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Running head: HUMOUR AND MARITAL QUALITY

Humour and Marital Quality: Is Humour Style Associated with Marital Success?

By

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Bachelor of Arts, University of Western Ontario, 2001

THESIS

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Abstract

Humour has been postulated to be an important variable contributing to success in romantic relationships. Most past research has tended to view humour as a unitary construct with invariably beneficial relationship effects (e.g.,: Hampes, 1992). However, if used maladaptively, humour may be a detriment to relationship success (Cohan and Bradbury, 1997). The purpose of the current study was to determine the relationship between adaptive/ positive and maladaptive/ negative styles of humour and quality of marriage. It was expected that positive humour is associated with higher marital quality, while negative humour is associated with lower marital quality. A secondary goal was to examine possible variations in the relation between humour and marital quality according to demographic differences. Over 450 participants from around the world completed the study over the internet, completing two humour scales and a measure of marital quality. Results came out as expected, although the correlation was much stronger with the humour scale that is more pertinent to marriage than the humour scale that assesses individual humour in a general manner. In addition, various interactions were explored using demographic (moderator) variables, and results are discussed.

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Humour and Marital Quality: Is Humour Style Associated with Marital Success?

Can humour contribute to marital satisfaction? With the growing divorce rate of present day society, researchers have explored variables that contribute to strengthening marriage. There are several aspects that characterize a successful marriage in research to date, such as love, intimacy, nurturance, communication, trust, honesty, maturity, effective problem solving and shared interests (Snyder, 1993; Terman, 1963; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995). Humour is another variable that is considered to be important in marriage by laypersons, philosophers and researchers alike, although it has often been largely ignored in the literature (Ziv, 1984). There is no action more commonplace than laughter, yet no action remains more unexplained (Dugas, 1902, as cited in Freud, 1905). This oversight could be due to the lack of reliable humour measures available in the past (Ziv, 1988). Difficulties exist in conceptualizing humour, in general, because various types of humour are discussed as though it is a unitary concept (Ziv, 1984).

Research shows that marriage and social intimacy (Booth & Johnson, 1994; D'Arcy & Siddique, 1985; Miller & Lefcourt, 1982; Miller & Lefcourt, 1983; Schmoldt, Pope & Hibbard, 1989) and humour (Kuiper, Martin & Dance, 1992; Kuiper, Martin & Olinger, 1993; Kuiper & Martin, 1998) are each related to physical and psychological health, yet little research has examined the immediate relation between marriage and humour (Raniseski, 1998). It would be useful to be able to predict factors that relate to enhanced marriage and health, so that these characteristics can be fostered early in the relationship, and early intervention can then take place (Levenson & Gottman, 1985). Perhaps if humour is related to enhanced marital functioning, it could be utilized in the curriculum of premarital workshops and courses. Not only can humour use within the marriage be encouraged in these workshops, but humour being used within the

classroom itself can also raise the quality of learning and teaching (Ziv, 1984). In social work practice, humour can be used to support clients in achieving an enhanced quality of life (Kuiper, Martin & Dance, 1992), including an enhanced marriage. Humour can also be used in couples counselling, to strengthen the couple, build their relationship, and boost encouragement (McBrien, 1993).

Humour is related to intimacy (Hampes, 1992), stress relief (Freud, 1905), improved communication (Chapman, Smith & Foot, 1980), encouragement, conflict management (McBrien, 1993), self-disclosure (Avant, 1982), divergent thinking (Ziv, 1983), and cohesiveness, which are all areas which could greatly benefit a marital union (Alberts, 1990; Avant, 1982; Ziv, 1988). Adaptive humour also encourages couples through enhancing creativity, hopefulness, optimism, positive mood, social interest and self-acceptance (McBrien, 1993). Within interpersonal interactions, humour is used to demonstrate cognitive similarity, group esteem, and ethnic allegiances (Chapman, Smith & Foot, 1980). Humour can be used as a coping mechanism or strategy (Chapman, Smith & Foot, 1980; Freud, 1905), allowing the partner or couple to take perspective of a situation and thus view it as more manageable (Raniseski, 1998). From this new perspective, they can view the situation as humorous and insignificant in the grander scheme of life. Humour can also reduce the overall tension of a problem so that it can be attacked with rekindled vigour (Murstein & Brust, 1985). This perspective potentially allows individuals to refrain from blaming themselves or their partner (Bodenmann, 1997). Problems are inevitable in a relationship, and so being able to cope with crises, and making a safe place for conflict, is imperative to a good relationship. If humour is used as a means to deal with these tasks, then it follows that humour is useful for maintaining balance within a relationship (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995).

Past researchers have viewed humour as a solely positive aspect of marriage, relating more humour to greater satisfaction (Hampes, 1992). It has also been said that without good humour, we lack one of the qualities necessary for making our partner happy; good spirits and good humour is an expression of love (Leites, 1981). However, some research shows that when used maladaptively, humour can be a detriment to marriage, for example if one partner uses humour during an inappropriate time (Cohan and Bradbury, 1997) or if one partner is unresponsive to the humour used by the other (Chapman, Smith & Foot, 1980; Ziv, 1984). Humour can be a 'lubricant' or an 'abrasive' in social interactions, especially in common everyday interactions that make the routine flow of social life possible (Martineau, 1972). Sarcasm, for example, is an everyday form of biting oral communication which can impair control and stability (Ball, 1970). If one partner consistently uses sarcasm to put the other down, this invalidation can potentially cost the relationship (Markman & Hahlweg, 1993). The understanding of humour, then, has in turn evolved from being conceptualized as a unidimensional concept to a multidimensional concept.

Humour questionnaires have recently been devised which account for various styles of humour (De Koning & Weiss, 2002; Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray & Weir, 2003; Puhlik-Doris, 1999). The current approach is to divide humour into two main categories, namely positive/adaptive and negative/maladaptive (De Koning & Weiss, 2002; Martin, et al., 2003; Puhlik-Doris, 1999; Raniseski, 1998). Humour questionnaires can assess humour in general (Martin et al., 2003) or humour that is specific to marriage (De Koning & Weiss, 2002). For example, Martin et al. (2003) have established a questionnaire that assessed four styles of humour: that used to enhance the self (Self-Enhancing), to enhance relationships (Affiliative), to enhance the self at the expense of relationships (Aggressive), and to enhance relationships at the

expense of the self (Self-Defeating). The former two styles are adaptive while the latter two are maladaptive. These questionnaires will be further explored below.

The main purpose of the present study is to examine the correlation between humour styles and marital satisfaction. The correlation between recently devised humour measures and quality of marriage will be examined in order to determine whether positive humour is positively correlated with marital satisfaction while negative humour is negatively related to marital satisfaction.

Past Research: Unidimensional View of Humour

The few earlier studies which have examined the relation between humour and success of intimate relationships have measured humour in terms of positive assumptions, and have measured it in very different ways. These studies will be described next.

Murstein and Brust (1985) asked college couples (26 single, 4 married) to rate the humourousness of cartoons, comic strips, and jokes, to assess humour appreciation. They found that couples with similar humour appreciation were more likely to love and like their partners, as assessed by Rubin's Loving and Liking Scales (Rubin, 1970). In addition, those couples who were not married were more likely to want to marry their partner when there was a smaller humour difference between the partners. In this study, the more similar the humour appreciation was between the partners, the better the relationship.

Rust and Goldstein (1989) found that, compared to a non-distressed group, there was less humour appreciation in the distressed group of married or cohabiting couples. Further, they found that appreciation of the partner's sense of humour correlated significantly with the general state of the relationship. However, to assess humour, only one item was asked, "I really appreciate my partner's sense of humor" (219). This item was embedded within a scale assessing

the extent of marital discord, the Golombok Rust Inventory of Marital State (GRIMS; Rust et al. 1988). Thus, it seems that having a similar humour appreciation and being able to appreciate the partner's sense of humour are related to romantic success.

Ziv and Gadish (1988) also explored humour and marital satisfaction, using a sample of fifty Israeli couples. The researchers used the Attitude Toward Marriage Scale (ATOM; Ziv, 1985), which is a questionnaire based on the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959). They assessed humour with a Creativity and Appreciation Scale of Humour (Ziv, 1984). The researchers found that husband's own humour appreciation and humour creation were significantly related to marital satisfaction. However, for women, their own use of humour appreciation and humour creation were not significantly related to satisfaction in marriage. The researchers found that marital satisfaction was related to the partner's use of humour more than the spouse's own humour. For example, the correlation between wife's humour creation and their marital satisfaction is much lower ($r = .05$) than the correlation between wife's perception of their partner's humour creativity and their marital satisfaction ($r = .58$). Ziv and Gadish (1988) also found that there is a complementarity between the partner's humour, such that the most important prediction of marital satisfaction was appreciation of his or her own humour and perception of his or her partner's humour creation. This was found for both men and women, but is stronger when husbands create humour and wives appreciate it. Thus, it seems that humour appreciation and humour creation is more important to satisfaction for husbands than for wives. Thus, like Rust and Goldstein (1989), Ziv and Gadish (1988) also found that perceptions of partner's humour is related to satisfaction in marriage.

Humour can be used to bring people together, and to create intimacy, by forming private jokes or exchanging in light-hearted banter (Ziv, 1988). Hampes (1992) found that a high level

of humour was associated with intimacy. He used the Situational Humour Response Questionnaire (SHRQ; Martin & Lefcourt, 1984), which measures the frequency of mirth response to stressful situations, and an intimacy scale from The Measures of Psychosocial Development, based on Erikson's stage theory (Hawley, 1988). He found that the high intimacy group scored significantly higher on the SHRQ than the low intimacy group. Hampes (1992) concluded that humour helps people succeed in intimate relationships because it allows them to handle the inevitable stress that occurs in relationships. The assumption was made here that responding with humour to various events would also apply to stressful events within the context of an intimate relationship. For example, it may or may not be the case that how one reacts to soup being spilled on one's lap (an item in the SHRQ) is relevant to how one reacts when their spouse loses their job. The question Hampes (1992) fails to address, then, is how exactly humour is used within the context of a loving relationship, as reactions to stressful events outside the context of marriage may not be comparable.

Gottman and Levenson (1999) performed a four-year follow-up on affective behaviours between married couples, to assess how stable marital interaction is over time. They had couples come into their lab and videotaped problem solving interactions, while coding their emotional behaviours using the Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF; Gottman, 1996), which included a code for humour. They found that humour was stable for both partners and, what is more, the problems themselves were also stable over the four-year period. The researchers found that what was really salient were the patterns of marital interactions: couples seem to talk about the same issues in the same ways. They noticed that some couples seemed amused by the familiar problem, and capable of laughing at it, while other couples were quite angry with each other and showed no humour when talking about their problems (Gottman and Levenson, 1999).

Therefore, it seems that rather than being able to solve a recurring problem within a relationship using humour, what is more healthy is for the couple to be able to laugh at it, and in so doing, accept its existence.

When used in a sensitive manner, humour can bring lightness and intimacy to the marriage. Lauer, Lauer, and Kerr (1990) also found humour to serve as a solely strengthening characteristic. They asked one hundred couples, who had been married for more than forty-five years, what they viewed as important to their marriages. Being able to laugh together frequently was one of the top six reasons for marital success. Further, eighty percent of the couples who reported that they were happy with their marriage, as assessed by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), reported laughing together once a day or more. Therefore, having a sense of humour seems to be important in a long-term romantic union, because it allows another avenue by which to create intimacy, and can be used to enhance relational well-being (Lauer, Lauer, & Kerr, 1990). A limitation to this study is that the researchers failed to assess the context in which couples were reported to 'laugh together.' For instance, it is uncertain whether couples share stories about their day together or whether they passively watch sit-coms in the evening together. Also, do they laugh together at the expense of others, or at each other, or do they use humour to make others feel good? Like Hampes (1992), then, Lauer, Lauer, & Kerr (1990) also fail to address how humour is exactly used in marital relationships.

While humour can bring intimacy and closeness to a relationship, it can also bring distance and dissolution. Cohan and Bradbury (1997) conducted a longitudinal study, in which 60 newlywed couples were followed for 18 months. The researchers gave several questionnaires, including a marital satisfaction measure, the Survey of Life Events (Bradbury, 1990, as cited in Cohan & Bradbury, 1997), and they also coded affect in video-taped problem solving interactions

using the Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF, Gottman, 1996). The researchers found that divorce or separation could actually be predicted eighteen months later by a positive association between husbands' use of humour during problem solving and major events for couples (where major events were defined as severe stressors, such as filing for bankruptcy or hospitalization) (Cohan and Bradbury, 1997). In other words, if a couple had experienced many stressors and the husband often used humour while problem solving, the couple was more likely to divorce or separate. Although the authors did not describe exactly how humour was used (for example, whether it was aggressive towards the partner or used to avoid the issue) it is assumed that it was used in an inappropriate manner. In this way, husbands' humour can be a detriment to the relationship. Men tend to use humour more often than women, especially in an aggressive manner (Johari, 2001; Martin, et al., 2003), yet perhaps they do not realize that jocularity and sarcasm are non-serious behaviours that have serious consequences (Seckman & Couch, 1989). The detrimental effects are particularly profound if the partner is unresponsive to humour instigated by the other (Chapman, Smith & Foot, 1980).

If an issue is to be resolved or at least dealt with in a mature manner, confrontation of the real issue should take place (Snyder, 1993; Barback & Geisinger, 1991). Humour can be an asset in problem-solving if the issue is not avoided completely, but rather is dealt with in a more reflective, non-aggressive manner. Laughter can act as a buffer and humour can actually facilitate adjustment and coping (Kuiper, Martin & Olinger, 1993; Kuiper & Martin, 1998). Therefore, while humour has proven to be a benefit in stressful life events (Kuiper, Martin & Dance, 1992; Kuiper, Martin & Olinger, 1993; Kuiper & Martin, 1998), it carries the potential to damage a relationship if used maladaptively.

To my knowledge, the study done by Cohan and Bradbury (1997) was the first empirical study to find humour to be a detriment to a romantic relationship. While this shows progress in the evolution of humour literature, Cohan and Bradbury (1997) still did not consider humour to be a multidimensional trait, per se. They did not report exactly how humour was used in the relational interactions; whether it was aggressive or self-disparaging, or used socially while still avoiding the problem. They did not, in other words, describe the style of humour the husbands used in these couple interactions, and thus assumed that humour was simply a unitary trait.

Previous Studies: Multidimensional View of Humour

Only a handful of researchers have examined the relationship between intimacy and humour, while viewing humour as a multidimensional characteristic. In a study reported in an unpublished PhD dissertation, Jacobs (1985) gave married women a relationship success scale, the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), as well as a humour questionnaire. Unfortunately, the details of the humour questionnaire that was used were elusive, but when factor analyses were performed, the researcher found a distinction between positive and negative uses of humour. It was found that when used in a positive, or adaptive manner, humour was related to regulation of intimacy and managing conflict. Alternatively, when used in a negative, or maladaptive manner, humour expressed hostility and was related to increased interpersonal distance (Jacobs, 1985). Further, the way a couple used humour in the relationship accounted for more variance in relationship adjustment than did biographical information, such as age. Jacobs (1985) found that relationship success was correlated with a greater degree of adaptive humour, while less-successful adjustment was associated with more maladaptive humour. The distinction made between positive and negative humour here is progressive. It is unfortunate, however, that Jacobs (1985) only used women in her study, as this offers a limited perspective of how humour

might relate to marital adjustment. Men may have a different view of humour or express their humour differently than their wives.

Ziv (1988) published a study where he interviewed 51 married couples regarding their use of humour in their relationship. He found that 95% use humour in their common/ everyday life and 92% said that humour contributes something to their married life. When asked what functions humour fulfills in their married life, they answered the following in order of importance: social, aggressive, sexual, defensive, and intellectual. Only 12% said that humour is used negatively, and in this way would be used to avoid facing issues/ problems. Ziv (1988) also found that men use humour more often than women. Thus, humour mostly served an adaptive and social function in marriage, and was used maladaptively -to avoid problems- relatively infrequently.

Alberts (1990) examined the use of humour in forty marital dyads during conflictual interactions. Twenty were deemed adjusted and twenty maladjusted, according to the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). The couples were asked to discuss a common area of disagreement in the marriage, and come to some resolution, or at least agree to disagree. The data were then analyzed, making note of the number of humorous interactions, who used humour as a tool, types of humour involved, frequency of reciprocation or acceptance, and the number of times humorous comments terminated the interactions (Alberts, 1990). The authors note that humour may be used as a management technique, but it may not come up in every conflict interaction. This was exemplified by only 15 out of the 40 couples (38%) using humour to manage the conflict, a total of 22 times. There were five categories of humour found in this study: jokes about the partner (made fun of or playfully threatened partner), jokes about the self, jokes about the relationship, jokes about events or other people, and sarcasm (negative, cutting,

rejecting or hostile putdowns). Types of humour were placed into the category of 'benign' or 'hostile.' Benign humour included jokes about self, relationship or partner in a gentle manner while hostile humour included joking about the partner in a negative way, particularly with sarcasm.

The authors found that adjusted couples used humour 13 times, mostly (Mode = 8) by using jokes about the partner. In contrast, maladjusted couples used humour only 9 times, mostly (Mode = 4) using sarcasm. There was a significant difference found between adjusted couples who used benign humour and maladjusted couples who used hostile humour. Response to the partner strongly influences how an interaction will unfold, and so is important in examining relational communication (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974, as cited in Alberts, 1990). In this study, adjusted couples accepted the humour 10 times and rejected 3 times, whereas maladjusted couples accepted humour 4 times and rejected 5 times. Although this trend suggests adjusted couples readily respond to humour more than maladjusted couples, and reject less, none of the differences achieved significance. The author contends that humour can be used to terminate negative spirals, and indeed found that adjusted couples used humour to end the conflictual interaction significantly more often than maladjusted couples. As previous researchers found, this does not necessarily mean that the couple has resolved the issue, it simply means that they have used humour to laugh at the situation (Gottman & Levenson, 1999) or to bring the discussion to a close (Alberts, 1990). The authors conclude that there is a connection between negative humour use and dysfunctional relationships and adjusted couples using humour as a tool to terminate disagreement episodes (Alberts, 1990).

In an unpublished thesis, Weir (2000) used undergraduate students to examine the relationship between humour styles and intimacy with a close friend. She measured humour with

the Humour Styles Questionnaire (HSQ; Martin, et al., 2003; Puhlik-Doris, 1999), and used The Miller Social Intimacy Scale (Miller & Lefcourt, 1982) to assess intimacy level. The HSQ subdivides adaptive and maladaptive humour into various humour styles, namely: Affiliative humour, Self-Enhancing Humour, Aggressive Humour, and Self-Defeating Humour. Affiliative humour is telling jokes or using humour to amuse and cheer people up. Self-Enhancing humour relates to the use of humour to improve one's own mood. In contrast, Aggressive Humour involves belittling others, being offensive, or using humour in an inappropriate situation or time. Self-Defeating humour involves extreme self-derogation, or laughing with others when being put down (Martin, et al., 2003; Puhlik-Doris, 1999). It was found that intimacy was positively associated with Affiliative humour and Self-Enhancing Humour, and negatively correlated with Aggressive Humour and Self-Defeating Humour (Weir, 2000). The highest significant correlation was that between Affiliative humour and the intimacy score for females ($r = .45$). This same association was much smaller for males ($r = .27$), which may be further evidence that humour serves different functions for men and women (Weir, 2000).

Rather different results were found in dating relationships. In an undergraduate honours thesis, Johari (2001) examined the relation between humour styles and romantic relationship success using the HSQ (Martin, et al., 2003), and numerous measures of relational satisfaction (Interpersonal Solidarity Scale, Wheelless, 1976; Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Spanier, 1976; Relationship Assessment Scale, Hendrick, 1988; Rubin's Loving and Liking Scale, Rubin, 1970; Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale, Sternberg, 1997; Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships, Schaefer & Olson, 1981; Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale, Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992; Fear of Intimacy, Descutner & Thelen, 1991). Nearly 200 undergraduates were used to examine the hypothesis that adaptive styles of humour (Social and Self-Enhancing) are

associated with successful relationship outcomes, while maladaptive styles of humour (Aggressive and Self-Defeating) are associated with lower relationship satisfaction. A secondary goal was to examine possible gender differences in humour and in the correlations between humour and intimacy.

Results showed a significant relation with maladaptive humour styles, in the expected direction, but no significant relation between romantic satisfaction and adaptive humour styles. Johari (2001) also showed that men scored significantly higher on most humour scales, especially Aggressive Humour. In addition, Aggressive Humour showed stronger negative correlations with relationship success for males than females. Thus, it is more harmful for men to use an aggressive form of humour during dating, yet they use it more often. Although the direction of causality is unknown, these findings suggest that, if one desires to have a healthy and satisfying relationship with an intimate partner, it is best not to engage in an aggressive or self-defeating style of humour, especially for men (Johari, 2001).

The lack of significant positive correlations found here between adaptive humour and relationship satisfaction, compared to previous findings (e.g., Weir, 2000), could be explained by various factors (Johari, 2001). It could be that the association between humour and intimacy may differ with types of relationships, whether they are friends or lovers, dating partners or marriage partners. Perhaps adaptive forms of humour significantly facilitate friendships, but not necessarily romantic dating relationships. In addition, it could be that during marriage, a positive form of humour may be of a benefit in keeping a couple happily united, in that it could buffer conflict (Kuiper & Martin, 1998); whereas when dating, affiliative humour has more of an entertainment value, not necessarily a personality characteristic that directly keeps a couple satisfied in their relationship (Johari, 2001). Lundy, Tan and Cunningham (1998) have also

postulated that humour has a greater effect for marriage than in dating relationships because interior qualities are more important than physical attractiveness for long-term relationships.

The lack of relation found for adaptive humour in Johari's (2001) study could also be due to the HSQ not being directly applicable to romantic relationships. It is designed to measure one's style of humour in a general manner, not necessarily how humour is used within a romantic context (Johari, 2001). Perhaps how humour is used with other people is not how humour is used with one's partner. In fact, writings by Richard Steele in the 17th or 18th century state that some ways to maintain good cheer with friends, like pointed wit, are not appropriate in the marital union (as cited in Leites, 1981). He goes on to say that the humour partners share together ought to be altogether kindly in character (Leites, 1981). If this is so today, that the humour used with friends varies from that used with one's spouse, then responses to items in the HSQ might differ. For example, if a participant responded that they disagree to the question, 'I put some effort into finding something to laugh about every day,' they might agree if the question were, 'My partner and I put some effort into finding something to laugh about together every day.' Perhaps they depend on their partner for humour in the relationship, or perhaps they are not humorous themselves as an individual, but as a couple, they tend to use humour to increase intimacy or enhance communication. It is still useful, however, to examine an individual's style of humour in general terms when studying couple interactions, but it would also be a benefit to utilize a humour questionnaire designed specifically for couples.

In an unpublished PhD dissertation, Raniseski (1998) used a humour measure that was specific to married couples (HUMOR-R, Manke, 1998) and devised her own measure of marital well-being, in order to examine how humour is used in marriage. The humour measure is divided into affiliative, or playful and friendly humour, and distancing, or aggressive humour.

Assessment of affiliative humour included such items as, "I tell funny stories to my spouse about things that have happened to me," while those of distancing humour included items like, "I make sarcastic or cutting remarks toward my spouse." The Marital Well-Being questionnaire consists of six items, such as, "In the last few months, how often have you considered leaving your spouse" and "All in all, how satisfied are you with your marriage?"

She found that affiliative humour was related to a greater amount of marital well-being, especially for husbands. Distancing humour, however, showed a different relation for men and women. For husbands, it was a detriment to the relationship when they or their wives used distancing humour, but for wives, distancing humour had an opposite effect. When the wives perceive a similar amount of distancing humour being used between themselves and their husbands, they report higher levels of marital satisfaction. This finding again shows that humour serves a different purpose for men and women. Raniseski (1998) suggests that humour is a tool, and uses the metaphor of a hammer; one side can be used to strengthen and support while the other side can be used to remove nails and thus weaken or destroy. She goes on to say that husbands perceive the destructive nature of negative humour, while wives perceive the strengthening nature of it. For wives, this style of humour gives them a chance to express their feelings and by expressing themselves in such a way that they gain a sense of equality with their partners. For men, on the other hand, they view distancing humour as a threat to their sense of superiority and control (Raniseski, 1998). For example, if they play a practical joke on their husbands, they could perceive this as outsmarting them, while the husbands could feel a sense of defeat. It was also suggested that dating couples may differ from married couples, in that humour may be used as a screening tool in determining who would be a suitable partner (Raniseski, 1998). Perhaps those who have a consistently distancing and aggressive sense of

humour will not experience many long-term and successful relationships. Viewed in this way, they may in fact be a contributor to their very own demise with respect to intimate relationships.

The most recent published work on humour as a multidimensional trait in relation to romantic relationships was published by De Koning & Weiss (2002). They devised a humour scale specific for use in relationships, The Relational Humor Inventory (De Koning & Weiss, 2002), that examined humour as positive, negative, and instrumental for both the self and the partner. In addition, two items addressed humour used between the couple. This scale will be further examined below. To examine marital quality, they used the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS, Schumm, Paff-Bergen, Hatch, Obiorah, Copeland, Meens & Bugaighis, 1986) and the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships- Inventory (PAIR- Inventory, Schaefer & Olson, 1981).

The researchers found that for both husbands and wives, partner positive humour and couple humour was significantly positively related to both intimacy and satisfaction. This finding corresponds to most past research (Jacobs, 1985; Raniseski, 1998; Weir, 2000), and it is expected that the more one uses humour to make their partner feel good or the more humour is shared within the couple themselves, the closer and happier they will be. Neither Instrumental Humour nor Partner Instrumental Humour were significantly related to marital intimacy or satisfaction for either partner. It is interesting to note the trends for Instrumental Humour, however: for husbands it tended to be negatively related to intimacy and satisfaction, but for wives it was negatively related to marital satisfaction, while positively related to intimacy. This could mean that when women use humour to avoid conflict or lighten a tense situation, they feel emotionally closer to their partner, but they are not necessarily happier in the relationship. This could be a parallel to Raniseski (1998) where humour offered women more control in the

relationship and put them on more of an equal playing field as men. For men, however, using humour in this way is not helpful for intimacy or satisfaction; perhaps they prefer to avoid conflict by withdrawing or, when they do fight, they are more aggressive and fail to try and ease the stress with humour.

Positive Humour was found to be significantly positively related to intimacy and satisfaction for women but did not reach significance for men. This finding is in direct contrast to Raniseski's results (1998), who found that affiliative (or positive) humour was especially beneficial for husbands. For Negative Humour and Partner Negative Humour, DeKoning & Weiss (2002) found these to be negatively related to intimacy and satisfaction, although some relations did not reach significance. For women, the correlation between Negative Humour and Satisfaction did not reach significance and for men, Negative Humour and Partner Negative Humour were not significantly negatively related to Intimacy. Generally speaking, however, the trends were such that the more Negative Humour and Partner Negative Humour is used, the less intimate and satisfied the individuals will feel in the relationship. This result found on maladaptive forms of humour is aligned with past researchers (Jacobs, 1985; Johari, 2001; Weir, 2000).

Limitations of previous studies

While past research has generally viewed humour in an incomplete fashion - as a solely uniform and positive personality characteristic - more recent studies have used more comprehensive measures of humour, by viewing humour as multidimensional. Studies which have considered humour as unidimensional have sometimes used limited ways of measuring humour, such as asking only one item on humour appreciation (Rust and Goldstein, 1989), or by making behavioural observations of only positive humour (Gottman and Levenson, 1999).

Studies that measured similarity of humour appreciation by ratings of jokes (Murstein and Brust, 1985) have since been shown to be invalid (Lefcourt & Thomas, 1998). They do not necessarily reflect a sense of humour, and tend not to be related to certain humour criteria, such as peer ratings (Lefcourt & Thomas, 1998). It would be useful to examine humour using standardized, reliable and valid measures.

Most researchers also assumed that humour was a strictly positive attribute, and considered that the more it is present in a relationship, the better (Hampes, 1992). They had not considered the possibility that humour may be a potentially negative quality, and a hindrance to successful social interactions. Even when humour was in fact found to be a detriment in a relationship, it was still conceptualized as a unidimensional characteristic and the researchers also failed to explore exactly how humour was used in the marriage itself (Cohan and Bradbury, 1997). They did not report exactly how humour was used in the relational interactions. For example, it was unclear whether it was aggressive humour used to cut the partner down during stressful times, or whether it was used socially to make the partner feel better while avoiding the real issues. They did not, in other words, describe the style of humour used in these couple interactions, and thus assumed that humour was simply a unitary trait.

There was much progress made in the humour literature once it was conceptualized as a multidimensional characteristic. The Humour Styles Questionnaire was devised (Martin, et al., 2003; Puhlik-Doris, 1999), which is useful to determine the style of humour one generally uses across situations and persons- the disposition of an individual- as it were. This questionnaire has been used to examine the quality of friendships (Weir, 2000) and dating relationships (Johari, 2001), but not yet of marital relations. Further humour measures were also created that assessed positive and negative humour specifically used in marital interactions (e.g., DeKoning & Weiss,

2002). Raniseski (1998) suggested that humour may also have a different result for romantic interactions at various stages of the relationship, with aggressive humour possibly being used as a screen for potential suitors, and used as a power tool later, in marriage.

Jacobs (1985) has found that humour can be both positive and negative, but used a sample of only married females, which limits this study in that research has shown that humour serves different purposes for each gender. It is critical to be able to reconcile some differential results of past literature, such as whether positive humour is a greater benefit for men (Raniseski, 1998) or women (DeKoning & Weiss, 2002; Weir, 2000), or if it is even a benefit at all (Johari, 2001). It may also be that Aggressive Humour will be negatively associated with romantic satisfaction for males, but positively related for females, in accord with Raniseski's (1998) findings. It is important for the present study to be able to replicate or reconcile the past findings that are mentioned above, in order to gain a greater knowledge and understanding of humour and its connection to success in romantic relationships.

One limitation to some of the studies that did examine humour in a multidimensional fashion is that they only used undergraduate students as their sample (Johari, 2001; Weir, 2000). While it is helpful to gain some insight into humour used in social interactions by using a convenience sample of undergraduates, it is important to acknowledge other types of individuals. Weir (2000) used the HSQ for undergraduate students, and found a relation between different styles of humour and intimacy. The intimacy measure she used, however, was for friendships, not romantic relationships. It is of interest in the present study to assess the relevance of different humour styles in marital interactions. Thus, this study will focus on marriage from a broad sample, rather than friendship (Weir, 2000) or dating relationships (Johari, 2001) from an undergraduate participant pool.

It has been previously noted that most relationship literature fails to reflect ethnic diversity, by using only American samples (Schlesinger, 1982). Similarly, all of the past research mentioned above (e.g., DeKoning & Weiss, 2002; Johari, 2001; Raniseski, 1998) recruited participants from within America and Europe only. While this is helpful in understanding our own culture further, it is Euro-centric to fail to include participation from other countries. It would increase generalizability to include participants outside of an undergraduate subject pool, and from outside of the country.

In summary, there are still many questions that require answers. How are humour styles related to quality of marriage? Is there a gender difference in the relation between humour styles and marital satisfaction? Does the relation between humour and marital quality differ with other demographic variables, such as years married? Does humour serve a different purpose in marriage than in dating relationships or friendships?

Present Research

It is my personal bias from past research and from informal interviews over the years that humour does indeed serve different purposes depending upon how it is used within marriage. Many couples have told me that humour is everything in their marriage; it is the glue that bonds them together. Humour helps enrich their day-to-day life and also helps them to cope during times of extreme stress. A few couples have also shared with me how humour may be used in a destructive manner. In each case, it was the male who was continuously jocular, and the female who came to a point where she simply wanted to have a serious conversation. These insights, in addition to the aforementioned research to date, underlie the current research project. It is my goal to explore these assumptions and findings using a reliable and valid quantitative research approach in order to obtain findings that contribute to the literature.

The current study has two goals. The main purpose is to examine the use of various humour styles in marriage, relative to marital quality. It is hypothesized that adaptive/ positive humour styles are associated with greater quality of marriage. On the other hand, maladaptive/ negative humour styles are expected to be negatively correlated to marital quality.

The second goal of the present study is to examine gender differences in humour and other possible demographic differences in the relation between humour styles and marital quality. For example, gender differences have previously been found in the way humour is used. Martin and Kuiper (1999) found gender differences in the correlations between total laughter frequency and Type A personality characteristics. Men who showed greater Type A characteristics tended also to laugh more, while women with fewer Type A characteristics laughed more (Martin & Kuiper, 1999). This could mean that men use humour in competition and to show aggression and control in an acceptable manner (Chapman, Smith & Foot, 1980; Freud, 1905) while women who use more humour are less driven and orderly/ organized (Martin & Kuiper, 1999). Women may instead use humour to build social relationships and to be more responsive to companions (Chapman, Smith & Foot, 1980; Lefcourt & Martin, 1986; Weir, 2000). Ziv (1984) also proposed that humour creation and appreciation is related to control in a domination/ submission relationship, such that women tend to enjoy humour more and men tend to create it.

Lefcourt and Martin (1986) found gender differences in the way men and women use humour to cope with stress. Coping humour was unrelated to destructiveness for women but was significantly related for men. When dominance was examined, it was found that dominant husbands laugh less, but dominant wives laugh more. In addition, they found that men who use coping humour report more marital dissatisfaction, whereas women seem to be much more

satisfied in marriage. As Raniseski (1998) postulated, humour could be used as a power and control tool, with certain types being helpful for women and harmful for men.

Gender differences were also found when self-deprecating humour was examined. Lundy, Tan and Cunningham (1998) gave participants photographs and humorous remarks of strangers to rate their desire of interest for marriage. They found that when men rated women, their use of self-deprecating (self-defeating) humour actually decreased their desirability, regardless of their level of attraction. When women used this type of humour, it decreased the men's perceived intellect of that woman. Thus, when women use humour, it may be a benefit to themselves in that it helps them cope and is related to happiness in marriage (Lefcourt and Martin, 1986; Raniseski; 1998), yet using self-deprecating humour specifically may decrease positive perceptions from men. It is to be taken into consideration, however, that these participants in the study by Lundy et al. (1998) rated others in terms of desire to be with that person-- more akin to the screening process of dating than the long-term commitment of marriage. It is important to also reinforce that style of humour may make a difference, because Raniseski (1998) found that husbands who perceive their wives to use more affiliative humour in the relationship are actually more satisfied in their marriage, whereas Lundy, Tan and Cunningham (1998) found that women who use self-deprecating humour were perceived by men as less intelligent and less desirable to be with.

Ethnicity could also show a difference in the relation between humour styles and marital quality. For example, Self- Defeating Humour is used as a defence mechanism against anxiety (Ziv, 1984), and can be used by minorities to fit the 'American mold' (Martineau, 1972). This style of humour can also be used by oppressed minorities to effectively deal with their circumstance and standing within society, such as how some Jewish people tend to make jest at

themselves (Ziv, 1984). Minorities also tended to use gallows humour as a compensatory device during the Nazi occupation (Obrdlik, 1942). Humour used by African Americans has also evolved, whereas the slave population had used humour to manipulate their environment and decrease their work load (Goldman, 1960, as cited in Martineau, 1972). Now, African Americans tend to use humour to show Black pride (Boskin, 1966, as cited in Martineau, 1972). Humour, then, seems to be an adaptive function, serving various purposes, depending upon emotional and social needs within the context of the society.

The definition of the joking relationship, where one person teases while the other is to take no offence, was found in Africa, Asia, Oceania and North America (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940, as cited in Martineau, 1972). Humour is used everywhere in the world, by all types of people, but it is the style of humour used and the degree to which it is used that could possibly differ amongst various demographic variables.

Method

Participants

Four hundred and seventy-one married individuals from around the world participated in this study. There were 143 (30.4%) males and 327 (69.4%) females. Participants had to be married and currently living with their partner. Further description of demographic characteristics of the sample to be presented in the Results.

Measures

Several questionnaires were used in the current study, including The Humour Styles Questionnaire (HSQ; Martin, et al., 2003; Puhlik-Doris, 1999), The Relational Humor Inventory (De Koning & Weiss, 2002), and The Positive and Negative Quality in Marriage Scale (PANQIMS; Fincham & Linfield, 1997). Numerous demographic information was also obtained, namely: gender, partner's gender, age, English as first language, place of residence, ethnicity, length of time participants have known their partner, length of marriage, number of children and whether children are from current marriage. Optional demographic questions were also posed, namely: status of parent's marriage, religion, education, occupation, and income. The actual website pages with the demographic questions and the humour and marital quality measures can be found in Appendix A.

The Humour Styles Questionnaire (HSQ; Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray & Weir, 2003; Puhlik-Doris, 1999).

In a Masters thesis, Puhlik-Doris (1999) designed The Humour Styles Questionnaire under the supervision of Dr. Rod Martin. The 32-item questionnaire was shortened to 20 items for this study by using alpha analyses, and keeping items with the highest factor loadings. The items are equally divided into four styles of humour: Affiliative humour, Self-Enhancing

Humour, Aggressive Humour, and Self-Defeating Humour. The former two are considered adaptive, while the latter two are maladaptive humour styles.

Affiliative Humour is a style used to facilitate relationships, by telling jokes or using witty banter to amuse and cheer people up, with items such as, "I laugh and joke a lot with my closest friends." Self-Enhancing humour enhances the self and has no direct impact on other people. It involves keeping a humorous perspective on life's problems, in times of adversity. It also relates to the use of humour to improve one's own mood and amusement at the incongruities of life. Items include statements such as, "If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself up with humour." Aggressive Humour involves belittling others, being offensive, sarcastic, or using humour in an inappropriate situation or time. It is humour used to enhance the self at the expense of other people. For example, "If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it." Self-Defeating humour involves extreme self-derogation, using humour to hide true feelings, or laughing along with others when being put down, and then feeling badly about it afterwards. Here, humour is used in such a way as to facilitate relationships at the expense of the self. This style has items such as, "I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should." Each scale has an equal number of items.

Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they agree with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "totally disagree" to "totally agree." The HSQ has good reliability, with internal consistencies for the four scales ranging from .77 to .81 (Martin, et al., 2003). The intercorrelations between the four scales are low, showing that each scale measures a distinct aspect of humour. Test-retest reliabilities were also high, ranging from .80 to .85 across the four scales. The mean scores for the scales ranged from 25.9 (SD = 9.22) (Self-defeating Humour) to 46.4 (SD = 7.17) (Affiliative Humour) (Martin, et al., 2003). Gender differences

were found in validation studies, whereas males score significantly higher on Aggressive and Self-Defeating Humour. When compared to existing humour measures, the HSQ is significantly related, indicating high convergent validity. For example, when compared to the Situational Humor Response Questionnaire (SHRQ; Martin & Lefcourt, 1984), a scale that examines one's tendency to respond with smiling and laughter in various life situations, the multiple R was highly significant at .47 ($p < .001$). When examining each scale in relation to the SHRQ, it is the adaptive styles of humour that are highly significantly related while the maladaptive styles are not (Affiliative Humour, $r = .27$, $p < .001$; Self-Enhancing Humour, $r = .43$, $p < .001$; Aggressive Humour, $r = .12$, n.s.; Self-Defeating Humour, $r = -.01$, n.s.) (Martin, et al., 2003). Thus, there is overlap between being able to laugh in different situations and using humour to make yourself or others feel cheerful. The HSQ also taps maladaptive humour, a dimension distinct from that assessed in previous measures of humour.

The Relational Humor Inventory (RHI; DeKoning & Weiss, 2002)

This questionnaire was the most recently devised and published humour assessment. Like the HSQ, it viewed humour as multidimensional, yet was specific to humour used in intimate relationships. As mentioned previously, it was devised of positive, negative and instrumental humour for both self and partner. It also had a scale specific to couple humour. The authors described positive humour as sharing laughter to become emotionally closer to each other, and includes aspects such as humour appreciation and attractiveness. They assess positive humour used by the individual (example item: "My use of humor has brought me closer to my partner") and used by the partner (e.g., "My partner has little difficulty making me smile or laugh").

With negative humour, the undertone of misanthrope is apparent, but not acknowledged. This type of humour is used to express aggression or manipulation. An example of an item to assess the individual's negative humour is, "Sometimes I use humor to put my partner down," and to assess the partner is, "My partner's humor can be really aggressive." Instrumental humour might be used to change the topic from a difficult issue to a less emotional one, therefore avoiding tension or alleviating negative feelings. Instrumental Humour of the individual is assessed by questions such as, "Whenever I can, I prefer to use humor to avoid conflict between us." Partner Instrumental Humour includes questions like, "My partner uses humor to ease the tension when we fight." Couple Humour is humour that is shared within the couple, and it was assessed by two questions: 'My partner and I share a lot of "private jokes"' and 'As a couple, we have our own sense of humour.'

As the subscales were categorized subsequent to principle component analyses, each scale has an unequal number of items (Instrumental Humor = 8 items, Partner Negative Humor = 7 items, Positive Humor and Partner Positive Humor = 5 items each, Partner Instrumental Humor = 4 items, Negative Humor = 3 items, and Couple Humor = 2 items). Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they agree with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "totally disagree" to "totally agree." The scale showed good reliability with Cronbach alpha ratings ranging from .72 (Couple Humour) to .84 (Instrumental Humour) (DeKoning & Weiss, 2002).

When compared to the SHRQ for convergent validity, there is no relation for males. However, for females, the SHRQ was significantly related to Positive Humour ($r = .34, p < .008$) and Instrumental Humour ($r = .37, p < .008$). This shows that in general, humour used within the context of a couple is distinct from mirth shown in various situations, such as if a waiter

accidentally spills soup in your lap. This is especially the case for males, whereas females who tend to laugh or smile in different life circumstances would also tend to use humour in their marriage to increase closeness or avoid conflict.

The Positive and Negative Quality in Marriage Scale (PANQIMS; Fincham & Linfield, 1997).

The PANQIMS is a brief, global assessment of marital quality. The authors found positive and negative quality in marriage to be two independent factors, thus yielding a more thorough and comprehensive index of marital quality (Fincham & Linfield, 1997). Thus, just as humour has been found to be more complex and is now considered as a multidimensional construct, so too is marital quality. There are six items that comprise the PANQIMS. Participants are asked to evaluate one dimension of marital quality at a time (positive or negative) in three different areas. Sample items include: “Considering only the positive qualities of your spouse, *and ignoring the negative ones*, evaluate how positive these qualities are,” “Considering only negative feelings you have towards your spouse, *and ignoring the positive ones*, evaluate how negative these feelings are,” and “Considering only good feelings you have about your marriage, *and ignoring the bad ones*, evaluate how good these feelings are.” They indicated their response on a 7-point likert scale, with 1 representing “not at all” and 7 representing “extremely.”

The questionnaire can be used as two distinct measures, or can offer a single summary index of marital quality. When using the scale as two distinct measures, the authors have found four types of couples when using the scale: satisfied (high positive quality, low negative quality), distressed (low positive, high negative), ambivalent (high positive, high negative), and indifferent (low positive, low negative). The distinction between ambivalence and indifference in marital quality is obscured in past relationship satisfaction measures, as evidenced by similar

'moderately happy' scores on the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959). Ambivalent wives attributed significantly more cause and responsibility to their husbands for negative events than indifferent wives. Ambivalent wives also reported higher ratios of negative to positive behaviours for their husbands and themselves. In terms of behaviours and attributions, ambivalent wives were more similar to distressed spouses than happy spouses, and indifferent spouses were more akin to happy spouses than distressed spouses. Gender differences found here are partly explained by the view that women are more attuned to the marriage than men, and better serve as a barometer for the functioning of the relationship (Fincham & Linfield, 1997).

The internal consistency of each dimension was found to be high with coefficient alpha ratings being .87 and .91 for husbands and .90 and .89 for wives, for positive and negative dimensions, respectively (Fincham & Linfield, 1997). When compared to the MAT for convergent validity, there was a significant positive correlation for positive marital quality ($r = .63, p < .05$ for husbands; $r = .58, p < .05$ for wives) and a significant negative correlation found for negative marital quality ($r = -.58, p < .05$ for husbands; $r = -.65, p < .05$ for wives)

The authors of the PANQIMS suggest that a limitation to their study was that the sample they used did not reflect diversity within society as a whole (e.g., race, ethnicity), thus limiting the generalizability of the findings (Fincham & Linfield, 1997). As participants for the current study were recruited from around the world, the extended application of the marital quality index can be examined.

Procedure

In order to obtain high reliability and validity when examining various demographic differences in the relation between humour styles and marital quality, the researcher aimed to

recruit a large number of participants. Participants were given a confidential and secure website address, located through The University of Western Ontario website, where they logged-on and completed the informed consent form, demographics form, questionnaires and an option for feedback.

The primary method of recruitment entailed a network sampling approach (Raniseski, 1998), which began with mass e-mailing and word-of-mouth with colleagues and peers. Mass e-mails were initially sent to married friends around the world by the main researcher and thesis committee members. Mass e-mails were also initially sent to faculty, staff and students of the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University. In addition, a mass e-mail was sent to colleagues worldwide through a mailing list for a humour journal. Married contacts who are leaders of a premarital course in the Kitchener area were also notified of the survey via telephone and e-mail. These above attempts were then expanded through snowball e-mailing such that each participant was requested to forward the website to married individuals that they knew. They were encouraged to also include married individuals from outside of Canada. The original e-mail contained an informational letter and the website link. Sample homogeneity is avoided because the participants contacted, and then the married individuals contacted by them do not necessarily know one another, thus increasing the chance of diversity of the sample (Killian, 2001).

Secondary methods of recruitment included posting flyers. Various churches in London, Ontario were contacted via telephone or e-mail, and those who chose to assist in recruitment were given a flyer to post on their bulletin boards. With permission, flyers were also posted in various community boards and businesses in the London and Kitchener/ Waterloo area. Flyers

were also placed in each counsellor's mail box at Kitchener-Waterloo Counselling Services Incorporated.

Results

Correlational analyses were utilized between humour and marital quality for the entire sample, and for males and females separately. Further demographic differences were also explored using Univariate Analyses of Variance. The use of standardized instruments ensures reliability and validity, and a high number of participants increases the power of the results. Reliability analyses were examined for each scale used for verification purposes, and strong reliability ratings were found (See Appendix B). To further ensure the trustworthiness of the data, dummy items were added to the scales, such as: "My partner and I have never spoken to each other since we first met" and "I have never laughed in my life." The data were analysed to examine whether those who agreed with the improbable/ fake items differed significantly from those who disagreed with these items. There were no significant differences found, and so the data were used in their entirety.

Although it is not directly pertinent to the main research question, it is interesting to note how the sub-scales of each questionnaire correlate to one another. These intercorrelations can be found in Appendix C.

A description of the participants will be presented, followed by the correlation between humour and marital quality, an exploration of gender differences, and regression and univariate analysis of variance for various demographic variables.

Participants

Four hundred and seventy-one individuals participated in this study (143 (30.4%) males and 327 (69.4%) females). Out of these, there was one male in a same-sex relationship and six women in a same-sex relationship. Participants had a relatively even distribution of ages. Ninety-six (20.4%) were aged 20-30, 139 (29.5%) from 31-40 years old, 120 (25.5%) from 41-50 years old, 107 (22.7%) from 51-70 years old, and 8 (1.7%) were over 70 years old. More participants have known their partner for a longer amount of time. Only two (.4%) knew their partner for less than one year, 12 (2.5%) knew their partner for 1-2 years, 56 (11.9%) knew them for 3-5 years, 97 (20.6%) for 6-10 years, 119 (25.3%) for 11-20 years, and 181 (38.4%) knew their partner for over 20 years. Many participants had long-term marriages, with over 50% being married for over 11 years. Twenty-seven (5.7%) were married for less than one year, 52 (11.0%) for 1-2 years, 73 (15.5%) for 3-5 years, 71 (15.1%) for 6-10 years, 112 (23.8%) for 11-20 years, and 135 (28.7%) were married for over 20 years.

Although participation was encouraged from all over the world, 79.2% of the participants lived in North America, with 153 (32.5%) from Canada and 220 (46.7%) from the USA. The rest currently reside in Europe ($N = 33$, 7.0%), Asia ($N = 28$, 5.9%), Australia and NZ ($N = 30$, 6.4%), Latin America ($N = 3$, 0.6%), and Africa ($N = 4$, 0.8%). Most identified their ethnicity as European ($N = 363$, 77.1%), with the rest who described themselves as Asian ($N = 31$, 6.6%), North American ($N = 29$, 6.2%), Mixed ($N = 25$, 5.3%), Pacific Islander ($N = 2$, 0.4%), Latin American ($N = 4$, 0.8%), African ($N = 3$, 0.6%), or Aboriginal ($N = 1$, 0.2%).

The majority of the participants were of the Christian faith (120, 25.5% Catholic; 143, 30.4% Protestant; 56, 11.9% Other Christian), 5 (1.1%) were Moslem, 8 (1.7%) Buddhist, 3 (0.6%) Hindu, 30 (6.4%) Jewish, 10 (2.1%) Agnostic, 8 (1.7%) Atheist, and 70 (14.9%) were of no religion. The number of participants increased with the level of education, with 25 (5.3%)

going as far as a high school diploma, 60 (12.7%) completing or currently enrolled in college, 138 (29.3%) undergraduate studies, and 239 (50.7%) finished or in graduate school. Occupations ranged widely, with most working in education ($N = 118$, 25.1%), health ($N = 79$, 16.8%), or management ($N = 67$, 14.2%).

Income was given in currencies worldwide, such as Euros ($N = 18$, 3.8%), Australian Dollars ($N = 22$, 4.7%), Pounds ($N = 9$, 1.9%), Japanese Yen ($N = 6$, 1.3%), Hong Kong Dollars ($N = 5$, 1.0%), and New Zealand Dollars ($N = 1$, 0.2%). When converted to Canadian Dollars, the mean income was \$113,912 ($SD = \$72,638$) and ranged from \$0 to \$483,073. The first quartile earned less than \$69,010, those in the 50th percentile earned less than \$99,687, and those in the 75th percentile earned less than \$138,021.

Most of the participants' parents were still married ($N = 267$, 56.7%), with the rest being divorced ($N = 96$, 20.4%) or widowed ($N = 96$, 20.4%). The number of children ranged from none to over 4 ($N = 12$, 2.5%), with 138 (29.3%) participants who reported no children, 214 (45.5%) had one or two children and 106 (22.5%) had three or four children.

Descriptive statistics and gender differences

Means and standard deviations were computed for all participants and for males and females separately on all of the questionnaires used. Two-tailed independent samples t-tests were conducted to assess any sex differences on the various scales (see Table 1). While there were no sex differences found in the Marital Quality scale, there were significant differences in some of the humour measures. Namely, males scored significantly higher than females on Aggressive Humour ($M = 3.64$, $M = 3.23$, for males and females respectively, $t(467) = 3.72$, $p < .001$) and Instrumental Humour ($M = 3.84$, $M = 3.52$, for males and females respectively, $t(468) = 2.55$, $p < .05$). Females, on the other hand, scored significantly higher than males on

Positive Humour ($\underline{M} = 5.74$, $\underline{M} = 6.01$, for males and females respectively, $t(209) = -2.27$, $p < .05$), Partner Positive Humour ($\underline{M} = 5.22$, $\underline{M} = 5.63$, for males and females respectively, $t(468) = -3.38$, $p < .01$), Partner Negative Humour ($\underline{M} = 2.23$, $\underline{M} = 2.65$, for males and females respectively, $t(351) = -3.88$, $p < .001$), Partner Instrumental Humour ($\underline{M} = 3.71$, $\underline{M} = 4.27$, for

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations and t-test results of each scale

Measure	Total	Male	Female	p
<u>HSQ</u>				
Affiliative Humour	5.86 [1.03]	5.81 [1.01]	5.88 [1.03]	n.s.
Self-Enhancing Humour	4.68 [1.33]	4.61 [1.35]	4.72 [1.33]	n.s.
Aggressive Humour	3.34 [1.13]	3.64 [1.22]	3.22 [1.07]	<.001
Self-Defeating Humour	3.33 [1.37]	3.31 [1.32]	3.34 [1.40]	n.s.
<u>RHI</u>				
Positive Humour	5.93 [1.04]	5.74 [1.27]	6.01 [.91]	<.05
Negative Humour	2.85 [1.60]	2.73 [1.59]	2.91 [1.61]	n.s.
Instrumental Humour	3.62 [1.23]	3.84 [1.28]	3.52 [1.20]	<.05
Partner Positive Humour	5.50 [1.21]	5.22 [1.24]	5.63 [1.18]	<.01
Partner Negative Humour	2.52 [1.20]	2.23 [.96]	2.65 [1.26]	<.001
Partner Instrumental Humour	4.10 [1.39]	3.71 [1.37]	4.27 [1.37]	<.001
Couple Humour	5.53 [1.36]	5.26 [1.52]	5.64 [1.28]	<.01
<u>Marital Quality</u>				
Positive Quality	8.93 [1.43]	8.73 [1.73]	9.02 [1.27]	n.s.
Negative Quality	3.92 [2.09]	3.65 [2.13]	4.04 [2.06]	n.s.

N 471 143 327

Note: HSQ = Humour Styles Questionnaire, RHI = Relational Humour Inventory



males and females respectively, $t(467) = -4.11, p < .001$), and Couple Humour ($M = 5.26, M = 5.64$, for males and females respectively, $t(235) = -2.68, p < .01$).

Correlations between humour and marital quality

The main research question for the current thesis was to examine the relation between humour and marital quality. Pearson Product Moment Correlations were utilized to determine this relation. The data were analysed for males and females separately, and for the sample as a whole. Table 2 presents the correlations between the humour scales (RHI, HSQ) and the marital quality scale (Positive, Negative, and Total Quality). Total Quality is derived from subtracting Negative Quality from Positive Quality, producing a similar construct as traditional marital satisfaction scales.

In general, the correlations between marital quality and humour came out as expected, although the correlations for the HSQ were comparatively smaller than the RHI. For the total sample, Positive Marital Quality was significantly positively related to Affiliative Humour ($r = .12, p < .05$), Self-Enhancing Humour ($r = .10, p < .05$), Positive Humour ($r = .61, p < .01$), Partner Positive Humour ($r = .63, p < .01$), Partner Instrumental Humour ($r = .29, p < .01$), and Couple Humour ($r = .48, p < .01$). Alternatively, Positive Marital Quality showed a significant negative relation to Aggressive Humour ($r = -.19, p < .01$), Negative Humour ($r = -.18, p < .01$), and Partner Negative Humour ($r = -.21, p < .01$). For the total sample, Negative Marital Quality was significantly positively related to Aggressive Humour ($r = .15, p < .01$), Self-Defeating Humour ($r = .17, p < .01$), Negative Humour ($r = ., p < .01$), and Partner Negative Humour ($r = .28, p < .01$). Negative Marital Quality showed a significant negative relation to Positive Humour ($r = -.26, p < .01$), Partner Positive Humour ($r = -.38, p < .01$), Partner Instrumental Humour ($r = -.15, p < .01$), and Couple Humour ($r = -.27, p < .01$).

Table 2
Correlations between humour and marital quality measures

Measure	Positive Quality	Negative Quality	Total Quality
AF	.12*	.01	.05
Males	.13	-.04	.10
Females	.11	.03	.03
SE	.10*	-.04	.08
Males	.19*	.06	.07
Females	.04	-.09	.08
AG	-.19**	.15**	-.20**
Males	-.31**	.25**	-.33**
Females	-.09	.13*	-.13*
SD	-.09	.17**	-.16**
Males	.07	.05	.01
Females	-.18**	.22**	-.24**
POS	.61**	-.26**	.48**
Males	.73**	-.25**	.56**
Females	.51**	-.31**	.45**
NEG	-.18**	.30**	-.29**
Males	-.19*	.25**	-.27**
Females	-.18**	.32**	-.31**
INST	.03	.03	-.01
Males	.09	.01	.04
Females	.01	.06	-.04
PPOS	.63**	-.38**	.57**
Males	.68**	-.35**	.61**
Females	.59**	-.43**	.57**
PNEG	-.21**	.28**	-.30**
Males	-.09	.19*	-.17*
Females	-.31**	.30**	-.35**
PINST	.29**	-.15**	.25**
Males	.31**	-.17*	.28**
Females	.26**	-.17**	.24**
COUPLE	.48**	-.27**	.42**
Males	.56**	-.26**	.48**
Females	.42**	-.29**	.39**

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ RHI: POS = Positive Humour, NEG = Negative Humour, INST = Instrumental Humour, PPOS = Partner Positive Humour, PNEG = Partner Negative Humour, PINST = Partner Instrumental Humour, COUPLE = Couple Humour; HSQ: AF = Affiliative Humour, SE = Self-Enhancing Humour, AG = Aggressive Humour, SD = Self-Defeating Humour

There was no significant relation to adaptive forms of humour, but a significant negative correlation with Aggressive Humour ($r = -.20, p < .01$) and Self-Defeating Humour ($r = -.16, p < .01$). In relation to the RHI, Total Quality was significantly positively related to Positive Humour ($r = .48, p < .01$), Partner Positive Humour ($r = .57, p < .01$), Partner Instrumental Humour ($r = .25, p < .01$), and Couple Humour ($r = .42, p < .01$). Total Quality was significantly negatively related to Negative Humour ($r = -.29, p < .01$) and Partner Negative Humour ($r = -.30, p < .01$).

Total Quality showed similar trends to Positive Quality, although the strength of the correlations tended to be in between that of Positive and Negative Quality. The only exception to this was the results for Partner Negative Humour, where the Total Quality was actually higher than both Positive Quality and Negative Quality. When Marital Quality was correlated to the RHI, there are stronger correlations than with the HSQ, which is expected, as the RHI is specific to humour used within a marriage, whereas the HSQ taps a more general use of humour. It is also interesting to note that while Partner Instrumental Humour shows significant relations to Marital Quality, there are absolutely no significant relations between Instrumental Humour and Marital Quality, again showing how perceptions of one's partner has a stronger impact than one's self-evaluation.

Correlations between humour and marital quality for each sex

Any differences between the sexes were examined in the correlations between Marital Quality and Humour (refer to Table 2). The biggest differences were the correlations between Marital Quality and Aggressive Humour, Self-Defeating Humour and Partner Negative Humour. Males who score high on Positive Quality or Total Quality tend to show less Aggressive Humour ($r = -.31, p < .01$; $r = -.33, p < .01$, respectively). Likewise, males who score high on Negative

Quality tend to show more Aggressive Humour ($r = .25, p < .01$). In contrast, for females, Aggressive Humour either shows no significant correlation (Positive Quality, $r = -.09, n.s.$) or a weaker significant relation (Negative Quality, $r = .13, p < .05$; Total Quality, $r = -.13, p < .05$). Thus, males tend to use more Aggressive Humour (Table 2) and it relates to quality of their marriage in a more drastic manner.

Females show significant correlations for Self-Defeating Humour across all of Positive Quality ($r = -.18, p < .01$), Negative Quality ($r = .22, p < .01$) and Total Quality ($r = -.24, p < .01$). In contrast, there are no significant correlations found between Self-Defeating Humour and Marital Quality at all for males ($r = .07, n.s., r = .05, n.s., r = .01, n.s.$, for Positive Quality, Negative Quality and Total Quality, respectively).

Partner Negative Humour shows a similar trend to Self-Defeating Humour. Females show significant correlations for Partner Negative Humour across all of Positive Quality ($r = -.31, p < .01$), Negative Quality ($r = .30, p < .01$) and Total Quality ($r = -.35, p < .01$). In contrast, there are either no significant correlations or much weaker significant relations found between Partner Negative Humour and Marital Quality for males ($r = -.09, n.s., r = .19, p < .05, r = -.17, p < .05$, for Positive Quality, Negative Quality and Total Quality, respectively).

A statistical test was utilized in order to determine whether these correlations had significantly different strengths for each gender. Indeed, there was a significant difference in the correlations for Total Quality and Aggressive Humour between males and females ($p < .04$). The difference between men and women in the relation between Total Quality and Self-Defeating Humour was also significant ($p < .02$). Finally, the correlation between Total Quality and Partner Negative Humour was significantly different for each gender ($p < .06$).

Regression and Analysis of Variance: Examining demographic contributions

To determine the amount of variance in marital quality that is accounted for by humour, step-wise multiple regression analyses were conducted. Considering that Positive Humour, Partner Positive Humour and Couple Humour seem to be a similar construct, all being significantly correlated to one another and correlated to Positive Quality, these were grouped into one category called Total Positive Humour. Similarly, Negative Humour and Partner Negative Humour were put into a category called Total Negative Humour, for the purposes of Regression and Univariate Analysis of Variance analyses.

Regression Analyses were conducted with Positive Quality as the outcome variable and Total Positive Humour as the predictor variable. The results showed that 15.3% of the variation in Positive Quality is accounted for by Total Positive Humour and this Total Positive Humour does significantly contribute to Positive Quality ($r(466) = .392, p < .001$). A similar multiple regression analysis using Total Quality as the outcome variable also revealed that Total Positive Humour together accounted for 13.0% of the variance, contributing significantly to Total Quality ($r(466) = .360, p < .001$). Regression Analyses were conducted in a similar manner using Negative Quality as the outcome variable and Total Negative Humour as the predictor variable. Results showed that Total Negative Humour significantly contributes to Negative Quality ($r(466) = .356, p < .001$), and accounts for 12.7% of the variance.

The demographic variables (moderating variables) that could be examined by using equivalent logical groups were examined using univariate analysis of variance. This was done in order to determine whether there were any significant differences in the relation between humour and marital quality found between groups. Unfortunately, for some variables- namely those of religion, place of residence, same-sex relations, and ethnicity- there were not enough participants

in each category to accurately compare groups. The moderator variables presented include: gender, age, years married, number of children, parents' marital status, level of education, occupation, and income.

Each moderator variable used was put into a logical new group to make a smaller number of categories. To easily compare among groups, Total Positive Humour was divided at the median, creating one group that is high in Total Positive Humour and another that is low in Total Positive Humour. Total Negative Humour was also split at the median in a similar manner. As the HSQ did not highly correlate with Marital Quality, focus for the Analysis of Variance was solely on the RHI. Interactions were examined for each moderating variable with combinations of Positive Quality, Negative Quality and Total Quality as dependent variables and Total Positive Humour and Total Negative Humour as independent variables. As there were no significant interactions found when using Negative Quality and Negative Humour, and also when using Total Quality and Negative Humour, these two particular combinations will not be presented. The demographic variables for which there were interactions found will be reviewed first, followed by demographic variables for which there were no significant interactions.

Number of children

An analysis of variance was conducted to determine whether the relationship between positive humour and marital quality was different for number of children. For this purpose, participants were divided into three groups: no children, one or two children, and three or more children. A two (Positive Humour) by three (number of children) between-subjects univariate analysis of variance was computed with positive marital quality as the dependent variable. This analysis showed a significant interaction ($F(1, 467) = 4.45, p < .05$). To further examine this interaction, the mean scores for each group are plotted in Figure 1. As shown in this figure,

participants in the low Positive Humour group who have any children at all have much lower Positive Quality than those who have no children. However, those who are in the high Positive Humour group have higher Positive Quality overall, and are more stable regardless of number of children. As can be seen in Figure 2, a similar significant result is found when Total Quality is used in place of Positive Quality ($F(1, 467) = 4.74, p < .01$). A similar analysis of variance was also conducted using Positive Quality as the dependent measure and Negative Humour as the independent variable. This too showed a significant interaction ($F(1, 467) = 3.25, p < .05$). The interaction between number of children and Negative Humour is similar to the results of Positive Humour, except in the opposite direction (see Figure 3). Those who score lower in the Total Negative Humour score higher on Positive Quality regardless of children. Alternatively, those in the high Negative Humour group tend to have relatively high scores in Positive Quality when they have no children, much lower Positive Quality with one or two children, and even lower quality with three or more children. Thus, overall it seems that more Positive Humour and less Negative Humour is related to a more stable Positive or Total Quality of marriage, regardless of number of children. For those in the low Positive Humour group or high Negative Humour group, however, they tend to experience severe declines in quality of marriage when children enter into the marriage.

Number of years married

Another factor that may influence the relation between quality of marriage and humour is the number of years the participant has been married. To this end, participants were divided into approximately equal groups based on duration of marriage (less than six years, six to twenty years, and over twenty years). A two (Positive Humour) by three (duration of marriage) between-subjects univariate analysis of variance was computed with positive marital quality as the

dependent variable. This analysis failed to show a significant interaction. However, when Total Quality was substituted for Positive Quality as the dependent measure, there was indeed a significant interaction ($F(1, 467) = 4.06, p < .05$). As can be seen in Figure 4, there is a smaller difference between the low Positive Humour and high Positive Humour group for those who have been married for less than six years. After this ‘honeymoon’ period is over, those in the low Positive Humour group experience a decline in Total Satisfaction, especially for those married six to twenty years. As with children, those in the high Positive Humour group are more stable across years married, and those married twenty or more years actually experience a slight increase in Total Quality of marriage. A similar analysis of variance was also conducted using Positive Humour as the independent variable and Negative Quality as the dependent variable. This too showed a significant interaction ($F(1, 467) = 3.44, p < .05$). Figure 5 shows that the relation between Negative Quality and Positive Humour is almost an exact mirror image of the relation between Total Quality and Positive Humour. Those married for a shorter time have a smaller difference between high Positive Humour and low Positive Humour, those in the low Positive Humour group who have been married six to twenty years have the highest Negative Quality, and those in the high Positive Humour group who have been married for over twenty years have the lowest Negative Quality.

Parents’ marital status

Status of parents’ marriage was also examined to determine whether the relationship between humour and marital quality varied. For this purpose, three logical groups were devised: parents married, parents separated/divorced, and parents widowed. When analyses of variance procedures were conducted for status of parents’ marriage, the only significant interaction was found when Positive Quality was a dependent variable and Positive Humour was an independent

variable ($F(1, 456) = 3.35, p < .05$). To further examine this interaction, see Figure 6. As shown here, those in the low Positive Humour group have lower Positive Quality, regardless of whether or not their parents are still married. However, they have a curious increase in Positive Quality if they indicated their parents as widowed. As the trend continues from the other demographic variables, the high Positive Humour group is more stable regardless of the parents' marital situation.

Occupation

Occupation is another demographic variable that may or may not interact with the relation between Positive Quality and Positive Humour. In order to examine this, there were five groups comprised of: Business/Management, Science/Health, Education, Student, and Other. This was computed in a two (Positive Humour) by five (occupation) between-subjects univariate analysis of variance with Positive Quality as the dependent measure. This analysis showed a significant interaction ($F(1, 468) = 3.10, p < .05$). Examination of Figure 7 shows that for those in Business/Management, the difference in Positive Quality between the low Positive Humour group and high Positive Humour group is the smallest, and those in the low Positive Humour group who work in the Science/Health field have the lowest positive marital quality. Again, the high Positive Humour group have the highest Positive Quality, and are most stable regardless of occupation.

Figure 1

Estimated Marginal Means of Positive Quality with Number of Children

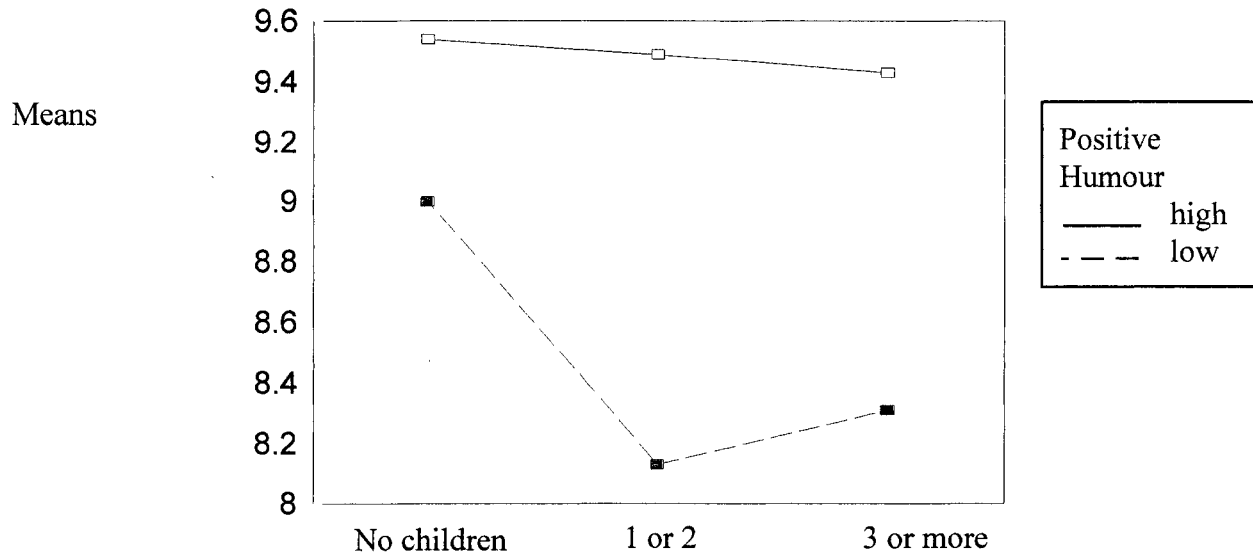


Figure 2

Estimated Marginal Means of Total Quality with Number of Children

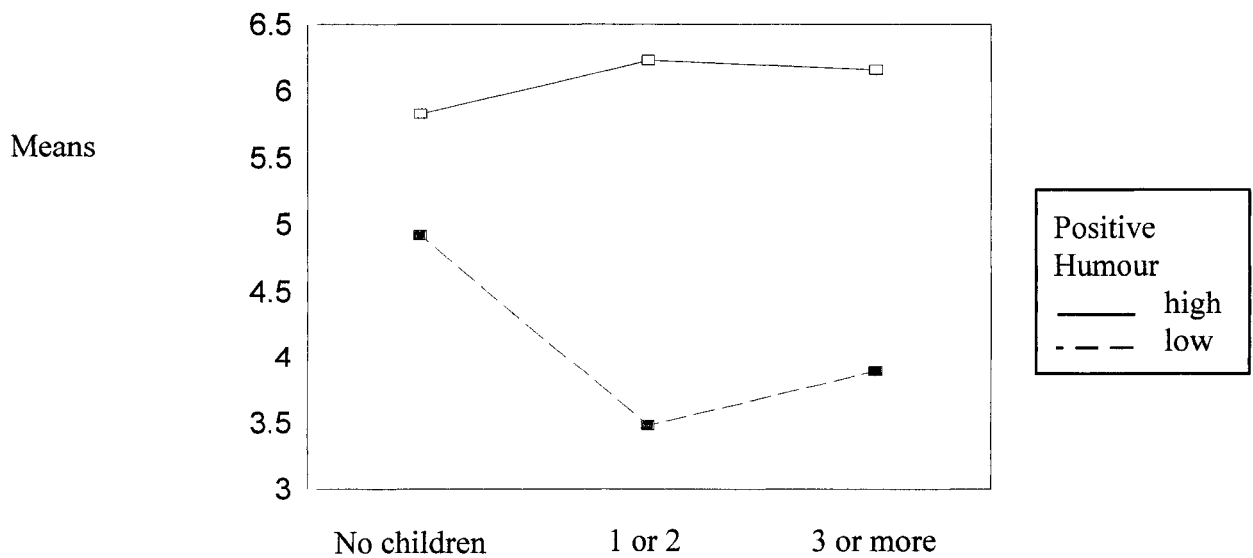


Figure 3

Estimated Marginal Means of Positive Quality with Number of Children

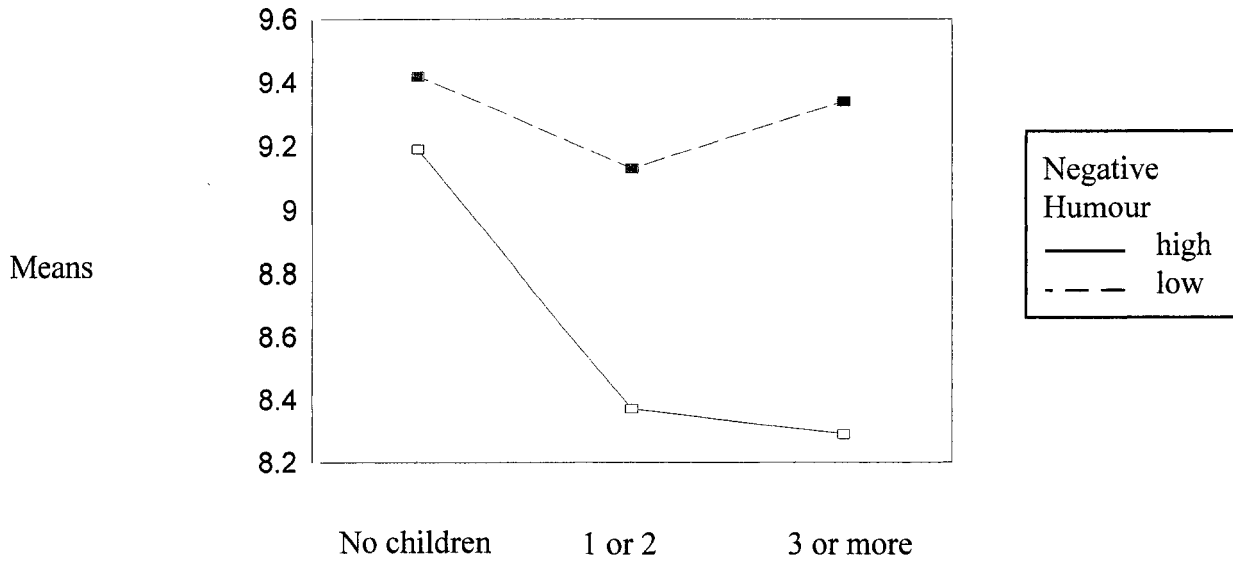


Figure 4

Estimated Marginal Means of Total Quality with Years Married

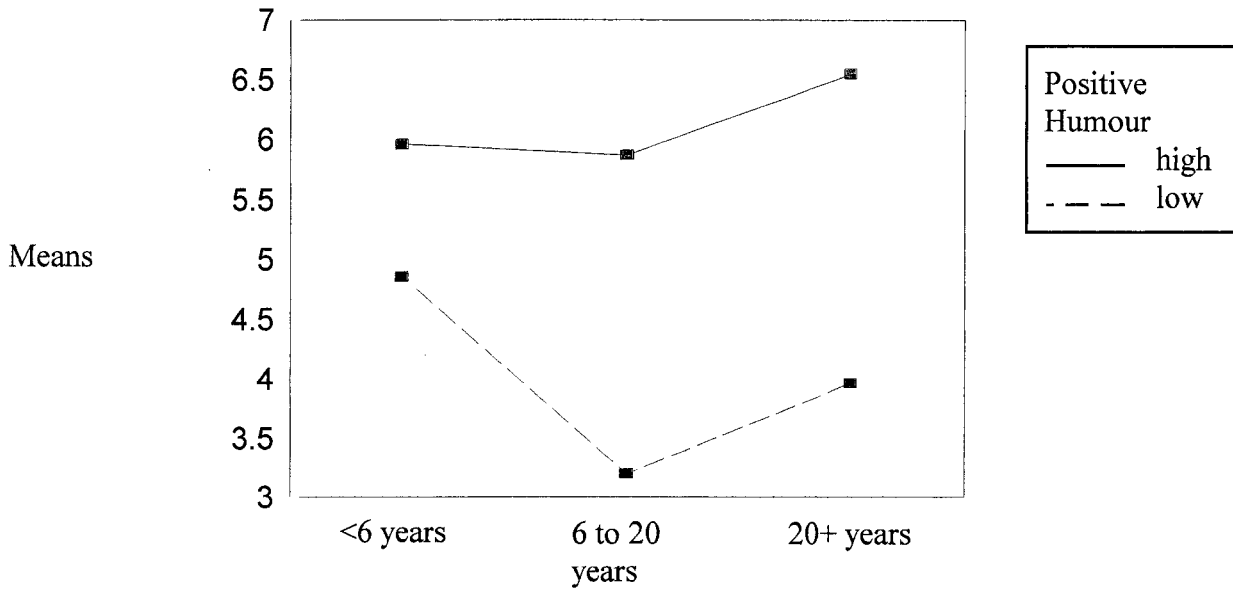


Figure 5

Estimated Marginal Means of Negative Quality with Years Married

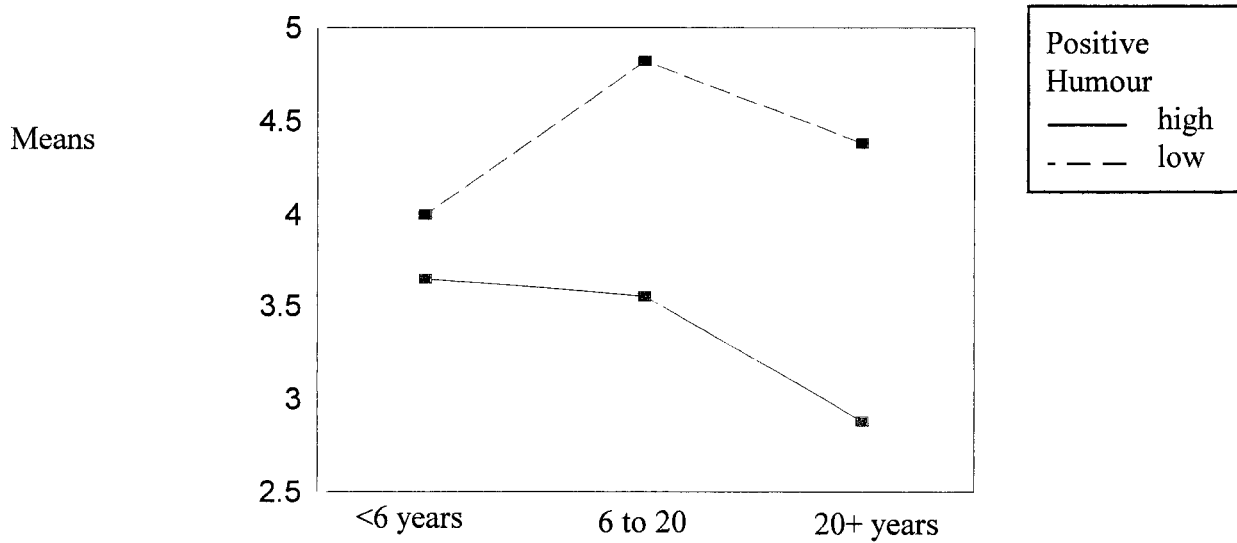


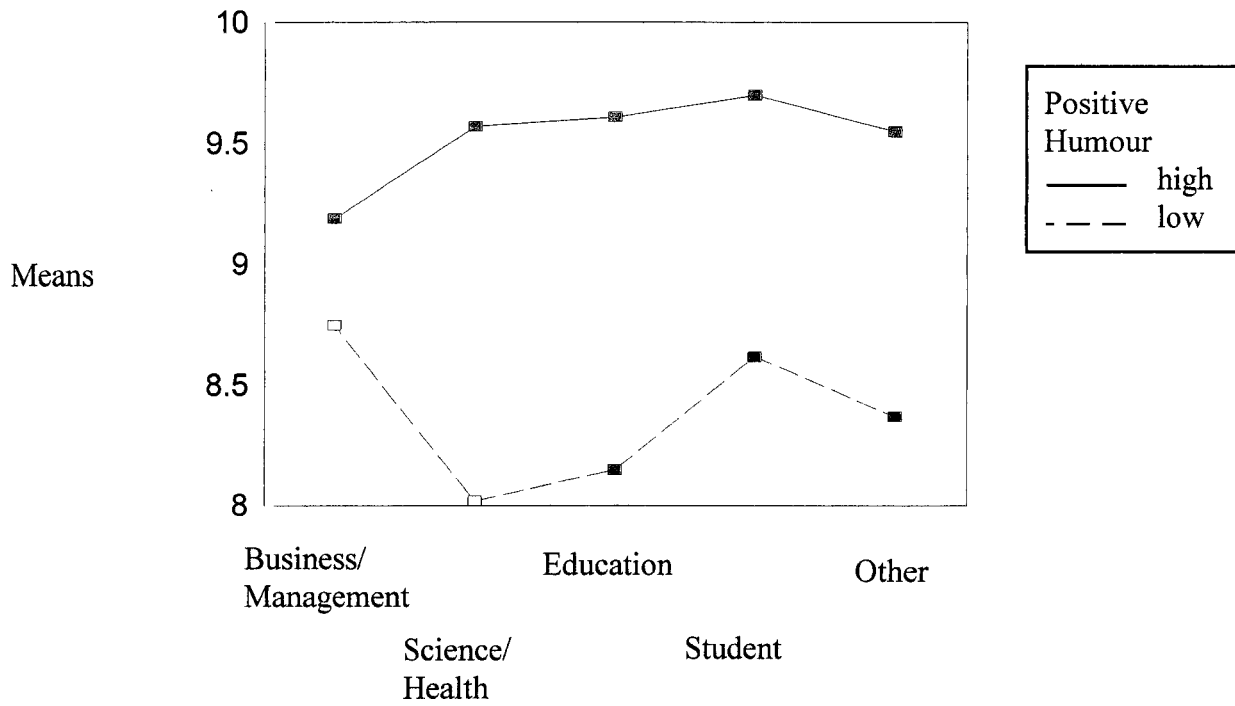
Figure 6

Estimated Marginal Means of Positive Quality with Parental Marital Status



Figure 7

Estimated Marginal Means of Positive Quality with Occupation



Non-significant interactions

An analysis of variance was also conducted to determine whether the relationship between humour and marital quality was different for the distinct genders. A two (Positive Humour) by two (sex) between-subjects univariate analysis of variance was computed with Positive Quality as the dependent variable. Although there are some interesting sex differences found in humour (Table 2) and in the relation between humour and marriage (Table 1), there was no significant interaction found between Positive Humour and Positive Quality using sex as the moderator variable. There were also no significant interactions found when using any combination of Positive Quality, Negative Quality, or Total Quality as dependent variables and Positive Humour or Negative Humour as independent variables.

Analyses of variance were similarly conducted to determine whether the relationship between positive humour and marital quality was different for people of different ages. For this purpose, participants were divided into four approximately equal groups (under 31 years old, 31 to 40 years old, 41-50 years old, and over 51 years old). A 2 (positive humour group) by 4 (age) between-subjects univariate analysis of variance was computed with positive marital quality as the dependent variable. Similar to sex, age showed no significant interaction here or with any other combination of dependent and independent variables.

Education was also examined, being divided into four groups of highest education achieved or currently enrolled in: high school, community/ vocational college, undergraduate studies, and graduate studies. As with gender, and age, education too showed no significant interactions for any combination of dependent and independent variables.

Finally, income was examined to determine whether the relationship between humour and marital quality was different for participants of varying levels of income. Annual income was

standardized from whatever currency that was reported from various countries into Canadian currency, then grouped. It was grouped into quartiles, creating four groups (less than \$69,010, \$69,010 to \$99,687, \$99,687 to \$13,8021, and over \$13,8021). Income was also grouped by being separated by the median (less than or equal to \$99,500, and over \$99,500). In both of these scenarios, there were no significant interactions found with any combination of dependent and independent variables.

Thus, there were no significant interactions found for gender, age, education or income. However, across the remaining moderating variables (number of children, number of years married, status of parents' marriage, occupation, ethnicity, and residence), there does exist a common trend: those high in Positive Humour or low in Negative Humour tended to be more satisfied and more stable regardless of the position within each demographic variable. In contrast, those low in Positive Humour or high in Negative Humour tend to vary depending on their demographic characteristics.

Discussion

The current study sought to answer two main research questions. The main goal was to determine whether or not there is an association between humour and quality in marital relationships. More specifically, it was expected that positive humour is associated with higher marital quality, while negative humour is associated with lower marital quality. A secondary goal was to examine possible variations in the relation between humour and marital quality according to demographic differences. These results and others found are discussed in detail, followed by limitations of the study, suggestions for future research and general conclusions.

Correlations between Humour and Marital Quality

Results of the correlations between humour styles and marital quality came out as expected. It does make sense that the more positively one views their marriage, the more adaptive and less maladaptive styles of humour they tend to use. The relation could go in either direction, with adaptive humour use creating more satisfied marriages; alternatively, it could be that more positive marital quality results in a lighter heart and so more use of adaptive humour and less maladaptive humour.

Negative quality of marriage shows opposite results to Positive quality. Just as it would be expected that positive quality of marriage shows certain patterns in humour use, so it is expected that if one reports negative quality, then they would also report more maladaptive humour and less of adaptive humour. For instance, if an individual experiences volatile interactions in her marriage through aggressive or hostile humourous remarks from her partner, she would report more negative quality within her marriage. If a partner avoids issues, or the couple actively criticises or puts each other down, this can generate major arguments and potentially cost the relationship (Cohan & Bradbury, 1997; Markman & Hahlweg, 1993).

Total quality was also examined, and results were generally in between that of positive quality and negative quality. Again, results were as expected and similar to those of Positive Quality, although less extreme. This shows that past studies that utilized a unidimensional assessment of marital quality were limited in that they covered up the differentiation between positive quality and negative quality of marriage. In other words, positive quality and negative quality each show diverse relations to humour, which would not be shown if typical marital satisfaction measures were used, that are similar to the Total Quality score.

These results are also in agreement with past research. Johari (2001) found that there was no correlation between adaptive styles of humour (affiliative humour and self-enhancing humour) and relationship satisfaction, but did find a significant negative relation between maladaptive humour styles (aggressive and self-defeating) and relationship satisfaction. When looking at Total Quality of the present study (which is a similar assessment to the relationship satisfaction scales used in Johari, 2001), the results are the same. Johari (2001) also stated that if the humour scale used was directly relevant to humour used in the context of a couple, the results could come out stronger. This is precisely what occurred in the present study. When examining the results of the RHI and Total Quality of the present study, results for maladaptive humour styles were stronger with the RHI and there were indeed significant findings for adaptive humour styles and the RHI.

It is also interesting to note that DeKoning and Weiss (2002) found no significant relations between instrumental humour and marital satisfaction or between partner instrumental humour and marital satisfaction. The current study, too, found no significant relations for instrumental humour and quality of marriage. The items for instrumental humour were varied; some items assessed whether humour was used to avoid discussion, while other items captured

humour used to delicately breach a subject for discussion. The motives in each case are apparent to the participant, and depending on the situation, instrumental humour could either be positively related to marital quality or negatively related to marital quality. Thus, instrumental humour had such variable items in one sub-scale that any significance one way or the other was hidden.

While DeKoning and Weiss (2002) did not find any significant relations for partner instrumental humour, the current study did. The partner's use of humour to avoid or broach an issue, relates to higher quality of marriage, perhaps because it makes the participant feel like he is not in conflict with his partner, as he does not necessarily see the motives behind the humour. For example, if the partner avoids issues, the participant may feel content because he is not in conflict. Likewise, if the partner uses humour to bring an issue up for discussion, the participant may feel content because they are communicating and resolving conflicts.

All of the partner ratings for positive humour, negative humour and instrumental humour, were stronger than rating humour for the self. It seems that perceptions of partner humour has a bigger impact on marital quality-- or marital quality has a bigger impact on the perception of partner humour-- than one's own humour. Indeed, Raniseski (1998) found that perceptions of partner's humour are more important than reality. In addition, several researchers found the same result where perceptions of partner's humour was more strongly related to marital satisfaction than the respondent's own humour (DeKoning and Weiss, 2002; Rust and Goldstein, 1989; Ziv and Gadish, 1988). Thus, our perceptions of how our partner behaves is more crucial to marital quality than how they are in reality or how we behave ourselves. The perceptions of the other person in the relationship could influence how we feel about ourselves, the relationship, and the partner. The other person could make us happy, or discontent depending on how they treat us, what they say to us, and how they say it.

Gender Differences among the Humour Scales

In past research, there have been gender differences found in the styles of humour used and the amount to which humour is used. The current study also found gender differences. For the HSQ, Johari (2001), found that men scored significantly higher on Aggressive Humour, Affiliative Humour, and Self-Defeating Humour, and Martin et al. (2003) found that men obtained significantly higher scores on all four subscales compared to women (although the researcher stated that the significant difference reached for Affiliative Humour and Self-Enhancing Humour was only evident due to the extremely large sample size). However, like Weir (2000), the current study found only one significant difference between men and women; this was with men using more Aggressive humour than women. The concept that men are more aggressive is not novel, and is attested to start at the end of preschool, with sex role stereotypes encouraging more aggressiveness and sexual expressiveness in males (Ziv, 1984).

For the RHI, the original researchers failed to find any significant differences between genders, although the trends were that men were higher on Negative Humour and women had higher scores on Partner Positive Humour, Partner Negative Humour, and Partner Instrumental Humour. In contrast, the present study did find significant differences between genders using the RHI. Men were found to have more Instrumental Humour, while women had significantly higher scores in Positive Humour, Partner Positive Humour, Partner Negative Humour, Partner Instrumental Humour, and Couple Humour. These findings suggest that humour is used as a tool, but men and women use this tool differently. Men more often use humour to hint at an issue or to avoid conflict; women tend to use humour to increase intimacy, and are more attuned to their partner's styles of humour and the humour that they share as a unit. Past researchers, too, have stated that women tend to use humour to maintain close relationships, while men are less socially

purposeful in their use of humour (Chapman, Smith & Foot, 1980; Fincham & Linfield, 1997; Lefcourt & Martin, 1986; Weir, 2000). Not only do women use humour to maintain closeness, but women are also more aware of the complexities of their relationships than men, and better serve as barometers of the way the relationship is functioning (Fincham & Linfield, 1997).

Demographic Differences in the relation between Humour and Marital Quality

Gender

The relation between humour and marital quality was mostly similar for each gender. However, there were some notable differences. Namely, men had a stronger correlation between marital quality and aggressive humour. The more positive quality or total quality men reported, the less they tended to use aggressive humour, and the more negative quality they reported, the more they used aggressive humour. While, for women, there was little to no relation between the aggressive humour they reported and quality of marriage. Just as Johari (2001) found, men not only use more aggressive humour, but it also appears to be more detrimental to their relationship. It could be that because men are generally not as aware of or responsive to the emotions within the relationship (Fincham & Linfield, 1997), they do not realize how their actions, including use of humour, relate to their marriage.

Self-Defeating humour was another style of humour that showed gender differences in the relation to marital quality. Here, there was no relation at all for men, but for women there was a significant relation found. Women who report more positive quality or total quality show less self-defeating humour, and women who report more negative quality show more self-defeating humour. Thus, if men use humour to make fun of themselves, this does not relate to how they feel about their marriage; while women who use humour to put themselves down tend not to be as happy in their marriage. Self-defeating humour has been shown to be related to depression,

anxiety, hostility, and aggression, and is negatively related to intimacy and self-esteem for both men and women (Martin et al., 2003; Weir, 2000). Women are more vulnerable to depression (D'Arcy & Siddique, 1985) and are twice as likely to have lower self-esteem than men (Schmoldt, Pope & Hibbard, 1989). Women also place more emphasis and importance in their relationships (Weir, 2000). Thus, if women are unhappy with their relationship, they could be using self-defeating humour to express how they feel about not only themselves with self esteem, but about their marriage. Extreme self-derogation is also seen as a defense mechanism, to deter aggressiveness, and to grapple with the fear aroused by one's weaknesses (Ziv, 1984). Thus, if the husband is being aggressive, the wife could use self-defeating humour as a way to appease the husband and make fun of herself for him. She could be instilling his aggressive remarks within herself which would relate to her self-defeating humour and her negative view of the marriage. It would be interesting for future research to incorporate partner's use of humour styles with the HSQ and match couples to examine how various humour style combinations relate to marital quality.

Partner negative humour was another subscale that showed gender differences in the relation to marital quality. Husbands use of negative humour greatly impacts on how the wife views the marriage. Or, alternatively, the wife's experience of the quality of marriage could influence her views of her husband's use of negative humour. If she's unhappy in the marriage, she will tend to say that her husband uses more negative humour. In either case, it seems that men tend to use more aggressive humour and their partners view them as using more negative humour (refer to Table 1), and this relates to lower marital quality for themselves and their partner. This confirms Cohan and Bradbury's (1997) research, where they found that husband's use of humour actually predicted separation or divorce eighteen months later.

These gender differences were found when examining each individual subscale, which is of interest in understanding how humour styles relate to quality of marriage for each gender. However, there was no interaction found for gender when comparing the relation between humour and marriage using gender as the moderator variable in univariate analyses of variance. This suggests that the overall relation between humour and marriage was similar between genders. Analyses of variance results for other demographic variables will be discussed next.

Children

Children can enrich and bless a marriage, or alternatively, can create an extra burden and stress in the marriage. One theme in family life cycle theory is that the birth of children brings a decline in marital satisfaction and then once children leave, there is an increase in satisfaction again, creating a U- curve (Schlesinger, 1982). Results of the present study indicate that individuals who use more positive humour or less negative humour are consistently higher on marital quality, regardless of number of children. However, those with low positive humour or high negative humour are much more variable in marital quality with number of children. Once there are children who enter the marriage, marital quality for this group drastically declines. Thus, rather than having a U- curve, the positive humour group is a linear line, higher in marital quality than the negative humour group. One participant wrote me about her life with her husband and five children, stating, “believe me, with that many children, a sense of humour is a necessary tool!” Indeed, it seems that humour can be a helpful buffer in dealing with the stresses of having children. Alternatively, those of higher marital quality could be using more positive humour and also be more stable when children enter into the dyad.

Years married

One trend previously purported in marriage research is that the happiest stage of a couple is the honeymoon period, and after this, there is a steady decline in marital satisfaction, although some argue that length of marriage is not necessarily related to happiness (Schlesinger, 1982). The current study found that those high in Total Positive Humour were stable regardless of number of years married, and in fact showed a slight increase in Total Quality and a slight decrease in Negative Quality. For those low in Total Positive Humour, there is a marked decline in Total Quality and a marked increase in Negative Quality at 6-20 years of marriage. Thus, it seems that the honeymoon theory applies for those who have low Total Positive Humour, but just as with children, high Total Positive Humour can serve as a buffer throughout the years of marriage. As causation is impossible to determine here, it could also be that those who have the highest quality of marriage also tend to use more positive humour, and are stable through the years.

A participant wrote some feedback on the study and stated, "I think we have lasted [30 years] because of our humour!!" Humour can potentially enrich a marriage by building intimacy and can help get the couple through rough times. Several participants gave examples of how humour can be used to get through a stressful situation. For example, one participant wrote that when she gave birth to their first child, her husband had to do wet-dry dressings in her stomach which were extraordinarily painful. She says that her "husband took pride in coming up with witty remarks to help me through, such as, 'Guess I can honestly tell others I know you inside and out.'" Humour can be used to lighten the mood or make the partner feel better, as her husband did here. It allowed them to get through an anxious situation and be able to laugh about it.

Another participant wrote that in the beginning of her marriage, she tried to find nice ways of getting her husband to clean up after himself without nagging, and found nothing worked better than using humour. After years of marriage, they have a routine where she takes the role of a General and humourously warns him that if he does not clean the kitchen, she will have him shot. In turn, he might continue the charade by responding about how despicable despots are. In the end, the kitchen is clean, there was no nagging, and both partners are in good humour. Stress and conflict is inevitable in any marriage. What matters is how the couple deals with the issues (Cohan & Bradbury, 1997; Snyder, 1993). Humour can be used to smooth out the issues, to get through rough times, and to get things done by maintaining some distance or perspective. With time spent together, humour can also become a short hand. The participant who wrote about the 'General' routine also wrote that, "within a relationship [humour] evolves...it becomes a short hand and a way for both parties to save face but at the same time say what they mean."

Parents' Marital Status

Parents provide role models and an example of what to follow when one reaches adulthood. The interactions between parents that one is exposed to in childhood may be repeated in patterns as one grows up and interacts with one's own spouse (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999). An exploratory examination of whether parents' marriage affects their children is to simply ask whether the parents are still married. This is a preliminary examination of whether those whose parents are separated or divorced would experience lower humour use and lower quality in their marriage. Results suggest that although the high Total Positive Humour group showed higher Positive Quality than the low Total Positive Humour group, there is a very slight decline in marital quality in both groups when parents are divorced or separated. What is most interesting, though, is that those in the high Total Positive Humour group show lower Positive Quality when

parents are widowed, but those in the low Total Positive Humour group show a marked increase in Positive Quality. Further research is needed to clarify this anomaly in the low humour group showing an increase in quality with parents reported as widowed. It could be that the low humour group does not necessarily use humour to cope, but uses other mechanisms such as religion or other activities which makes them stronger as a couple.

Occupation

Humour can be used to not only cope with marital stressors, but also occupational differences. It is interesting to explore how various occupations might show different results in the relation between humour and marital quality. Results suggest that those in the high Total Positive Humour group had a high and stable positive quality of marriage, regardless of occupation. However, those in the low Total Positive Humour group showed much more variation in positive quality depending on area of work. For instance, those in Science/ Health showed the lowest positive quality, and the greatest difference in marital quality between those who use more humour and those who use low degrees of humour. This suggests that for those who work in this field, humour seems to be a great benefit in quality of marriage. It could be that more positive humour allows this group to cope with the stresses of their job. After a work day of dealing with facts and matters of life and death, perhaps those who use humour enrich their experience of marriage. Or perhaps those who have a high quality marriage tend to use more positive humour. Alternatively, those in the Science/ Health field in the low humour group cannot deal well with the stresses of work, and this relates to their quality of marriage.

Business/ Management also showed interesting results. Those in this occupational field showed little difference between the group that was high on humour and the group that was low on humour. This suggests that humour has little relation to marital quality for those in this field.

It could be in this field of serious negotiations, power, and authority, there is not much room for positive humour in their lives, including in their marriage.

These theories are merely speculative and further research would be needed to obtain a clearer explanation of how humour is related to marriage for people of various occupations. It is difficult to determine if these results have more to do with the people who tend to enter into these professions or the nature of the work or both.

Limitations

The current research has various limitations. First, the measures used to assess humour and marital quality were all self-report questionnaires done over the internet. The research depended on the honesty of participants; honest not only to the study but also to themselves. Marital success and a good sense of humour are desirable attributes, which some participants may perceive themselves or their partner to have more than they actually do. To avoid the potential problem of social desirability, one alternative to self-report is to use laboratory observation techniques. For example, trained observers could observe how humour might be used by a couple in various given circumstances. Success of a couple can be observed using techniques such as the Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF; Gottman, 1996), which codes emotional behaviours in response to problem solving interactions.

A second limitation, related to the first is that while an internet study is a very useful tool in easily obtaining participants from countries all over the world, it does allow for less control over who is taking part in the study and how they complete the questionnaires. Participants were instructed to complete the study alone and they were supposed to be married. However, we have little control over whether the participant decides to fill out the questionnaire with the spouse, with others around, or whether the participant is even married at all. For example, if they

completed the questionnaire with the spouse present, they may have answered questions slightly differently than if alone. We did rely on the honesty of our participants. In general, however, using the internet worked in our benefit in obtaining a high number of participants and from various locales. Examination of how fake items were completed also provided a check as to whether the participants were truly paying attention to the wording of the questions. Even though we have less control in an internet study, asking many demographic questions also gave us a good idea of the description of our participants. Using the internet is a useful tool, and seems to be the movement of future data collection, however these above cautions should be taken into consideration, and also the above precautions taken.

Third, marital quality and humour were only assessed by one partner in the present study, rather than both partners as a couple. If both partners indeed participated in the study, there was no means by which to match partners. It could be that the perceived quality of marriage of one partner does not relate to the perceived quality of the other partner. In addition, the current study only obtained the humour styles- as assessed by the HSQ- of the participant, as perceived by the participant, not as rated by the partner or rated of the partner. In other words, it would be useful to have items for the HSQ pertaining to the partner's style of humour. It would also give a more complete picture to have both partners fill out all scales for themselves and for each other, to examine congruence in responses. It could be, for example, that one does not realize that one is being aggressive in the way one uses humour, but the partner perceives him as having a high degree of aggressive humour and even views it as a problem in the relationship.

Fourth, the present study is strictly correlational; therefore it is impossible to determine the direction of causality between humour and marital quality. While it seems logical that humour styles determine quality of marriage, it is just as plausible that positive or negative

marital quality determines the style of humour one uses generally and in the context of marriage. The relation is likely even more complex, with perhaps even a third variable involved that mediates the relation between humour and marital quality, such as attachment security. Future studies can explore this possibility through experimental and longitudinal designs.

A fifth limitation pertains to the generalizability of the results. Although an attempt was made to recruit participants from various cultures and demographics, the vast majority were still white upper class Americans of European descent. Although numbers of alternative demographics are limited, one advantage of the present study is that it opened participation to the entire world, rather than strictly using an undergraduate subject pool or volunteers from within one community. This does give a broader exploratory analysis of how humour in marriage might be used in various cultures, occupations, and other demographic differences. This offers more understanding in the literature for future studies.

A final and related limitation to the above is that with participation from some minority groups being too small, it is more difficult to compare amongst various groups. For example, with religion, ethnicity, and place of residence, it is hard to compare if one group is composed of less than five participants while another group is composed of over one hundred. It would be useful for future studies to gather an equivalent number of participants from each group that is representative of the population.

Future Studies

As humour investigation is still in its infancy, a multitude of further research could be explored from this study. The current study was useful in examining how humour is related to marital quality. An attempt at an international sample was made, although the majority of participants were still from North America. Future studies could use this as a starting point to

further examine how humour is used in marriage in various cultures through out the world. This study was an initial step in gaining an international perspective on how humour is used within marriage, but it might be useful to examine cultural differences in humour and the history behind where the humour came from. Humour could be used as social control, and cultures that experienced oppression could use a style of humour very different from those who had not experienced this lack of control (Martineau, 1972). Humour allows us to remain unperturbed and gives us emotional independence from the circumstances we find ourselves in (Leites, 1981). Humour could show ethnic allegiances (Chapman, Smith & Foot, 1980).

Future studies could continue to investigate the initial trends found here by perhaps more actively seeking out participants from Asian, Black, or Native societies. For example, in my experience living in Japan, I did in fact observe that the typical Japanese marriage is quite unlike the typical Western marriage, in that the each partner's roles are more task oriented and distinct. In Japan, the typical marriage is traditional and patriarchal, and each partner relies on the other carrying out their specific roles; whereas, in North America, roles tend to be increasingly interchangeable and typically each partner relies on the other for emotional support. Thus, it may be found that Asians have low positive quality of marriage, as they do not tend to depend on each other for emotional or personal fulfillment. In addition, I also observed that Japanese tend to be rather formal and if I used humour in interactions with Japanese, they did not understand my humour. In fact, a Japanese participant for this study wrote me feedback saying, "Japanese don't have much of a sense of humour." While future studies could find that Japanese tend not to use humour, other cultures could use humour more.

Barbadians, for example, use humour often. Sometimes it is their way of saying something serious in a gentle way and other times they just like to have fun (Bello, 2001). They

tease one another a lot, but noting body language is important in deciphering their true intentions (Bello, 2001). In my experience living in Barbados, it is not uncommon for Bajans to tease each other in public about things that may be perceived as personal. For example, when a Bajan man teases his wife about putting on a few pounds, both partners would appreciate the jest involved in this comment. Conversely, this comment would be taken much differently compared to an American man teasing his wife about gaining weight. She might take it very personally, and not see the humour at all. The reasons behind how humour is used in various cultures would be very interesting for future studies to explore. Perhaps researchers from these various countries could work together in administering the same humour scale and marital quality scale, and collaborate by comparing their results.

Another area for further exploration is same-sex couples. Research could explore whether there is a difference between how humour is used in same-sex relationships as opposed to opposite-sex relationships. Perhaps homosexual males will show less aggressive humour than heterosexual males. It could be that homosexuals use more self-enhancing humour than heterosexuals, perhaps as a way of helping them cope with homophobia. Perhaps homosexual couples who use more positive humour have a higher degree of relationship quality, as it brings them even closer together despite living in a homophobic society. These and various other hypotheses can be explored in the future.

Past studies have used the HSQ to examine relationship success in friendships (Weir, 2000) and in dating (Johari, 2001). The present study was a further extension, in examining married individuals. This study showed similar results to dating couples using the HSQ, but with the RHI, showed stronger support for our hypotheses. It would give a more clear understanding

for future studies to directly explore the difference between how humour is used in dating versus marriage using both the HSQ and RHI.

Past researchers have found differences between dating and marriage using other means of assessing humour. Ziv (1984) states that women's laughter stimulates the man to be more amusing, and appreciating another's humour is a sign of acceptance. This could be useful in dating, a time when people send signals to one another to show whether they are interested or like one another. Indeed, Hansen (1977) found that highschool students ranked humour as third most important in dating, but ninth most important in marriage. Other researchers found, however, that humour is more important in marriage. Kenrick, Sadalla, Groth & Trost (1990) found that college students would prefer their marriage partner to be above average in humour, and humour became increasingly important as level of commitment increased- for both men and women.

There could also be sex differences in the relation between humour and dating versus marriage. Hewitt (1958) found more men (90%) than women (81%) thought humour was important in dating, but found more women (87%) than men (83%) thought humour was important in marriage. Still another researcher found that humour was initially attractive, but then became unattractive and disliked in time (Felmlee, 1995). Of course in Felmlee's study (1995), humour was treated as a unitary characteristic, and so there is limited detail of what style of humour was eventually disliked. It is obvious that past research has found quite varied results, and that a need for standardized measures, such as the RHI and HSQ are imperative in obtaining a clearer picture of how humour might be used in various relationships.

It is also important to use these multidimensional assessments of humour, as the style of humour used relates differently to how the relationship is perceived. One participant of the current study wrote that early on in the relationship, if "one party continually uses humour when

the other wants to talk about ‘the relationship’ or wants to find ways to become closer, then it is distancing...the other uses jokes as a way of stopping the conversation from becoming personal.” Thus, future researchers would benefit from using the multidimensional standardized measures of humour when assessing any differences in types of relationships.

Qualitative studies could also be utilized in future research, in order to gain rich interview data around humour use in marriage. Various questions could be asked in order to obtain a deeper understanding of how humour is used. For example, what motivates couples to use various styles of humour, how they perceive humour to relate to marital satisfaction, why couples may use humour to cope with situations rather than other coping mechanisms, and how their humour use has changed in their marriage with children, work, number of years married, and so on.

Another idea for future research is to observe compatibility of married couples who demonstrate various combinations of humour styles. Just as Ziv and Gadish (1988) found that there is a complementarity between partners using humour appreciation and humour creation, so too might future studies find compatibility using other humour measures. For example, if using the HSQ, perhaps the most satisfied marriage would be that between two people who each have a high social humour score, while the least satisfied couple may be two people with aggressive forms of humour.

Future studies could also further explore how humour is used in other demographic differences. For instance, the RHI and PANQIMS could be administered to people of various work places to see if hospital staff, for example, use humour in marriage differently than stockbrokers. Perhaps if humour is protective from stressors not only in the workplace but also at home with one’s spouse, this could be encouraged as part of the training for the job. Examination

of parents marriage could also be explored. Participants could even complete the RHI as rating their parents marriage, and examine whether how their parents used humour in their marriage relates to how they use humour in their current marriage. Further exploration of how parent's widowhood affects the participant's use of humour in marriage would also be a benefit.

When using the RHI in the future, it could also be useful to amalgamate the subscales so that they fit into logical categories. Researchers could perform factor analyses to examine how sub-scales would best fit into new categories. For example, perhaps positive humour and partner positive humour could be in one new category. Also, instrumental humour could be placed with positive humour or negative humour depending on the item. Further revisions of the RHI could also include items added to explicitly assess sexual humour. This form of humour is used by many couples and provides additional sexual satisfaction without actually partaking in the sexual activity (Ziv, 1984). One participant even commented on the lack of items pertaining to "joking, laughing, teasing, joshing, etc in bed or during sex." This is an important omission in gaining a full picture of how humour is used in a relationship. Couples can use humour extensively in bed, which is a key element in building their sense of trust and intimacy with each other. These refinements to the RHI would make this scale that much stronger and accurate in gaining a true sense of humour use in marriage.

Conclusions

Research examining the relation between multidimensional humour and marital quality or satisfaction has only recently been explored. The current study contributes to our growing knowledge in this field, and it is hoped that this is a stepping stone towards future studies. The results of the present study suggest that one's general use of humour (as assessed by the HSQ) is slightly different than humour that one uses in the context of marriage (as assessed by the RHI).

Positive humour used in marriage correlates to higher marital quality while adaptive forms of general humour do not necessarily relate to marital quality at all. Negative humour in marriage also shows a stronger negative relation to marital quality than general maladaptive humour.

In this study, it also seems that men use more aggressive humour and wives perceive their husbands to use more negative humour, both of which relate to greater negative marital quality for men. So, not only do men use these styles of humour to a greater degree, but these forms of humour also shows greater adverse effects for them. Women also seem to be more attuned to the relationship, recognizing how their partner uses various styles of humour and how they use humour as a couple. Women also tend to tie self-defeating humour to the quality of their marriage, which is a way of focussing inwards. Perhaps how a woman feels about her marriage is more tied to how she feels about herself and whether she would make fun of herself or not.

Various demographic variables- number of children, number of years married, parents' marital status, occupation- were also examined in the present study when relating how humour is used in marriage. It is clear that those who use more positive humour consistently have greater quality of marriage than those who use less positive humour, while taking moderating variables into account. Results suggest that positive humour served as a buffer, protecting individuals from the adverse affects of various stressors. So, regardless of whether one has children or a highly stressful job, if one shows high positive humour, their marital quality is protected compared to those who show lower degrees humour. Alternatively, it could be that having a high quality marriage serves as a buffer for various stressors and encourages one to have a more positive style of humour. In any case, it is useful for the public to know that using more positive humour in their day to day lives is related to higher quality of marriage, regardless of demographic

variations. In social work practice, counsellors can encourage the use of positive humour and discourage negative forms of humour displayed within the marriage.

Humour can be used to help a spouse feel better, to build rapport through private jokes or, on the other end of the spectrum, to humiliate or dominate (Freud, 1905, Martineau, 1972, Ziv, 1984). People have to be cautious in how they use humour in their marriage. Most people, including past researchers, have thought that the more humour present, the better it is for the marriage. However, this is not the case. Continuous bombardment of abrasive humour has a destructive effect on the partner (Miller, 1967). As found in this study, negative humour is significantly negatively related to marital quality, while positive humour is significantly related to higher quality of marriage. Humour is one way to enrich your married life. As one participant said it best, “humour is such a gift when used with the best intentions.”

Appendix A

Website questionnaires: Demographic Information, Relational Humor Inventory, Humor Styles Questionnaire, and Positive and Negative Quality in Marriage Scale**Demographic Information**

Please answer the following questions by clicking one of the option buttons.

1. What is your gender?

Male Female

2. What is your marriage partner's gender?

Male Female

3. How old are you?

under 20 20-30 31-40 41-50 51-70 over 70

4. Is English your first language?

Yes No

5. If not, at what age did you learn English?

0 - 4 years 5 - 12 years 13 - 18 years over 18

6. Current place of residence: Canada USA South America or Mexico Europe Africa Antarctica Asia Australia or NZ

7. To which ethnic group did your ancestors belong?

European Arab Asian African Pacific Islands Latin America Caribbean Aboriginal North American Mixed Other

8. How long have you known your marriage partner?

less than 1 year 1-2 years 3-5 years 6-10 years 11-20 years more than 20 years

9. How long have you been married to your partner?

less than 1 year 1-2 years 3-5 years 6-10 years 11-20 years more than 20 years

10. Number of children:

none 1 2 3 4 more than 4

11. If you have children, are they from:

this marriage only previous relationship only both

The following questions are optional:

12. Status of your parents' marriage: married separated/divorced, not remarried divorced, remarried widowed, remarried widowed, not remarried

13. Religious affiliation: Catholic Protestant Other Christian Islam Buddhist Hindu Sikh Jewish Agnostic Atheist No religious affiliation Other religion

14. Education level (click the highest level that you are currently enrolled in or have completed): Elementary school Junior high school High school Community college/ Vocational school Undergraduate (Bachelor) Graduate (Masters or Ph.D.)

15. Occupation: Management Business Finance and administrative Natural and applied sciences Health occupations Education Government service Religion Art, cultural, recreation, sport Sales and service Trades, transport, equipment operator Agriculture Manufacturing Student Other

16. What is your family's current annual income level? (please include currency type by three letter code, eg, CAD for Canadian dollars, USD for U.S. dollar, EUR for Euro, JPY for Japan yen, MYR for Malaysian Ringgits, AUD for Australian dollar, etc.):
Amount: Currency:

Relational Humor Inventory

Please indicate the extent to which each statement below is true for you and your spouse. Please respond as honestly and objectively as you can. Answer by clicking one of the option buttons (1 to 7) located below each statement, using the following scale:

- 1 - totally disagree - does not describe us at all
- 2 - moderately disagree
- 3 - slightly disagree
- 4 - neither agree nor disagree
- 5 - slightly agree
- 6 - moderately agree
- 7 - totally agree - describes us extremely well

1. My partner has little difficulty making me smile or laugh.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. I believe that my partner appreciates my humorous remarks.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. My partner and I share a lot of "private jokes".

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. My partner uses humor to avoid facing issues that concern us.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. When something about my partner is bothering me, I make a joke about it.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. When I am mad at my partner, I use humor to hint at it first.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. Whenever I can, I prefer to use humor to avoid conflict between us.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. I sometimes defend myself when my partner feels hurt by telling him/her that I was "just kidding".
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. As a couple, we have our own sense of humor.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. My partner uses humor to put me down.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. I really enjoy it when my partner and I share a humorous experience.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. Sometimes I make my partner the butt of a joke.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. My partner's humor can be really aggressive.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. When my partner feels sad or upset, I try to make him/her see the funny side of the story.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. My use of humor has brought me closer to my partner.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. Occasionally, I tend to make jokes at my partner's expense.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. I see my use of humor in our relationship as a positive contribution.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. I don't like my partner's humor.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19. Joking with my partner makes me feel closer to him/her.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

20. Sometimes I use humor to put my partner down.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

21. My partner and I have never spoken to each other since we first met.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

22. I think that one of the attractive things about my partner is his/her sense of humor.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

23. I sometimes try to change the subject with a joke.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

24. From my partner's responses to my attempts at humor, it would be obvious to anyone watching that he/she enjoys my humor.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

25. I can feel really hurt by some of my partner's jokes.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

26. My partner can persuade me to do something by making me laugh.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

27. Sometimes when my feelings are hurt, my partner will blow it off by saying "just kidding".

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

28. I view my partner's humor as a real skill.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

29. Whenever I am upset, my partner is likely to try to smooth over my feelings with humor.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

30. I use humor to get out of a fight with my partner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

31. When my partner is angry with me, I can usually change his/her mood by making him/her laugh.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

32. You can tell when my partner is uncomfortable by the way he/she starts making fun of everything.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

33. My partner often tries to trick me into doing something for him/her by using humor.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

34. My partner uses humor to ease the tension when we fight.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

35. When I am angry, my partner can get me out of it by making me laugh.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Humor Styles Questionnaire

People experience and express humour in many different ways. Below is a list of statements describing different ways in which humour might be experienced. Please read each statement carefully, and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it, as it relates to you. Please respond as honestly and objectively as you can. Answer by clicking one of the option buttons (1 to 7) located below each statement, using the following scale:

- 1 - totally disagree - does not describe me at all
- 2 - moderately disagree
- 3 - slightly disagree
- 4 - neither agree nor disagree
- 5 - slightly agree
- 6 - moderately agree
- 7 - totally agree - describes me extremely well

1. I usually don't laugh or joke around much with other people.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself up with humour.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. I will often get carried away in putting myself down if it makes my friends or family laugh.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. If I am feeling upset or unhappy I usually try to think of something funny about the situation to make myself feel better.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. My humorous outlook on life keeps me from getting overly upset or depressed about things.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. I do not like it when people use humor as a way of criticizing or putting someone down.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. I usually don't like to tell jokes or amuse people.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. If I'm by myself and I'm feeling unhappy, I make an effort to think of something funny to cheer myself up.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. I enjoy making people laugh.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. I have never laughed in my life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. I never participate in laughing at others even if all my friends are doing it.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. When I'm with my friends or family, I often seem to be the one that other people make fun of or joke about.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. I don't often joke around with my friends.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. It is my experience that thinking about some amusing aspect of a situation is often a very effective way of coping with problems.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19. If I don't like someone, I often use humour or teasing to put them down.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

20. Even if something is really funny to me, I will not laugh or joke about it if someone will be offended.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

21. Letting others laugh at me is my way of keeping my friends and family in good spirits.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Positive and Negative Quality in Marriage Scale

Now please answer the 6 questions below with regard to your CURRENT MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP. Answer by clicking one of the option buttons (1 to 10) located below each statement, using the scale indicated.

1. Considering only the POSITIVE QUALITIES of your spouse, and ignoring the negative ones, evaluate how positive these qualities are.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

not at all

positive moderately

positive extremely

positive

2. Considering only the NEGATIVE QUALITIES of your spouse, and ignoring the positive ones, evaluate how negative these qualities are.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

not at all

negative moderately

negative extremely

negative

3. Considering only the POSITIVE FEELINGS you have towards your spouse, and ignoring the negative feelings, evaluate how positive these feelings are.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

not at all

positive moderately

positive extremely

positive

4. Considering only the NEGATIVE FEELINGS you have towards your spouse, and ignoring the positive feelings, evaluate how negative these feelings are.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

not at all

negative moderately

negative extremely

negative

5. Considering only the GOOD FEELINGS you have about your relationship with your spouse, and ignoring the bad feelings, evaluate how good these feelings are.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

not at all

good moderately

good extremely

good

6. Considering only the BAD FEELINGS you have about your relationship with your spouse, and ignoring the good feelings, evaluate how bad these feelings are.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

not at all

bad moderately

bad extremely

bad

Appendix B

Reliabilities of measures

Reliability analyses were examined for each scale used, in order to verify the dependability of the instruments used. The alpha coefficient for each sub-scale is reported below, as well as the means and Corrected Item-Total Correlations for each item of each scale. For the HSQ, the Affiliative Humour subscale showed an alpha rating of .70, Self-Enhancing was .84, Aggressive Humour was .60, and Self-Defeating was .81. Considering there are only five items in each scale of the HSQ, these are very strong reliabilities. The item-total Correlations ranged from $r = .34$ to $r = .75$. Self-Enhancing Humour had item-total Correlations ranging from $r = .59$ to $r = .75$ and Self-Defeating Humour had item-total Correlations ranging from $r = .51$ to $r = .68$, so the items for these scales were highly correlated with each other. The items of the Aggressive Humour sub-scale, however, were more varied, ranging from $r = .34$ to $r = .41$, although the items were still well correlated with each other.

The RHI also shows high reliabilities with alpha ratings ranging from .69 for Couple Humour to .87 for Negative Humour. As each scale has a different number of items, the lower alpha rating for Couple Humour could be due to there being only two items as part of that sub-scale. The item-total Correlations were relatively high, ranging from $r = .37$ to $r = .82$. The items for each of the Positive Humour, Negative Humour, Partner Instrumental Humour, and Couple Humour sub-scales were especially well correlated to one another with correlations greater than $r = .50$. This shows that the items from each of these sub-scales assess a similar construct within that sub-scale. The other sub-scales had items that were more varied (Instrumental ranged from $r = .47$ to $r = .65$; Partner Positive $r = .37$ to $r = .75$; Partner Negative $r = .39$ to $r = .65$)

For the Marital Quality Scale, the means for Positive Quality ($\underline{M} = 8.91$ to $\underline{M} = 8.98$) were higher than the means for Negative Quality ($\underline{M} = 3.52$ to $\underline{M} = 4.36$). The items were highly intercorrelated, ranging from $r = .75$ to $r = .88$, showing that the items for Positive Quality were each assessing a similar construct, and the items for Negative Quality too were tapping a similar construct. The alpha coefficients were very high for Positive Quality (.90) and Negative Quality (.92), showing excellent reliability for this scale.

Reliability Analyses for each item on all scales

Item #	Mean	Correlation	Alpha
HSQ			
Affiliative			.70
1	5.83	.48	
6	5.31	.34	
11	5.71	.58	
13	6.22	.42	
17	6.20	.51	
Self-Enhancing			.84
2	4.61	.59	
7	4.44	.69	
9	5.02	.63	
12	4.06	.75	
18	5.33	.59	
Aggressive			.60
3	3.34	.34	
10	2.59	.36	
15	4.89	.36	
19	2.07	.41	
20	3.74	.34	
Self-Defeating			.81
4	3.05	.61	
5	3.09	.68	
8	4.10	.59	
16	2.70	.51	
21	3.76	.57	

RHI

Positive			.83
2	5.92	.56	
11	6.63	.59	
15	5.28	.71	
17	5.91	.71	
19	5.90	.65	
Negative			.87
12	3.27	.77	
16	2.98	.82	
20	2.32	.70	
Instrumental			.84
5	3.57	.63	
6	3.12	.57	
7	3.79	.65	
8	3.10	.47	
14	4.77	.51	
22	3.86	.60	
29	3.06	.67	
30	3.60	.49	
Partner Positive			.78
1	5.68	.37	
18	6.10	.47	
21	5.64	.75	
23	5.40	.59	
27	4.82	.66	
Partner Negative			.81
4	3.13	.39	
10	2.20	.65	
13	2.34	.59	
24	2.36	.64	
26	2.76	.56	
31	2.61	.56	
32	2.40	.49	
Partner Instrumental			.77
25	4.83	.52	
28	4.04	.55	
33	3.47	.56	
34	4.12	.66	

Couple			.69
3	5.61	.52	
9	5.43	.52	

Marital Quality

Positive Quality			.90
1	8.98	.75	
3	8.93	.85	
5	8.91	.83	
Negative Quality			.92
2	4.36	.76	
4	3.88	.88	
6	3.52	.85	

Note: HSQ = Humour Styles Questionnaire; RHI = Relational Humour Inventory

Appendix C

Intercorrelations among sub-scales

Peasons Product Moment Correlations were utilized in order to determine the degree of correlation between sub-scales within each questionnaire. Results showed that the intercorrelation between the Positive Quality Index and the Negative Quality index was significantly negatively related ($r = -.40$, $p < .01$). This clearly shows that as one aspect of marital quality increases, the other tends to decrease. There were many significant intercorrelations found overall between the subscales of the Humour Styles Questionnaire and the Relational Humour Inventory.

The overall lowest positive intercorrelation was $r = .10$ ($p < .05$) between both Couple Humour and Self-Defeating Humour and with Instrumental Humour and Partner Positive Humour. The overall highest positive intercorrelation was $r = .76$ ($p < .01$), found between Positive Humour and Partner Positive Humour. This shows that these two sub-scales are in fact not disparate scales, but rather assess a similar construct. In contrast, the highest positive correlation within the HSQ was $r = .29$ ($p < .01$), found between the two adaptive forms of humour- Affiliative Humour and Self-Enhancing Humour. Thus, some of the sub-scales of the RHI are more highly related to one another than any of the sub-scales of the HSQ.

In terms of negative overall intercorrelations, they ranged from $r = -.11$ ($p < .05$) between Positive Humour and Aggressive Humour to $r = -.16$ ($p < .01$) between both Negative Humour and Partner Positive Humour and also Partner Positive Humour and Partner Negative Humour. It is interesting to note that while Partner Positive Humour and Partner Negative Humour was indeed significantly negatively related, there was no significant negative relation between Positive Humour and Negative Humour. In other words, as the partner uses more positive (negative)

humour, this significantly relates to how much one perceives their partner to use less of negative (positive) humour, however there is no significant relation between how much one-self uses positive or negative humour in the marriage.

Intercorrelations among sub-scales of both humour measures

Measure	Positive	Negative	Instr.	P.Positive	P.Negative	P.Instr.	Couple	Affiliative	S-Enhanc.	Aggressive	S-Def.
Positive		-.09	.25**	.76**	-.15**	.42**	.62**	.34**	.29**	-.11*	.03
Negative			.34**	-.16**	.39**	.07	.02	.13**	.03	.42**	.41**
Instr.				.10*	.28**	.43**	.28**	.24**	.44**	.27**	.40**
P.Positive					-.16**	.47**	.60**	.22**	.20**	-.14**	-.04
P.Negative						.26**	.05	-.08	.02	.19**	.30**
P.Instr.							.42**	.06	.28**	.02	.18**
Couple								.22**	.23**	-.03	.10*
Affiliative									.29**	.19**	.18**
S-Enhanc.										-.04	.26**
Aggressive											.28**
S-Def.											

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Positive = Positive Humour, Negative = Negative Humour, Instr. = Instrumental Humour, P.Positive = Partner Positive Humour, P.Negative = Partner Negative Humour, P.Instr. = Partner Instrumental Humour, Couple = Couple Humour, Affiliative = Affiliative Humour, S-Enhanc. = Self-Enhancing Humour, Aggressive = Aggressive Humour, S-Def. = Self-Defeating Humour

Relational Humour Inventory consists of: Positive, Negative, Instr., P.Positive, P.Negative, P.Instr., and Couple Humour Styles Questionnaire consists of: Affiliative, S-Enhanc., Aggressive, S-Def.

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