



2015

Examining Peer Perceptions of Humorous Communication in the College Classroom

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EXAMINING PEER PERCEPTIONS OF HUMOROUS COMMUNICATION
IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in the College of Communication and Information
at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

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2015

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

EXAMINING PEER PERCEPTIONS OF HUMOROUS COMMUNICATION IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

The majority of instructional communication literature has historically focused on the positive outcomes of incorporating humor into the classroom. However, despite the clearly documented instructional benefits of humorous communication, the literature tends to focus solely on *instructor*-enacted humor. However, humor is not a homogenous concept; therefore, it is imperative to examine it from a number of contexts, including *student*-enacted humor. Although the Instructional Humor Processing Theory (IHPT) has made a number of theoretical advances in exploring humorous communication in the classroom, it still lacks adequate explanatory power, particularly when examining *student*-enacted humor. Thus, four expansions to IHPT are proposed: to incorporate (a) the interpersonal attraction experienced toward the sender, (b) the humor orientation of the receiver, (c) the enacted humor style of the sender, and (d) the receiver's perception of the classroom climate. Results indicate that the aforementioned expansions are theoretically pertinent to examining student-student humorous communication and warrant future research for inclusion to IHPT. The study also discovered sex differences regarding the message sender, along with interaction effects between the sex of the sender and receiver. Theoretical and practical implications of these results are discussed, and directions for future research are provided.

KEYWORDS: Instructional Humor Processing Theory, Humorous Communication, Humor Orientation, Humor Styles, Classroom Connectedness

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EXAMINING PEER PERCEPTIONS OF HUMOROUS COMMUNICATION
IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

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DEDICATION

In Loving Memory of my Dad, David S. Davenport.

Thank you for instilling in me the importance of education – and humor – from an early age. Above all, thank you for continually believing in me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following thesis, while an individual work, benefitted greatly from the insights and direction of several people. First, I would like to acknowledge the guidance and support of my Thesis Chair, Dr. Brandi Frisby – this project simply would not have been possible without your insight and constructive evaluation at every stage of the process. Second, this work has been substantially shaped and improved by the formative feedback and wisdom of my Committee, Drs. Deanna Sellnow and Amy Gaffney. Each of the above individuals exemplify the high quality scholarship to which I aspire, and I am grateful for their insights that have guided and challenged my thinking. Finally, I wish to thank the faculty within the College of Communication and Information. The educational experiences afforded to me by these faculty – both inside and outside the classroom – have given me the ability and confidence to complete this project.

Additionally, I would like to thank my undergraduate advisor, Dr. Molly Reynolds, for her guidance and support throughout the years. I am beyond thankful for the numerous teaching, research, and service opportunities she has provided me (along with countless therapy sessions). I undoubtedly would not have pursued this graduate degree without your encouragement, and I am deeply appreciative for that.

In addition to the instrumental assistance above, the support shown to me by my friends has been equally vital. To Jennifer and Paige: you both have been right beside me from my very first day on campus as an undergraduate, through the good times, the bad times, and the *heavy burtations*. Words cannot express how thankful I am for everything you two have done for me. To Pete, Jamie, Ben, Melanie, Caleb, Maggie, and Max: although I will never be able to repay all that you have done for me, I am eternally

grateful for your unwavering love and support. To Alex, Whitney, and Emma: I unquestionably would not have survived my college experience without your pep talks and our many Starbucks, Panera, and Mexican outings. I am so blessed to have you guys in my life.

Of course, I would be seriously remiss not to also mention my high school crew. Although our schedules do not permit us to see each other as much as I would like, I still consider you all among my best friends and am so blessed to have your continued support.

To my graduate cohort — Audrey, Craig, David, Gabby, Heather, Keara, Lauren, Melissa, Meredith, Samantha, Sarah, Tamika, and Taylor: you all have made my graduate experiences tremendously successful and enjoyable. A special thanks to Gabby, Taylor, and Tamika for dealing with my stress on a daily basis and never growing tired of giving me pep talks along the way.

To the remainder of my University of Kentucky family: I am forever indebted to you for being an integral component of my time at UK. All of you – from the other cohorts in my program to my coworkers at University Sound & Lights – have made my graduate and undergraduate experiences at UK a time to remember.

Finally, I wish to recognize the love and support of my family. To Donna, Bill, Katie, and Ben: thank you for the immeasurable support you have provided me throughout my education. I am so blessed to have you all in my life. To my dad: thank you for believing in me. Your unconditional love, compassion, and selflessness have molded me into the man I am today. Thank you for persistently going the extra mile for me and for always encouraging me to follow my dreams.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Cornett (1986) describes humor in the classroom as an educator's "most powerful resource," as it enables him or her to achieve a number of educational outcomes (p. 8). Although Cornett's endorsement of the transformational power of humorous communication is perhaps extreme, as Banas, Dunbar, Rodriguez, and Liu (2010) contend, the benefits of humor within the instructional setting are well documented and supported in the literature (see Berk, 1996; Berk & Nada, 1998; Johnson, 1990; Ziegler, Boardman, & Thomas, 1985).

Certainly, the majority of instructional communication literature has historically focused on the positive outcomes of incorporating humor into the classroom (Banas et al., 2010). Specifically, empirical research suggests that humorous communication can enhance students' health (Check, 1997; Ziegler, 1998), alleviate anxiety and depression (Check, 1997), foster a sense of trust (Pollak & Freda, 1997), promote cognitive processing and retention of course material (Kher, Molstad, & Donahue, 1999), and even increase levels of liking and immediacy towards the instructor (Weaver & Cotrell, 1987).

Still, despite the clearly documented benefits of incorporating humor into the classroom, the literature tends to focus on *instructor*-enacted humor. Indeed, a majority of the instructional literature is framed as an appeal to instructors to either begin using humorous communication, or to begin using humor more effectively in order to better reap the aforementioned educational outcomes. However, as Booth-Butterfield and Wanzer (2010) caution, it is imperative to examine the senders and receivers of humorous instructional messages from multiple perspectives in order to gain a more holistic understanding of the process. Further, as Banas et al. (2010) explain, humor is not a

“homogenous concept,” which suggests that an understanding of humor from one context (i.e., teacher-student) is not sufficient for understanding how humor operates across different contexts (i.e., student-student) (p. 117). Thus, the current study contends that the instructional literature lacks a sufficient examination of *student*-enacted humor—that is, examining humor messages in which another student (not the instructor) is the sender.

According to Booth-Butterfield and Wanzer (2010), there are a number of different theories that address humorous communication and its various functions. However, as Wanzer, Frymier, and Irwin (2010) contended, the literature still lacked an integrative theoretical framework that addressed why educational material in a humorous environment may be learned and recalled more efficiently. Therefore, Wanzer et al. (2010) developed instructional humor processing theory (IHPT), which shall serve as the theoretical framework for the current study. This theory has only previously been applied to instructors’ use of humor in the classroom.

Due to the new theoretical application in the current study (i.e., *student*-enacted humor), the tenets of IHPT must be expanded and adapted. Namely, the original IHPT framework fails to account for four components that are theoretically pertinent to student enacted humor in the college classroom: (a) the interpersonal attraction experienced towards the peer, (b) the humor orientation of the receiver, (c) the enacted humor style of the message sender, and (d) the student’s perception of the classroom climate.

Ultimately, the current study seeks to not only validate the above four proposed expansions to IHPT, but to also shed preliminary light onto an unexplored, yet fundamental, component of incorporating humor in the college classroom: peer perceptions of student-enacted humorous communication. Chapter Two will begin with

an overview of the historical conceptualizations of humor, followed by the conceptualizations of humor within the instructional communication literature. Next, a review of the benefits of humorous communication within the classroom will be provided. Finally, following an examination of the tenets of IHPT, this study's proposed expansions to the existing framework will be detailed.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

A person's sense of humor is generally perceived as a positive attribute by all (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1991). Historically, a number of researchers (see Chapman, 1976; Martin, 2001; McGhee & Goldstein, 1983) have recognized the value of humorous communication and have studied it extensively in an attempt to articulate precisely what comprises humor. However, due to a multiplicity of debates in the literature regarding humor conceptualization, arriving at a singular definition of "humor" has been problematic.

Conceptualizing Humorous Communication

The aforementioned debate has roots dating back to the beginning of humor research in the 1940s, when humor was initially operationalized by asking individuals to assess the "funniness" of a joke (Svebak, 2010, p. 289). While this conceptualization clearly has a biased focus towards the appreciation of jokes, more recent definitions of humor are still criticized due to a continual debate among theorists regarding what, precisely, is being operationalized. More specifically, "humor" can be used to refer to "a stimulus (e.g., a comedy film), a mental process (e.g., perception or creation of amusing incongruities), a response (e.g., laughter), a therapeutic intervention, or a personality trait" (Martin, 2001, p. 505).

In the communication literature, Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1991) define humor as an "intentional verbal [or] nonverbal message which elicits laughter, chuckling, and other forms of spontaneous behavior taken to mean pleasure, delight, and/or surprise in the targeted receiver" (p. 206). Within the classroom, and relevant to the current study, a student-enacted humor event can be conceptualized as any intentional

verbal or nonverbal message committed by a peer which elicits a spontaneous behavior reflecting pleasure, delight, and/or surprise. Although intention to enact humor is not a crucial element of some existing conceptualizations of humor, Banas et al. (2010) contend that, in congruence with Martin (2007), conceptualizing humorous communication as an *intentional* act is an appropriate characterization within the context of instructional communication. In the following section, the benefits of humorous communication within the classroom context will be detailed.

Benefits of Humorous Communication in the Classroom

Humor has long been explored for its perceived benefits (Elliot, 2013). Although humor used to be regarded as a potential distraction in the classroom that could reduce teaching efficiency (Torok, McMorris, & Lin, 2004), it is now widely regarded as not only appropriate, but also encouraged (Lei et al., 2010). Indeed, when students are asked to articulate what makes a “good instructor,” humor is among one of the first characteristics mentioned (Lei, Cohen, & Russler, 2010, p. 326). Although humor itself “is not sufficient for enhancing student learning,” (Wanzer et al., 2010, p. 15), Louis (2011) contends that it is a viable means to achieving a critical end. Not only can the inclusion of humor lead to positive outcomes for the instructor—such as more positive student evaluations (Bryant, Cominsky, Crane, & Zillmann, 1980) and greater levels of class participation (Gorham & Christophel, 1990), empirical evidence suggests that a number of psychological, social, and cognitive outcomes exist for the students, as well (Torok et al., 2004).

Psychological benefits for students include alleviating classroom anxiety, elevating self-esteem, and improving self-confidence (Check, 1997). *Social* benefits for

students include creating a positive learning climate conducive to cognitive learning (Kher et al., 1999), “breeching the gap” between instructors and students, and increasing levels of immediacy and liking towards the instructor (Weaver & Cotrell, 1987, p. 167). *Cognitive* benefits for students include capturing student interest—particularly within “dread” courses (Weaver & Cotrell, 1987, p. 167), making the lesson more memorable (Pollak & Freda, 1997), and encouraging critical thinking and problem solving (Kher et al., 1999).

Instructor-enacted humor. Although previous literature has examined the benefits of humorous communication within the classroom, the primary focus tends to be on *instructor*-enacted humor. Indeed, research on humor enacted by instructors is extensive and includes explorations of the types of instructor humor used (Bryant et al., 1980; Gorham & Christophel, 1990), the reasons instructors used humor (Aylor & Opplinger, 2003; Bryant & Zillman, 1988; Davies & Apter, 1980), and its effectiveness in facilitating learning (Davies & Apter, 1980; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999). A general conclusion from this body of research is that not all humorous communication is created equal in achieving positive outcomes for the instructor and the students. Namely, this body of research suggests two primary themes: first, instructors’ use of appropriate and relevant humor is more effective than inappropriate and/or irrelevant humor; and, second: the sex of the instructor is more important in determining a message’s effectiveness than the type of humor enacted.

More specifically, in examining the *types of humor* that instructors enact within the classroom, Bryant et al.’s (1980) seminal work discovered five distinct categories of humorous teacher behavior: jokes, riddles, puns, funny stories, and humorous comments.

Ultimately, Bryant et al. discovered that, although the type of humor did affect learning outcomes to a certain degree, humor used by male instructors is perceived as being more effective than humor enacted by female instructors. Further, Frymier, Wanzer, and Wojtaszczyk (2008) found that instructor humor perceived as appropriate to the classroom setting resulted in more effective learning outcomes than humor that was perceived as inappropriate.

Student-enacted humor. As evidenced in the review above, and as Wanzer (2002) contended, a substantial body of literature is devoted to examining an instructor's use of humor in educational settings. *Student-enacted* humor, on the other hand, is still largely unexplored. Although there are a myriad of notable benefits, it is important to gain a greater understanding of how humor operates in the classroom from the student's perspective. Particularly, in response to Waldeck, Kearney, and Plax's (2001) contention that the instructional literature does not have an adequate focus on student-to-student interactions within the classroom, this study seeks to begin to bridge this gap. As students participate, engage, and co-construct the classroom environment, their role, whether humorous or not, is critical to student-student and student-instructor relationships and learning outcomes.

Given criticisms that the instructional communication literature lacks a) adequate theoretically grounded investigations (Banas et al., 2011; Sprague, 1993) and b) empirical research on *student-enacted* humor (Waldeck et al., 2001), this thesis seeks to address both critiques. Accordingly, the present study seeks to expand the existing literature by examining peer perceptions of student-enacted humor within the college classroom, using Wanzer et al.'s (2010) instructional humor processing theory (IHPT).

Instructional Humor Processing Theory

IHPT (Wanzer et al., 2010) is an integrative theory that draws from Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) elaboration likelihood model (ELM), LaFave, Haddad, and Maesen's (1996) incongruity-resolution theory, and Zillmann and Cantor's (1996) disposition theory of humor. Ultimately, Wanzer et al. sought to explain how instructional humor can facilitate learning. To fully understand IHPT, the theories from which it is derived will be briefly reviewed and connected to IHPT.

Elaboration likelihood model. ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) explains how individuals process persuasive messages. Specifically, ELM posits that there are two routes to persuasion: *central* and *peripheral*. The *central* route consists of thoughtful consideration of the message's arguments. Conversely, the *peripheral* route occurs when cues unrelated to the message itself are responsible for message processing. This understanding of cognitive processing, as Wanzer et al. (2010) explain, can help to elucidate the relationship between humor and learning. Specifically, when individuals engage in high levels of elaboration (i.e., the central route), they process information critically, which can lead to strong, permanent cognitive changes. ELM suggests that, in order for the central route to be taken, a person must be both *motivated* and *able* to process messages.

Based on the above tenets of ELM, Wanzer et al.'s (2010) IHPT suggests that an instructors' use of humorous messages would incite greater motivation and ability to process content to the extent that the message (a) gained the student's attention, (b) increased the clarity of the message, and (c) made the content personally relevant. However, ELM does not address the cognitive processing of *humorous* messages

specifically. IHPT's second theoretical integration—incongruity-resolution theory—allows us to account for how humorous messages are cognitively processed.

Incongruity-resolution theory. LaFave et al.'s (1996) incongruity-resolution theory illustrates how the receivers cognitively process humorous messages. Expanded from Berlyne's (1960) incongruity theory—which explains that humor is perceived once the receiver recognizes an incongruity between a message and a reality—LaFave et al. conceptualized humor as a two-phase process. First, perceived incongruity must be recognized; second, the receiver must accurately interpret the message (i.e., “get” the joke).

Thus, within the classroom setting, it is not enough for a student to simply recognize a humorous stimuli, it must also be interpreted, or resolved. As Banas et al. (2010) clarify, if a humorous instructional message is only recognized, but not subsequently interpreted, the student may experience feelings of confusion due to the enduring incongruity of the message. Still, Incongruity-Resolution theory fails to consider an individual's interpretation of the humorous message (e.g., inappropriate or appropriate); thus, the final theoretical component of IHPT—disposition theory of humor (Zillmann & Cantor, 1996)—must be incorporated.

Disposition theory of humor. Zillmann and Cantor's (1996) disposition theory of humor posits that individuals will interpret humorous messages as *not funny* or *inappropriate* when it targets liked others. Ultimately, Zillmann and Cantor argue that one is more likely to view a humor attempt favorably when it targets individuals who are disliked or not recognized. Therefore, from a disposition theory perspective, IHPT predicts that a negative affect humor attempt within the classroom will result in the

students' recognition of a humor message, but will ultimately be viewed as inappropriate (Banas et al., 2010).

Previous studies. As noted, IHPT combines elements of these three theories and is specific to the classroom context. To date, IHPT has only been used in a small number of studies. Specifically, Anderson (2011) examined the effects of humor in an online learning environment on student participation. Although limited to the context of online learning, this study provided partial support for IHPT's conclusion that the inclusion of humor in a learning environment can lead to positive social outcomes for the student, such as being more engaged in discussion, more positive perceptions of the instructor, and increased student enjoyment. Further, Louis's (2011) discussion of IHPT attempted to expand the theory's applicability outside of the traditional classroom and into the context of forensics coaching. In his attempt to expand IHPT into a new context, Louis noted that future research is necessary to better understand the correlations between humor practice and its instructional outcomes.

The most recent — and perhaps most notable — incorporation of IHPT was Bolkan and Goodboy's (2015) examination of the theoretical tenets of IHPT. Bolkan and Goodboy ultimately challenged whether the theory's explanation of how humor impacts student learning is valid. Specifically, although humor was associated with perceived cognitive and affective learning, the variables of attention and affect did not predict likelihood of elaborately processing instructional messages in a causal manner, as predicted by Wanzer et al. (2010). Instead, Bolkan and Goodboy discovered that the fulfillment of students' classroom needs were better predictors of perceived cognitive learning than was the students' sustained attention. The results of this study were a

preliminary indication that IHPT does not comprehensively explain the relationship between humor and perceived cognitive learning. Thus, expansions to IHPT that more closely relate to students' basic needs in the classroom are warranted.

Wanzer et al. (2010) originally posited that, in order for humor to successfully facilitate learning, students must (a) be motivated and able to process the message, (b) perceive the humorous message, (c) interpret the message as having a positive affect, and (d) resolve the incongruity of the message. Similarly, when a student enacts humor, the peers and instructor must also (a) be motivated and able to process the message, (b) perceive the humorous message, (c) interpret the message as having a positive affect, and (d) resolve the incongruity of the message. Although one's *motivation* to process and *ability* to process a message is an important part of the IHPT framework—as ELM would explain—this study is the first of its kind to examine student-enacted humor. While these constructs are still present within the current study (i.e., IPA as a proxy for motivation and HO as a proxy for ability to process), it is not feasible to test all components of the IHPT framework within this exploratory study. Consequently, *motivation* and *ability* to process are not included as control variables in the present study.

Ultimately, based upon the theoretical explanations and previous research reviewed, IHPT predicts that humor related to instructional content would correlate positively with student learning, whereas inappropriate forms of humor would not. More specifically, Wanzer et al. (2010) argue that student learning is the result of instructors' use of appropriate humor to create positive affect and gain student's attention, thus resulting in greater motivation and ability to process content in “effortful ways” (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2015, p. 26).

Although IHPT makes important theoretical additions to the humor literature — namely, providing explanatory power as to why some instructor enacted humorous messages lead to learning — this framework still needs theoretical expansion in order to explain the relationship between humor and learning, as evidenced by Bolkan and Goodboy (2015). Due to the current study’s goal to examine this link within the context of student-student interactions, and based upon prior research that suggests students’ learning is enhanced when they perceive the classroom to be connected and personalized (see Prisbell, Dwyer, Carlson, Bingham, & Cruz, 2009; Waldeck, 2007), the current study proposes adaptations of IHPT that focus on classroom climate as the intermediary between humor and learning.

Expanding IHPT

Although IHPT is still in its infancy, several adjustments to the theory will make it a more robust explanatory model for the use of humorous communication in the classroom. First, IHPT fails to consider the effects of enacted humor upon *interpersonal perceptions* of the sender. However, existing literature has acknowledged that people tend to be more attracted to those who are perceived as humorous (Wanzer, Booth-Butterfield, & Booth-Butterfield, 1996). In concordance with ELM’s (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) peripheral route to message processing, interpersonal attraction often serves as a cue in message processing. Specifically, when a receiver is attracted to the message sender, message elaboration (i.e., critical examination of information) is reduced. Thus, the current study seeks to examine, specifically, the interpersonal attraction experienced to humorous peers within the classroom.

Second, IHPT does not take into consideration the individual traits of the receiver

(e.g., humor orientation). Prior research (see Banas et al., 2011) suggests that the receiver's humor orientation is likely related to his or her ability to process messages. As IHPT is theoretically grounded upon the argument that a student's "effortful" message processing is critical to learning, it is, therefore, imperative to examine HO as a variable affecting message elaboration (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2015, p. 26). To that end, the current study seeks to expand upon IHPT and examine the potential effects of the receiver's *humor orientation* (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1991).

Third, IHPT limits its explanatory power insofar that Wanzer et al. (2010) only examined the students' perceptions of sender *humorousness* (i.e., "this instructor is one of the funniest instructors I know" and "this instructor is humorous"). Instead, and based on research that differentiates between appropriate and inappropriate humor (Gorham & Christophel, 1990), and research that certain humor styles tend to be viewed as more appropriate (Frymier et al., 2008), the current study proposes that perceived *humor style* of the sender would be a critical addition to the theory.

Finally, IHPT fails to acknowledge the students' perceptions of the effects of humorous communication on the overall classroom climate. Sollitto, Johnson, and Myers (2013) found that higher-quality student-student relationships result in greater feelings of classroom connectedness, and consequently, increased student motivation and learning. As Bolkan and Goodboy (2015) suggested, potential mediator variables of the classroom environment should be explored in order to more comprehensively explain the link between humor and learning. To this end, the current study seeks to examine classroom climate as a potential variable for IHPT expansion.

In the following sections, each proposed expansion of IHPT will be reviewed in

more detail. Based on the empirical findings of Bolkan and Goodboy (2015), the discipline's current understanding of the relationship between humor and learning—specifically with regard to the exploratory power of IHPT—lacks an adequate exploration of how the fulfillment of students' needs affects the variable relationships as described by IHPT. Thus, the four proposed expansions of IHPT were chosen in an attempt to better understand how students' classroom needs may affect the humor–learning relationship.

Interpersonal attraction. Historically, interpersonal scholars have examined how “person perceptions” affect interpersonal communication and vice versa (McCroskey, McCroskey, & Richmond, 2006, p. 1). This literature suggests that our perceptions of one another have a strong impact upon all facets of communication—including level of message elaboration and subsequent comprehension. Therefore, it is imperative to take into consideration the receiver's perception of the peer in order to gain a complete understanding of what affects learning outcomes. In order to expand IHPT to consider how one's interpersonal perceptions affect the relationship between humor and learning, the variable of *interpersonal attraction* shall be added to serve as the measure of “person perceptions.”

Berscheid and Walster (1969) proposed two important conclusions about interpersonal attraction: (a) the more a person is attracted to another, the more they will communicate; and, (b) the more interpersonal attraction experienced towards another, the more influence that person has upon on receiver. McCroskey and McCain (1974) expanded upon this foundation, developing a multidimensional construct of attraction, consisting of three separate dimensions: physical attraction, social attraction, and task

attraction. *Physical attraction* consists of whether or not the individual perceives the sender to be “handsome,” “pretty,” or “good looking” (McCroskey & McCain, 1974, p. 263). Social attraction considers whether the sender “could be a friend of mine” or “would be pleasant to be with” (p. 263). Task attraction examines whether the individual has confidence in his or her ability “to get the job done” or if they would be “fun to work with” (p. 263).

Recently, the instructional literature has started to examine the student-teacher relationship as an interpersonal relationship (Frymier & Houser, 2000). By examining this relationship within the interpersonal context, McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey (2005) explained that students more frequently initiate communication with instructors to whom they experience interpersonal attraction. Further, students actively avoid communicating with instructors to whom they do not experience attraction. Prior instructional studies (see Weiss & Houser, 2007) have utilized interpersonal attraction as the means of examining perceptions of instructors within the classroom due to the fact that interpersonal attraction affects not only the amount, but also the quality, of the communication that occurs between communication partners (McCroskey, Hamilton, & Weiner, 1974). Berscheid and Walster’s (1969) proposition that interpersonal attraction can predict the amount of influence one individual has upon another certainly has important implications within the classroom.

Frisby and Sidelinger (2013) found that students who appropriately disclosed in the classroom elicited greater task and social attraction from their peers. Similarly, student humorous communication may also influence peer’s perceptions of interpersonal attraction. In fact, Wanzer et al. (1996) found that funny students were also more

popular, being rated higher in social attraction by their peers. When one considers the fact that peers can impact learning outcomes—such as reinforcing instructional messages and rephrasing messages in different terms (see Frisby & Martin, 2010; Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2009)—it is understandable the great influence that peers can have on one another. Thus, examining the construct of interpersonal attraction solely within instructor-student relationships is insufficient for understanding the full complexity of student-student relationships.

In order to examine the potential effects of students' interpersonal attraction toward a peer enacting humorous communication in the college classroom, the following hypotheses are posed:

H1a: Students experience higher levels of physical attraction to peers who enact humor than to peers who do not enact humor.

H1b: Students experience higher levels of task attraction to peers who enact humor than to peers who do not enact humor.

H1c: Students experience higher levels of social attraction to peers who enact humor than to peers who do not enact humor.

In addition to examining the effects of humor on interpersonal attraction, it is also imperative to examine how interpersonal attraction may be influenced by his or her humor orientation, especially given Aylor and Opplinger's (2013) findings that high HO may lead to fostering interpersonal relationships. The following section will provide rationale for examining a potential interpersonal attraction-HO link.

Receiver Humor Orientation

For the purposes of the current study, in congruence with Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, and Weir (2003), humor is conceptualized as a stable personality trait. Specifically, McCroskey and Daly (1987) found that people differ in their use of humor depending on individual difference patterns, such as argumentativeness, assertiveness, and other communication skills. Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1991) elaborated on this concept by explaining that every individual develops “differing levels of expertise in choosing, producing, and timing humor” (p. 206). The successful use of humor depends not only on a person’s ability to process humorous information, but also his or her ability to produce humorous messages. Therefore, Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield proposed that humor be conceptualized from a “symbolic processing model” perspective, leading to the development of an individual’s humor orientation (HO) (p. 206). Specifically, HO is an individual, trait-based use of humor as a communicative device based on the individual’s ability to process information and ability to produce humorous messages.

Based on McCroskey et al.’s (2006) argument that interpersonal attraction is related to communication outcomes, it is imperative to examine the relationship between interpersonal attraction and HO. Previous research demonstrates that individuals are more interpersonally attracted to those who they perceive as similar (Berscheid & Walster, 1969; McCroskey et al., 2006; McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975). Further, an individual who is high HO is expected to process humorous communication differently than those who are low HO. Thus, the following hypothesis is posed:

H2: Students' own humor orientation (HO) is positively related to the degree of interpersonal attraction experienced towards peers who enact humor.

Just as the receiver's HO is a stable personality trait, prior research (see Schermer, Martin, Martin, Lynskey, & Vernon, 2013) suggests that the humor *styles* one chooses to enact is also a stable personality—and perhaps even genetically inherited—trait. Therefore, it is imperative to examine not only the receiver's orientation to *interpreting* humor, but also the specific styles in which the sender tends to *enact* humorous communication.

Sender Humor Styles

Martin et al. (2003) posited that there are four independent ways in which people express humor. These four styles differ among two different dimensions: (a) whether humor is used to enhance the self or to enhance one's relationship with another, and (b) whether the humor is benign or injurious in nature. Each of the four dimensions described by Martin et al.—affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating—relate to the different uses, or functions, of humor in everyday life. Two of the styles are considered to be conducive to individual and relational well-being (i.e., benign), whereas the other two are potentially detrimental to the well-being of self, another individual, or the relationship (i.e., injurious).

The first humor style suggested by Martin et al. (2003) is *affiliative*. Individuals who enact affiliative humor tend to “say funny things, to tell jokes, and to engage in spontaneous witty banter to amuse others, facilitate relationships, and to reduce interpersonal tensions” (p. 53). Ultimately, affiliative humor is concerned with enhancing one's relationship with others.

The second humor style is *self-enhancing*. Individuals who enact this style tend to be frequently amused, have a generally humorous outlook on life, and maintain a humorous perspective, even when faced with adversity. Self-enhancing humor ultimately serves as a coping mechanism insofar that it may regulate emotions while maintaining a realistic perspective on aversive situations (Dixon, 1980).

The third humor style is *aggressive*. This style is closely related to the use of sarcasm, ridicule, and implied threat. Ultimately, individuals who enact this style express humor without regard for its impact on others. Aggressive humor is closely related to hostility, anger, and aggression. This humor style does not refer to “friendly teasing” or “playfully poking fun” at others; instead, it refers to humor that is intentionally used to belittle others (Martin et al., 2003, p. 52).

The fourth humor style is *self-defeating*. Similar to affiliative humor, individuals who enact this style are concerned with enhancing their relationship with others, but at the expense of one’s self. Further, this style is commonly marked by allowing oneself to be the “butt” of others’ humor in order to gain approval (Martin et al., 2003).

Martin et al. (2003) consider *affiliative* humor and *self-enhancing* humor to be benign humor styles, as they enhance relationships in a way that is not at the expense or detriment of the self or others. The use of benign humor styles is used to “oil the wheels of communication and permits the establishment of social relations with a minimum of conflict” (Ziv, 1984, p. 32). In other words, these styles increase the other’s feelings of well-being, reduce conflict, and strengthen ties between individuals.

Conversely, *aggressive* humor and *self-defeating* humor are considered to be injurious humor styles. Even though they may be an attempt to enhance relationships,

they may be injurious to important relationships with the self or others, such as one's friends, family members, or colleagues (Ziv, 1984).

In addition to strengthening ties between individuals, Martin et al. (2003) found that benign humor styles "increase one's attractiveness to the other" (p. 52). Indeed, due to the fact that humor is a highly valued trait across cultures (Buss, 1988), empirical evidence suggests that the use of humor is not only a favorably evaluated personality trait (Anderson, 1968; Craik, Lampert, & Nelson, 1996), but it predicts higher levels of interpersonal attraction. Therefore, the following hypotheses are posed:

H3: Students experience higher levels of interpersonal attraction to peers who enacted benign humor styles (affiliative and self-enhancing) than to those who enacted injurious humor styles (aggressive and self-defeating).

H4: Students experience higher levels of interpersonal attraction to peers in classroom environments characterized by benign humor styles than to those in classroom environments characterized by injurious humor styles.

As Bolkan and Goodboy (2015) explained, one student need that has not been adequately incorporated into the examination of humorous communication in the classroom is the students' need to feel connected and enjoy a sense of belonging. Thus, it is imperative to also examine the climate of the classroom in which the humor events occur.

Classroom Connectedness

IHPT has not examined how instructional humor processing may affect an overall climate, or connectedness, in a classroom as an outcome associated with humorous communication. For the purposes of this study, a connected classroom climate is defined

as “student-to-student perceptions of a supportive and cooperative communication environment in the classroom” (Dwyer et al., 2004, p. 267). Allen (2000) provides support for this conceptualization, as a connected classroom reflects a strong within-group bond which allows students to communicate with one another freely and openly.

Indeed, fostering a sense of community and positive climate for students in the college classroom setting has been shown to have positive effects on retention, learning, participation, and general academic success (Dwyer et al., 2004; Frisby & Martin, 2010). Further, students who report high levels of community also report “greater academic motivation, affinity for school, empathy to help others, better conflict resolution skills, greater enjoyment of class, higher self-efficacy, and great motivation and liking for school” (Dwyer et al., 2004, p. 265).

Consequently, the current study seeks to examine whether the perceived classroom connectedness is related to not only the sender’s humor style, but also the receiver’s perception of message humorousness. Therefore, the following hypothesis and research question are posed:

H5: Students will experience higher levels of classroom connectedness in classrooms where students enact benign humor styles (affiliative and self-enhancing) than to those who enact injurious humor styles (aggressive and self-defeating).

RQ1: Is there a relationship between one’s perceptions of classroom connectedness and the perceived humorousness of the sender’s message?

Finally, although the incorporation of sex was not proposed as an expansion to IHPT, as a result of the widely inconsistent findings in sex research regarding classroom

communication, the current exploratory study seeks to examine if the sex differences found in some notable studies (see Bryant et al., 1979; Se'ver & Ungar, 1997) are also reflected within the context of student-student interactions.

Sex of Sender and Receiver

As previously detailed, a number of individual differences exist in examining humorous communication, including one's HO and humor styles. Additionally, existing research has suggested that sex differences exist in the use of instructional humor. Specifically, not only do men generally tell more jokes than women in the classroom, but they may also be using humorous communication to serve different functions (Bryant et al., 1979; Sev'er & Ungar, 1997). Namely, Sev'er and Ungar found that men tend to use humor primarily as an attention-gaining and entertaining strategy, whereas women used humor to re-gain control after a disruption. Further, Bryant et al. discovered that male instructors used more self-disparaging humor than their female counterparts. Still, instructional literature suggests that humorous communication enacted by male instructors tends to be perceived as more effective than when enacted by female instructors (Banas et al., 2010).

Although the aforementioned studies' results are statistically significant, it is important to note that they had small effect sizes. Canary and House (1993) argued that the polarization of sexes in communication research will contribute to small effect sizes and conflicting results. Indeed, a number of studies (see Banas et al., 2010) have reported inconsistent findings with one another regarding sex differences in instructional humor. Specifically, in her work on instructional message interpretation, Edwards (1998) found that the sex of the sender and the receiver influenced each one's interpretation of

relational messages. Indeed, Rester and Edwards (2007) also found interaction effects with regard to biological sex in the interpretation of relational messages. However, the aforementioned findings are within the context of instructor enacted humor and student–instructor relationships. Thus, due to the exploratory nature of the present study, the following research questions are posed to examine sex differences within the context of student enacted humor and student–student relationships:

RQ2: Does the sex of the sender affect the levels of interpersonal attraction experienced?

RQ3: Does the sex of the receiver affect the levels of interpersonal attraction experienced?

RQ4: Are there interaction effects for sender and receiver sex on interpersonal attraction?

In sum, Chapter Two provided a conceptualization of humorous communication, specifically as it pertains to the instructional setting. Moreover, the benefits of instructional humorous communication were reviewed. In an attempt to examine these benefits in an unexplored area of the literature — student-student interactions — four expansions to IHPT were proposed. In Chapter Three, the present study’s method will be detailed.

Chapter Three: Method

Study Design

Currently, non-experimental research design is more commonly used within the instructional communication literature than experimental design. As Fassett and Warren (2010) discussed, this tendency to use non-experimental design in instructional research is primarily due to concerns of ecological validity. Specifically, experimental research design does not allow a researcher to examine natural classroom events. Using a quasi-experimental design is especially relevant in examinations of humorous communication as Wanzer et al. (2010) — along with Bolkan and Goodboy (2015) — encouraged future studies to incorporate experimental design to examine IHPT's predictions. Consequently, this study employed a mixed methods quasi-experimental approach to exploring the research question. First, students were randomly assigned to conditions where they completed a qualitative recall activity of either a) a student-enacted humor event (treatment group) or b) a student-asked question (control group). Second, participants completed quantitative scales about the event they described in the recall prompt.

Procedures

Participants were recruited using a convenience sample acquired through the use of an instructor listserv. Specifically, general education communication course instructors were encouraged to distribute the online access link for the current study to their respective students. Students were all offered minimal and equal extra credit upon successful completion of the survey across all sections. After agreeing to IRB-approved informed consent, participants were randomly assigned by Qualtrics to one of two conditions: a) peer enacted humorous communication or b) peer asked a question.

Participants assigned to the first condition were prompted to write a description of the most recent time they remember a peer successfully and appropriately enacting humorous communication within any one of the participant's currently enrolled classes. Specifically, participants were instructed:

A humor event is defined as an intentional verbal or nonverbal message that elicited laughter, chuckling, or another spontaneous behavior which could be taken to mean pleasure, delight, and/or surprise. Think about the most recent time one of your classmates used humor in a class you are currently taking. In the space below, describe this specific humor event in as much detail as you can remember. Be specific in your description of the event, including what was said that you found humorous and why you found it humorous.

Participants assigned to the second condition were prompted to write a description of the most recent time they remember a peer asking a question during a currently enrolled class. Specifically, participants were instructed:

Think about the most recent time one of your classmates asked a question in a class you are currently taking. In the space below, describe this specific time he or she asked a question in as much detail as you can remember.

The purpose of this writing response is twofold. First, it ensured each participant only considered one specific peer during one specific event while completing the measures (as opposed to their reflections of peers or the classroom in general). Second, their response to this question allows the peer's enacted humor style (i.e., affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, self-defeating) in that instance to be qualitatively coded.

By asking the control group about a non-humor-related event (i.e., a question

asked), but still requiring the participant to recall a specific individual, levels of interpersonal attraction can effectively be compared between the treatment and control groups. Specifically, as Dillon (1986) argued, question-asking is an intentional act. Since the treatment group was asked to report on an intentional event (i.e., enacted humor), for the purposes of comparison between groups, it was imperative to choose an intentional act (i.e., asking a question) for the control group. Further, when students ask questions, they are fulfilling different classroom needs and motivations (Chin, Brown, & Bruce, 2002), along with utilizing different cognitive skills (Brown & Walter, 2005) than students who are enacting humorous communication.

After each participant wrote a brief description of the salient event (Appendix A) and completed the four scales detailed in the following section (Appendices B-E), demographic information was collected (see Appendix F). Next, each participant was asked to report how long ago the event happened. Finally, each participant was re-directed to a separate survey in order to collect their name and Student ID number for the purpose of survey completion credit. No personally identifiable information was retained with the survey answers for this study.

Participants

A total of 302 participants were recruited from a general education communication course that draws students from all majors and is required by the core curriculum at a large Southern university. Before data analysis, 24 participants were removed from the sample for not completing the qualitative recall, four participants were removed for not completing the quantitative instruments, and two participants were removed for having been erroneously exposed to both the control and treatment

conditions by Qualtrics, the survey software system.

The remaining eligible participants ($N = 272$, 35.3% men, 64.7% women) for this study consisted of first year students ($n = 230$), sophomores ($n = 31$), juniors ($n = 9$), and seniors ($n = 2$). Participants' ranged in age from 18 to 30 ($M = 18.75$, $SD = 1.13$); 41 participants did not report their age. The participants identified as White (75.4%; $n = 205$), Black or African American (6.6%, $n = 18$), Hispanic or Latino (5.9%, $n = 16$), Asian or Asian American (6.3%, $n = 17$), and Other (5.8%; $n = 16$). The students reported on class sizes ranging from 1 to 300 ($M = 67.95$, $SD = 75.96$). Two participants did not report class size. Participants reported on both female ($n = 127$) and male ($n = 145$) peers in events ranging from 0 to 30 days prior to the survey ($M = 7.96$, $SD = 8.27$); 23 participants did not report how long ago the event occurred. After random assignment, 133 students were assigned to the treatment group and 139 students reported on a peer asked question.

Instrumentation

Interpersonal attraction scale. After priming the participant to a specific event, levels of social, physical, and task attraction were collected using McCroskey and McCain's (1974) Measurement of Interpersonal Attraction Scale (IAS). The IAS consists of 15 Likert items, measured on a scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) (see Appendix B). Items 1-5 measure social attraction (e.g., "I think he (she) could be a friend of mine" and "I would like to have a friendly chat with him (her)"), items 6-10 measure physical attraction (e.g., "I find him (her) very attractive physically" and "I don't like the way he (she) looks"), and items 11-15 measure task attraction (e.g., "I have confidence in his (her) ability to get the job done" and "He (she) would be a poor

problem solver”). The items from the IAS were randomly displayed in different order for each participant. Three subscores were calculated from the IAS (i.e., social attraction, physical attraction, and task attraction) by taking the mean of the respective items.

McCroskey and McCain (1974) reported high internal reliabilities for the IAS as follows: Social Attraction, $\alpha = .84$; Task Attraction, $\alpha = .81$; and Physical Attraction, $\alpha = .86$. Various researchers (see Ayers, 1989; Brandt, 1979; Duran & Kelly, 1988; Wheelless, Frymier, & Thompson, 1992) have reported similar reliability results ranging from .80 to .93. Further, McCroskey, Richmond, Daly, and Cox (1975) reported split-half reliability as: Social Attraction, $\alpha = .90$; Task Attraction, $\alpha = .87$; and Physical Attraction, $\alpha = .92$. In this study, the three dimensions—Social Attraction ($\alpha = .78$) ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.14$), Task Attraction ($\alpha = .80$) ($M = 4.78$, $SD = 1.10$), and Physical Attraction, ($\alpha = .79$) ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.18$)—were also reliable.

Classroom connectedness. Dwyer et al.’s (2004) Connected Classroom Climate Inventory (CCCI) was utilized to assess each participant’s perception of supportive climate within the classroom. The CCCI consists of 18 Likert-type items, and includes items such as, “I feel included in class discussions in my class” and “the students in my class are supportive of one another” (see Appendix C). The items from the CCCI were randomly displayed in different order for each participant. Dwyer et al. (2004) found the measure yielded a coefficient alpha of .94. Indeed, others (see Johnson, 2009; Sidelinger, Bolen, Frisby, & McMullen, 2012) have provided similar support for the CCCI, reporting reliabilities ranging from .91 to .94. In this study, the CCCI was also found to be reliable ($\alpha = .95$) ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.61$).

Adapted humor styles questionnaire. Martin et al. (2003) developed the Humor

Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) in order to identify the individual differences in everyday uses of humor. The HSQ is typically used as a self-report measure. In order to explore the cumulative effect of the overall humor climate within the classroom, the HSQ was modified for other-report by adjusting the items' target (e.g., instead of "I use humor to make myself feel better," the item was modified to "in our class, we use humor to make ourselves feel better." The HSQ identifies four categorizations of humor styles—affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating. Martin et al. reported internal reliabilities of .80 for affiliative, .81 for self-enhancing, .77 for aggressive, and .80 for self-defeating.

The adapted humor styles questionnaire (AHSQ) consisted of 17 Likert-type items (see Appendix D). The AHSQ was reliable in two of the four dimensions: affiliative ($\alpha = .81$) ($M = 6.28$, $SD = 1.81$) and self-enhancing ($\alpha = .85$) ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 1.91$). The aggressive ($\alpha = .25$) and self-defeating ($\alpha = .21$) dimensions were not reliable, could not be improved by dropping items, and were excluded from further analyses.

Humor orientation scale. Next, the participant's own humor orientation (HO) was collected using Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield's (1991) Humor Orientation Scale. The HO Scale consists of 17 Likert items, ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5) (see Appendix E). The HO scale assesses individual differences in the use of humor as a communicative device and asks the participant to report on their own humor orientation (e.g., "being funny is a natural communication style with me" and "my friends would say that I am a funny person"). The items from the HO scale were randomly displayed in different order for each participant. The self-report measure of HO has been validated by Wanzer et al. (1996), who found that people who rated themselves

as high HO were also rated as high in humor by others. The HO scale was also found to have excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .94$) (Wanzer et al., 1996). The current study also found the HO scale to be reliable ($\alpha = .88$) ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.54$).

Humor styles. In order to determine the peer's enacted humor style as described in the participants' qualitative recall, coders were trained on Martin et al.'s (2003) four humor styles (see Appendix G for Qualitative Coding Manual). A randomly selected sample of 25 qualitative accounts from the treatment group was provided to the coders. For each qualitative account, the coders independently selected the humor style exhibited by the peer, as reported by the participant. The two coders initially achieved a Krippendorff's alpha of .51 (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). Following the initial independent coding, all discrepancies between the coders were discussed until agreement was reached, allowing each account to be coded for one of the four humor styles. A second randomly selected sample of 25 qualitative accounts was independently coded, and the two coders achieved internal reliability ($\alpha = .72$). After reaching agreement on the second sample of 25, the remaining 83 responses from the treatment group were randomly divided between the two coders and independently coded. The control group responses ($n = 139$) were not coded for humor styles. Of the treatment group responses ($n = 133$), 34.6% were affiliative ($n = 46$), 15.8% were aggressive ($n = 21$), 6.0% were self-enhancing ($n = 8$), and 3.8% were self-defeating ($n = 5$). 39.8% of the treatment group responses ($n = 53$) were uncodable.

Message humorousness rating scale. Finally, participants were asked to rate how humorous they perceived the classmate's message to be on a 10-point scale, ranging from 1 (not humorous) to 10 (humorous). To ensure the construct validity of the

manipulation between treatment and control groups, an independent samples t-test was performed as a manipulation check (Cozby, 2009). Levene's test for equality of variances was significant ($p = .001$). The t-test revealed that the treatment ($M = 6.94, SD = 1.81$) and control ($M = 2.49, SD = 2.41$) groups were significantly different; $t(256) = -17.281, p = <.001$, with the recalled humor event being considered more humorous than the question asking event.

Data Analysis

In order to test H1a, H1b, and H1c, a MANOVA was performed between the IAS subscores and the condition assignment (peer enacted humor or peer asked a question). More specifically, the condition assignment (“peer enacted humorous communication” or “peer asked a question”) served as the independent variable. The dependent variable for H1a was the physical attraction subscore; for H1b, the task attraction subscore; for H1c, the social attraction subscore.

To test H2, correlation analyses were performed between the HO score and each of the IAS subscores separately (physical attraction, task attraction, and social attraction).

To test H3, participants in the treatment condition were first assigned to one of two groups: (a) sender enacted a benign humor style (i.e., affiliative or self-enhancing), or (b) sender enacted an injurious humor style (i.e., aggressive or self-defeating). Then, an Independent Samples T-test was performed between each of the IAS subscores and the senders' benign/injurious grouping.

H4 predicted that levels of interpersonal attraction would be higher in benign humor classroom environments than in injurious humor classroom environments. H4 was unable to be tested due to the unacceptable reliabilities of the two injurious subscales

of the AHSQ.

Similar to H4, H5 predicted that levels of classroom connectedness would be higher in benign humor classroom environments than in injurious humor classroom environments. H5 was unable to be tested due to the unacceptable reliabilities of the two injurious subscales of the AHSQ.

To explore RQ1, a correlation analysis was performed between the CCCI score and the participants' perception of message humorousness.

To explore RQ2, an Independent Samples T-test was performed between the IAS subscores and the sex of the peer, which served as the grouping variable.

To explore RQ3, an Independent Samples T-test was performed between the IAS subscores and the sex of the participant.

To explore RQ4, a MANOVA was performed between the sex composition of the dyad (male-male, female-female, or male-female) and the IAS subscores.

Chapter Four: Results

Hypothesis One

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine if participants reported higher levels of physical (H1a), task (H1b), and social (H1c) attraction to peers who enacted humor (i.e., the treatment group) than to peers who did not enact humor (i.e., the control group). The MANOVA revealed a significant model, $\Lambda = .94$, $F(3, 261) = 5.01$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .05$, power = .91. Specifically, participants who recalled a humorous event reported higher levels of physical attraction ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.19$) and social attraction ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.16$) than participants who recalled a peer asking a question for physical attraction ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.15$) and social attraction ($M = 4.89$, $SD = 1.08$). However, the MANOVA revealed that levels of task attraction were higher for participants who recalled a peer asking a question ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.12$) than participants who recalled a humorous event ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 1.07$). Thus, H1a and H1c were supported; H1b was not supported.

Hypothesis Two

In order to determine whether the students' own HO was related to the degree of interpersonal attraction experienced towards peers who enacted humor, correlation analyses were performed between treatment participants' HO scores and the three IAS subscores separately. The analyses revealed significant relationships between HO and two of the three IAS subscores—social attraction and task attraction.

Specifically, a moderate, significant relationship ($r = .31$, $p < .001$) was discovered between HO and task attraction. Similarly, a weak, significant relationship ($r = .25$, $p < .01$) was discovered between HO and social attraction. No significant

relationship ($p = .92$) was discovered between HO and physical attraction. Thus, H2 was partially supported.

Hypothesis Three

To examine if students experienced higher levels of interpersonal attraction to peers who enacted benign humor than to those who enacted injurious humor, independent samples t-tests were performed. The results indicated that differences did exist, but only in levels of social attraction. No significant differences existed between the benign and injurious groups with regard to task attraction ($p = .67$) or physical attraction ($p = .60$).

In examining social attraction, Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant ($p = .85$). The t-test revealed that participants reported higher levels of social attraction toward peers enacting a benign humor style ($M = 5.46, SD = 1.18$) than peers enacting an injurious humor style ($M = 4.81, SD = 1.23$); $t(78) = 2.25, p = .03$. H3 was partially supported.

Hypotheses Four and Five

Due to unacceptable reliabilities of the aggressive ($\alpha = .25$) and self-defeating ($\alpha = .21$) subscales of the Adapted Humor Styles Questionnaire, H4 and H5 were not tested.

Research Question 1

To determine the relationship between perceptions of classroom connectedness and perceived humorousness of the sender's message, a correlation analysis was performed. The analysis revealed a nonsignificant relationship ($r = .09, p = .125$). This finding suggests that no relationship exists between CCCI and the perception of message humorousness.

Research Question 2

In order to examine whether sex differences existed in levels of interpersonal attraction based on the sex of the peer, independent sample t-tests were performed between the sex of the target and each of the three dimensions of interpersonal attraction. The results indicated that sex differences did exist in physical attraction and task attraction, but no statistically significant differences existed between the sexes in reporting social attraction ($p = .20$).

In examining physical attraction, Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant ($p = .89$). The t-test revealed that there was a significant difference in the level of physical attraction reported between participants who recalled a female peer ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.17$) and those who recalled a male peer ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.13$); $t(270) = -3.86$, $p = <.001$.

In examining task attraction, Levene's test was significant ($p = .04$). The t-test likewise revealed higher levels of task attraction toward female peers ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.12$) than toward male peers ($M = 4.58$; $SD = 1.03$); $t(270) = -3.34$, $p = .001$. These results suggest that the sex of the sender did affect the levels of two of the three dimensions of interpersonal attraction, and that specifically, females using humor were more physically and task attractive than male peers using humor.

Research Question 3

To determine whether sex differences existed in levels of interpersonal attraction based on the sex of the receiver, independent sample t-tests were performed. The results revealed no significant differences between male and female receivers for any of the interpersonal attraction subscores. Specifically, the t-test for physical attraction revealed

$t(270) = -1.86, p = .06$. The t-test for social attraction revealed $t(269) = -1.21, p = .23$. The t-test for task attraction revealed $t(270) = -1.02, p = .31$. These findings suggest that the sex of the receiver did not affect the levels of interpersonal attraction reported toward humorous peers.

Research Question 4

In order to examine RQ4, participants were assigned to one of three groups based upon the sex of the sender and the receiver: male-male dyads, male-female dyads, and female-female dyads. A MANOVA was conducted to determine if interaction effects existed for sender and receiver sex on levels of interpersonal attraction. The MANOVA revealed a significant model, $\Lambda = .90, F(6, 520) = 4.71, p = <.001, \eta^2 = .051, \text{power} = .99$. Although there were no significant differences in the subscore of social attraction, a post-hoc Tukey test revealed that interaction sex effects did exist for both task attraction and physical attraction.

Specifically, for task attraction, female-female dyads ($M = 4.96; SD = 1.14$) reported significantly higher levels of task attraction than male-male dyads ($M = 4.46, SD = 1.02$). Likewise, for physical attraction, female-female dyads ($M = 4.15, SD = 0.91$) reported significantly higher levels of physical attraction than male-male dyads ($M = 3.36, SD = 1.09$). Further, male-female dyads ($M = 4.19, SD = 1.30$) reported significantly higher levels of physical attraction than male-male dyads ($M = 3.36, SD = 1.09$). In sum, RQ4 revealed that some interactions effects for sender and receiver sex do exist on two of the three dimensions of interpersonal attraction. Specifically, female-female dyads experiences greater physical and task attraction to one another than any of

the other dyadic compositions.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Ultimately, the purpose of this study was to extend the discipline's understanding of the use of humorous communication in the classroom by examining an area of instructional communication that has been overlooked in prior research: *student*-enacted humor. To this end, this study proposed four expansions to instructional humor processing theory that are theoretically relevant to fully understanding the functions of humorous communication when enacted by a student, not an instructor. The proposed expansions were to include the constructs of: (a) interpersonal attraction, (b) humor orientation, (c) humor style, and (d) classroom connectedness. In the following sections, each of the proposed expansions will be examined in light of the results of this study. Additionally, although sex differences were not proposed as a theoretical expansion, prior studies have suggested that sex differences do exist within the constructs of attraction (McCroskey & McCain, 1972) and perceptions of humor (Darling & Civikly, 1987). Consequently, this study's findings regarding sex differences will be discussed. Next, the practical implications for classroom behavior, teaching, classroom climate, and classroom management will be offered for both instructors and students. Finally, limitations of the study will be presented and directions for future research will be offered.

Interpersonal Attraction

As mentioned previously, existing literature has provided support for the notion that interpersonal perceptions have a strong impact on all facets of communication (McCroskey et al., 2006). Through the incorporation of McCroskey and McCain's (1974) conceptualization of interpersonal attraction as the measure of interpersonal

perceptions, the current study sought to provide empirical support for the interpersonal attraction construct as an essential expansion to IHPT.

Results from the study indicated that participants reported higher levels of physical and social attraction for peers who enacted humor than participants in the control condition. However, higher levels of task attraction were reported for participants in the control condition. Although H1b was not supported, this result is consistent with the work of Claus, Booth-Butterfield, and Chory (2012). Specifically, Claus et al. noted that the three forms of attractiveness should be expected to operate independently from one another, and each provides particular benefits in the classroom environment (i.e., task attraction related to functional motives, physical attraction related to relational motives, and social attraction related to sycophantic motives). Thus, as a result of the current study manipulating the control group to recall a peer asking a question, it is reasonable to expect higher levels of task attraction, as this would appeal to the participants' classroom functional needs.

In further support of the current study's results, Berkos and Pecchioni (2001) found an inverse relationship between perceptions of instructor misbehaviors and task attractiveness; that is, levels of task attractiveness are expected to decrease as instructors engage in actions considered to be misbehaviors (see Kearney, Plax, Hays, & Ivey, 1991). Although classroom misbehaviors are not included as a variable in the current study, it is important to note as a potential theoretical explanation. Namely, it is possible that participants viewed their peers' use of humor as disruptive to the educational environment, and thus perceived as a classroom misbehavior, which would result in

lower task attraction. This may be especially true of the injurious styles, which may be considered more of an instructor misbehavior than the benign styles.

Nevertheless, this finding still raises a number of questions. Particularly, Berkos and Pecchioni (2001) also discovered an inverse relationship between instructor misbehaviors and *social* attractiveness. If the above explanation is, in fact, responsible for the unsupported finding of H1b, it would still not explain why higher levels of social attractiveness were reported for the treatment group. Similar to the present study's results, Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1996) reported that they found higher levels of social attraction for acquaintances who had high HO. Still, Claus et al. (2012) noted that *social* attraction is also related to functional motives. If social attraction and task attraction are both related to the same functional motives, one would expect for these two dimensions to move in likewise directions. It will be imperative for future research to examine this relationship between social and task attraction as a result of humorous student communication.

Still, the results indicated that there is a clear difference in reported levels of interpersonal attraction between the treatment and control groups, which ultimately suggests that the addition of interpersonal attraction to IHPT is warranted.

Receiver Humor Orientation

Just as one's humor orientation affects that individual's ability to both process and produce humorous messages, it is expected that humor orientation may be correlated with perceived interpersonal attraction (Booth-Butterfield, Booth-Butterfield, 1991; McCroskey et al., 2006). Specifically, as Wanzer et al. (1996) argued, humor is an

integral factor of one's communication competence (Duran, 1992), which, in turn, is related to social attraction (McGhee, 1989).

The present study expected to see correlations between HO and the three dimensions of interpersonal attraction (H2). After data analysis, a moderate, significant relationship between HO and task attraction was discovered, along with a weak, significant relationship between HO and social attraction. No significant relationship existed between HO and physical attraction.

The HO-social attraction link confirms the findings of Wanzer et al. (1996), who similarly found that people who were rated as having a higher HO were also seen as more socially attractive. In turn, the HO-task attraction link confirms Claus et al.'s (2012) argument that task attraction and social attraction are both related to one's functional needs. However, the present study did not discover a HO-physical attraction link. Similar to the result of H1b, this result is interpreted as a function of each of the three forms of attractiveness operating independently from one another and fulfilling separate student needs. Specifically, as physical attraction is most significantly related to relational motives, this finding may suggest that HO is most closely related to students' functional needs (as opposed to their relational needs).

Sender Humor Style

Based on existing empirical evidence that suggests one's humor style is related to both interpersonal attraction (Anderson, 1968; Craik, Lampert, & Nelson, 1996) and classroom connectedness (Dwyer et al., 2004), the current study sought to confirm these connections in two manners: first, with regard to the enacted humor style of the peer (H3); second, with regard to the perceived classroom humor style environment (H4 and

H5). Unfortunately, due to the aforementioned internal reliability concerns with the injurious dimensions of the AHSQ, H4 and H5 were unable to be tested. Although generally acceptable psychometric properties tend to be reported for the original HSQ (Erickson & Feldstein, 2007; Sirigatti, Penzoa, Giannetti, & Stefanile, 2014), prior research (Sullivan & Dithurbide, 2007) has reported low reliabilities for the injurious styles, particularly when attempting to adopt the HSQ to new contexts, as is the case with the present study's AHSQ. Specifically, while the benign subscales were reliable, the injurious subscales were not. This may serve as an initial indication that benign classroom climates are more likely than injurious ones. Indeed, the descriptive statistics for coded humor styles from the qualitative recall seem to support this claim. Namely, 40.6% of participants in the treatment group ($n = 54$) recalled a benign humor event, whereas only 19.5% of treatment participants ($n = 26$) recalled an injurious humor event. As will be further discussed in the directions for future research, this may ultimately indicate that the current classification taxonomy of humor styles may not accurately reflect what occurs within the classroom environment.

In examining H3, the only link between interpersonal attraction and enacted humor style was with regard to social attraction. Specifically, participants reported higher levels of social attraction toward peers enacting a benign humor style than peers enacting an injurious humor style. This is expected, as the benign humor styles have been found to be associated with positive social personality features, such as extraversion, openness, and self-esteem (Zeigler-Hill, Besser, & Jett, 2013). Further, humor has been found to serve positive social functions, such as increasing group cohesion (Lefcourt, 2001; Lefcourt & Martin, 1986). However, the insignificant

relationships between humor style and task attraction, along with humor style and physical attraction, were unexpected. Specifically, empirical evidence (see Didonato, Bedminister, & Machel, 2013; Zeigler-Hill, Besser, & Jett, 2013) suggests that benign humor styles are viewed more positively in terms of romantic desirability, which would suggest that physical attraction should be significantly correlated. Further, prior studies (see Sullivan, 2013) have discovered that humor style is a strong predictor of satisfaction for task-related functions, particularly within group contexts. Thus, the present study's findings contradict this expectation and previous research.

However, if the current study's previous findings pertaining to the HO- interpersonal attraction links are confirmed in future research — meaning that students' functional needs are, indeed, more prevalent in the classroom environment than are relational needs — this result would provide partial theoretical support. Specifically, since physical attraction is related to relational needs, and these needs are less prevalent in the classroom environment, we would not expect humor style and physical attraction to be correlated. Still, the insignificant relationship between humor style and task attraction needs further exploration.

Classroom Connectedness

As mentioned in the previous section, perceived classroom connectedness was expected to be related to the overall humor environment of the classroom. Unfortunately, this was unable to be tested due to scale reliability issues, as discussed in Chapter Four (H5). Still, as Allen (2000) posited, a connected classroom reflects a strong within-group bond. Thus, students within classrooms perceived to be connected are expected to communicate freely and openly with one another. This led to the question, then, if

receivers may perceive messages as more humorous when classroom climates are connected. Conversely, it is possible that classrooms become more connected when peers enact humor.

Consequently, RQ1 examined the relationship between perceptions of classroom connectedness and perceived humorousness of the sender's message. A correlation analysis revealed a nonsignificant relationship, suggesting that no relationship exists between CCCI and the perception of message humorousness. This finding sheds light on the previous line of research examining which classroom behaviors and communication patterns lead to increased student connectedness. Specifically, Glaser and Bingham (2009) discovered that "joking" and "using humor" — both categorized as "friendly behaviors" within their study — encouraged student connections, and consequently, increased CCCI (p. 61). However, the present study did not find such a correlation. Thus, it is possible that Glaser and Bingham's findings are a function of the social *process* of incorporating humor — not the "humorousness" of the message itself — that results in stronger feelings of classroom connectedness. Thus, the current study's nonsignificant findings do not indicate that classroom connectedness is not a theoretically pertinent addition to IHPT; instead, these findings suggest that the study's operationalization of message "humorousness" is perhaps not the best measurement of enacted humor within the classroom setting.

Sex of Sender and Receiver

Finally, although sex differences were not proposed as an expansion to IHPT, prior instructional literature (see Banas et al., 2010; Edwards, 1998; Rester & Edwards, 2007) has been inconsistent in empirical findings regarding sex differences in the

classroom. As a result of the exploratory nature of the current study in a new context, sex differences were explored with regard to interpersonal attraction within the sender (RQ2), the receiver (RQ3), and interaction effects between the two (RQ4).

Sender sex differences. RQ2 revealed that participants who recalled a female peer reported higher levels of physical and task attraction than participants who recalled a male peer. There were no significant differences with regard to social attraction. This finding is supported by existing humor sex differences literature. Specifically, Ziv (1984) suggested that, although women are less likely to produce humor themselves (McGhee, 1979), they tend to be different in both using and responding to benign and injurious humor styles. Specifically, females are more careful to avoid being derisive and immodest. Thus, it is logical that participants recalling a female peer reported higher levels of physical and task attraction than for male peers. This notion is further supported when one considers the instructional research on communication styles (Grossman, 2003). Specifically, males tend to use more aggressive, controlling, and competitive communication styles, whereas females tend to use more collaborative, supportive, and informative communication styles. While this explanation clearly justifies why levels of task attraction were higher, it does not explain why there were no significant differences in levels of social attraction, since task and social attraction tend to serve the same student needs within the classroom environment.

Receiver sex differences. RQ3 revealed that there were no sex differences with regard to the sex of the receiver. Thus, these findings suggest that males and females appear to process humor similarly. However, this finding is inconsistent with some existing humor literature. Specifically, Liu (2012) reported that both “gender role and

social status are important on the perception of humor” (p. 22). This finding, though, was grounded in Brown and Levinson’s (1987) assumption that “some women may not be brave enough to pay the cost since some humors may carry risks,” and was confirmed in a study that recruited Hong Kong undergraduate students (p. 22). Therefore, the present study’s results may indicate — in concordance with Zhang (2005) — that cultural differences exist in how humor is perceived by males and females.

Interaction effects. RQ4 revealed that female-female dyads reported higher levels of task and physical attraction than male-male dyads. Further, male-female dyads reported higher levels of physical attraction than male-male dyads. There were, again, no interaction effects found with regard to social attraction. The lack of significant differences with regard to social attraction certainly raise important questions that need to be addressed in future research. Specifically, if social attraction and task attraction are, indeed, theoretically related with regard to students’ needs, as Claus et al. (2012) posited, future research must address what conceptual differences exist between social and task attraction’s need fulfillment within the classroom environment that led to these inconsistent results.

To summarize, this study contributes to IHPT significantly. As Bolkan and Goodboy (2015) explained, research examining humorous communication in the classroom environment must have a greater focus on the fulfillment of students’ needs, as these are better predictors of perceived cognitive learning. Further, the current status of instructional communication literature did not have an adequate focus on student-student interactions. Thus, the current study sought to shine preliminary light on these gaps in the literature by proposing four expansions to IHPT – a theory that has provided

significant contribution to the area, but still lacks sufficient explanatory power to arrive at *cognitive learning*. The results of this exploratory study are a preliminary indication that interpersonal attraction, receiver's humor orientation, sender's humor style, and perceived classroom connectedness are all theoretically pertinent to the construct of student-student humorous communication, and warrant further research to incorporate them into the theoretical model of IHPT. In addition to the aforementioned theoretical implications, the results of this study also have a number of practical implications for both instructors and students.

Practical Implications

Although the instructional communication literature is inconsistent regarding whether humor can be successfully taught to teachers (Banas et al., 2010; Booth-Butterfield & Wanzer, 2010; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999), there are still a number of practical implications that the present study has for instructors. First, these findings corroborate prior literature that states the use of benign humor leads to more connected learning environments, which may lead to actual learning. As the present study showed, students do experience higher levels of interpersonal attraction (social and physical) to peers who enact humor. Further, levels of social attraction are increased when the humor enacted is benign. Thus, allowing for a classroom environment that is conducive to student use of positive humor should lead to a more collaborative, connected learning environment for the students, which, in turn, may lead to increased actual learning (Banas et al., 2010). Similarly, if students can be motivated to incorporate humor — ideally, benign styles of humor — they will experience greater connection to peers and to classroom environment as a whole. In sum, the present study's findings suggest that

teachers should not only avoid suppressing students' humorous communication in the classroom, but also attempt to foster an environment in which humorous communication is encouraged. Future translational research in this area is warranted in order to determine best practices for instructor interventions regarding student humor.

Likewise, a number of practical implications for the student can also be extrapolated. Although one's humor orientation is considered to be more of a *trait* characteristic than *state*, this does not inherently signify that humor is not trainable. Specifically, future intervention campaigns could be designed to inform students of the more effective ways to employ humor in order to better reap the potential education outcomes (e.g., by employing benign humor styles instead of injurious ones).

Limitations

As with any study, the current study had several limitations. First, two dimensions of the AHSQ experienced low internal reliabilities and, consequently, the AHSQ had to be removed from analysis, which resulted in two hypotheses being untestable. Similar to the present study's AHSQ, the original HSQ has likewise experienced difficulties with internal reliability of the two injurious dimensions when adapting the questionnaire to new contexts. Thus, the AHSQ's low internal reliability ultimately raises the question if it is the most appropriate operationalization of classroom humor, or if another taxonomy would better classify the types of humor used in classrooms.

Indeed, this suspicion is further substantiated when one considers that the majority of humor styles enacted by peers were affiliative ($n = 46$). Further, the coders noted that there may be some crossover between the humor styles within the classroom

context, particularly between self-enhancing and affiliative. For example, participant 153 reported, “a young man was called on when the teacher asked us what our favorite extracurricular activity was. The young man responded with a simple answer by saying ‘sleeping.’” In this instance, the student may have been enacting affiliative humor insofar that he was telling a spontaneous joke in order to facilitate relationships with his peers, but he also may have been using self-enhancing humor to cope with the stress of being called on without a prepared answer.

Second, the two independent qualitative coders noted that 39.8% of the treatment group ($n = 53$) reported humor events that were uncodable. Of these, the vast majority was the result of an unintentional humor event being reported. For example, participant 12 reported, “during an online class, while the teacher was getting the class started a student started his video camera and showed him just in his dorm eating and it was so awkward that it made the whole class laugh.” While this may have otherwise been coded as affiliative humor, the coders inferred that this was an unintentional action and coded it as such. Thus, it was excluded due to the study’s operationalization of humor as an intentional act. The second most prevalent reason for responses being uncodable was due to a lack of information to know whether the event was benign or injurious. For instance, participant 22 stated, “someone compared what we were learning about to an event that happened in his life.” Without more detail about what was said, it was not possible to determine the humor style that made the student classify this as humorous. Likewise, responses were uncodable if the coders were unable to determine the target of the humor event (i.e., whether the event was *self*-directed or *other*-directed). Moreover, responses that reported on an instructor-enacted humor event were uncodable.

Third, and related to the first two, the study may have been limited by a conceptualization-operationalization mismatch with regard to humor styles. Specifically, humor was conceptualized as any intentional verbal or nonverbal message committed by a peer which elicits a spontaneous behavior reflecting pleasure, delight, and/or surprise. Although the humor literature tends to conceptualize humor as an intentional act (Banas et al., 2010), the HSQ was not created on the underlying assumption that people use humor consciously or strategically. Instead, it was assumed that people tend to engage in humor “quite spontaneously, and are often unaware of its social or psychological functions in a given situation” (Martin, 2007, p. 211).

Moreover, as noted by the two coders, there were instances where a control group participant reported a question that was humorous. Although the question-asking control group was statistically significantly rated as less humorous, it is possible that these recalled events were also humorous. Thus, although question-asking is an intentional classroom act that fulfills different needs and motivations and utilizes different cognitive skills, question-asking is not necessarily mutually exclusive from enacting humor.

Finally, due to the present study’s exploratory nature, learning was not examined as an outcome variable. Instead, the goal of the present study was to explore how classroom climate is affected by humor, which prior research suggests may lead to learning outcomes and academic success (Prisbell et al., 2009; Waldeck, 2007). Still, the fact that cognitive learning was not included as an outcome variable should be considered a limitation to be addressed in future research.

Directions for Future Research

In order to address the first limitation regarding the low internal reliability of the injurious subscales of the AHSQ, future research should examine the construct of injurious humor within student-student classroom interactions in order to determine if it is applicable to the classroom environment. Specifically, a different operationalization of classroom humor may be warranted in order to better capture the types of humor enacted. Several taxonomies have been created to classify the types of humor used in classrooms (Banas et al., 2010). Specifically, as an alternative to Martin et al.'s (2003) taxonomy, Hay's (2000) classification may be a better fit for the classroom environment, as it classifies humor into three categories: solidarity-based humor, humor serving psychological needs, and power-based humor.

Furthermore, and related to the first limitation, future studies should consider the best method to examine an individual level characteristic (i.e., humor styles) on the group level. While it is possible that the AHSQ experienced reliability issues due to an inappropriate taxonomy of classroom humor, it is also possible that these reliability issues stemmed from adapting Martin et al.'s (2003) HSQ items to examine the classroom level instead of the individual level.

To address the second limitation regarding uncodable humor events, future research should employ prompts that more efficiently prime the participants to recall an event that fits the inclusion criteria. Additionally, prompts could be reviewed by a focus group to ensure that directions are clear and are effectively priming participants before administering the survey to participants.

To address the third limitation regarding conceptualization-operationalization match of humor styles, future studies should seek alternative solutions to operationalizing humor styles in order to better match its theoretical conceptualization.

To address the fourth limitation concerning learning as an outcome variable, future research must focus on the direct effects of peer humor on cognitive learning in order to further enhance IHPT's explanatory power. Although the present study did provide valuable insight into the indirect effects of humor on learning, it will be imperative for future studies to include cognitive learning as an outcome variable.

Finally, future research should consider whether expanding IHPT from its current state is a worthwhile venture, considering its already unparsimonious nature. Although it is clear that IHPT in its current state has insufficient exploratory power (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2015), it may be sensible to consider the parsimony lost when further expanding IHPT. Of course, this is not to suggest that parsimony should be inherently valued over a theory that is more comprehensive in nature, as prior models (see Weber, Martin, & Myers, 2010) have affirmed.

Conclusion

In sum, although IHPT has made numerous theoretical advances within the instructional communication humor literature, it still lacked adequate explanatory power and focus on student-student interactions. The present study sought to provide a preliminary examination of four potential additions to IHPT that can increase its explanatory power within the context of student-student humor. Ultimately, although this study did have limitations that should be addressed in future research, the results of this

study indicate that the proposed additions are theoretically pertinent and, therefore, warrant future examination for inclusion to IHPT.

Appendix A: Event Description

Condition 1: A humor event is defined as an intentional verbal or nonverbal message that elicited laughter, chuckling, or another spontaneous behavior which could be taken to mean pleasure, delight, and/or surprise. Think about the most recent time one of your classmates used humor in a class you are currently taking. In the space below, describe this specific humor event in as much detail as you can remember. Be specific in your description of the event, including what was said that you found humorous and why you found it humorous.

Condition 2: Think about the most recent time one of your classmates asked a question in a class you are currently taking. In the space below, describe this specific time he or she asked a question in as much detail as you can remember.

Both Conditions:

1. What is the sex of the classmate who you described at the beginning of this survey?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
2. How humorous did you perceive your classmate's message to be?

1 (Not humorous) ----- 10 (Humorous)
3. How long ago, in days, did the event you described at the beginning of this survey occur?

0 ----- 30

4. How many students, including yourself, are enrolled in the class that you have described?

1 ----- 300

5. What is the subject of the class where this event occurred?

Appendix B: Interpersonal Attraction Scale

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to the student in the event you described at the beginning of this survey.

Use the following scale to indicate your feelings.

1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Moderately disagree; 3 = Slightly disagree; 4 = Undecided;
5 = Slightly agree; 6 = Moderately agree; 7 = Strongly agree

- _____ 1. I think he (she) could be a friend of mine.
- _____ 2. It would be difficult to meet and talk with him (her).
- _____ 3. He (she) just wouldn't fit into my circle of friends.
- _____ 4. We could never establish a personal friendship with each other.
- _____ 5. I would like to have a friendly chat with him (her).
- _____ 6. I think he (she) is quite handsome (pretty).
- _____ 7. He (she) is very sexy looking.
- _____ 8. I find him (her) very attractive physically.
- _____ 9. I don't like the way he (she) looks.
- _____ 10. He (she) is somewhat ugly.
- _____ 11. He (she) is a typical goof-off when assigned a job to do.
- _____ 12. I have confidence in his (her) ability to get the job done.
- _____ 13. If I wanted to get things done, I could probably depend on him (her).
- _____ 14. I couldn't get anything accomplished with him (her).
- _____ 15. He (she) would be a poor problem solver.

Items 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 14, and 15 are reverse-coded.

Appendix C: Connected Classroom Climate Inventory

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to the event you described at the beginning of this survey. As you complete the following questions, recall the overall climate of the class in which the event occurred.

Use the following scale to indicate your feelings.

1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

- _____ 1. I feel a sense of security in my class.
- _____ 2. I have common ground with my classmates.
- _____ 3. I feel a strong bond with my classmates.
- _____ 4. The students in my class share stories and experiences with one another.
- _____ 5. The students in my class are friendly with one another.
- _____ 6. The students in my class respect one another.
- _____ 7. I feel included in class discussions in my class.
- _____ 8. The students in my class are courteous with one another.
- _____ 9. The students in my class praise one another.
- _____ 10. The students in my class are concerned about one another.
- _____ 11. The students in my class smile at one another.
- _____ 12. The students in my class engage in small talk with one another.
- _____ 13. The students in my class are non-judgmental with one another.
- _____ 14. The students in my class laugh with one another.
- _____ 15. The students in my class are supportive of one another.
- _____ 16. The students in my class show interest in what one another is saying.
- _____ 17. The students in my class cooperate with one another.
- _____ 18. The students in my class feel comfortable with one another.

Appendix D: Adapted Humor Styles Scale

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which the following statements describe the overall climate of the class in which the event occurred.

Use the following scale to indicate your feelings.

1 = Not at all like my class; 10 = Exactly like my class

- _____ 1. In our class, we use humor to build stronger relationships.
- _____ 2. Our humorous communication never attacks anyone.
- _____ 3. We often use humor to lighten the mood.
- _____ 4. We become closer friends as a result of our humorous communication in the class.
- _____ 5. We don't usually joke around much with each other in class.
- _____ 6. If class discussion is tense or uncomfortable, we tend to use humor about the subject to make ourselves feel better.
- _____ 7. In our class, we use humor to make ourselves feel better.
- _____ 8. We maintain a humorous outlook on life to keep class discussions from getting too tense or stressful.
- _____ 9. If we are sad or uncomfortable during class, we often lose our sense of humor.
- _____ 10. People are never offended or hurt by our use of humorous communication.
- _____ 11. If we don't like someone, we often use humor to put them down.
- _____ 12. Even if something is funny, we will not laugh or joke about it if someone is easily offended.
- _____ 13. If someone makes a mistake, we often joke or tease them about it.
- _____ 14. We don't often say humorous things to put ourselves down.
- _____ 15. Laughing at each other's faults and weaknesses is our way of keeping each other in good spirits.
- _____ 16. If we are uncomfortable or upset during class discussion, we often cover it up by joking around.
- _____ 17. We do not use humor to joke about each other's faults or weaknesses.

*Affiliative: 1-5; Self-enhancing: 6-9; Aggressive: 10-13; Self-defeating: 14-17
Items 5, 10, 12, 14, and 17 are reverse-coded.*

Appendix E: Humor Orientation Scale

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Use the following scale to indicate your feelings.

1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

- _____ 1. I regularly tell jokes and funny stories when I am in a group.
- _____ 2. People usually laugh when I tell a joke or story.
- _____ 3. I have no memory for jokes or funny stories.
- _____ 4. I can be funny without having to rehearse a joke.
- _____ 5. Being funny is a natural communication style with me.
- _____ 6. I cannot tell a joke well.
- _____ 7. People seldom ask me to tell stories.
- _____ 8. My friends would say that I am a funny person.
- _____ 9. People don't seem to pay close attention when I tell a joke.
- _____ 10. Even funny jokes seem flat when I tell them.
- _____ 11. I can easily remember jokes and stories.
- _____ 12. People often ask me to tell jokes and stories.
- _____ 13. My friends would not say that I am a funny person.
- _____ 14. I don't tell jokes or stories even when asked to.
- _____ 15. I tell stories and jokes very well.
- _____ 16. Of all the people I know, I'm one of the funniest.
- _____ 17. I use humor to communicate in a variety of situations.

Items 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, and 14 are reverse-coded.

Appendix F: Demographic Information

1. What is your age? _____
2. What is your sex?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. What is your ethnicity? (Please choose the one option that best describes you).
 - a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - c. Asian or Asian American
 - d. Black or African American
 - e. Hispanic or Latino
 - f. White (Non-Hispanic)
 - g. Other (please specify) _____
4. As of the beginning of this semester, what is your grade classification?
 - a. Freshman (less than 30 hours completed)
 - b. Sophomore (30-59 hours completed)
 - c. Junior (60-89 hours completed)
 - d. Senior (90+ hours completed)

Appendix G: Qualitative Coder Training Manual

Participants assigned to the treatment group in this study were asked to describe a time that a peer (not the participant themselves) used humor in the classroom. When reading the participants' responses, you will be asked to code for what type of humor the peer enacted. Fortunately, Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, and Weir (2003) developed the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) in order to identify the individual differences in everyday uses of humor. However, since the HSQ is a self-report measure, and we are collecting other-report data, we must rely on qualitative coding of Martin et al.'s categorizations.

Introduction to HSQ

The HSQ identifies four categorizations of humor styles—affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating. Before continuing, please familiarize yourself with Martin et al.'s article (attached).

Martin et al. developed a 2 x 2 model for conceptualizing the ways in which people express humor. The four styles differ among two dimensions: (a) whether humor is **self**-directed or **other**-directed, and (b) whether the humor is **benign** (conductive to well-being of self or other), or **injurious** (potentially detrimental to the well-being of self or other).

	Other-Directed	Self-Directed
Benign	Affiliative (1)	Self-Enhancing (3)
Injurious	Aggressive (2)	Self-Defeating (4)

Affiliative (p. 53)

Individuals who enact affiliative humor tend to “say funny things, to tell jokes, and to engage in spontaneous witty banter to amuse others, facilitate relationships, and to reduce interpersonal tensions.” Ultimately, affiliative humor is concerned with enhancing one’s relationship with others.

An example of Martin et al.’s conceptualization of affiliative humor, as represented on the original HSQ, is: “I enjoy making people laugh.”

Aggressive (p. 54)

This style is closely related to the use of sarcasm, ridicule, and implied threat. Ultimately, individuals who enact this style express humor without regard for its impact on others. Aggressive humor is closely related to hostility, anger, and aggression. This humor style does not refer to “friendly teasing” or “playfully poking fun” at others; instead, it refers to humor that is intentionally used to belittle others.

Example HSQ item: “If I don’t like someone, I often use humor or teasing to put them down.”

Self-Enhancing (p. 53)

Individuals who enact this style tend to have a generally humorous outlook on life and maintain a humorous perspective, even when faced with adversity. Self-enhancing humor ultimately serves as a coping mechanism insofar that it may regulate emotions while maintaining a realistic perspective on aversive situations.

Example HSQ item: “Even when I’m by myself, I’m often amused by the absurdities of life.”

Self-Defeating (p. 54)

Similar to affiliative humor, individuals who enact this style are concerned with enhancing their relationship with others, but at the expense of one’s self. Further, this style is

commonly marked by allowing oneself to be the “butt” of others’ humor in order to gain approval.

Example HSQ item: “I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense.”

Affiliative Humor example

“[Student A] sat down next to [Student B] and [Student C]. She noticed that one smelt incredibly good, and wanted to know which one it was [...] A few minutes later, the professor told [Student A] to go get a folder from her original seat. With a straight face, she said she couldn’t do that because she was drunk in love” (Participant 89).

Aggressive Humor example

“The most recent time was a friend of mine in class commented on how funny the instructor sounded. It was pretty mean but made me chuckle. She imitated the voice of the teacher” (Participant 51).

Self-Enhancing Humor example

“During the second week of school, we were giving our ‘This I believe Speech’. One kid had forgotten his flash drive to access his powerpoint, but, instead of not giving his speech, he improvised about how he believed in being prepared” (Participant 29).

Self-Defeating Humor example

“A classmate was giving a speech and included a joke about how women aren’t really attracted to him. I found it humorous because he was bold enough to basically label himself as unattractive” (Participant 81).

Establishing Intercoder Reliability

Using a random number generator, 25 qualitative accounts of participants assigned to the treatment group have been chosen and are displayed on the following pages. Code each response as: 1 (affiliative), 2 (aggressive), 3 (self-enhancing), 4 (self-defeating), or 0 (other/uncodable). Please remember—when reading participants' responses, you should code only for **the peer's communicative event** (i.e., do not code for the participant's reaction to the communicative event).

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Education, 56, 409-432. doi:10.1080/036345207014000090

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CURRICULUM VITAE
David Chanson Davenport

EDUCATION

B.A. University of Kentucky, May 2014
Major: Communication; Track: Interpersonal
Minor: Spanish Language
GPA: 3.97
Summa Cum Laude

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

2014 – present Independent Lab Instructor, School of Journalism and
Telecommunications, University of Kentucky

2014 Graduate Research Assistant, U.S. Geological Survey grant:
Assessing the Effectiveness of Instructional Risk Messages,
University of Kentucky

2014 Graduate Research Assistant, National Center for Food Protection
and Defense grant: 2014 Elk River Chemical Spill, University of
Kentucky

2013 Graduate Teaching Assistant/Course Grader, Department of
Communication, University of Kentucky

2012 – 2014 Peer Tutor, Multimodal Communication Consulting Center,
University of Kentucky.

SCHOLARLY PRODUCTIVITY

Manuscripts in Progress

Davenport, D. C. (2015). *Examining peer perceptions of humorous communication in the college classroom.* (Master's thesis). University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky. Manuscript in preparation.

Scott, A. M., Wombacher, K. A., Williams, G. A., Alfonso, III, F. A., **Davenport, D. C.** (2015). *What did I do?: Understanding 'black outs.'* Manuscript in preparation.

Convention Participation

Frisby, B. N., **Davenport, D. C.**, Grewe, B., Medjesky, C. A., Omachinski, K. M., Polk, D., Wagner, P. E., Young, L. (2014, November). *Exploring three year PhD programs: Financial and practical implications.* Co-chair for competitively selected panel at the National Communication Association Annual Convention, Chicago, IL;

sponsored by NCA First Vice President.

Sellnow, D. D., Arnett, R., Flinko, S., Seiler, B., Stephenson-Abetz, J., Head, K. J., **Davenport, D. C.**, & Tompoulidis, T. M. (2013, November). *Making connections in teaching and learning: Value added experiences in mentoring undergraduate teaching apprentices (UTAs) in the communication classroom*. Panelist for competitively selected panel at the National Communication Association Annual Convention, Washington, D.C.; sponsored by Instructional Development Division.

Reynolds, M. A., **Davenport, D. C.**, & Tompoulidis, T. M. (2013, May). *Learning through leading: Pedagogical innovations gained through mentoring undergraduate apprentices*. Panelist at the Kentucky Innovations Annual Conference, Lexington, Kentucky.

Invited Presentations

Davenport, D. C. (2015, April). *Formatting theses and dissertations*. Invited presentation for Presentation U!, University of Kentucky.

Davenport, D. C. (2015, February). *Experiences as a post-secondary transition specialist*. Invited presentation for Presentation U!, University of Kentucky.

Davenport, D. C. (2014, November). *Using Associated Press style*. Guest lecture for JOU 497, University of Kentucky.

Davenport, D. C., Knuth, R. A., Whitney, M. L., Elliott, A. N., & Alabdali, M. G. (2014, February). *APA is not a four-letter word!: Learning the basics of APA and annotated bibliographies*. Workshop presentation for Multimodal Communication Consulting Center, University of Kentucky.

Reynolds, M. A., & **Davenport, D. C.** (2013, October). *Transformational Teamwork: Building Bridges Not Walls*. Invited presentation for College of Communication and Information, University of Kentucky.

Davenport, D. C., Untch, L. D., & Knuth, R. A. (2013, September). *APA is not a four-letter word!: Learning the basics of APA and annotated bibliographies*. Workshop presentation for Multimodal Communication Consulting Center, University of Kentucky.

Davenport, D. C., Untch, L. D., Wade, T., & Elliott, A. N. (2013, January). *What is an annotated bibliography?* Workshop presentation for Multimodal Communication Consulting Center, University of Kentucky.

Reynolds, M. A., Tompoulidis, T. M., & **Davenport, D. C.** (2012, October). *Breaking up is hard to do: Managing the post relational termination blues*. Guest lecture for UK 101, University of Kentucky.

SERVICE

Departmental Service

- 2014 College of Communication and Information's Strategic Planning Task Force on Undergraduate Programs
- 2012 – 2013 Undergraduate Assistant, Communication Student Group Advising

Additional Service

- 2013 Mentor, Engagement and Outreach Program for college-bound secondary school students
- 2008 – *present* Founding Member, "Anchors of Hope" – American Cancer Society Relay for Life Team

SCHOLASTIC AND PROFESSIONAL HONORS

- 2015 Nominee, Graduate Teaching Assistant Award, College of Communication and Information, University of Kentucky.
- 2015 "Presentation U! tutors prepare high school students for college life." UKNow: University of Kentucky news.
<http://uknow.uky.edu/content/presentation-u-tutors-prepare-high-school-students-college-life>
- 2014 "Undergraduate student research spotlight."
Instructional Communication & Research newsletter.
<http://ci.uky.edu/icr/showcase-spotlight>
http://issuu.com/instructionalcomm/docs/research_newsletter_spring_2014/
- 2013 "Being innovative." Instructional Communication & Research blog. <http://ci.uky.edu/icr/being-innovative>
- 2012 "First semester of CIS 590 comes to rewarding close."
Instructional Communication & Research blog.
<https://ci.uky.edu/icr/first-semester-cis-590-comes-rewarding-close>

2012

“Apprentice experience for undergraduates.” Instructional
Communication & Research blog.
<https://ci.uky.edu/icr/apprentice-experience-undergraduates>