendix F). Six items are reverse scored, then all items are summed for an overall sense of humor score. No validity and reliability data are available, but given the use of this scale in multiple other studies (Martin & Sullivan, 2013) and its theoretical backing, it seems to be a good measure of multiple dimensions of sense of humor.

Humor Styles Questionnaire

Another scale used is the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin et al., 2003), a 32-item scale designed to measure the styles of humor (i.e., self-enhancing, self-defeating, aggressive, and affiliative) participants engage in during their personal use of humor. The scale gives participants statements and asks them to rate the statement's applicability on a 7-point Likert-type scale (Appendix G). The first item on this questionnaire is "I usually don't joke around much with other people." Some items are reverse scored, then eight items each are summed to get a total score for all four humor styles. The Humor Styles Questionnaire has good validity and reliability according to research; however, a recent study indicates that for the self-defeating dimension, convergent validity is low (Heintz, 2017).

Procedure

Participants were recruited from an Introduction to Psychology pool at a small liberal arts university in western New York. After signing up for the study, participants were given a web address and login information for an online survey at esurveyspro.com. Participants first read and signed an

online consent form (Appendix H) before going on to answer demographics questions about sex, age, ethnicity, year in school, and major (Appendix I). Participants then filled out the remainder of the survey, a compilation of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Sensitivity to Criticism Scale, HEXACO-PI-R, Toronto Empathy Questionnaire, Dirty Dozen Assessment, Humor Styles Questionnaire, and Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale. After completing the survey, participants were provided with the online debriefing form (Appendix J) and asked to give an electronic signature. Participation in this study took approximately 20 minutes on average. Participants received credit towards the experiential component of Introduction to Psychology or extra credit from other psychology courses. The data collected for the surveys was then analyzed.

Results

Descriptive statistics for all the measures are presented in Table 1. It was expected that high scores in subjective happiness would correlate with affiliative and self-enhancing humor on the HSQ. It was also expected that high scores for subjective happiness would correlate with high levels of coping humor on the MSHS. High scores for self-esteem were expected to correlate to high levels of affiliative and self-enhancing humor, as well as humor appreciation. It was hypothesized that those who scored highly for Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (the *Dark Triad* traits) would also score highly for aggressive humor. It was expected that multiple relationships between personality traits and humor styles would be discovered.

A Pearson correlation was performed on the data to analyze the hypotheses. The Pearson correlations among the measures of personality and humor are presented in Table 2. These correlations compared the total scores on the personality scales and humor styles assessments to each other. The only original hypothesis which was supported by the data was that narcissism and aggressive humor were positively correlated ($r = .33, p < .05$). High scores for subjective happiness did not correlate with affiliative humor ($r = -.18, p = .25$) or self-enhancing humor ($r = .24, p = .13$). High scores for subjective happiness did not correlate with coping humor on the MSHS ($r = .07, p = .64$). Self-esteem had no significant relationships with affiliative humor ($r = .01, p = .92$) or self-enhancing humor ($r = .21, p = .16$).

Aggressive humor had no significant correlations with Machiavellianism ($r = .15, p = .31$) or psychopathy ($r = .27, p = .07$).

However, multiple significant relationships between other personality traits and humor styles were discovered. Self-defeating humor was negatively correlated with self-esteem ($r = -.415, p < .01$), conscientiousness ($r = -.56, p < .001$), and extraversion ($r = -.35, p < .05$), but positively correlated with Machiavellianism ($r = .34, p < .05$) and psychopathy ($r = .34, p < .05$). As scores on self-esteem, conscientiousness, and extraversion increased, scores on self-defeating humor decreased. High scores on Machiavellianism and psychopathy were tied to high self-defeating humor scores. Affiliative humor correlated negatively with MSHS scores ($r = -.48, p < .001$) and extraversion ($r = .35, p < .05$). As scores on affiliative humor increased, scores on the MSHS and extraversion decreased. Self-enhancing humor correlated positively with empathy ($r = .35, p < .05$), extraversion ($r = .36, p < .05$), and MSHS scores ($r = .51, p < .001$). As empathy, extraversion, and MSHS scores increased, so did levels of self-enhancing humor. Aggressive humor correlated negatively with empathy ($r = -.33, p < .05$) and positively with narcissism ($r = .33, p < .05$). High scores on empathy were tied to low scores on aggressive humor, and as scores on narcissism increased, so did levels of aggressive humor. These relationships indicate that personality traits and humor styles are connected and may impact and influence one another.

Discussion

Multiple relationships between personality traits and humor styles were discovered in this study. It was found that high scores on self-esteem were related to infrequent use of self-defeating humor. This may be because individuals with high self-esteem view themselves as valuable and important and do not feel any desire to put themselves down in front of others for the sake of humor. Additionally, high scores for conscientiousness related to low use of self-defeating humor. One possible explanation for this is that those scoring high in conscientiousness may avoid self-defeating humor so as not to put others in the position of feeling awkward and/or uncomfortable about listening to someone put him/herself down. High extraversion levels also correlated to low levels of self-defeating humor. This result could have occurred because individuals high in extraversion tend to enjoy making connections with others; as a result, they

may try to use other humor styles in order to bond with others instead of making jokes at their own expense.

Those scoring highly for Machiavellianism reported more frequent use of self-defeating humor than those with low Machiavellianism scores. Machiavellianism occurs when one is so focused on one's own interests that manipulation, deception, and exploitation may be used to achieve one's own goals. Individuals scoring highly for Machiavellianism may use self-defeating humor to manipulate others into comforting/praising them after putting themselves down (an example of this would be deliberately making a hurtful joke about one's appearance so others feel compelled to compliment and praise their looks). High psychopathy scores also were found to relate to more use of self-defeating humor as well. Psychopathy refers to persistent antisocial behavior, high levels of selfishness and impulsivity, and impaired empathy and remorse. Individuals with high levels of this trait may tend to use more self-defeating humor because psychopathy is characterized as a malevolent trait and self-defeating humor is a maladaptive humor style; therefore, it may be that individuals high in psychopathy have behaviors and characteristics that make them more likely to use this negative style of humor.

Additionally, a relationship was found between affiliative humor and extraversion. Higher scores in extraversion correlated to low use of affiliative humor. This is a surprising result because affiliative humor is a positive form of humor used to bond with others, so it seems as though extroverts would use this style frequently. It may be that extroverts primarily enjoy using self-enhancing humor to boost their own moods while also connecting with others. It could also be that affiliative humor use follows a curvilinear pattern, so individuals scoring highly for extraversion may fall on the lower side of affiliative humor use. High scores for empathy were related to high scores for self-enhancing humor. As empathy is categorized by the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, empathic individuals may use humor to boost their own mood so they, in turn, can share their feelings and humor. Self-enhancing humor was also correlated to extraversion; participants with higher levels of extraversion were more likely to report frequent use of self-enhancing humor. Again, this could be that extroverts enjoy formulating humor for themselves but also use it to connect with others. Aggressive humor was

negatively correlated to empathy, with participants with high levels of empathy reporting lower levels of aggressive humor. Empathic individuals tend to be sensitive to hurting others' feelings, so it makes sense that they typically do not report high levels of aggressive humor. Finally, the only original hypothesis supported by the data was the relationship between narcissism and aggressive humor. Participants with high scores for narcissism tended to report more frequent use of aggressive humor. Narcissism is excessive interest in oneself, so it may be that narcissistic individuals simply use aggressive humor without considering the feelings of others. All other originally stated hypotheses were not supported by the data and, therefore, were rejected.

This research is significant because it has filled a gap in the current literature. The use of the HSQ and MSHS to assess humor styles is much more theoretically appropriate than previous studies, which have focused on humor appreciation and/or laughter. While important to examine, humor appreciation and laughter are not good measures of humor styles (Thorson & Powell, 1993). This study was able to examine how people are able to formulate humor and the intent with which they use it, either benignly or maliciously, with themselves and/or others.

It was hoped that the results of this study could indicate which humor styles and personality traits are beneficial and/or harmful to individuals' psychological and physiological happiness and health. Although more research must be done to support this concept, the preliminary data from this study suggests that personality traits typically seen as "negative" or "maladaptive," such as the Dark Triad traits, are tied into the humor styles most often seen as malevolent (e.g., self-defeating and aggressive humor styles). Personality traits seen as favorable or desirable—such as extraversion, self-esteem, and empathy—tended to be closely related with the "positive" humor style of self-enhancing humor. Based on these findings, it can tentatively be stated that self-enhancing humor is the most beneficial humor style to adopt and use, especially in terms of enhancing and maintaining psychological health. However, more research should be done to investigate this conclusion. This study is also important because it indicates that personality traits and humor styles are, in fact, connected. Many of the personality traits examined in

this study had significant relationships with one or more humor styles, which supports the hypothesis that personality traits have some degree of influence over humor styles (and possibly vice-versa).

There were a few limitations to this study. First, the study was conducted at a small, private, liberal arts college where the demographics do not accurately represent the whole population. Therefore, these results may not be generalizable. Another limitation is that the wording of the HSQ was vague for some questions and used “people,” “someone,” and “others” to ask about how participants used humor in relation to other individuals. However, the way individuals interact with different types of people—friends, family, authority figures, strangers, etc.—varies immensely. This unspecific wording may be responsible for some of the participants thinking about different groups (e.g., one participant may have read the questions thinking about the humor he/she uses with family, while another may have had his/her friends in mind), and skewing some of the results. For example, one of the more surprising results was that high levels of extraversion correlated to low levels of affiliative humor—this may be explained by the vague wording of the questionnaire resulting in unusual answers.

More research should be done on the relationship between extraversion and affiliative humor. The result obtained in this study seems counterintuitive; it was expected that those higher in extraversion would be more likely to use affiliative humor to relate to others. The obtained result seems surprising, so more investigation into this relationship would be beneficial. It would also be important to look at whether humor styles are influenced by other factors besides personality traits. It may be worthwhile to look at whether other factors like education level, socioeconomic status, environment, and/or religion impact the use of humor as well. Additionally, it would be interesting to look at combinations of humor styles. Humor styles examine someone’s intent for the humor he/she uses, and it may be that multiple intents exist when individuals use humor, although this model supports only one intent at any given time. Therefore, it may be interesting to consider researching and expanding the current model of humor styles to include multiple simultaneous intentions for humor.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for personality traits and humor styles

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Minimum	Maximum
Self-Esteem	32.02	3.06	61		
Honesty-Humility	55.60	9.88	57		
Emotionality	50.59	10.07	56		
Extraversion	52.59	12.98	56		
Agreeableness	49.53	9.02	57		
Conscientiousness	56.80	8.75	56		
Openness to Experience	51.71	10.52	55		
Machiavellianism	8.94	3.01	53		
Psychopathy	9.11	3.23	54		
Narcissism	9.00	3.07	54		
Empathy	59.84	8.24	51		
Subjective Happiness	17.60	4.74	49		
MSHS	94.71	13.42	51		
Affiliative Humor	29.80	3.76	49		
Self-Enhancing Humor	36.82	7.70	49		
Aggressive Humor	30.96	5.72	49		
Self-Defeating Humor	27.68	8.94	47		

Table 2

Pearson correlations between personality traits and humor styles

	Affiliative Humor	Self-Enhancing Humor	Aggressive Humor	Self-Defeating Humor	MSHS (Overall Sense of Humor)
Honesty-Humility	.06	.20	-.17	-.19	-.04
Extraversion	-.35*	.36*	-.26	-.35*	.22
Agreeableness	.10	.04	-.24	-.24	-.16
Conscientiousness	-.18	.16	-.02	-.56*	.01
Openness to Experience	-.03	.19	.02	-.27	.06
Emotionality	.11	-.07	-.08	.15	-.16
Machiavellianism	-.06	-.10	.15	.34*	.21
Psychopathy	-.01	.06	.27	.34*	.19
Narcissism	.13	-.09	.33*	.16	.02
Empathy	-.17	.35*	-.33*	-.05	.16
Subjective Happiness	-.18	.24	-.02	-.29	.07
Self-Esteem	.01	.21	-.05	-.42*	-.18

*= $p < .05$

Appendix A
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement by choosing either 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Appendix B
HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised (Ashton, Lee, & de Vries, 2014)

Read each statement and decide how much you agree or disagree with that statement. Respond according to the following scale: 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree. Please answer every statement, even if you are not completely sure of your response.

Honesty-Humility

- 6. If I want something from a person I dislike, I will act very nicely toward that person in order to get it.
- 12. If I knew that I could never get caught, I would be willing to steal a million dollars.
- 18. Having a lot of money is not especially important to me.
- 24. I am an ordinary person who is no better than others.
- 30. I wouldn't use flattery to get a raise or promotion at work, even if I thought it would succeed.
- 36. I would be tempted to buy stolen property if I were financially tight.
- 42. I would like to live in a very expensive, high-class neighborhood.
- 48. I wouldn't want people to treat me as though I were superior to them.
- 54. If I want something from someone, I will laugh at that person's worst jokes.
- 60. I would never accept a bribe, even if it were very large.
- 66. I would like to be seen driving around in a very expensive car.
- 72. I think that I am entitled to more respect than the average person is.
- 78. I wouldn't pretend to like someone just to get that person to do favors for me.
- 84. I'd be tempted to use counterfeit money, if I were sure I could get away with it.
- 90. I would get a lot of pleasure from owning expensive luxury goods.
- 96. I want people to know that I am an important person of high status.

Emotionality/Neuroticism

- 5. I would feel afraid if I had to travel in bad weather conditions.
- 11. I sometimes can't help worrying about little things.
- 17. When I suffer from a painful experience, I need someone to make me feel comfortable.
- 23. I feel like crying when I see other people crying.
- 29. I don't mind doing jobs that involve dangerous work.
- 35. I worry a lot less than most people do.
- 41. I can handle difficult situations without needing emotional support from anyone else.
- 47. When someone I know well is unhappy, I can almost feel that person's pain myself.
- 53. When it comes to physical danger, I am very fearful.
- 59. I rarely, if ever, have trouble sleeping due to stress or anxiety.
- 65. Whenever I feel worried about something, I want to share my concern with another person.
- 71. I feel strong emotions when someone close to me is going away for a long time.
- 77. Even in an emergency I wouldn't feel like panicking.
- 83. I get very anxious when waiting to hear about an important decision.
- 89. I rarely discuss my problems with other people.
- 95. I remain unemotional even in situations where most people get very sentimental.
- 97. I have sympathy for people who are less fortunate than I am.

Extraversion

- 4. I feel reasonably satisfied with myself overall.
- 10. I rarely express my opinions in group meetings.
- 16. I avoid making "small talk" with people.
- 22. I am energetic nearly all the time.
- 28. I think that most people like some aspects of my personality.
- 34. In social situations, I'm usually the one who makes the first move.

- 40. I enjoy having lots of people around to talk with.
- 46. On most days, I feel cheerful and optimistic.
- 52. I feel that I am an unpopular person.
- 58. When I'm in a group of people, I'm often the one who speaks on behalf of the group.
- 64. I prefer jobs that involve active social interaction to those that involve working alone.
- 70. People often tell me that I should try to cheer up.
- 76. I sometimes feel that I am a worthless person.
- 82. I tend to feel quite self-conscious when speaking in front of a group of people.
- 88. The first thing that I always do in a new place is to make friends.
- 94. Most people are more upbeat and dynamic than I generally am.

Agreeableness

- 3. I rarely hold a grudge, even against people who have badly wronged me.
- 9. People sometimes tell me that I am too critical of others.
- 15. People sometimes tell me that I'm too stubborn.
- 21. People think of me as someone who has a quick temper.
- 27. My attitude toward people who have treated me badly is "forgive and forget."
- 33. I generally accept people's faults without complaining about them.
- 39. I am usually quite flexible in my opinions when people disagree with me.
- 45. I rarely feel anger, even when people treat me quite badly.
- 51. If someone has cheated me once, I will always feel suspicious of that person.
- 57. I tend to be lenient in judging other people.
- 63. When people tell me that I'm wrong, my first reaction is to argue with them.
- 69. Most people tend to get angry more quickly than I do.
- 75. I find it hard to fully forgive someone who has done something mean to me.
- 81. Even when people make a lot of mistakes, I rarely say anything negative.
- 87. I find it hard to compromise with people when I really think I'm right.
- 93. I find it hard to keep my temper when people insult me.
- 100. People see me as a hard-hearted person.

Conscientiousness

- 2. I clean my office or home quite frequently.
- 8. When working, I often set ambitious goals for myself.
- 14. I often check my work over repeatedly to find any mistakes.
- 20. I make decisions based on the feeling of the moment rather than on careful thought.
- 26. I plan ahead and organize things, to avoid scrambling at the last minute.
- 32. I often push myself very hard when trying to achieve a goal.
- 38. When working on something, I don't pay much attention to small details.
- 44. I make a lot of mistakes because I don't think before I act.
- 50. People often joke with me about the messiness of my room or desk.
- 56. Often when I set a goal, I end up quitting without having reached it.
- 62. I always try to be accurate in my work, even at the expense of time.
- 68. I don't allow my impulses to govern my behavior.
- 74. When working, I sometimes have difficulties due to being disorganized.
- 80. I do only the minimum amount of work needed to get by.
- 86. People often call me a perfectionist.
- 92. I prefer to do whatever comes to mind, rather than stick to a plan.
- 98. I try to give generously to those in need.
- 99. It wouldn't bother me to harm someone I didn't like.

Openness to Experience

1. I would be quite bored by a visit to an art gallery.
7. I'm interested in learning about the history and politics of other countries.
13. I would like a job that requires following a routine rather than being creative.
19. I think that paying attention to radical ideas is a waste of time.
25. I wouldn't spend my time reading a book of poetry.
31. I enjoy looking at maps of different places.
37. I would enjoy creating a work of art, such as a novel, a song, or a painting.
43. I like people who have unconventional views.
49. If I had the opportunity, I would like to attend a classical music concert.
55. I would be very bored by a book about the history of science and technology.
61. People have often told me that I have a good imagination.
67. I think of myself as a somewhat eccentric person.
73. Sometimes I like to just watch the wind as it blows through the trees.
79. I've never really enjoyed looking through an encyclopedia.
85. I don't think of myself as the artistic or creative type.
91. I find it boring to discuss philosophy.

Appendix C
Dirty Dozen Scale (Jonason & Webster, 2010)

Please answer all of the following questions. 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

Machiavellianism

1. I tend to manipulate others to get my way.
2. I have used deceit or lied to get my way.
3. I have used flattery to get my way.
4. I tend to exploit others towards my own end.

Psychopathy

5. I tend to lack remorse.
6. I tend to not be too concerned with morality or the morality of my actions.
7. I tend to be callous or insensitive.
8. I tend to be cynical.

Narcissism

9. I tend to want others to admire me.
10. I tend to want others to pay attention to me.
11. I tend to seek prestige or status.
12. I tend to expect special favors from others.

Appendix D
Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009)

Below is a list of statements. Please read them all and answer accordingly; 0=never, 1=rarely, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=always.

1. ___ When someone else is feeling excited, I tend to get excited too.
2. ___ Other people's misfortunes do not disturb me a great deal.
3. ___ It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully.
4. ___ I remain unaffected when someone close to me is happy.
5. ___ I enjoy making other people feel better.
6. ___ I have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
7. ___ When a friend starts to talk about his/her problems, I try to steer the conversation towards something else.
8. ___ I can tell when others are sad even when they do not say anything.
9. ___ I find that I am "in tune" with other people's moods.
10. ___ I do not feel sympathy for people who cause their own serious illnesses.
11. ___ I become irritated when someone cries.
12. ___ I am not really interested in how other people feel.
13. ___ I get a strong urge to help when I see someone upset.
14. ___ When I see someone being treated unfairly, I do not feel very much pity for them.
15. ___ I find it silly to cry out of happiness.
16. ___ When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards him/her.

Appendix E
Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999)

For each of the following statements and/or questions, please choose the number that best represents your opinion.

1. In general, I consider myself:

not a very happy person	2	3	4	5	6	a very happy person
1						7

2. Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:

less happy	2	3	4	5	6	more happy
1						7

3. Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

not at all	2	3	4	5	6	a great deal
1						7

4. Some people are generally not very happy. Although not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

not at all	2	3	4	5	6	a great deal
1						7

Appendix F
Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (Thorson & Powell, 1993)

Please answer the following questions accordingly: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

1. Other people tell me I say funny things.
2. My clever sayings amuse others.
3. I can say things in such a way as to make people laugh.
4. I'm regarded as something of a wit by my friends.
5. I'm confident that I can make other people laugh.
6. People look to me to say amusing things.
7. I use humor to entertain my friends.
8. I can often crack people up with the things I say.
9. I sometimes think up jokes or funny stories.
10. I can actually have some control over a group by my uses of humor.
11. I can ease a tense situation by saying something funny.
12. I can find something funny in most situations.
13. Humor helps me cope.
14. Coping by using humor is an elegant way of adapting.
15. Uses of humor help to put me at ease.
16. Uses of wit and humor help me master difficult situations.
17. I can use wit to help adapt to many situations.
18. I appreciate those who generate humor.
19. I like a good joke.
20. Getting people to lighten up by joking around is useless.
21. I love it when I think of a good line in time to use it.
22. Things go better with humor.
23. Calling somebody a "comedian" is a real insult.
24. I'm uncomfortable when everyone is cracking jokes.

Appendix G
Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003)

Please answer all of the following questions. 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree.

Affiliative humor

1. I usually don't laugh or joke around much with other people.
5. I don't have to work very hard at making other people laugh—I seem to be a naturally humorous person.
9. I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself.
13. I laugh and joke a lot with my closest friends.
17. I usually don't like to tell jokes or amuse people.
21. I enjoy making people laugh.
25. I don't often joke around with my friends.
29. I usually can't think of witty things to say when I'm with other people.

Self-Enhancing Humor

2. If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself up with humor.
6. Even when I'm by myself, I'm often amused by the absurdities of life.
10. If I am feeling upset or unhappy I usually try to think of something funny about the situation to make myself feel better.
14. My humorous outlook on life keeps me from getting overly upset or depressed about things.
18. If I'm by myself and I'm feeling unhappy, I make an effort to think of something funny to cheer myself up.
22. If I am feeling sad or upset, I usually lose my sense of humor.
26. It is my experience that thinking about some amusing aspect of a situation is often a very effective way of coping with problems.
30. I don't need to be with other people to feel amused—I can usually find things to laugh about even when I'm by myself.

Aggressive Humor

3. If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it.
7. People are never offended or hurt by my sense of humor.
11. When telling jokes or saying funny things, I am usually not very concerned about how other people are taking it.
15. I do not like it when people use humor as a way of criticizing or putting someone else down.
19. Sometimes I think of something so funny that I can't stop myself from saying it, even if it is not appropriate for the situation.
23. I never participate in laughing at others even if all my friends are doing it.
27. If I don't like someone, I often use humor or teasing to put them down.
31. Even if something is really funny to me, I will not laugh or joke about it if someone will be offended.

Self-Defeating Humor

4. I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should.
8. I will often get carried away in putting myself down if it makes my family or friends laugh.
12. I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults.
16. I don't often say funny things to put myself down.
20. I often go overboard in putting myself down when I am making jokes or trying to be funny.

24. When I am with friends or family, I often seem to be the one that other people make fun of or joke about.
28. If I am having problems or feeling unhappy, I often cover it up by joking around so that even my closest friends don't know who I really feel.
32. Letting others laugh at me is my way of keeping my friends and family in good spirits.

Appendix H
Informed Consent Form

Dear Research Participant:

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. The relationship between personality traits and sense of humor is being examined in this research. You will be asked to fill out a series of questionnaires regarding your own personality traits and humor preferences. Please answer these questions truthfully and to the best of your ability. Refusal to participate will not result in any penalties. This study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. The study will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

There are no known risks associated with your agreement to participate in this research; you will only be experiencing situations and asked to complete tasks that carry the same level of risk you can expect in everyday educational activities. If, however, you experience any emotional distress as the result of participating in this study, psychological treatment is available through Alfred University Counseling Services (607) 871-2300, which is part of the free health services in the Crandall Wellness Center. This project has undergone independent review by the University's Human Subjects Research Committee (HSRC) to assure that no aspect of this research involves more than this low level of risk to participants.

This study is not designed to benefit any individual participant, but rather to add to knowledge about the responses of people in general. Participation in this study will provide you with an opportunity to learn more about research methods in psychology. If you so desire, you may also contact the researchers at the email listed below to obtain information about the results of the study.

The records in this study will be kept private. All your answers and information collected about you will be completely anonymous and confidential. There will be no link between any personally identifying information and your data; your participation is completely anonymous. In any published report of this research, we will not include information that would make it possible to identify you as a participant.

You will receive 2 research credits in your psychology course to compensate you for the time you spend participating in this study. Continuing to the next page after typing your name below implies your consent to participate in the study. You will receive credit even if you choose to leave certain questions unanswered or if you choose at any time to discontinue participation. At the conclusion of the study, you still have the option to withdraw your data without penalty. If you choose not to participate in this study, you may fulfill your course research requirement by participating in other studies or through alternative assignments. Contact your instructor for information about alternatives to participating in research.

The primary researcher for this study is Abby Williams, and you may contact the researcher at aew7@alfred.edu for answers to questions about the study. Dr. Amy Button and Dr. Nancy Furlong are the primary supervisors of Abby Williams. You may also contact Dr. Button by email at button@alfred.edu and Dr. Furlong at ffurlong@alfred.edu with questions or concerns about the study. If you have questions about research participants' rights, you may contact the Human Subjects Research Committee chair, Dr. Danielle Gagne, at (607) 871-2873 or hsrc@alfred.edu.

Your electronic signature indicates that you have read the material presented above and agree to participate.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix I
Demographics Questionnaire

Please provide the following information.

1. I identify my gender as _____.
2. My age is _____.
3. My racial identity is (please select all that apply)
 - a. White
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - d. Asian
 - e. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - f. Hispanic/Latino
 - g. Other
4. My year in school is
 - a. First-year
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Other
5. My major is _____.

Appendix J
Debriefing Statement

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between personality traits and sense of humor. The researcher expects to find that participants' scores on traits such as empathy, sensitivity to criticism, and conscientiousness may correlate to the types of humor they enjoy. You earned 2 research credits by participating in this study.

There are no known risks associated with your agreement to participate in this research; you only experienced situations and completed tasks that carry the same level of risk you can expect in daily life. If, however, you experience any emotional distress as the result of participating in this study, psychological treatment is available through Alfred University Counseling Services (607) 871-2300, which is part of the free health services in the Wellness Center.

The primary researcher for this study is Abby Williams, and you may contact the researcher at aew7@alfred.edu for answers to questions about the study. Dr. Amy Button and Dr. Nancy Furlong are the faculty supervisors of Abby Williams. You may also contact Dr. Button via email at button@alfred.edu or by phone (607) 871-2860 and Dr. Furlong at (607)871-2858. with questions or concerns about the study. If you have questions about research participants' rights, you may contact the Human Subjects Research Committee chair, Dr. Danielle Gagne, at (607) 871-2873 or hsrc@alfred.edu.

Please do not discuss the details of this study with any of your classmates or friends.