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The Moderating Effect Of Gender On The Use Of Humor During An Employment Interview That's What She Said

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THE MODERATING EFFECT OF GENDER ON THE USE OF HUMOR DURING AN
EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW: THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the moderating impact of gender on the use of humor during employment interviews. Consistent with expectancy violation theory, I hypothesized that the use of humor by female candidates would cause more extreme evaluations than the use of humor by male candidates. In other words, when positive (affiliative) humor is used, females will be rated more positively than males, but when negative (aggressive) humor is used, females will be rated more negatively than males. I also hypothesized that the relationship between humor condition and evaluations would be partially mediated by state positive affect. I also posed a research question regarding how recall of what was said in the interview would relate to humor and evaluations. This experiment was a 2 (gender) x 3 (affiliative humor, aggressive humor, no humor) factorial design. Participants received brief interviewer training, interviewed a confederate playing another participant as the applicant, and then completed measures. Data from 221 undergraduate students were analyzed. Results demonstrate support of some hypotheses, including a main effect of humor condition on evaluations and partial mediation of state positive affect. Practical and theoretical implications of the findings are discussed.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

ANCOVA – Analysis of Covariance
ANOVA – Analysis of Variance
CEO – Chief Executive Officer
CFI – Comparative Fit Index
DF – Degrees of Freedom
EVT – Expectancy Violation Theory
KSAO – Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other characteristics
MS – Mean Square
RMSEA - Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SAS – Statistical Analysis Software
SEM – Structural Equation Modeling
SRT – Social Role Theory
SS – Sum of Squares

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A free website designed for sharing information, Yedda.com, recently had a question posted by an individual who asked if he should use humor in a job interview (e.g. "Using sense of humor in a job interview," 2008). Yedda.com is open to anybody, so users who answer a question such as this can range from a layperson to an expert. Responses to this question varied, but many indicated that it depends. One user said "The first move is to make an observation of your interviewer", indicating that there are individual differences between interviewers that may make candidates more or less successful when using humor. Another user is a little more encouraging: "Maybe crack one or two jokes to show that you're personable, but remember to stick to the business at hand." He acknowledges that there is an element of personality that can be inferred from the interview, but also reminds the user that job-relevant information is the primary focus. Yet another user encourages him to consider the type of job: "It depends on what kind of job [you're] going for. If [it's] working in a forensics lab, I would not make jokes about crime scenes. In all other cases, I would say go for it. Who wants a dud in the office? I'd rather have a comedian around the water cooler." These answers, as well as a broader internet search, suggest that there is no clear cut answer to this question.

One online article, written by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a recruitment firm, states, "The walk to the interview area and the initial minutes of the meeting are good opportunities for a candidate to show his or her personality and sense of humor before getting down to business" (Gamble, 2003). Clearly, Gamble believes that showing a sense of humor is in the best interest of the applicant. But Gamble's article is not about humor in a job interview. Rather, he discusses the importance of recognizing gender differences in interview coaching. As

somebody who coaches interviewees regularly, Gamble acknowledges that "Gender-based advice is not only OK, it's crucially important to a candidate's success" (Gamble, 2003, p. 1).

While acknowledging the impact of both humor and gender on interviews, Gamble fails to acknowledge that the two may interact. Humor has long been considered a "male" behavior, and even current research indicates an association between humor and "maleness" (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003).

How do gender role expectations impact reactions to the use of humor by both sexes in an employment interview? Expectancy violation theory (EVT) states that evaluations (i.e., perceptions) of individuals will become more extreme when behavior violates expectations (Jussim, Coleman, & Lerch, 1987). Because humor use is more expected from males than females, EVT would suggest that interviewers will have more extreme reactions (evaluations) to the use of humor by female candidates than male candidates. To further complicate evaluations, there are several different types of humor (Eysenck, 1942; Martin et al., 2003). In a broad sense, humor can be categorized as either positive or negative (e. g. Decker & Rotondo, 2001). Expectancy violation theory suggests that the interaction between gender and type of humor used would also impact the evaluations. This experiment will manipulate type of humor and gender of the candidate in order to answer these questions: 1) When candidates use different types of humor in an interview, how does it impact their evaluations? and 2) How does the candidate's gender moderate the impact of humor use on evaluations?

These are important questions to answer because interviews are a critical component to most selection processes (Cascio & Aguinis, 2005). Therefore, it is important to organizations that the best candidates are also the best interviewees. In most cases, there is a difference between the skill set needed to interview well and the skill set required for the position (Stevens

& Kristof, 1995). That is why several books and training programs offer guidance on how to interview well. Chances are that humor occurs in interviews more than we are aware, yet there is a void in interviewing research that leaves us unsure about its impact. What should experts advise applicants to do when it comes to using humor in a job interview? Does that advice change for men as compared to women? As Gamble pointed out, it is a mistake to ignore how gender changes the coaching advice he gives to applicants. With all the research that has been done on interviews and how the applicant's behavior impacts evaluations, I have yet to find any research that examines the effect of humor use. This is surprising, considering that the workplace is a rich environment for humor, with laughter occurring as frequently as every 2-5 minutes (Holmes & Marra, 2002).

In addition to the implications for applicants, another important question to consider is whether variance in evaluations from humor is job relevant or not. In other words, should interviewers be trained to not allow humor to impact their evaluations, or is humor use in interviews a relevant predictor to how the candidate will perform on the job? This study will begin to explore the question of whether humor is construct-relevant or -irrelevant by investigating how the state affect of the interviewer and interviewer recall relate to evaluations. State positive affect is a commonly experienced outcome of positive humor (Robert & Yan, 2007). Research shows increased state positive affect has an impact on individuals' perceptions. For example, increased state positive affect has lead to more positive perceptions of job satisfaction and task assignments (Isen & Baron, 1991). A question addressed by this study is, 3) Does state affect partially mediate the relationship between humor use and evaluations? If evaluations are significantly impacted by affect, this may suggest that humor is not construct-relevant.

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However, the use of humor has many positive outcomes in the workplace, such as leadership effectiveness (Avolio, Howell, & Sosik, 1999) and performance ratings (Sala, 2000). Interviewers may cognitively evaluate the candidate based on their use of humor and then evaluate that person based on cognition. In order to attempt to understand cognitive processing, a measure of recall was given to see how deeply participants processed with the applicant said during the interview. Therefore, with this study, I addressed the question, 4) Does the interviewer's recall of what the applicant said during the interview partially mediate the relationship between humor use and evaluations? If recall relates to evaluations, this may suggest that humor is construct-relevant.

A recent review of humor research calls for the exploration of the influence of humor in job interviews (Robert & Yan, 2007) and this study will begin to shed light on the answers to these questions. In the next section, I will give an overview of what is known about employment interviews as it relates to this study. I will also review research on humor and relevant humor types. A review of research of humor at work will follow, leading into the hypotheses for the current study. Gender will be discussed in each context.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Employment Interviews

Loosely defined, an employment interview is essentially a conversation designed to solicit information (Drake, 1989). This type of interview typically serves a two-way function, allowing both for the employer to evaluate the job candidate, and for the candidate to evaluate the employer (Drake, 1989). Although information exchanged during employment interviews is bi-directional, this study will focus on the interviewer's perceptions of the candidate.

Interviews are the most commonly used selection tool (Arvey & Campion, 1982), and are often used to make the final decision in the selection process (Drake, 1989). An organization's decision to hire can be the difference between a great employee who takes the company to new heights, or a bad employee that costs the organization thousands of dollars in lost time and turnover costs plus the frustration of dealing with problematic performance. From the organization's perspective, interviews are crucial to the decision making process in selection. Additionally, interviews are highly important to the applicants. These decisions can be extraordinarily life altering for applicants, especially given some of the turbulent economic times our society is currently facing. The hiring decision can affect immediate outcomes, such as income and being able to provide for a family, and it can also affect longer-term outcomes such as career path and retirement planning. Because of the impacts interviews have on both organizations and individuals, it is important to understand how interviews work and their effectiveness.

Selection interviews serve two primary functions: filling information gaps (Tucker & Rowe, 1977) and assessing factors that can be assessed face-to-face (Cascio & Aguinis, 2005). There is much knowledge, and many skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) that can

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be assessed in the interview. Knowledge assessed in the interview is typically job-related knowledge that can be easily conveyed verbally. Skills and abilities assessed in an interview can vary, but often include social skills such as interpersonal relations and the ability to work well with others (Huffcutt, Conway, Roth, & Stone, 2001). The face-to-face nature of interviews can provide a realistic preview of how the individual will perform in situations that require interpersonal skills (Cascio & Aguinis, 2005). There is also evidence that interviews measure cognitive ability (Campion, Pursell, & Brown, 1988). Other characteristics measured in interviews include personality traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness (Huffcutt, Conway et al., 2001), or motivational components such as willingness to work long hours or to travel.

An effective interview should reliably and validly assess relevant KSAOs for the position, but despite the widespread use of interviews, reviews suggest that the correlation between interview evaluations and job performance is fairly low (e.g. Arvey & Campion, 1982; Carlson, Thayer, Mayfield, & Peterson, 1971; Hunter & Hunter, 1984). Researchers posit that this finding is primarily due to the conversational nature of most interviews. However, with the introduction of structure to the interview process, the correlation, or criterion-related validity, improves significantly. A significant amount of evidence demonstrates that structured interviews are far better for making reliable, valid employment decisions than unstructured interviews. Unstructured interviews have no fixed set of questions or set method for scoring responses (Hunter & Schmidt, 1998). These interviews are generally evaluated with just one overall score that is given on the basis of the interviewer's general impression of the candidate. Structure can be added by using standardized questions developed on the basis of a job analysis, and by

standardizing the scoring of each question, including the probing follow-up questions (Campion et al., 1988).

A job analysis should be conducted in order to accurately identify the KSAOs required for the position, as it is an essential component to a structured interview (Cascio & Aguinis, 2005). A job analysis will allow the interviewer to fully understand what knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) are required of the position. An effective interview should assess those KSAOs, while minimizing the amount of construct-irrelevant variance (Messick, 1995). Structure can be defined as "the reduction in procedural variance across applicants, which can translate into the degree of discretion that an interviewer is allowed in conducting the interview" (Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994, p. 186). In their meta-analysis, Huffcutt and colleagues argue that the reason structured interviews yield such different criterion-related validities than unstructured is because they assess different constructs, and that structured interviews assess more constructs that relate to job performance (Huffcutt, Conway et al., 2001). In other words, the structure of the interview is an important moderator between the interview-performance relationship (Huffcutt, Conway et al., 2001).

A model of the interview process by Dipboye (1982) shows there are many opportunities for bias to impact interviewer evaluations. The following is a summary of the research on employment interviews as it relates to this study, including Dipboye's (1982) process model of interviews and other factors that influence interviews.

Dipboye's Process Model of Interviews. According to Dipboye, pre-interview information such as résumés and application blanks will influence how the interviewer evaluates candidates. Post-interview impressions or evaluations of candidates may be influenced directly by the information provided, or indirectly through cognitive and behavioral biases. In a direct

sense, the negative information presented before the interview could carry straight through to the post-interview evaluation. Indirectly, behavioral bias could also manifest itself through a reciprocal pattern of behaviors whereby the interviewer treats the candidate differently depending on his/her expectations, also known as expectancy effects or self-fulfilling prophecy (Dipboye, 1982; Dipboye, Stramler, & Fontenelle, 1984). When an interviewer believes an applicant is highly qualified, he or she may treat the applicant very positively, thereby enhancing the interview performance of the candidate (Cascio & Aguinis, 2005). Alternatively, if the interviewer believes the candidate is less qualified, he or she may exhibit behaviors that negatively impact the applicant and ultimately the performance in the interview. Another indirect route that pre-interview information can take is through cognitive bias. Cognitive bias could influence applicant evaluations through selective encoding and selective retrieval of information obtained from the interview. Selective encoding occurs when the interviewer only attends to certain information, usually that which is consistent with his or her existing belief. This is also called confirmation bias, a phenomenon whereby individuals attend to information that is consistent with what they already know, and ignore information that is inconsistent with their beliefs. Additionally, interviewers are more likely to remember information that is consistent with the information they received before the interview (Dipboye, Stramler et al., 1984).

Several empirical studies have tested this model. For example, one of Dipboye's studies demonstrated that altering the pre-interview information affected post-interview descriptions of an applicant (Dipboye, Stramler et al., 1984). When positive information was provided about the applicant, post-interview descriptions were biased towards positive terms like "intelligent" and "enthusiastic", but if negative (or less positive) information was provided, post-interview descriptions of the same interview included words like "nervous" and "quick to object to

interviewer's assumptions". In another study, favorable pre-interview information was shown to bias the attribution made by the interviewer, such that internal attributions were more likely (Phillips & Dipboye, 1989). In other words, existence of positive pre-interview information caused the interviewer to attribute positive interview performance to the internal characteristics of the applicant. Pre-interview impressions are so strongly related to post-interview evaluations that the relation holds, even when controlling for other variables, such as reputation of the university from which the applicant comes (Macan & Dipboye, 1990). Another study found that reviewing an application before an interview negatively impacted the reliability of the evaluations of the interview (Dipboye, Fontenelle, & Garner, 1984) although it did lead to gathering more non-application information during the interview.

One study investigated how the behaviors of interviewers changed depending on their first impressions (Dougherty, Turban, & Callender, 1994). Interviewers' first impressions of the applicant came from pre-interview information: application blanks and test scores. Positive first impressions led to more use of positive style, the interviewer being more likely to "sell" the company and job, and differences in questioning style, such as fewer closed, initial and probing questions. Positive first impressions also correlated with positive communication style from the applicant, suggesting some level of self-fulfilling prophecy: the interviewers think positively of the applicant and treat them differently, and the applicant's behavior is also more positive.

Construct-irrelevant Variance in Interviews. In addition to the factors identified in Dipboye's (1982) model, other factors can lead to construct-irrelevant variance in interview evaluations. Construct-irrelevant variance is variance in the criterion that is not applicable to the construct it represents. For example, in an interview, construct-irrelevant variance is variation in the evaluation scores that does not ultimately predict job performance. Construct-irrelevant

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variance, by definition, negatively impacts the accuracy of evaluations. It is important to understand how these factors influence evaluations in order to hypothesize how humor will impact perceptions. For example, construct-irrelevant variance can result from prejudice against individuals of a certain age, race, or gender, or from non-verbal behaviors during the interview.

Individual differences in interviewers, even when temporary, can impact evaluations. Baron (1993) investigated the impact of interviewer mood on interview evaluations. He manipulated mood as positive, negative or neutral and the qualifications of the applicants as high, low, or ambiguous. When qualifications of the applicant were clear, mood did not impact evaluations. In the ambiguous qualifications condition, interviewers in a positive mood evaluated the candidate more positively than those in a negative mood. The results suggest that mood matters most when the qualifications of the applicant are ambiguous.

Van Rooy (2006) conducted an experiment which manipulated participants' commute time and level of traffic congestion to see what impact it had on hiring decisions. He hypothesized that the affective state that results from varying commuting characteristics would have a spillover effect into behavior and decisions on the job. The results show that affect was significantly impacted by commuting characteristics before (in anticipation) and during the drive. The affective states showed little evidence of spillover, but the results demonstrated partial support for the hypothesis, in that participants with long and congested commutes rated the unqualified applicant lower than participants with short commutes. However, the evaluations of the highly qualified and moderately qualified applicants were not significantly impacted by commute characteristics.

An experiment investigating the impact of induced mood on performance evaluations found that participants in more positive moods rated individuals higher than those in more

negative moods (Ding, 2007). The study also attempted to eliminate mood effects through monetary incentives, but the incentives only eliminated the effects for some of the measurement tools.

A reason that interviewer mood may add construct-irrelevant variance is that research has shown that mood relates to depth of information processing. People tend to process information on a superficial level when they are happy, and more analytically when they are sad (Bless, Fiedler, & Forgas, 2006; Bless, Schwarz, Chaiken, & Trope, 1999; Fiedler & Forgas, 2001; Forgas, 1995; Wegener & Petty, 1994). Positive moods lead to decreased processing motivation (Bless et al., 1996) whereas feeling sad leads to more systematic processing and elaboration of information, which can make individuals more critical (Forgas & Locke, 2005). Research has shown that being in a good mood increases the likelihood that people will rely on general knowledge structures such as stereotypes and expectancies (Bless et al., 1999). Also, the affect-as-information hypothesis suggests that individuals experiencing negative affect believe it is a signal that the environment poses a problem, requiring additional consideration, whereas positive affect signals that the environment is harmless and does not require additional analysis (Schwarz & Clore, 1983). These studies suggest that mood can impact evaluations through the depth of processing.

In sum, individual differences of applicants, individual differences of interviewers, and the interaction between them can all lead to differences in evaluations during interviews. This research demonstrates how many factors can impact the way interviewers evaluate applicants. Another individual difference variable of interest in interview evaluations is gender, which I review next.

Gender and Interviewing. The gender of the applicant and interviewer can impact interview evaluations in line with Dipboye's (1982) process model of interviews. For example, research has shown that the gender of the interviewer and the applicant can induce confirmation bias (Binning, Goldstein, Garcia, & Scattaregia, 1988). In this study, participants, as interviewers, wrote their own questions. When interviewing applicants of the same sex, they were more likely to use positive questions (questions that solicit positive information). In contrast, when interviewing candidates of the opposite sex, interviewers were more likely to ask disconfirming questions.

Gender can also serve as an important moderator of the effects of non-verbal behavior during an interview. Gender is often a moderator because of stereotypes people hold about men and women. Generally, a stereotype is defined as a belief about the personal attributes of a group of people (Myer, 2007). Stereotypes can also be applied to positions, in the sense that individuals categorize certain positions as more male or more female in orientation, typically based on which gender most frequently occupies the role.

Research has found that behaviors exhibited by men are perceived differently than the same behaviors exhibited by women (e. g. Aguinis & Henle, 2001; Stewart, Dustin, Barrick, & Darnold, 2008). For example, a study by Aguinis and Henle (2001) found that women were perceived as having more coercive power (a negative source of power) when exhibiting direct eye contact, whereas Aguinis, Simonsen, and Pierce (1998) found the same behavior in men was perceived as having more credibility. Additionally, a strong handshake relates to more positive interview evaluations for male and female candidates, but the effect is even stronger for women (Stewart et al., 2008).

Another recent study investigated how men and women were perceived when manipulating their communication style in an audio-taped interview for jobs that were gender-stereotyped as either male or female (Juodvalkis, Grefe, Hogue, Svyantek, & DeLamarter, 2003). Communication styles were also gender typed (dominant – male; submissive – female; neutral). The authors found that when the behavior goes against gender stereotypes, both men and women can be perceived negatively. However, while they found this to be always true for male applicants, for female applicants, communicating in a dominant manner negatively impacted perceptions of likeability and sociability, but improved overall impressions as well as desire to hire. This indicates that women may be rewarded for gender-inconsistent behavior, whereas men are much less likely to be rewarded for gender-inconsistent behavior.

In sum, research has shown that gender is a variable that frequently moderates the impact these factors have on evaluations. Given that all these factors have been shown to impact interviewer evaluations, it is reasonable to think that an applicant's use of humor during the job interview will also have an effect. The next section summarizes what is known about humor in general and also about humor in the workplace.

Humor

Martin (2007) hypothesizes that humor is somewhat neglected by researchers because humor is non-serious by nature, and its association with fun may lead some to believe that it is frivolous. Additionally, it is a difficult phenomenon to define, never mind investigate and understand. Historically, humor and wit were differentiated, such that "wit" had a connotation of being a bit more mean-spirited, and "humor" had a positive connotation of being light-hearted and good-natured (Martin, 2007).

Research has shown that despite the fact that "sense of humor" is not a well defined construct, it is a very socially desirable characteristic, with 94% of people rating themselves as having an average or above average sense of humor (Allport, 1961). Why do so many individuals feel that they have such great senses of humor? It could be due to the perceptions associated with an individual with an above average sense of humor. One study asked participants to imagine a hypothetical person who has a "well above average sense of humor" and somebody with a "below average sense of humor" (Cann & Calhoun, 2001). Participants then rated these hypothetical individuals on several characteristics, and the results show that the individual with a "well above average sense of humor" was rated as significantly more friendly, pleasant, cooperative, interesting, imaginative, creative, clever, admirable, intelligent, and perceptive than the hypothetical individual with a "below average sense of humor". Another study asked participants to imagine a hypothetical person with a great sense of humor (Craik & Ware, 1998). Participants then conducted a Q-sort with cards containing positive and negative adjectives to describe this hypothetical person. The hypothetical person was seen to have skillful humor ability, cheerful disposition, and good natured wittiness, and was perceived to be low on aggression and inappropriate use of humor. These studies demonstrate that, in general, having a sense of humor is a positive attribute. Much research has investigated perceptions of sense of humor with hypothetical individuals (e.g. Cann & Calhoun, 2001; Craik, Lampert, & Nelson, 1996; McCrae & John, 1992), but I have yet to find studies that experimentally manipulate the use of humor with real interaction between individuals.

The studies described previously did not overtly try to define sense of humor, but rather, allowed participants to use their own definition. According to some researchers (e.g. Martin et al., 2003) this lack of differentiation between types of humor is what has led some research findings

to be mixed, inconclusive, or weak. As a start, Eysenck (1972) stated that sense of humor can refer to a qualitative or quantitative judgment or it could refer to a productive sense of the construct – an individual's production of humor. It could be qualitative: the extent to which somebody laughs at the same things as others, or a quantitative judgment: the frequency with which somebody laughs or the extent to which one is easily amused. It could also refer to a productive sense of the construct. In other words, how much and how often one tells funny stories and amuses others. These interpretations of humor are not necessarily correlated with each other, and it is important to understand which sense of the construct is intended. For the purposes of this study, I refer primarily to the extent to which interview candidates produce humor (quantitative and qualitative).

Focusing on the qualitative aspect of sense of humor, many researchers have conducted factor analyses to investigate the content types. Eysenck (1942) found three factors: 1) sexual vs. non-sexual, 2) simple vs. complex, and 3) personal vs. impersonal. A few years later, Cattell and Luborsky, (1947) labeled five factors of humor: 1) good natured self-assertion, 2) rebellious dominance, 3) easy going sensuality, 4) resigned derision, and 5) urbane sophistication. Yet another series of factor analyses discovered three factors: 1) incongruity-resolution, 2) nonsense humor, and 3) sexual (Forabosco & Ruch, 1994; Hehl & Ruch, 1985; McGhee, Ruch, & Hehl, 1990; Ruch, 1988; Ruch & Forabosco, 1996; Ruch & Hehl, 1998; Ruch, McGhee, & Hehl, 1990). Perhaps the simplest factor analysis investigated responses to humor and found two factors: 1) positive enjoyment and 2) aversiveness (Ruch & Hehl, 1998). Interestingly, these two factors were only slightly negatively correlated, suggesting that individuals may find a joke very funny, but may also find it to be aversive (such as a sexist or racist joke).

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Types of Humor. Recent advancements in humor research have characterized humor along two dichotomous dimensions: 1) humor targeted at oneself vs. at others and 2) benign/benevolent vs. detrimental/injurious (Martin et al., 2003). Combining these two categories, the authors describe four types of humor (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Types of Humor

	Self	Others
Benign/Benevolent	Self-enhancing	Affiliative
Detrimental/injurious	Self-defeating	Aggressive

Table depicting types of humor
according to Martin et al., 2003.

Benign/benevolent humor is categorized as humor that is accepting and tolerant of both the self and others. Within the category of benign/benevolent humor, the authors categorize humor as aimed either at oneself or at others. Self-enhancing humor is benign/benevolent humor that is targeted towards oneself, and is characterized as maintaining a humorous outlook on life, being frequently amused by incongruities, and using humor in coping. This type of humor has many uses such as a coping mechanism, as a defense mechanism, as a courage mechanism, to relieve tension, and to assert one's feelings of control over a situation (Obrdlik, 1942). Affiliative humor is benign/benevolent humor that is targeted towards others. It is characterized by saying funny things, telling jokes, and engaging in ways that facilitate personal relationships. This style encompasses non-hostile communication that is affirmative both towards the self and others. It is characterized by not taking oneself too seriously while maintaining self-acceptance. In sum, benign/benevolent types of humor can be used to enhance one's relationship with others (affiliative) or used to enhance the self (self-enhancing).

Additionally, Martin and colleagues (Martin et al., 2003) describe humor that is detrimental or injurious, which is negative in nature. This type of humor is also categorized in terms of humor targeted at oneself (self-defeating) and humor targeted at others (aggressive). Self-defeating humor is detrimental/injurious humor targeted at oneself, and includes putting oneself down in an effort to gain the approval of others (Martin et al., 2003). Aggressive humor is detrimental/injurious humor that is targeted at others. It includes being sarcastic and disparaging, as well as teasing and ridiculing. It can be used to enhance the self by putting others down, and includes a general lack of regard for how it will affect others.

I propose that among the different types of humor, the ones most likely to be used during employment interviews are those that are targeted at others: affiliative (benign/benevolent, or "positive") and aggressive (detrimental/injurious, or "negative"). Because of the interpersonal nature of interviews, it is important to examine how the other-targeted humor types impact evaluations. Affiliative humor is the most frequently used humor by both males and females (Martin et al., 2003). It is a non-threatening type of humor that is used to bring people together. Applicants are likely to try to create a bond with the interviewer, and affiliative humor can help achieve that purpose. Aggressive humor is consistent with superiority theory which proposes that people enhance the self through putting others down (de Koning & Weiss, 2002). In interviews, applicants want to build themselves up, which may manifest itself at the expense of others. It is reasonable that applicants will utilize aggressive humor in order to look appealing to the interviewer. In fact, Romero and Cruthirds (2006) propose that in addition to aggressive humor, it is important to understand "mild" aggressive humor, which can have positive functions. When delivered in a teasing or playful mode, aggressive humor may be considered "mild" (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006).

Alternatively, the self directed types of humor: self-defeating (detrimental/injurious, or "negative") and self-enhancing, (benign/benevolent, or "positive") are less likely to be implemented during an interview. Self-defeating humor includes making jokes at one's own expense for the humor and enjoyment of others. It is less likely applicants will put themselves down in an interview, as the goal is to boost themselves up to gain the interviewer's approval (Weiss & Feldman, 2006). Self-enhancing humor encompasses humor that is good for the self. In other words, it includes using humor in order to cope or to cheer oneself up. It also focuses on the use and benefit of humor while alone. Although self-enhancing implies enhancing the self to others, the type of humor measured by this scale is not concerned with others as targets of humor or participants in the humor. In the development of these humor scales, Martin and his colleagues found that of these four types of humor, self-enhancing is most similar to the more traditional narrowly-defined types of humor captured by other scales (Martin et al., 2003). Therefore individuals' use of this type of humor during an interview is possible for their own coping purposes, yet it is less likely to be used than other forms.

Correlates of Affiliative Humor. Humor can be seen as a defining characteristic of an individual. In fact, over time "having a sense of humor became synonymous with being stable and well-adjusted, being able to adapt to stress, being temperate, affable, not prone to anger, and easy going" (Martin, 2007, p. 25). To investigate the accuracy of the previous statement, I conducted a literature review of the correlates of self-reported humor use.

Research has repeatedly shown that humor correlates with extraversion (e.g. Craik et al., 1996; Martin & Lefcourt, 1984; Ruch & Deckers, 1993). Extraversion is comprised of many traits and tendencies, such as being sociable, people-oriented, active, talkative, optimistic, fun-loving, joyful, lively, sensation-seeking, carefree, dominant, and having a tendency to experience

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positive moods (McCrae & John, 1992). This suggests that individuals with an above average sense of humor are likely to enjoy being around people, tend to be happy, and can easily dominate a room. Research has also shown that individuals who utilize humor are well-liked (Mettee, Hrelec, & Wilkens, 1971). The use of affiliative humor is correlated with positively valued femininity, or communion, which includes being understanding of others, warm and kind. In addition to being seen as more extraverted, individuals who use affiliative humor are likely to be seen as more likeable than those who do not use humor.

Individuals who are high on the trait of extraversion are perceived as having better interpersonal skills than those who are low on the trait, due to their natural tendencies to interact frequently with others (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Related to interpersonal skills, the use of humor has also been shown to relate to self-monitoring (Turner, 1980). Self-monitoring is "a personality trait having to do with the degree to which individuals are sensitive to environmental cues of social appropriateness and regulate their behavior accordingly" (Martin, 2007, p. 217). In a majority of workplace environments, self-monitoring is a valuable trait. This inclination to pay attention to and react to behavioral cues of others enables individuals to develop the skill required to create and deliver humor (Turner, 1980). Research connecting self-monitoring and humor also suggests that humor creativity should be viewed as more than just personality, but should also be considered a type of skill (Bell, McGhee, & Duffey, 1986), in this case, an interpersonal skill.

Creating humor also correlates with the skill of creativity (e.g. Ferris, 1972; Murdock & Ganim, 1993; Treadwell, 1970; Wicker, 1985; A. Ziv, 1984). Being creative requires divergent thinking, incongruity, surprise and novelty. These same skills are required for humor. Additionally, the positive emotion that is elicited by humor has also been shown to demonstrate

greater cognitive flexibility (Isen, 2003; Isen, Aspinwall, & Staudinger, 2003). In fact, experiencing positive moods has been shown to relate to improvements in many cognitive and social behaviors, including increased cognitive flexibility, but also more effective thinking and planning, better integration of memory, and greater levels of prosocial behavior (Isen, 2003).

Some researchers characterize sense of humor as an aspect of an individual's personality (Martin et al., 2003), although it is actually quite multi-faceted and can be indicative of many qualities and characteristics. Humor can also be considered an emotion-related temperament trait (Ruch & Kohler, 1998), habitual behavior (e.g. Craik et al., 1996; Martin & Lefcourt, 1984), or an attitude (Svebak, 1996). Using humor can also represent a certain level of cognitive ability (Feingold & Mazzella, 1993). Feingold and Mazzella (1993) researched wittiness and identified three components: humor cognition, humor motivation, and humor communication. Humor cognition is the ability to understand a relationship between seemingly incongruous things in a way that is amusing. Humor motivation is an individual's drive to produce humor at a given time and location, and humor communication is the ability to actually communicate the humor as intended. The researchers collected several cognitive and social measures, as well as their measures of the three components identified above. They found that humor cognition relates strongly with other cognitive measures, including verbal ability and humor production. Social measures such as sociability, humor motivation, and humor communication correlate with each other. These two categories, cognitive measures and social measures, were not highly correlated. These results suggest that humor can represent more than one fairly distinct component, one of which is a cognitive component. Their study provides evidence that the ability to generate and comprehend humor is dependent on an individual's general cognitive ability.

The vast amounts of money spent on comedy each year indicate the great extent to which individuals enjoy the emotional pleasure associated with humor (Martin, 2007). Also, empirical research has demonstrated the relationships between humor and feeling emotional pleasure (Martin, 2007). Research has repeatedly utilized humorous stimuli as a way to induce positive affect (Carnevale & Isen, 1986; Kraiger, Billings, & Isen, 1989). Positive affect is defined as the experience of feelings such as enthusiastic, alert, active, and energetic (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). For the purposes of this study, I refer to the extent to which an individual experiences temporary, or "state" positive affect. "Persons high in state positive affect actively seek out the companionship of others, experience pleasurable engagement with the environment, and espouse positive views of themselves and the world in general" (Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, & de Chermont, 2003, p. 915).

Research has shown that an increase in state positive affect can influence individuals evaluations (Brief, Butcher, & Roberson, 1995). In Brief et al.'s study, participants were given a cookie to induce positive state affect, which resulted in higher job satisfaction ratings. Positive affect has also been shown to impact an individual's persuadability (Cooper, 2005). Specifically, humor can influence peripheral processing, by creating positive mood and increasing likeability toward the source of the humor (Lyttle, 2001). Humor can also decrease the likelihood of counterarguments, which contributes to the persuasiveness of the message (Freedman, Sears, & Carlsmith, 1978).

Although some research has focused on interpersonal benefits and outcomes of humor, much research has examined how having a sense of humor is beneficial to the individual. Humor and resiliency are likely correlated both directly and indirectly. In a direct capacity, humor can relieve tension between individuals (Adelsward & Oberg, 1998; Decker & Rotondo, 2001). In

fact, according to Martin (2007), the use of jokes during a stressful situation can alter individuals'

appraisals of that situation, which reduces the likelihood of negative emotions that might be

experienced. Indirectly, humor can lead to being happier in general, which can lead to longer

lives, experiencing less stress, and better coping strategies (Decker & Rotondo, 2001). Research

has shown that individuals with an above average sense of humor are more likely to use positive

reappraisal and problem solving coping strategies than individuals with a below average sense of

humor (Abel, 2002). Humor can also serve as a buffer against the impact of stress (Martin &

Lefcourt, 1983).

The self-reported use of affiliative humor relates to an integrative conflict management

style, which according to Rahim (1983), is the most effective style, as it has high regard both for

the self and others (Ruldolph & Lelchook, 2009). Affiliative humor is also correlated with

positively valued masculinity or agency, which includes dominance, independence, and self-

confidence (Martin et al., 2003).

In sum, the use of positive humor correlates with many positive outcomes, such as

extraversion, warmth and kindness, intelligence, creativity, persuasiveness, positive conflict

management and positive coping strategies.

Correlates of Aggressive Humor. There is less research on correlates of aggressive humor

compared to positive humor types, such as affiliative or the traditionally conceived but poorly

defined general humor scales. However, several notable correlations have been found in the

literature in just the last few years since Martin and colleagues published their paper on the

different types of humor (Martin et al., 2003).

Individuals who use aggressive humor may be more likely to alienate, offend, and upset

people than individuals who do not use humor at all. Research has shown that self-reports of

aggressive humor are related to neuroticism and unmitigated agency (Martin et al., 2003). Neuroticism is characterized as feeling anxiety, anger, guilt, and depression (Barrick & Mount, 1991). These tendencies are inconsistent with the type of individual that most people prefer. Unmitigated agency refers to negatively valued masculine traits, which include being aggressive, hostile and cynical (Martin et al., 2003). Aggressive humor is also directly related to aggression and hostility scales (Martin et al., 2003). Additionally, aggressive humor is negatively related to agreeableness (Martin et al., 2003), which is characterized by the tendency to get along with others.

Recalling the correlation between aggressive humor and neuroticism (Martin et al., 2003), it is unlikely that individuals who utilize aggressive humor will be perceived as skilled in interpersonal interactions. Research also shows that neuroticism relates negatively to emotional intelligence, which encompasses interpersonal skills (Goleman, 1997).

Aggressive humor may relate negatively to some traits, but the production of aggressive humor requires the same kind of skills like divergent thinking and incongruity that is required by affiliative humor. Therefore, creativity may be a positive correlate of aggressive humor (in addition to affiliative humor). Additionally, the use of aggressive humor requires the same level of cognitive ability as affiliative humor.

Self-reports of aggressive humor are positively related to coping humor scales (Martin et al., 2003). However, it's also non-significantly negatively related to well-being (Martin et al., 2003). The use of aggressive humor could be perceived as an ineffective or destructive way to cope, as it can be damaging to those involved (Campbell, Martin, & Ward, 2008), despite the fact that it is a legitimate coping mechanism. The self-reported use of aggressive humor relates to

a dominating conflict management style, which is a style that reflects high regard for the self and low regard for others (Ruldolph & Lelchook, 2009).

In sum, the known correlates of aggressive humor describe an individual who is less likely to be perceived in a positive light than somebody who uses affiliative humor.

Despite the many positives of humor use, there are also potential drawbacks. Just as humor can serve many functions, laughter, a common behavioral response to humor, also serves many functions. One function is to let another person know that one is in a non-serious frame of mind (Martin, 2007), or that he or she is just having fun (van Hooff, 1972). During an employment interview, as a candidate, it can be risky to signal to somebody that you are not in a serious frame of mind, as interviewers expect candidates to put their best foot forward at all times, and take an interview very seriously. The fact that laughter can signal being in a non-serious frame of mind could also explain why an above average sense of humor can lead to perceptions of being less conscientious than somebody with a below average sense of humor (McCrae & John, 1992). Conscientiousness is characterized as being well disciplined, reliable, hardworking, achievement-oriented, and other traits that may engender the image of a serious individual (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Research has shown that both self-reported affiliative and aggressive types of humor are negatively correlated with seriousness (Martin et al., 2003). Aggressive humor is also directly negatively related to self-reports of conscientiousness, and self-reports of seriousness (Martin et al., 2003).

In summary, there are both positive and negative outcomes and correlations of humor use, depending on the type of humor under investigation. Affiliative humor has correlations with personality variables such as extraversion, positive affect, and positive emotions which lead to cognitive flexibility and increased memory. Another positive correlate is effective coping styles

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and effective conflict management styles. Humor in general also correlates with creativity and intelligence. Negative outcomes and correlates of aggressive humor include negative correlations with agreeableness, positive correlations with neuroticism, and a dominating conflict management style. Generally, the use of aggressive humor can be damaging to others. These variables can have important implications for organizations. In the following section, I will review research investigating humor in the workplace.

Humor in the Workplace. In the past, many settings were viewed as inappropriate places for humor, such as in religion, education and politics (Martin, 2007). What about humor in the workplace? Scant research exists on the topic, even less conducted by industrial-organizational (I/O) psychologists (Martin, 2007). One could argue that humor at work is studied infrequently because of the context of work is viewed as a place where humor is rare. Of the research on humor at work, I have not found any that investigate the applicant's use of humor during the selection process. Perhaps this suggests that humor is not a relevant KSAO and therefore does not warrant study. Research conducted tells a different story, however. Studies on humor at work have examined the type and use of humor as it relates to variables like job satisfaction, performance, leadership, team cohesiveness and group interaction, power distance, negotiation and training. The results, which I summarize below, suggest that humor is an important variable with many pertinent outcomes.

The use of positive humor at work is positively related to several important organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, commitment levels and performance ratings. The use of negative humor is negatively correlated with the same outcomes (Susa, 2003). As previously mentioned, research has repeatedly demonstrated a relationship between humor and positive affect (Cann, Holt, & Calhoun, 1999; Kuiper, McKenzie, & Belanger, 1995; Martin,

Kuiper, Olinger, & Dance, 1993). Positive affect has been shown to relate to many positive outcomes such as job satisfaction (Isen & Baron, 1991) and prosocial behaviors at work (Brief & Weiss, 2002). Brief and Weiss (2002) also demonstrate that positive affect correlates positively with judgments and negotiation, and negatively with withdrawal behaviors. Researchers argue that affect impacts overall performance through motivational factors such as intensity and persistence (Seo, Barrett, & Bartunek, 2004). The use of positive humor by leaders enhances the positive affect dimension of leader-member exchange theory, which correlates with organizational citizenship behaviors and turnover intentions (Cooper, 2005).

A leader's use of humor also has positive outcomes for the leader him or herself. In the military, good leaders were rated higher in their use of humor (Priest & Swain, 2002). Managers' use of humor as rated by subordinates also correlated with ratings of performance by those managers' supervisors (Avolio et al., 1999). Research shows that leaders who use humor receive higher competency scores (Sala, 2000). This is consistent with findings that intelligence, giftedness and sense of humor are often correlated (Holt & Willard-Holt, 1995; Lehman & Witty, 1928). Humor use by leaders correlates with emotional intelligence competencies in particular (Goleman, 1994). Leaders' humor use also has more tangible correlates, such as bonuses (Sala, 2000). Authors suggest that the use of humor by leaders also has positive outcomes for their employees. Humor can be used to help mask unpleasant messages, reduce negative reactions to criticism or disagreement, and hide the authoritarian character of orders given to subordinates, which reduces the threat to their self-worth and autonomy (Robert & Yan, 2007). Empirical evidence also suggests that leader use of humor relates to higher job satisfaction in employees (Decker, 1987). In a vignette study, researchers found that when a leader was described as somebody that liked to joke around with his subordinates, he was perceived to be more likeable

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than a leader lacking this description (C. Cerrentano, 2009). The perceived likeability held even over ambiguous and poor performance conditions. The leader's sense of humor is important for groups and teams, as it can set the tone for acceptability of humor expression in the workplace, as humor is also beneficial for team cohesiveness.

Research has demonstrated that humor enhances team cohesiveness through emphasizing shared values (Meyer, 1997) and helping smooth interaction (Fine & DeSoucey, 2005). Humor can also be used to establish norms within a group, by teasing those who violate those norms (Meyer, 1990). This can be complicated however, by social identity theory. According to social identity theory, individuals categorize themselves and others into groups. Individuals identify or associate with certain groups which helps boost their self-esteem. According to Martinueau (1972), humor will have its most positive effects on social integration and cohesiveness when the producer and audience perceive each other as members of an in-group. Additionally, when the target of humor is seen as out-group, the effect of humor is to increase the esteem of the in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Humor is one way to assess whether two or more people have shared attitudes (Kane, Suls, & Tedeschi, 1977). Using humor to assert an opinion is a safe way to introduce an idea. Humor provides ambiguity that allows individuals to save face in the event that the attitudes are not shared. At the same time, one's reaction to a joke or humorous comment can be a way for one to judge whether there is a shared attitude on the topic (Kane et al., 1977). In the workplace, shared attitudes and values predict successful teamwork (Chou, Wang, Wang, Huang, & Cheng, 2008).

Studies have also examined how culture interacts with humor in organizations. Research shows that humor typically occurs in a downward direction through the hierarchy (Bradney,

1957; Coser, 1960; Holmes, 2000; Lundberg, 1969). The amount and direction of humor in organizations can be indicative of the power distance in the culture. In other words, organizations that have cultures with more power distance will experience less humor directed upwards than an organization with a low power distance culture. There are definitely downfalls to power distance in organizations as it relates to humor. First, power distance can stifle ideas and diminish the benefits that humor has to creativity and innovation (Van der Vegt, Van De Vliert, & Huang, 2005). Second, in organizations with high power distance and/or large amounts of hierarchy, subversive humor is more likely. This negative humor, which may be veiled or indirect (Holmes & Marra, 2002) can be motivated by a desire to destabilize power structures and challenge dominant behavior norms (Linstead, 1985). According to Coser (1960), high status individuals were unlikely to use self-deprecating humor. Perhaps this is changing over time, as the use of self-deprecating humor can put others at ease by communicating that the producer doesn't take him or herself too seriously (Vinton, 1989). Additionally, the status of the producer of humor relates to perceptions of that person. Research shows that high status people producing humor is more positively received than low-status individuals producing humor (Robert, Yan, & Lun, 2009).

Humor can be used in negotiation and mediation; or can be used spontaneously to change expectations, reframe information, provide multiple perspectives and even alter perspectives (Forester, 2004). O'Quin and Aronoff (1981) found subjects presented with a demand accompanied by humor made greater concessions than only a demand.

Research has also investigated the impacts of using humor in training. Humor has positive effects on attention and memory. Additionally, Lyttle (2001) suggests that trainers who use humor may be attempting to build cohesiveness, decrease the status difference between

themselves and the trainees, and increase the persuasiveness of their message by inducing positive affect (Cooper, 2005).

Despite the growing research investigating the use of humor in work contexts, I have not found any empirical research that has examined the use of humor or the assessment of humor in human resources selection contexts. However, a theoretical paper by Robert and Yan (2007) suggests that humor is a relevant predictor if the task performance requires creativity. Additionally, the authors suggest that in addition to tasks requiring creativity, humor use may be predictive of job attitudes and organizational citizenship behaviors. To build on this, in a more recent theoretical paper, Robert proposes that humor may actually serve as a reliable selection criterion (Robert & Wilbanks, 2009). He proposes humor is a relevant predictor because of the many outcomes humor has in the workplace. In particular, Robert emphasizes the research connecting humor and positive affect. He suggests that through several mediating and moderating factors, humor can lead to several important organizational outcomes such as organizational performance and retention.

This research suggests that investigating humor use in a selection context is relevant and valuable. This study will begin to divulge the impacts that humor use may have during a common selection device: the employment interview. An important consideration for humor use during selection is the gender of the applicant, as much research has demonstrated gender differences in humor use.

Gender Differences in Humor. Historically, humor has been regarded as a predominantly male characteristic (Martin, 2007). Even more recently, it is estimated that 83-88% of professional stand-up comedians are male (Groubert, 2008; "List of Comedians," 2009). Research from the early 90's indicated that when asked to describe somebody "with an

outstanding sense of humor", 73% of participants chose to describe a male (Crawford & Gressley, 1991). Some researchers claim that men and women simply differ in their humor preferences, such as men preferring sexual and aggressive jokes (Brodzinsky & Rubien, 1976), whereas women prefer more personal humorous stories (Crawford & Gressley, 1991). Other authors (e.g. Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 2006) argue that these claims are exaggerated because they are based on research that occurred only in laboratory and performance contexts.

Laboratory studies have indicated that men may not be funnier or have a better sense of humor than women, but rather prefer or are better at different types of humor. Research has shown that males generate funnier captions to already generated cartoon images than females, but only when the stimuli are sexual and/or aggressive in nature, and not when the stimuli are neutral (Brodzinsky & Rubien, 1976).

Men and women may use humor to achieve different social goals (Tannen, 1986). Men are more likely to use humor for self-presentation whereas women are more likely to use humor to achieve intimacy. These goals are consistent with gender stereotypes of women as the more nurturing, friendly sex and men as the stronger, more leading sex (Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000). These supplemental approaches to humor by each gender is consistent with the finding that humor compatibility relates to marital satisfaction (Avner Ziv & Gadish, 1990). The compatibility is consistent with research that shows that women are more likely to prefer people who *produce* humor, whereas men are more likely to prefer people who *appreciate* humor (Bressler, Martin, & Balshine, 2006).

Robert and his colleagues investigated the interaction between sex of the initiator and type of humor used, which was described in a vignette study. The authors found that affiliative humor was more positively received than aggressive humor across sexes, but there was an

interaction such that perceptions of the initiator were highest when the initiator was female using affiliative humor and lowest when the initiator was female using aggressive humor (Robert et al., 2009).

One study hypothesized that female managers would not reap the same benefit of using humor as male managers, due to prior research that shows women do not appreciate humor as much as men, and are less likely to use it (Decker & Rotondo, 2001). The authors argue that because men use humor more than women, humor will likely be more accepted from men than it is from women. They surveyed 359 business-school alumni from a University about the humor use of the individuals as well as their managers, and their perceptions of leadership effectiveness. They found that female managers were perceived more extremely than male managers whether they used positive or negative humor. Female managers were actually advantaged over male managers when using positive humor, and they were more penalized for using negative humor than male managers. The authors argue that a female's use of humor is unexpected whether it is positive or negative, and therefore respondents have more extreme reactions.

Few studies have investigated how perceptions are influenced by another's use of humor. In order to understand these findings, it is important to review and understand some important theories of perception.

Theories of Perception

There are a few key theories that likely play into many of the findings described above. First, social role theory (SRT) proposes an explanation for why males and females are expected to behave in certain ways. Second, I will review three theories that explain how violations of expectations in some form or another can impact perceptions: the stereotype fit model of discrimination, attribution theory, and expectancy violation theory (EVT).

Social Role Theory. Social role theory asserts that behavioral differences between men and women originate from the different social roles historically taken on by each sex (Eagly et al., 2000). From an evolutionary and historical perspective, the genders took on responsibilities that were consistent with their physical attributes. Therefore, men would take on roles requiring speed and strength (e.g. hunting) and women took on roles requiring care and nurturing (e.g. childbearing). Accordingly, over time, men are continually expected to behave in roles that are perceived to be agentic (i.e. masculine gender role orientation), and women are expected to behave in roles that are perceived to be communal (i.e. feminine gender role orientation). Despite the fact that more and more men and women are taking on roles outside these prescriptive norms, violation of these roles can have a negative impact on how individuals are perceived.

Stereotype Fit Model of Discrimination. The stereotype-fit model of discrimination (Dipboye, 1985) suggests that raters process information about particular ratees differently, depending on the stereotypes that they hold for individuals similar to the ratees. Essentially, a stereotype about what type of person should hold a certain job can create a prototype for the interviewer. A prototype is a central trait in reference to the way individuals organize, store, and retrieve information about a target (Dipboye, 1982). The extent to which the applicant deviates from a prototype may negatively impact evaluations of their performance in the interview. For example, some jobs may appear to be "man's work" (e.g. lumberjack) or "woman's" work (e.g. nurse) depending on the characteristics required by the position. Recall that SRT asserts these stereotypes come about due to historical division of labor between the sexes. Therefore, a woman interviewing for a male-typed job or a man interviewing for a female-typed job may suffer discrimination due to the stereotype held by the interviewer.

Attribution Theory. Attribution theory is a complex, multi-faceted theory of perception. For the purposes of the present study, I describe only the relevant components of the theory. Attribution theory states that individuals will attribute the behaviors of others to either internal influences (i.e. it is part of the person's natural disposition) or external influences (i.e. it was due to the situation; Kelley, 1973). This theory includes attributional mechanisms which further impact perceptions: augmentation and discounting. Augmentation is the process whereby the perceived role of a factor in producing an outcome is enhanced when factors leading to an opposite outcome are also present. For example, if a Black applicant has achieved much success, despite facing the challenges of modern racism and discrimination, individuals are likely to augment the perceived role of their work ethic and/or intelligence. In other words, the individual who has faced factors that could lead to failure (discrimination) is assumed to be even smarter or even more hard-working in order to have overcome that adversity. Discounting, in contrast, is the process whereby the perceived role a factor plays in producing an outcome will be diminished by the presence of other causal influences. For example, if an individual received a job at a company where he was good friends with the company president, individuals may be less likely to perceive the individual as qualified, because there is another causal influence in the direction of the success. These attributional mechanisms are consistent with expectancy violation theory.

Expectancy Violation Theory. The fundamental theory upon which I build my hypotheses is expectancy violation theory (EVT). Components of each of the above theories relate to EVT. EVT asserts that individuals evaluate others with a certain set of expectations in mind, and when these expectations are violated, evaluations become more extreme in the direction of the violation (Jussim et al., 1987). Expectations are typically grounded in societal norms for what is

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typical and appropriate behavior (Burgoon, 1993), or are formed on the basis of stereotypes (e.g. gender stereotypes). Then, when an individual behaves in a manner that is in contrast with the held stereotype or expectation, the perceptions become more extreme. To test EVT, one study manipulated race of job applicants while holding qualifications constant (Jussim et al., 1987). White judges rated the applicants. The range of ratings was greater for the Black applicants than the White applicants, and they were rated higher on average than White applicants. Another study investigating category-based expectancy violations manipulated the academic credentials of Black, White, and Asian targets to be either consistent or inconsistent with expectations (Bartholow & Bettencourt, 2000). The authors hypothesized that in-group and out-group associations would drive the results, but found that, in support of EVT, evaluations that violated expectations were more extreme regardless of in-group or out-group categories.

These theories all complement each other in the development of my hypotheses. Social role theory forms the basis upon which gender stereotypes can be formed. The stereotype-fit model of discrimination is consistent with EVT in that violating expectations can lead to more extreme evaluations. The attributional mechanisms associated with attribution theory are also consistent with EVT. In the example above, it violates expectations for a Black applicant to be highly successful, therefore the evaluations of this individual are more extreme than they would be for a White applicant (where there is no violation of expectations).

Social role theory contributes to individuals' expectations regarding men's and women's humor use. Because historically men use humor more, individuals learn to expect humor from men and expect it less from women. More specifically, men are more likely to use aggressive humor than women. Aggression is more consistent with stereotypes of males than with stereotypes of females. EVT and its closely related theories of perception suggest that violating

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these expectations (i.e. women using humor) will result in more extreme evaluations in the direction of the violation. To predict how these theories impact evaluations in an interview, I present my model of how humor condition and gender interact to cause evaluations (see Figure 1).
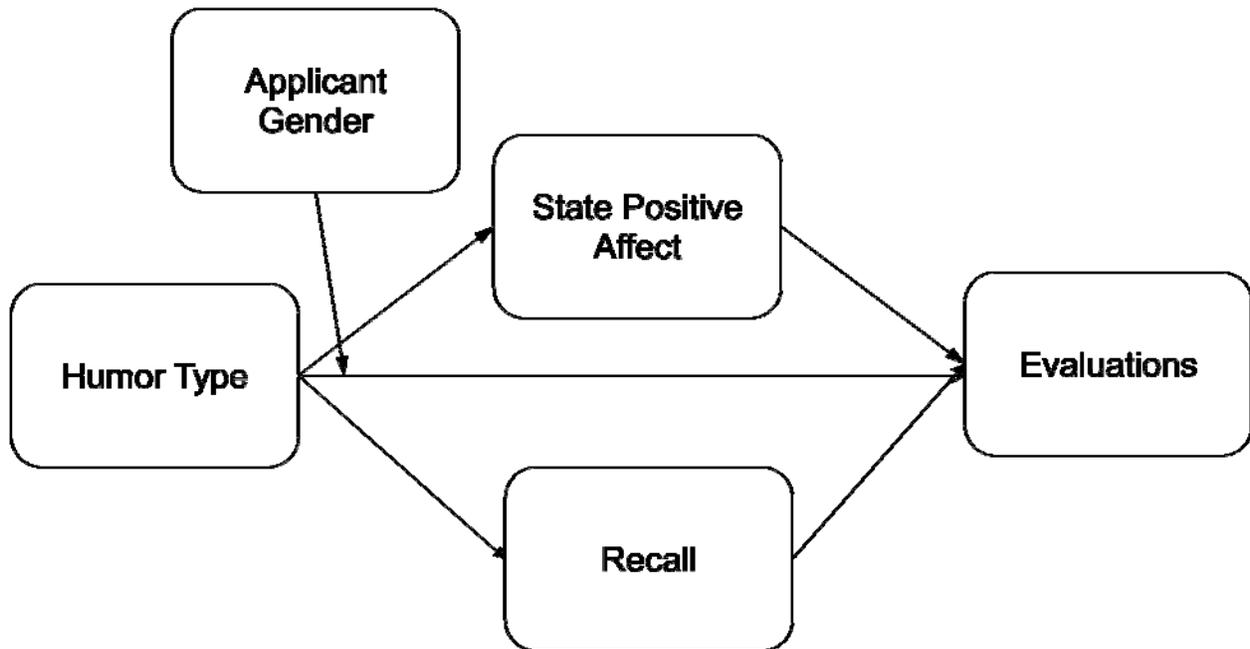
Figure 1: Model to be tested in this study

The Present Study

The present study will investigate the model shown in Figure 1. I expected humor condition to impact evaluations, but I also expected that humor will interact with candidate gender to impact evaluations. Additionally, I anticipated that the state positive affect of the interviewer would partially mediate the relationship between humor condition, applicant gender, and evaluations. By manipulating candidate gender and humor type in a job interview, I employed an experimental method to investigate how these variables impacted interviewer evaluations. Confederates played the role of the applicants and the participants were the interviewers making the evaluations.

Research has shown that there are many positive traits, characteristics, and outcomes associated with the use of humor. The type of humor impacts the outcomes, though, with affiliative humor leading to more positive outcomes and aggressive humor leading to more negative outcomes. The use of affiliative humor correlates with variables like extraversion and effective coping styles and conflict management styles, whereas aggressive humor correlates with variables like neuroticism and a dominating conflict management style. I expected that applicants using affiliative humor will be perceived more positively – friendly and resilient, for example, whereas applicants using aggressive humor will be perceived more negatively. The correlates of these variables suggest that the type of humor applicants use will impact their evaluations.

Hypothesis 1a: There will be a main effect of type of humor such that candidates who use affiliative humor are expected to be evaluated more positively than individuals who use no humor.

Hypothesis 1b: There will be a main effect of type of humor such that candidates who use aggressive humor are expected to be evaluated more negatively than individuals who use no humor.

Hypothesis 1c: There will be a main effect of type of humor such that candidates who use aggressive humor are expected to be evaluated more negatively than individuals who use affiliative humor.

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Research also shows gender differences in humor use. Social role theory helps explain how gender has led to different roles for men and women over time, and that our expectations for individuals depend on their gender, to a large degree. Humor is no exception. Wilson and Molleston (1981) propose that males are more likely than females to be socialized towards humor use. Humor has long been considered a male trait, and self-reports indicate higher levels of humor use by men across all types of humor. The tendency for men to use humor more than women leads to an expectation that men will use humor more than women. Additionally, social role theory suggests that historical gender roles lead to different behavioral expectations in men and women. Women are expected to be warm and nurturing without much regard to strength, and men are expected to be strong providers without much regard to nurturing. Similarly, men are expected to use aggressive humor more than women, as the use of aggressive humor by women goes against the gender stereotype of being nurturing, warm, and friendly. EVT suggests that reactions to humor use will depend on these expectations that women are less likely to use humor. When women do use humor, reactions will depend on the type. According to EVT, the use of affiliative humor by women would violate expectations in a positive way, leading to more extreme evaluations in a positive direction. The use of aggressive humor by women would violate expectations in a negative way, leading to more extreme evaluations in a negative direction.

Due to EVT, I expected that gender would moderate the relationship between humor use and evaluations such that interviewers would have more extreme responses to females' use of humor than to males' use of humor. I expected that when the humor was affiliative, women would likely be more "rewarded" compared to men. In contrast, when the humor was aggressive,

women would likely be "punished" more than men. Because of the violation of the expectation of humor use, I anticipated stronger responses to females using humor compared to males.

> *Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant interaction between type of humor used by candidates and the gender of the candidate such that female candidates will elicit more extreme evaluations than male candidates.*

In addition to understanding implications of humor use during an interview for applicants, one question this study begins to address is whether humor during a job interview leads to construct-relevant or construct-irrelevant variance in evaluations. The best way to do this would be to correlate interview ratings against a job performance criterion, which would provide evidence for whether humor matters on the job. Because I was not investigating interview performance of "real" candidates, I have no job performance criterion to which I can compare interview ratings. However, to begin to understand the sources of variance, I did measure two potential mediators: state affect and recall. The potential for state positive affect to impact evaluations would suggest that variance in evaluations could be attributed to mood and emotion, and not to the actual qualifications of the candidate, which would suggest that it is construct-irrelevant. State positive affect is a common outcome of humor use. Previous research has shown that induced state positive affect can impact individuals' perceptions of job satisfaction and task perceptions (Brief et al., 1995; Isen & Baron, 1991). I expected a similar effect in this study: that interviewers' evaluations would be impacted by their state affect, which would be impacted by the use of humor. If evaluations are impacted through state affect as a mediator, this

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may suggest that the variance due to humor in evaluations is construct-irrelevant, as the mood of the interviewer may artificially inflate ratings. Prior research has demonstrated that higher state positive affect leads to shallower information processing, suggesting that the variance in evaluations could be construct-irrelevant. Given what is already known about humor and state positive affect, I hypothesized partial mediation of the interviewer's state affect on evaluations of the applicant.

> *Hypothesis 3: State affect of the interviewer will partially mediate the*
>
> *relationship between humor condition and evaluations.*

Because research suggests that higher levels of positive affect lead to shallower levels of information processing, one could argue that interviewers high on state positive affect may be challenged to recall what the applicant said during the interview. To test this, I measured the extent to which individuals recalled the applicant's answers. The extent to which individuals can accurately recall what was said, and the content of what they remember (i.e. job-relevant information or humor) may represent the extent to which they processed construct-relevant information. More accurate recall may suggest that interviewers are not allowing their judgments to be influenced just by their state affect, but rather they are processing what they heard during the interview, which could suggest interviewers are attempting to identify the applicant's qualifications. Therefore, I pose a research question:

> *Research Question: Does interviewer recall mediate the relationship*
>
> *between humor condition and evaluations?*

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

Participants

Participants were recruited from a pool of undergraduate students in psychology courses at a large Southeastern university using an online experimental system. Individuals who major in psychology frequently go on to work in human resources positions ("Popular Jobs for Psychology Majors," 2009), where they will likely be involved in conducting employment interviews. Psychology majors are also often recruited for management trainee positions, and most managers engage in interviews on a fairly regular basis.

Data were collected from 283 participants. The average age was 19.3 years old. 52.3% were female, 61.1% were Caucasian, 15.9% were Hispanic, 14.1% were African-American, 10.2% were Asian, 0.7% were American Indian, and 0.7% were Pacific Islander. Data were excluded from the final analyses for four reasons (see Results section). The final data set included data collected from 221 participants. Included participants were 51.1% female with an average age of 19.9 years old. The majority of the sample was Caucasian (61.5%), with 16.3% Hispanic, 13.6% African-American, 10.4% Asian, 0.9% American Indian, and 0.5% Pacific Islander. Although it was a student sample, nearly 30% have worked full-time, and 83.3% have worked part-time. 20.8% have interviewed somebody for an employment or other opportunity. 20% identified as psychology majors, 5% as biology majors, and the rest were spread across a variety of subjects.

Procedure

Participants were told that they were "randomly" selected for their role as either interviewer or applicant, but in reality, the participants were always the interviewers. Participants were told that the study was investigating the impact of training on interview evaluations. The

participants went through a brief interviewer training (10 minutes) where they learned about effective interviewing. Training included the value of a structured interview, contrast effects, and the importance of note-taking. After the training, they were introduced to the "applicant" who was actually a confederate for the study. There was no specific job or position identified for the purposes of the interview. The participants interviewed the confederate with a set list of five questions, including three behaviorally-based questions. In the context of a structured interview, many types of questions may be asked. Research shows that structured interviews that focus on past behavior are more predictive of job performance than other types of questions, like situational interviews (Campion, Campion, & Hudson, 1994; Huffcutt, Weekley, Wiesner, Degroot, & Jones, 2001; Krajewski, Goffin, McCarthy, Rothstein, & Johnston, 2006). For that reason, the interview consisted of questions that solicit specific examples from the applicant's past. The interviews took between four and eleven minutes each, depending on how much time the participant took to take notes. The average length of the interview was about six minutes (SD = 1.16). Every interview was videotaped.

Two variables were manipulated in this study: gender and type of humor. Six confederates were used as the interviewees: three male and three female. Pictures of the confederates were pilot tested for perceived levels of attractiveness and age. Males and females were found to be equally attractive and equal in age (for details on the pilot testing, please see Appendix A. Each of the confederates was trained on three scripts. The first script included affiliative humor in answers to the three of the five questions; the second script included aggressive humor in three of the five answers; and the third script did not include any humor in the answers. The three behaviorally-based interview questions are listed below.

1) "Tell me about a time when you experienced a failure at work. What was the task, how did you respond to the failure, and what did you learn?"

2) "Tell me about a time when you had to influence somebody to see things your way. What was the situation, what did you do, and what was the result?"

3) "Tell me about a time that you experienced a challenge at work. What was the task, what did you do, and what was the result?"

Additionally, multiple scripts with different humor manipulations were pilot tested for perceived humor and quality of answers. Scripts were chosen based on those that were the funniest and the ones that were mostly clearly distinct as positive and negative humor. For the full scripts and manipulations, please see Appendix B.

Videos were coded to assess the consistency of confederate performance, laughter from the participants, script inconsistencies, accuracy of manipulations, and number of times the confederate smiled. Research has demonstrated that frequency of smiling has an impact on the impressions of the candidate, including perceptions of interpersonal warmth (Bayes, 1972), sincerity, sociability, and competence (Van Vianen & Van Schie, 1995).

At the conclusion of the interview, participants completed a self-report measure of state affect, an assessment of their perception of the applicant, and the evaluation. They also completed self-report measures of sense of humor and demographic characteristics. They completed a measure of recall and finally, they completed the manipulation checks. Following the measures, participants were debriefed.

Measures

State Affect. The participant's affect was measured by the Positive And Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988). Respondents indicated on a scale of 1-5 (1 – very

slightly or not at all, 2 – a little, 3 – moderately, 4 – quite a bit, 5 – extremely) the extent to which they felt "right now, that is, at the present moment" for many mood indicators, including inspired, nervous, and excited. The alpha for the PANAS Positive Affect scale = .89 and the alpha for the PANAS Negative Affect scale = .85. For a full list of items, see Appendix C.

Evaluation. Participants evaluated applicants on three scales: a professional evaluation scale, a personal evaluation scale, and interpersonal traits ratings. Professional evaluation was measured through three items used in Dipboye's (1984) study, including "How good of a job did the candidate do in answering the interviewer's questions?", which was evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale (*1 = Extremely bad job, 9 = Extremely good job*). Professional evaluation was also measured through the questions "Would you invite this candidate to visit your company for a second interview?" and "Would you hire this person?" (*1 = Definitely not, 9 = Definitely*; α =.91). I summed the items to form the professional evaluation variable.

The personal evaluation was measured through two items: "Would you personally like this candidate?" and "Would you like to work with this candidate?" on a 7-point Likert scale (*1 = Definitely not, 9 = Definitely*; α=.89). I summed the items to form the personal evaluation variable.

Interpersonal traits ratings included perceptions of the applicant's extraversion, likeability, interpersonal skills, persuasiveness and confidence. Ratings were made on a 7-point semantic differential scale (for a full list of items with the scale, see Appendix D). I summed the items to form the interpersonal traits variable. This scale was created for this study (α = .832). For a full list of evaluation items, see Appendix D.

Measure of Recall. Recall was measured with eight open-ended questions about the answers to the behaviorally based questions in the interview. Specifically, participants were

asked about the situation that the applicant described, the action taken by the applicant, and the outcome that the applicant reported. The responses were independently coded for accuracy by two raters with an inter-rater reliability = .789. Each of the eight answers received a score of 0, 1 or 2, where 2 reflected a complete and accurate reflection of the answer provided by the applicant (e.g. "The applicant was put in charge of helping create a power point for a professor. She was in charge of putting together graphs and charts and other students were to include text and put the production together"), a 1 represented partial accuracy of the answer (e.g. "I believe he had to work on a PowerPoint Presentation"), and 0 represented a complete lack of accuracy (e.g. "I don't remember").

Manipulation Checks. To test whether participants perceived the gender manipulation, one question was asked: "What was the gender of the applicant you interviewed today?" with response options of male and female.

To assess the humor manipulation, several questions were asked. First, participants answered the question "Did the applicant make an attempt to be funny (like try to make a joke or a funny comment)?" (*1 = Yes; 2 = No, 3 = I don't remember*). Next, they were asked "Was he or she funny?" (*1= no, 2 = Yes, a little, 3 = Yes, somewhat, 4 = Yes, very*). Participants were asked three questions to assess negative humor: "Did the applicant's humor make fun of anybody?", "Did the applicant's humor put anybody down?", and "Did the applicant use humor that could hurt somebody's feelings?" (0 = No, 1 = Yes). Answering "yes" to one of these resulted in a score of "Negative". Answering "yes" to two or more resulted in a score of "Very Negative". All applicants were also asked, "Did the applicant use humor that was light-hearted?" (0 = No, 1 = Yes). If yes, they were asked to indicate if it was "Positive" or "Very positive".

Potential Control Variables. Participants' sense of humor and demographics (such as gender and ethnicity) were measured. The participant's sense of humor was measured by the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin et al., 2003). This self-report scale includes four scales which each contain eight items. The Affiliative Humor scale has an alpha = .80 and includes items like "I enjoy making people laugh" and "I laugh and joke a lot with my closest friends". The Self-enhancing Humor scale has an alpha = .81 and includes items like "If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself up with humor" and "Even when I'm by myself, I'm often amused by the absurdities of life". The Aggressive Humor scale has an alpha = .77 and includes items like "If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it" and "When telling jokes or saying funny things, I am usually not very concerned about how other people are taking it". The Self-defeating Humor scale has an alpha of .80 and includes items like "Letting others laugh at me is my way of keeping my friends and family in good spirits" and "I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults". The scale responses range from 1-7 (1 = "Totally Agree" and 7 = "Totally Disagree"). For a full list of the items, see Appendix E. Demographics were assessed using several questions which can be found in Appendix F.

Data Analysis

I correlated potential control variables with the dependent variables using SPSS 15.0 Software (SPSS, Inc., Chicago IL) in order to determine which should be included in the tests of the analyses. Only the participants' sense of humor (affiliative sub-scale) was significantly correlated with the dependent variables (all rs > .168, all ps < .05), and was therefore the only control variable included in the analyses.

Manipulation checks were assessed by calculating accuracy for each question. Additionally, I conducted two ANCOVAs with humor condition as the independent variable and participants' sense of humor (affiliative sub-scale) as the covariate with each outcome: perceived funniness and the number of times participants laughed during the interview. To assess differences within main effects, post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test were conducted.

To begin to assess Hypothesis 1, I conducted an overall multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with humor condition as the independent variable, participants' sense of humor (affiliative sub-scale) as the covariate, and dependent variables of professional evaluation, personal evaluation, and interpersonal traits rating. Hypothesis 1 was then tested as a series of planned comparisons using ANCOVA. The independent variable was humor condition and the dependent variables (professional evaluation, personal evaluation, interpersonal traits ratings) were tested separately. Hypothesis 2 was tested using 2 (applicant gender) x 2 (humor condition) MANCOVAs with all dependent variables (professional evaluation, personal evaluation, interpersonal traits ratings).

To test whether state positive affect (Hypothesis 3) and interviewer recall (research question) partially mediate the relationship between humor condition and evaluations, I conducted structural equation modeling (SEM) using Statistical Analysis System (SAS), Version 9.1.3 of the SAS System, Copyright 2004, SAS Institute Inc. The model I tested did not include the moderator variable of applicant gender, as there is not a well-accepted way to include moderator variables in that type of statistical analysis (Schumacker & Marcoulides, 1998). Additionally, I included the participant's sense of humor (affiliative sub-scale) as a control variable.

To assess the fit of the data with the hypothesized model, I explored multiple goodness-of-fit indices including the comparative fit index (CFI), chi-square statistic divided by the degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Although the sample I analyzed for each SEM was relatively small (<200), RSEA and CFI are less sensitive to sample size that other indicators (Fan, Thompson, & Wang, 1999). According to the literature (Joreskog & Sorborn, 1993), the following criteria indicate a good fit of the data to the model: CFI equal to or greater than .90, (χ^2/df) less than 3, and RMSEA equal to or less than .08.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Data Inclusion

Of the 283 participants from which I collected data, 62 were excluded from analyses (21.9%). Participants' data were excluded for four reasons: 1) ineffective delivery of the manipulation by the confederate (n = 22, or 7%), 2) participants deviating from their scripted questions (n = 6, or 2%), 3) indicating suspicion of the study (n = 16, or 5.7%), and 4) inattentiveness and failure to complete measures appropriately (n = 23% or 8.1%). The criteria for inclusion were based on the coding of the videotaped interviews and the observations of participants. Videos were independently coded by two raters (all interrater reliability estimates were greater than .68). No significant differences exist between those included and excluded on demographic variables. Additionally, a chi-square analysis revealed that there was no differential attrition from conditions (Pearson chi-square = 2.216, $p > .05$).

Manipulation Checks

All participants correctly identified the gender of the individual they interviewed. There were three manipulation check questions assessing the humor manipulation. The question "Did the applicant make an attempt to be funny?" was answered accurately by 79% of participants. The question "Was the applicant funny?" was answered "accurately" by 76.5% of participants. Lastly, the question of "Was the applicant's humor positive (lighthearted), negative (made fun of somebody), or neither?" was answered accurately 65.6% of the time. Although these results are less than ideal, I also analyzed interviewer's perception of "funniness" (assessed as 7-point semantic differential item). I conducted an ANCOVA with humor condition as the independent variable, and participants' scores on the affiliative sub-scale as a covariate to predict a rating of funniness. The results revealed a main effect of humor condition, $F(2, 220) = 24.743$, $p < .001$,

partial η^2 = .188, such that the affiliative humor condition (M = 4.49, SD = .176) and aggressive

humor condition (M = 4.427, SD = .177) were both significantly funnier than the no humor

condition (M = 3.001, SD = .166). To explore how humor impacted the behavior of the

participants, I conducted an ANCOVA investigating the number of times the participant laughed

as the dependent variable. Humor condition was a significant predictor, $F(2, 220)$ = 23.395, p

< .001, partial η^2 = .179, such that participants laughed significantly more in the affiliative (M

= .649, SD = .066) and aggressive (M = .658, SD = .067) humor conditions than in the no humor

condition (M = .119, SD = .063). These results suggest a large degree of success with creating

humor manipulations that were perceived as significantly funnier than the control (no humor)

condition.

Basic Descriptive Statistics for the Measures

Means, standard deviations, and coefficient alphas can be found in Table 2 and scale

intercorrelations are in Table 3. Reliability estimates ranged from .77 for the affiliative self-

report sub-scale to .91 for the professional evaluation, suggesting adequate reliability.

Table 2

Means, standard deviations and coefficient alphas

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient alpha
State Positive Affect	2.98	.84	.87
Participant Affiliative Humor	5.50	.47	.77
Professional Evaluations	21.93	4.20	.91
Personal Evaluations	14.43	3.17	.88
Interpersonal Traits Rating	26.71	4.57	.82

Table 3

Intercorrelations between study variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	-.04								
3	.02	-.03							
4	.06	-.04	.09						
5	.06	-.14*	-.10	.09					
6	-.10	-.05	-.02	.16*	.24**				
7	-.04	-.00	.07	.27**	.20**	.76**			
8	.06	-.03	-.09	.34**	.18**	.79**	.70**		
9	.45**	.01	.01	.10	.11	.16*	.18**	.40**	

Note: 1 = Humor Condition (No humor = 1, affiliative = 1, aggressive = 2); 2 = Applicant

Gender; 3 = Participant Gender; 4 = State Positive Affect; 5 = Participant Affiliative Humor

Subscale; 6 = Professional Evaluation; 7 = Personal Evaluation; 8 = Interpersonal Traits Ratings;

9 = Was he or she funny. *p < .05, **p < .01.

Tests of Hypotheses

I conducted a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with humor condition as the independent variable, participants' sense of humor (affiliative sub-scale) as the covariate, and dependent variables of professional evaluation, personal evaluation, and interpersonal traits ratings. The analysis demonstrated a significant effect of humor condition , Wilks' λ = .825, F(2, 220) = 7.23, p < .001, partial η^2 = .064). Next I analyzed planned comparisons to test Hypotheses 1a-c.

Hypothesis 1a. Hypothesis 1a stated that applicants in the affiliative humor condition would be evaluated more positively than those in the no humor condition. I conducted planned comparisons between the affiliative humor and no humor conditions using ANCOVAs with participant's sense of humor (affiliative sub-scale) as the control variable. The dependent variables were professional evaluation, personal evaluation, and interpersonal traits ratings.

Table 4 presents the results of the ANCOVA with professional evaluation as the dependent variable. The overall model was significant, F(2, 149) = 5.15, p > .05, partial η^2 = .007. However, there was no main effect of humor condition, F(1, 149) = 1.31, p > .05, partial η^2 = .01. Participants rated applicants who used affiliative humor similarly (M = 22.76, SD = 4.03) to those who used no humor (M = 22.03, SD = 3.89).

Table 4

Hypothesis 1a: ANCOVA assessing differences between affiliative and no humor on professional evaluation

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial $\eta2$
Model	152.85	2	76.43	5.15	0.01	0.07
Affiliative	132.64	1	132.64	8.94	0.00	0.06
Humor Condition	19.37	1	19.37	1.31	0.25	0.01
Error	2180.24	147	14.83			
Total	2333.09	149				

Table 5 presents the results of the ANCOVA with personal evaluation as the dependent variable. The overall model was not significant, $F(2, 149) = 2.47$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. There was also no main effect of humor condition, $F(1, 149) = .00$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$. Participants rated applicants who used affiliative humor similarly ($M = 14.54$, $SD = 3.31$) to those who used no humor ($M = 14.51$, $SD = 2.96$).

Table 5

Hypothesis 1a: ANCOVA assessing differences between affiliative and no humor on personal evaluation

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η2
Model	47.06	2	23.53	2.47	0.09	0.03
Affiliative	47.03	1	47.03	4.93	0.03	0.03
Humor Condition	0.01	1	0.01	0.00	0.97	0.00
Error	1402.38	147	9.54			
Corrected Total	1449.44	149				

Table 6 presents the results of the ANCOVA with interpersonal traits ratings as the dependent variable. The overall model was significant, $F(2, 149) = 3.40$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. There was a main effect of humor condition, $F(1, 149) = 4.18$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. Participants rated applicants who used affiliative humor higher ($M = 27.92$, $SD = 4.28$) than those who used no humor ($M = 26.44$, $SD = 4.49$).

Table 6

Hypothesis 1a: ANCOVA assessing differences between affiliative and no humor on interpersonal traits rating

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η2
Model	130.18	2	65.09	3.40	.04	0.04
Affiliative	49.11	1	49.11	2.57	.11	0.02
Humor Condition	80.03	1	80.03	4.18	.04	0.03
Error	2811.88	147	19.13			
Corrected Total	2942.06	149				

These results provide some support for Hypothesis 1a, such that individuals who use affiliative humor were evaluated more positively on interpersonal traits than those who use no humor.

Hypothesis 1b. Hypothesis 1b stated that applicants in the aggressive humor condition would be evaluated more negatively that individuals in the no humor condition. I conducted planned comparisons between the affiliative humor and no humor conditions using ANCOVAs with participant's sense of humor (affiliative sub-scale) as the control variable. The dependent variables were professional evaluation, personal evaluation, and interpersonal traits ratings.

Table 7 presents the results of the ANCOVA with professional evaluation as the dependent variable. The overall model was significant, $F(2, 149) = 4.77$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. There was no main effect of humor condition, $F(1, 149) = 2.94$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. Participants rated applicants who used aggressive humor ($M = 20.99$, $SD = 4.57$) similarly to those who used no humor ($M = 22.03$, $SD = 3.89$).

Table 7

Hypothesis 1b: ANCOVA assessing differences between aggressive and no humor on professional evaluation

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	p	Partial η2
Model	163.51	2	81.76	4.77	0.01	0.06
Affiliative	123.11	1	123.11	7.19	0.01	0.05
Humor Condition	50.33	1	50.33	2.94	0.09	0.02
Error	2517.82	147	17.13			
Total	2681.33	149				

Table 8 presents the results of the ANCOVA with personal evaluation as the dependent variable. The overall model was significant, $F(2, 149) = 3.09$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. There was no main effect of humor condition, $F(1, 149) = .52$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$. Participants rated applicants who used aggressive humor ($M = 14.23$, $SD = 3.30$) similarly to those who used no humor ($M = 14.51$, $SD = 2.96$).

Table 8

Hypothesis 1b: ANCOVA assessing differences between aggressive and no humor on personal evaluation

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η2
Model	58.38	2	29.19	3.09	0.05	0.04
Affiliative	55.43	1	55.43	5.87	0.02	0.04
Humor Condition	4.93	1	4.93	0.52	0.47	0.00
Error	1388.71	147	9.45			
Total	1447.09	149				

Table 9 presents the results of the ANCOVA with interpersonal traits ratings as the dependent variable. The overall model was not significant, $F(2, 149) = 2.67, p > .05$, partial η^2 = .035. There was no main effect of humor condition, $F(1, 149) = .36, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$. Participants rated applicants who used aggressive humor ($M = 27.00, SD = 4.67$) similarly to those who used no humor ($M = 26.44, SD = 4.49$).

Table 9

Hypothesis 1b: ANCOVA assessing differences between aggressive and no humor on interpersonal traits ratings

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η2
Model	109.12	2	54.56	2.67	0.07	0.04
Affiliative	97.52	1	97.52	4.77	0.03	0.10
Humor Condition	7.44	1	7.44	.364	0.54	0.00
Error	3003.97	147	20.44			
Total	3113.09	149				

These results provide no support for Hypothesis 1b, as comparisons between aggressive humor and no humor did not yield significant differences.

Hypothesis 1c. Hypothesis 1c stated that applicants in the affiliative humor condition would be evaluated more positively than individuals in the aggressive humor condition. I conducted planned comparisons between the affiliative humor and no humor conditions using

ANCOVAs with participant's sense of humor (affiliative sub-scale) as the control variable. The dependent variables were professional evaluation, personal evaluation, and interpersonal traits ratings.

Table 10 presents the results of the ANCOVA with professional evaluation as the dependent variable. The overall model was significant, $F(2, 141) = 10.15$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$. There was a main effect of humor condition, $F(1, 141) = 7.83$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$. Participants rated applicants who used affiliative humor ($M = 22.76$, $SD = 4.03$) higher than those who used aggressive humor ($M = 20.99$, $SD = 4.57$).

Table 10

Hypothesis 1c: ANCOVA assessing differences between affiliative humor and aggressive humor on professional evaluation

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η2
Model	345.29	2	172.64	10.15	0.00	0.13
Affiliative	233.49	1	233.49	13.73	0.00	0.09
Humor Condition	133.19	1	133.19	7.83	0.01	0.05
Error	2364.43	139	17.01			
Total	2709.72	141				

Table 11 presents the results of the ANCOVA with personal evaluation as the dependent variable. The overall model was significant, $F(2, 141) = 4.37$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. There was no main effect of humor condition, $F(1, 141) = .58$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .004$. Participants rated applicants who used affiliative humor ($M = 14.54$, $SD = 3.31$) similarly to those who used aggressive humor ($M = 14.23$, $SD = 3.30$).

Table 11

Hypothesis 1c: ANCOVA assessing differences between affiliative humor and aggressive humor on personal evaluation

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η2
Model	90.78	2	45.39	4.37	0.01	0.06
Affiliative	87.37	1	87.37	8.42	0.00	0.06

Humor Condition	5.99	1	5.99	0.58	0.45	0.00
Error	1442.68	139	10.38			
Total	1533.46	141				

Table 12 presents the results of the ANCOVA with interpersonal traits ratings as the dependent variable. The overall model was significant, $F(2, 141) = 3.60$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$. There was no main effect of humor condition, $F(1, 141) = 1.93$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$. Participants rated applicants who used affiliative humor ($M = 27.92$, $SD = 4.29$) similarly to those who used aggressive humor ($M = 27.00$, $SD = 4.67$).

Table 12

Hypothesis 1c: ANCOVA assessing differences between affiliative humor and aggressive humor on interpersonal traits ratings

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η2
Model	139.88	2	69.94	3.60	.03	.05
Affiliative	110.12	1	110.12	5.67	.02	.04
Humor Condition	37.49	1	37.49	1.93	.17	.01
Error	2701.37	139	19.43			
Total	2841.25	141				

These results suggest partial support for Hypothesis 1c, such that for professional evaluations, applicants in the affiliative humor condition were evaluated more positively than those in the aggressive humor condition, but no significant differences were found for the personal evaluation or the interpersonal traits ratings.

Table 13 includes the means and standard deviations of each humor condition for each dependent variable. Table 14 summarizes the results of the testing of Hypothesis 1.

Table 13

Means and standard deviations of each humor condition for each dependent variable

	Professional	Personal	Interpersonal Traits Ratings
Affiliative Humor	22.76 (4.03)	14.54 (3.31)	27.92 (4.28)

No Humor	22.03	14.51	26.44
	(3.89)	(2.96)	(4.49)
Aggressive Humor	20.99	14.23	27.00
	(4.57)	(3.30)	(4.67)

Table 14

Summary of results of testing of Hypothesis 1

	Professional Evaluation	Personal Evaluation	Interpersonal Traits Ratings
H1a: Affiliative and No Humor	*ns*	*ns*	Affiliative > No Humor
H1b: Aggressive and No Humor	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*
H1c: Affiliative and Aggressive	Affiliative > Aggressive	*ns*	*ns*

Note: *ns* – not significantly different

Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 2 stated that there would be a significant interaction between type of humor used by candidates and the gender of the candidate such that female candidates will elicit more extreme evaluations than male candidates. I conducted a MANCOVA to test this hypothesis. The independent variables were humor condition (i.e., no humor, affiliative humor, and aggressive humor) and applicant gender. The covariate was participant's sense of humor (affiliative sub-scale). The dependent variables were professional evaluation, personal evaluation and interpersonal traits ratings. There was a significant effect of humor condition Wilks' λ = .814, $F(2, 220)$ = 7.68, $p < .001$, partial η^2 = .098, but there was no significant interaction effect between humor condition and applicant gender, Wilks' λ = .977, $F(2, 220)$ = .84, $p > .05$, partial η^2 = .012. Therefore, I did not conduct univarate ANCOVAs on each dependent variable.

Hypothesis 3 and the Research Question. Hypothesis 3 stated that state affect was

expected to partially mediate the relationship between humor and evaluations and the research

question asked if recall would partially mediate the relationship between humor and evaluations.

To test this, I conducted SEM. Because SEM allows for only continuous or dichotomous

variables, I tested the proposed model (see Figure 2) by analyzing the humor conditions two at a

time and by testing each of the dependent variables (i.e., professional evaluation, personal

evaluation, interpersonal trait ratings).
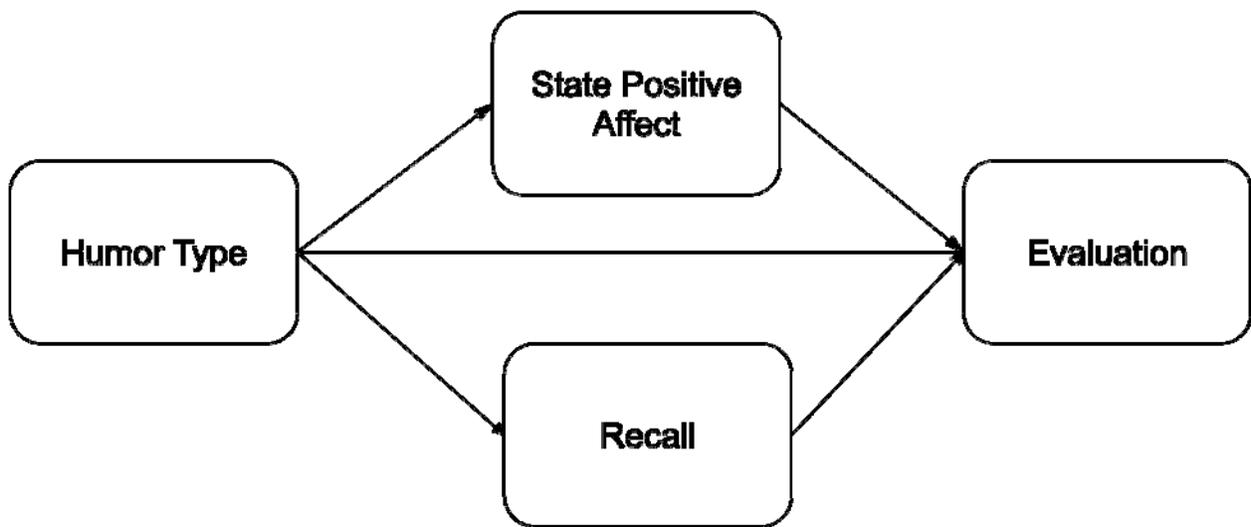
Figure 2. Model to be tested using each dependent variable.

First, I conducted SEM for the professional evaluation. When conducting SEM with the

no humor condition with each humor condition (i.e. no humor and affiliative humor, no humor

and aggressive humor), the overall fit of the data to the model was good (CFIs > .96, (χ^2/df) <

1.6, and the RMSEA < .06), however no significant paths emerged. When conducting SEM with

affiliative humor and aggressive humor, the fit indicators demonstrated a reasonable fit of the

data to the model: CFI = .95, the (χ^2/df) = 2.16, and the RMSEA = .09. Several significant paths

emerged. Table 15 presents the standard item loadings and reliabilities of the indicators in the

SEM. All of the estimates were generated through a maximum likelihood technique. As

evidenced in the table, all of the latent variables were represented by three indicators.

Table 15

Measurement properties: professional evaluation for affiliative and aggressive humor conditions

Construct and indicators	Standardized loading	Reliability
State Positive Affect	.87*	
λ_{pa1}	.79	.62
λ_{pa2}	.84	.71
λ_{pa3}	.87	.76
Recall	.72*	
λ_{rec4}	.79	.82
λ_{rec5}	.94	.62
λ_{rec6}	.92	.31
Professional Evaluations	.91*	
λ_{pfe7}	.79	.63
λ_{pfe8}	.95	.90
λ_{pfe9}	.92	.85
Affiliative Humor	.77*	
λ_{ah10}	.86	.74
λ_{ah11}	.86	.74
λ_{ah12}	.86	.74

Note. *Denotes composite reliabilities

Figure 3 displays the path coefficients between each of the variable in the tested model.

The path from the humor condition to state positive affect was significant and negative, $t(141)= -$

2.15, $p < .05$, $\beta = -.19$, such that participants reported higher state positive affect in the

aggressive humor condition than in the affiliative condition. There was also a positive,

significant path from state positive affect to professional evaluation such that the higher the

participant's state positive affect, the higher the evaluation of the applicant, in partial support of

Hypothesis 3, $t(141)=3.01$, $p < .05$, $\beta = .37$. Lastly, there was a positive and significant path from

humor condition to professional evaluation such that applicants who used affiliative humor were

evaluated more positively than applicants who used aggressive humor, $t(141) = 3.29$, $p < .05$, β

$= .32$.

Figure 3. Model displaying the significant paths from a SEM assessing professional evaluation

for affiliative humor and aggressive humor conditions.

Next, I conducted SEM for the personal evaluation. When conducting SEM with the no

humor condition with each humor condition (i.e. no humor and affiliative humor, no humor and

aggressive humor) the overall fit of the data to the model was good (CFIs $> .90$, $(\chi^2/df) < 3$, and

the RMSEA $< .08$), however no significant paths emerged from the humor condition. When

conducting SEM with affiliative humor and aggressive humor, the fit indicators demonstrated a

reasonable fit of the data to the model: CFI $= .89$, the $(\chi^2/df) = 1.8$, and the RMSEA $= .075$.

Table 16 presents the standard item loadings and reliabilities of the indicators in the SEM. All of the estimates were generated through a maximum likelihood technique. As evidenced in the table, all of the latent variables except for the dependent variable of personal evaluation (which was represented by two indicators) were represented by three indicators.

Table 16

Measurement properties: personal evaluation for affiliative and aggressive humor conditions

Construct and indicators	Standardized loading	Reliability
State Positive Affect	.87*	
λ_{pa1}	.79	.62
λ_{pa2}	.85	.72
λ_{pa3}	.87	.76
Recall	.72*	
λ_{rec4}	.90	.82
λ_{rec5}	.79	.62
λ_{rec6}	.56	.31
Personal Evaluation	.88*	
λ_{pfe7}	.87	.63
λ_{pfe8}	.88	.90
Affiliative Humor	.77*	
λ_{ah10}	.64	.41
λ_{ah11}	.64	.41
λ_{ah12}	.64	.41

Note. *Denotes composite reliabilities

The analysis of the personal evaluation (see Figure 4) differed from the professional evaluation in that the only significant paths included the path from humor condition to state

positive affect, $t(141) = -2.15$. $p < .05$, $\beta = -.19$, with aggressive humor leading to higher state

positive affect than affiliative and from state positive affect to personal evaluation, $t(141) = 2.91$,
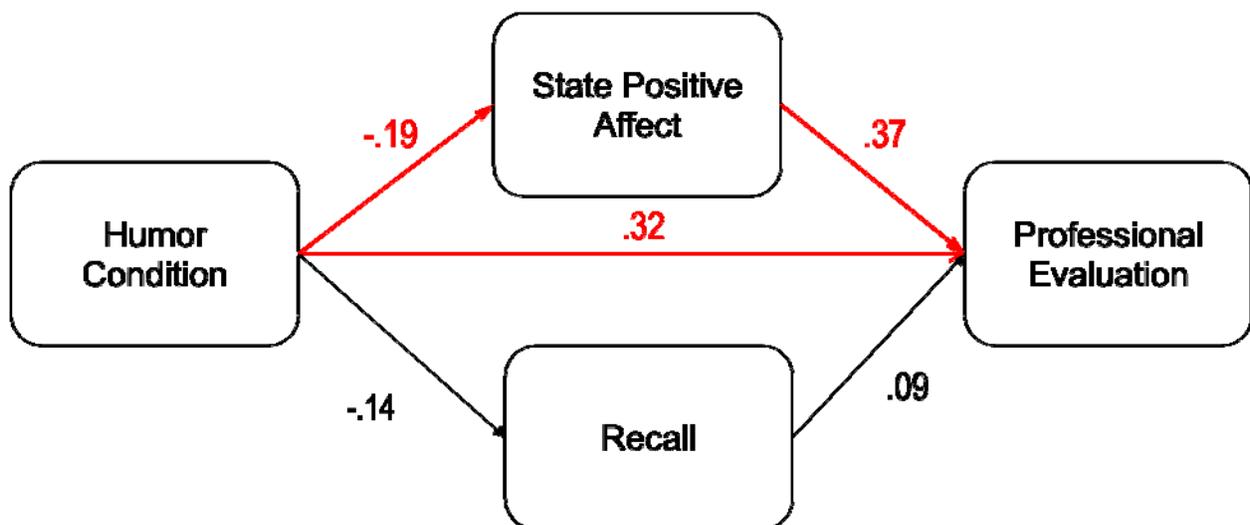
$p < .05$, $\beta = .38$.

Figure 4. Model displaying the significant paths from a SEM assessing personal evaluation for affiliative humor and aggressive humor conditions.

Next, I conducted SEM for the interpersonal traits ratings. When conducting SEM with

the no humor condition and aggressive humor condition, the overall fit was reasonable (CFIs

$= .91$, $(\chi^2/df) = 2.6$, and the RMSEA $= .086$), however no significant paths emerged. When

conducting SEM with the no humor condition and the affiliative humor condition, the fit

indicators demonstrated good fit of the data to the model: CFI $= .89$, the $(\chi^2/df) = 1.73$, and the

RMSEA $= .07$.two significant paths emerged. Table 17 presents the standard item loadings and

reliabilities of the indicators in the SEM. All of the estimates were generated through a

maximum likelihood technique. As evidenced in the table, all of the latent variables were

represented by three indicators. The standardized loadings and reliability estimates for the recall

variable were below an adequate level, suggesting not every indicator was a good representation

of the variable.

Table 17

Measurement properties: interpersonal traits ratings for affiliative and no humor conditions

Construct and indicators	Standardized loading	Reliability
State Positive Affect	.87*	
λ_{pa1}	.77	.60
λ_{pa2}	.85	.73
λ_{pa3}	.90	.80
Recall	.72*	
λ_{rec4}	.77	.59
λ_{rec5}	.54	.29
λ_{rec6}	.17	.03
Interpersonal Traits Ratings	.81*	
λ_{pfe7}	.79	.62
λ_{pfe8}	.84	.71
λ_{pfe9}	.66	.44
Affiliative Humor	.77*	
λ_{ah10}	.64	.41
λ_{ah11}	.64	.41
λ_{ah12}	.64	.41

Note. *Denotes composite reliabilities

The analysis of the interpersonal traits ratings (see Figure 5) resulted in a significant path

from the humor condition to interpersonal traits ratings, $t(149) = 2.48$, $p < .05$, $\beta = .25$ with

affiliative humor leading to higher evaluations than no humor. Also, a significant path emerged

from state positive affect to interpersonal traits ratings, $t(149) = 3.30$, $p < .05$, $\beta = .38$, such that higher state positive affect led to higher ratings.
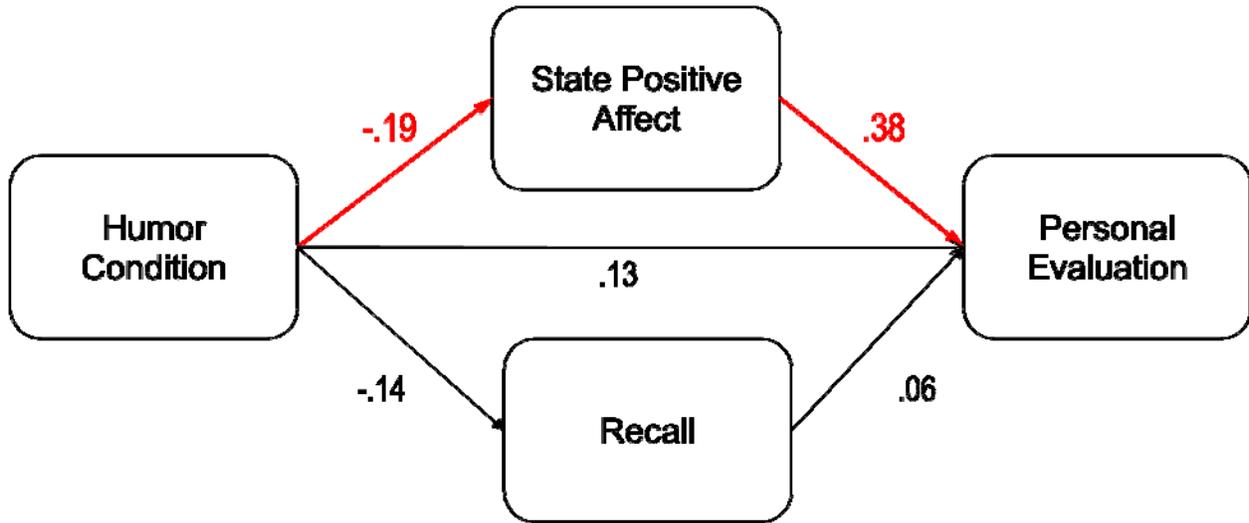

Figure 5. Model displaying the significant paths from a SEM assessing interpersonal traits ratings for affiliative humor and no humor conditions.

When conducting SEM on interpersonal traits ratings with affiliative humor and aggressive humor, the fit indicators demonstrated good fit: CFI = .90, the $(\chi^2/df) = 1.74$, and the RMSEA = .073. Table 18 presents the standard item loadings and reliabilities of the indicators in the SEM. All of the estimates were generated through a maximum likelihood technique. As evidenced in the table, all of the latent variables were represented by three indicators.

Table 18

Measurement properties: interpersonal traits ratings for affiliative and aggressive humor conditions

Construct and indicators	Standardized loading	Reliability
State Positive Affect	.87*	
λ_{pa1}	.79	.63
λ_{pa2}	.84	.70

λ_{pa3}	.87	.77
Recall	.72*	
λ_{rec4}	.90	.68
λ_{rec5}	.79	.63
λ_{rec6}	.56	.31
Interpersonal Traits Ratings	.83*	
λ_{pfe7}	.82	.68
λ_{pfe8}	.86	.74
λ_{pfe9}	.71	.51
Affiliative Humor	.77*	
λ_{ah10}	.64	.41
λ_{ah11}	.64	.41
λ_{ah12}	.64	.41

Note. *Denotes composite reliabilities

Figure 6 displays the path coefficients between each of the variable in the tested model. The path from the humor condition to state positive affect was significant and negative, $t(141)= -2.15$, $p < .05$, $\beta = -.19$, such that participants reported higher state positive affect in the aggressive humor condition than in the affiliative condition. There was also a positive, significant path from state positive affect to professional evaluation such that the higher the participant's state positive affect, the higher the evaluation of the applicant, $t(141)=3.52$, $p < .01$, $\beta = .49$. Lastly, there was a positive and significant path from humor condition to interpersonal traits ratings such that applicants who used affiliative humor were evaluated more positively than applicants who used aggressive humor, $t(141) = 2.17$, $p < .05$, $\beta = .22$.
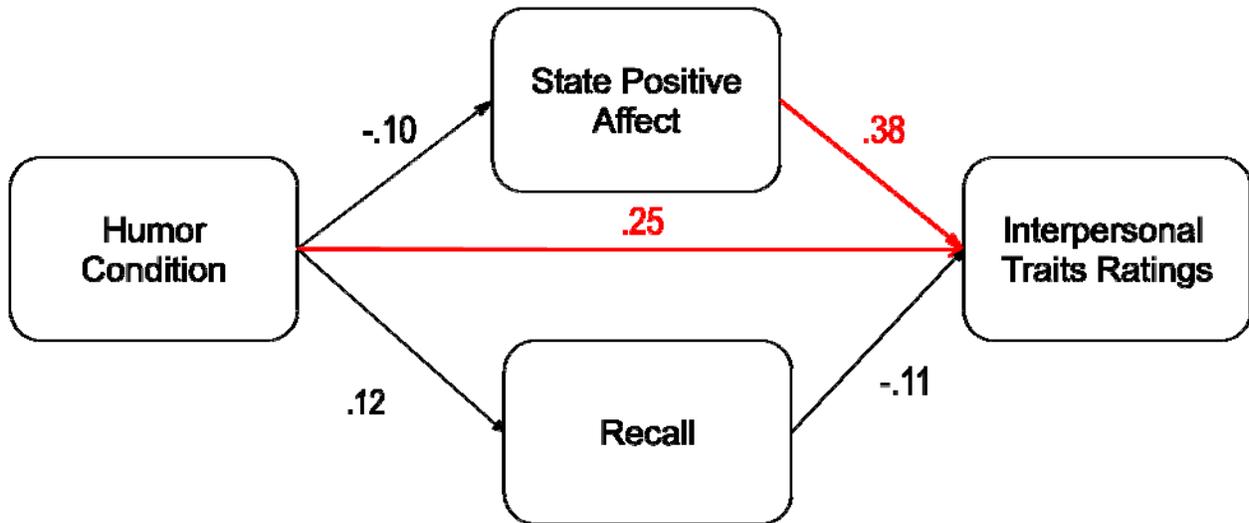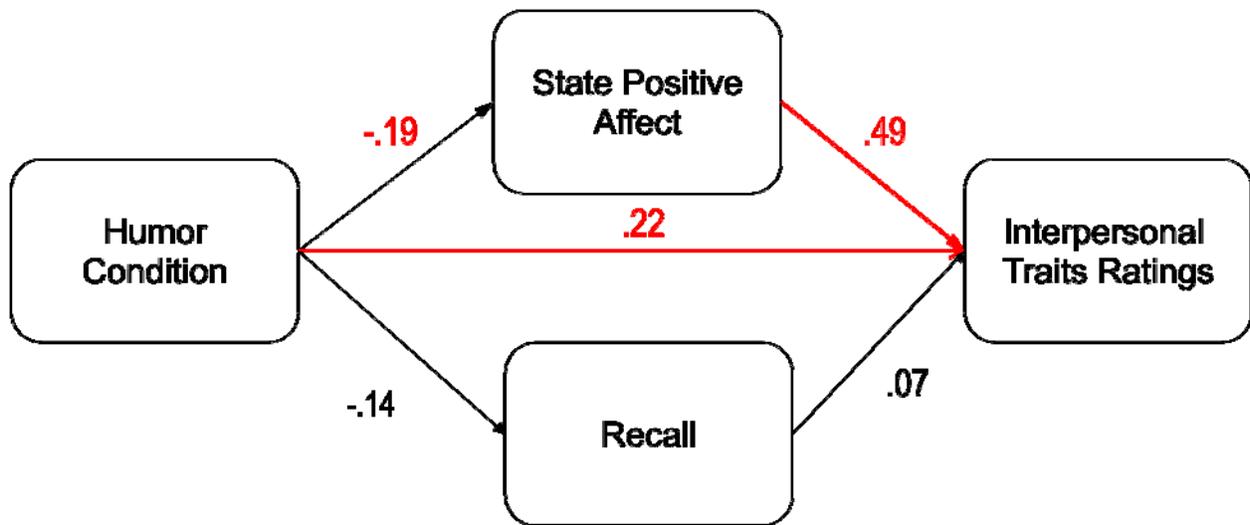
Figure 6. Model displaying the significant paths from a SEM assessing interpersonal traits ratings for affiliative humor and aggressive humor conditions.

Exploratory Analyses

Gender of the Interviewer. I explored how the gender of the interviewer (participant) impacted the data because humor research has shown that the gender of the audience can be an important variable. Some research suggests that males enjoy humor more than females (Crawford & Gressley, 1991), whereas other research suggests the type of humor matters (Brodzinsky & Rubien, 1976). Still other research indicates there are no gender differences in terms of appreciating humor (Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 2006). To explore this, I conducted three 2 (gender of the applicant) x 2 (gender of the interviewer) x 3 (type of humor) ANCOVAs with participant's sense of humor score (affiliative sub-scale) as the covariate and evaluations (i.e., professional evaluation, personal evaluation, interpersonal traits ratings) as the dependent variables. Neither participant gender nor applicant gender was a significant predictor of personal evaluations or interpersonal traits ratings. However, the overall model predicting professional evaluations was significant, $F(12, 220) = 2.62, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$. The ANCOVA revealed a significant interaction, $F(220) = 3.054, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .029$, between humor condition and

participant gender, such that females rated applicants who used affiliative humor higher ($M =$ 23.51, $SD = 3.87$) than those who used aggressive humor ($M = 20.78$, $SD = 4.80$).

Perception of Funniness. To explore how the interviewers' perceptions impacted their evaluations, I conducted ANCOVAs with perception of funniness as the independent variable, participants' sense of humor (affiliative sub-scale) as the covariate, and each dependent variable (professional evaluation, personal evaluation, interpersonal traits ratings). Perception of funniness was not a significant predictor for personal or professional evaluations, but was significant for interpersonal traits ratings, $F(4, 219) = 9.99$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .16$, such that the funnier the interviewers found the applicants, the more positively they evaluated them.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This experiment sought to understand three key questions: 1) How does using humor during a job interview impact applicant evaluations? 2) Does applicant gender moderate that impact? and 2) Is the variance in evaluations due to humor construct-relevant or construct-irrelevant? The results of the data analysis suggest that humor impacts applicant evaluations such that using affiliative humor leads to higher evaluations, in partial support of Hypothesis 1. However, contrary to Hypothesis 2, applicant gender was not found to be a significant moderator of the relationship between humor and evaluations, lending no support for expectancy violation theory (EVT). This suggests that men and women may be equally advantaged or disadvantaged by the type of humor they use in interviews. The final question asked in this study was the extent to which variance in evaluations due to humor was construct-relevant or –irrelevant. Unfortunately, the results of the tests of mediation failed to provide answers to this question. No support was found for Hypothesis 3 and the analyses suggest that recall did not mediate the relationship between humor and evaluations.

Impact of Humor

Applicants in the aggressive and affiliative humor conditions were perceived to be significantly funnier than individuals in the no humor condition. These results suggest that the humor manipulation was not only effective, but the affiliative and aggressive humor conditions were equally funny. Participants laughed more in the two humor conditions compared to the no humor condition and the funnier the participants perceived the applicants, the higher they rated applicants on evaluations.

The results show that the use of affiliative humor is more beneficial for applicants than the use of aggressive humor. Applicants who used affiliative humor were evaluated more

positively on the professional evaluation than applicants who used aggressive humor. Using affiliative humor also led to significantly higher ratings on the interpersonal traits compared to using no humor.

I hypothesized there would be differences between each of the humor conditions on evaluations, but this received only some support from the results. There are a number of potential reasons for this. For one, humor is a particularly difficult construct to create in a way that is consistent across a number of individual differences. Everybody has a different idea of what is funny. This was evidenced by the accuracy scores on the manipulation checks. Approximately 17% of the sample responded "inaccurately" to all of the humor manipulation checks. Participants "accurately" identified the applicant as funny or not 76.5% of the time, which means that 23.5% of the time, participants failed to perceive them as funny when they were trying to be, or thought they were funny when they were not trying. The results of these manipulation checks suggest that there may be some threats to the internal validity of the study. Clearly, participants were not able to easily identify the type of humor every time, which was a key manipulated variable. If these differences were larger or more exaggerated, perhaps the manipulation checks would have been more successful, and the internal validity would be stronger. This is one of the first studies that attempted to create humor for the purpose of studying it. Most research on humor has relied solely on individual's perception of humor without trying to create and manipulate it, with few exceptions (e.g. Robert et al., 2009). I did attempt to measure individual difference variables expected to be relevant, but there may be other differences I did not capture that may help explain the differences in perceived funniness within humor conditions.

Gender and EVT

Expectancy violation theory states that individuals will have more extreme responses to something when it violates their expectations. Given that, I had hypothesized that females would be evaluated more extremely than males, as humor is less expected from females and would violate expectations. The results suggest that applicant gender did not moderate the relationship between humor and evaluations. It is possible that the aggressive humor manipulations were too mild and the differential gender reactions were not extreme enough to be detected by this study. Another potential factor is that the applicant's performance in the interview was held constant across all conditions, with the exception of the humor manipulations. The applicants may have performed so well that it overpowered the potential impact of gender. In future research, manipulating the performance in the interview might lead to more support for EVT. In other words, perhaps the expected moderation between humor and gender would exist at varying levels of interview performance. Alternatively, perhaps the expectations around the use of humor by males and females are changing, such that it is becoming more accepted or more common for females to use humor. Social role theory suggests an evolutionary explanation for why different expectations exist for men and women, and focuses primarily on the role men and women took in sustaining the species. Perhaps it was too far-reaching to suggest that humor in an interview could be impacted by applicant gender. Additionally, as I will discuss later, perhaps the lack of a specified position diminished potential impacts of gender. The stereotype-fit model of discrimination suggests that evaluations will be impacted by the interviewer's perceived consistency of the applicant with the prototypical employee in that role. When interviewing for gender-stereotyped positions, gender may be a relevant moderator.

Although I hypothesized about the gender of the applicant, the gender of the interviewer appeared to matter. Female interviewers gave more extreme ratings based on the humor condition, suggesting that they have a strong preference for affiliative over aggressive humor in an interview setting. Research yields mixed findings in regard to sex differences in response to humor appreciation. Some studies suggest that men and women respond differently to the use of humor by others (e.g. Bressler et al., 2006), whereas other studies have found no differences (e.g. Wilson & Molleston, 1981). Tannen (1990) argues that men and women use humor for different social goals consistent with their expected role in society (women as nurturers, men as providers). This may help explain why women prefer affiliative humor, which is designed to create bonds between people, over aggressive humor, which has the potential to hurt relationships. The findings of this study are consistent with recent research that indicates that women engage in and appreciate affiliative humor more than aggressive humor.

Construct Relevance

This experiment also sought to begin to understand if variance in evaluations due to humor was construct-relevant or construct-irrelevant. In other words, humor impacts evaluations, but is it job-related or is it bias? The mediated relationship of humor, state positive affect and evaluations was significant but of much smaller magnitude ($r = -.072$) than the direct path ($r = .22$), suggesting that state positive affect did not play a big role in the evaluations. Recall was not a significant mediator, which as I discuss later, could be an indication that it did not represent the intended construct. Because the mediators were unable to provide a good deal of insight into the extent to which the variance is construct-relevant or irrelevant, I discuss other potential indicators.

A different pattern of results emerged for the different dependent variables. Humor condition significantly impacted professional evaluations and interpersonal traits ratings, but not personal evaluations. It seems that interviewers were able to separate evaluations that relate to the job and evaluations that reflect personal preference, as humor impacted professional and personal evaluations differently. Additionally, despite the fact that aggressive humor led to higher state positive affect than affiliative humor, professional evaluations were still significantly higher for affiliative humor. This suggests that while interviewers did allow their state affect to impact their evaluations, the impact was greater for personal evaluations while it was tempered for the professional evaluations.

Also, applicants who utilized affiliative humor were rated higher on the interpersonal traits (such as likeability and interpersonal skills) than applicants who used no humor, but there were no differences between humor conditions when participants were asked if they *personally* would like the person or like to work with them (personal evaluations). This suggests that individuals may have more of an "objective" evaluation of a person for the benefit of the interview, such that they personally do not have a preference but they value affiliative humor for a professional environment. In other words, the results indicate that participants do not personally like applicants more or less depending on the type of humor that is used, however they believe in general others will like applicants who use affiliative humor more than those who do not.

Prior research has also demonstrated that professional and personal evaluations can be impacted differently by humor. A study investigating the impact of humor and job performance in leaders (C. A. Cerrentano, 2007) hypothesized that both humor and job performance would impact the leader's likeability, but found that only humor significantly impacted likeability such

that using humor led to more likeability. However, when studying ratings of respect, the author found that both humor and job performance significantly impacted the extent to which participants respected the leader. This is similar to my study in that the pattern of results differs for personal and professional evaluations.

Limitations and Future Research

Recall. The model I tested in this study reflects interviewer's recall as having occurred prior to the interviewer's evaluation. In the procedure, however, participants evaluated the applicants prior to recall being measured. Recall was designed to assess the accuracy with which participants remembered what the applicants described during the interview, and represented a non-affect based path through which humor may impact evaluations. I did not want to measure recall prior to assessing the participants' evaluations of the applicants because that may have unintentionally guided their evaluations. The purpose of this study was not to influence the path that humor took to impact evaluations, but rather to begin to assess it. While it may seem that the model tested here is represented inaccurately, research has shown that manipulating the order of when recall and judgments were assessed relative to each other did not result in significant differences on either (Hastie & Park, 1986).

By assessing recall after the judgment (evaluation) was made, the content of what was recalled was likely biased retrieval of information. The biased retrieval model of the memory-judgment literature assumes that judgment causes memory. According to this model, whatever information the participant used to make the judgment (evaluation) is likely the information they generated during the free recall measure (Snyder & Uranowitz, 1978). Research also suggests that memory-based judgments (based on retrieving information from long-term memory) are not as reliable as on-line judgments, or judgments that are formed as the information is being

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perceived (Hastie & Park, 1986). Participants in this study were told they would be asked to report on what they thought about the applicant, and were therefore most likely making online judgments, which are more reliable than memory-based judgments.

There is mixed research regarding the memory-judgment relationship and how it differs based on whether the judgments are on-line or memory-based; some research show stronger relationships with on-line, some show stronger relationships with memory-based (Hastie and Park, 1986). However in this study, I found no significant relationship between judgment and memory.

Unfortunately, it appears that the measure of recall failed to capture the construct it was intended to represent. Because I measured state affect, I can assert with reasonable confidence that the majority of the impact humor had on evaluations was not due to the mood and emotion of the interviewer. It seems reasonable to assume that the interviewers made a cognitive evaluation of the humor use in terms of how it would impact the workplace. The measure of recall simply did not capture that cognitive process. Future research, described in the next sections, should directly assess the relationship between humor use in interviews and job performance in order to assess the extent to which humor is construct-relevant or -irrelevant.

Generalizability. In order to maintain the experimental nature of this study, many factors had to be controlled, which, while good for internal validity, can be detrimental for generalizability. For example, research has shown that interviewers who interview multiple candidates in a row tend to compare them to each other, rather than to an overall standard. Therefore, if an interviewer evaluates several poor candidates and then one average candidate, the average candidate will be evaluated more favorably. These contrast effects are quite persistent – interviewers continue to make this error even when previously warned (Wexley,

Yukl, Kovacs, & Sanders, 1972). Because this study did not use repeated measures, it fails to capture contrast effects that exist in real-world settings. Additionally, there was no specified job against which participants could evaluate the applicants. Structured interviews include a set of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics that are required to perform well in the job. Future research should assess how humor impacts evaluations when the job is described and/or manipulated. Certain position types may emphasize the importance or value of humor and others may diminish its effect. Similarly, having additional knowledge about the applicant may diminish the impact that state positive affect has on the evaluations, as prior research has shown that interviewer mood matters more when qualifications were ambiguous (Baron, 1993), as they were in this study.

Another limitation to this experiment is that in an actual interview, individuals would likely be aware of the cues in the environment which would guide their future behavior. For example, if the applicant uses humor in an answer and the interviewer does not laugh or smile in response, the applicant would likely adjust either the type or amount of humor until he or she received a response more in line with what they want. In this study, applicants had to continue with their scripts and continue to use humor whether it appeared to have a positive impact or not.

Using a student sample can also negatively impact the generalizability, as interviewers in organizations are more likely to have experience and training. However, 83% of this sample had work experience, and more than 20% had interviewed people before. Additionally, to help compensate for inexperience, these participants did receive interviewer training, and in fact were specifically trained against letting extraneous information bias their assessment. This may add additional support to the notion that humor is construct-relevant. Students may have been more nervous than experienced interviewers, although the data indicate the average score on the

"nervous" item from PANAS (Watson et al., 1988) was 2.01 on a 5 point scale, which is not terribly high. Individuals indicated being more excited (M = 2.83), strong (M = 2.84), alert (M = 3.44) and attentive (M=3.71), among others, than nervous.

   Future Research. Because past research has shown that individuals are heavily influenced by pre-interview information (e.g. Dipboye, Stramler et al., 1984), future research should incorporate this component to see if it alters the effects. Future research should also manipulate the amount of humor that is used, beyond just "some or none". It is likely that there is an ideal amount of humor to utilize in this type of setting. Additionally, the temporal place of the humor should be manipulated in order to investigate the effects of when during the interview humor is ideal and when it is disadvantageous. In order to understand how humor impacts job applicants in a real interview setting, field studies should examine the relationship between humor use and a criterion such as recommendation to hire, or a second interview.

   Future research should examine how humor in an interview relates to an ultimate criterion, such as job performance. Studies could investigate the extent to which actual applicants use humor in a field study. The type and amount of humor from applicants could be coded and correlated with interviewer evaluations as well as actual outcomes such as second interviews, hiring recommendation, actual hiring outcome, and even job performance. This would help researchers understand the impact of humor when considering a plethora of additional variables such as job type, interviewer individual differences, actual interview performance, and more.

Conclusions

   Prior research demonstrated that humor has positive correlates in the workplace, and this study suggests humor matters in selection also. A key finding from this study is that the funnier the interviewers found the applicants to be, the higher they rated them on the professional

evaluation. Funniness was also significantly related to interpersonal traits ratings including confidence, likeability, interpersonal skills, and persuasiveness, which is particularly important during an interview, when applicants are attempting to persuade the interviewer to hire them over the other applicants. Job applicants should pay attention to the cues of the interviewer when attempting to be humorous, such that humor that is well received should continue and humor that is not well received should be adjusted or stopped. Fortunately, individuals who have an above average sense of humor tend to be higher on self-monitoring (Turner, 1980), which would suggest that individuals who are naturally funny and self-aware should be successful in implementing their humor during an interview, keeping in mind that overall, affiliative humor is better than aggressive humor.

Although past research demonstrates that gender moderates the relationship between many behaviors and evaluations, gender did not moderate the relationship between humor and evaluations in this study. Rather, it seems that the gender of the audience matters more than the gender of the producer. Applicants should certainly use affiliative humor when the interviewer is female, as this study found that females do not respond to aggressive humor as positively as affiliative humor in an interview context.

This study has opened a new dimension in a very broad literature, as it is the first to my knowledge that empirically studies the use of humor during selection. The experiment has begun to address questions about humor during job interviews that will help both the interviewer and the applicant. While there are many more questions to be answered, this study demonstrates that humor does matter in a selection context regardless of gender. That's what she said.

APPENDIX A: PILOT STUDY RESULTS

Photographs were taken of many potential confederates who were dressed alike. These images were pilot tested for attractiveness and age. Confederates were selected on the basis of equivalence. Males and females in the final group of confederates were rated statistically equally attractive ($t(220)=.675$, $p > .05$). They were also not different on perceived age ($t(25)=-1.405$, $p > .05$).

Two different versions of the scripts were also pilot tested. The chosen script was seen as funnier and more readily identifiable as positive or negative than the other script. Additionally, participants rated the applicant as having a better sense of humor in the chosen script.

Interviewer:
What kinds of challenges motivate you the most?

Confederate:
Well...Challenges that motivate me the most are ones that like, make me step out of my comfort zone and push me to do better. I think that when a person gets too comfortable doing something, they get bored and then, ya know, their work will suffer. So, I try and look for challenges that I might feel uncomfortable doing at first but that will eventually, like, lead me to learn from them and be successful.

(No manipulation)

Interviewer:
How do you set goals for yourself and why is it important? Explain the steps that you take to set and achieve goals.

Confederate:
Well… (*pause*) I guess I would say- I would start by prioritizing what I need to get done. Uh next, I try and make deadlines that just keep me more productive and on top of things. I try to finish the most important tasks first and then move on to the tasks that are due later. Like, if a task is really complex, I just break it down into smaller projects and then set deadlines to complete them. This way, I can do it all without like getting overwhelmed or ya know, too stressed out.

(No manipulation)

Interviewer:
Tell me about a time when you experienced a failure at work. What was the task, how did you respond to the failure, and what did you learn?

Actor:
Ummm...(*pause*) ……well, at my last job, one time I was told to write up the monthly newsletter for the customers. I had never done that before and I was like really nervous about it. I worked on the newsletter for, like hours and finally turned it in to my boss. (*INSERT MANIPULATION HERE)* So, I took her criticism and revised the newsletter the way she wanted it. I learned that I, uh, should always ask questions so I fully understand what is expected from me.

Manipulations:
<u>*No humor*</u>*: She didn't like it. It's hard to always please your boss.*
<u>*Affiliative Humor*</u>*: To put it nicely, she didn't like it. I felt like I was a Padawan that had failed my Jedi Master.*

Aggressive Humor: To put it nicely, she didn't like it. But this is coming from a woman who doesn't even like puppies.

Interviewer:
Tell me about a time when you had to influence somebody to see things your way.   What was the situation, what did you do and what was the result?

Actor:
Oh, well, at my last job my supervisor put me in charge of reorganizing the filing cabinets for the whole office. So I let the employees know that as a group we had the option to complete the task little by little each day or just do it all at once even though it would take a long time. My boss needed it done as soon as possible so I was trying to get everyone to choose to do it all at once so that we could get it over with and, I mean we were even getting paid for our overtime work. *I* even offered to bring in donuts for everyone if we did it all at once. (*INSERT MANIPULATION HERE)* Even though it was hard to persuade everyone, we got the job done quicker than expected.

Manipulations:
<u>No humor</u>*: Everyone really appreciated the gesture and we all agreed to do it that day.*
<u>Affiliative Humor</u>*: Who would have thought donuts were the perfect driving force behind filing papers?*
<u>Aggressive Humor</u>*:* Some *people suddenly became much more motivated than others.*

Interviewer: Tell me about a challenge you experienced at work. What was the task, what did you do, and what was the result?

Actor:
Hm...Ok well when I worked at an office on campus a few of us were asked to make a PowerPoint presentation for the director. I was in charge of getting the material and making charts and graphs, and the rest of my co-workers had to put it all together into the power point presentation. I typed all the information and double checked everything before turning it into the second group in charge of putting it into power point. When we went to show the director the presentation the entire thing was filled with grammatical and spelling errors. Needless to say he wasn't very inspired by our presentation and our office was very unhappy with all of us. (*INSERT MANIPULATION HERE)*

Manipulations:
<u>No humor</u>*: I guess… I learned that working as a team means everyone is responsible for any errors made, not just the person who made the error.*
<u>Affiliative Humor</u>*: I guess... I learned to always TRIPLE check my presentations.*
<u>Aggressive Humor</u>*: I guess… I learned that I should never assume my coworkers might actually know how to spell.*

APPENDIX C: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT SCHEDULE

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word.

Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment.

Use the following scale to record your answers.

1 – very slightly or not at all
2 – a little
3 – moderately
4 – quite a bit
5 – extremely

_____ interested
_____ distressed
_____ excited
_____ upset
_____ strong
_____ guilty
_____ scared
_____ hostile
_____ enthusiastic
_____ proud
_____ irritable
_____ alert
_____ ashamed
_____ inspired
_____ nervous
_____ determined
_____ attentive
_____ jittery
_____ active
_____ afraid

APPENDIX D: EVALUATIONS

<u>Professional Evaluation</u>

How good of a job did the candidate do in answering the interviewer's questions?

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Extremely								Extremely
good job								bad job

Would you invite this candidate to visit your company for a second interview?

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Definitely								Definitely not

Would you hire this person?

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Definitely								Definitely not

<u>Personal Evaluation</u>

Would you personally like this candidate?

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Definitely								Definitely not

Would you like to work with this candidate?

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Definitely								Definitely not

<u>Interpersonal Traits Ratings</u>

Extraverted	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Introverted
Likable	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Unlikable
Strong Interpersonally	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Weak Interpersonally

Persuasive	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Unconvincing
Confident	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Nervous
Funny	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Unfunny*

*Not part of scale

APPENDIX E: HUMOR STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE

Affiliative humor

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

Self-Enhancing humor

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

Aggressive Humor

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

Self-defeating humor

I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than
I should.
I will often get carried away in putting myself down if it makes my family or friends laugh.
I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults.
I don't often say funny things to put myself down.
I often go overboard in putting myself down when I am making jokes or trying to be funny.
When I am with friends or family, I often seem to be the one that other people make fun of or joke about.
If I am having problems or feeling unhappy, I often cover it up by joking around, so that even my closest friends don't know how I really feel.
Letting others laugh at me is my way of keeping my friends and family in good spirits.

APPENDIX F: DEMOGRAPHICS ASSESSMENT

Please complete the following questions. Any information you provide is voluntary and will be kept strictly confidential. A participant number will be assigned to your responses and in no way will your name be associated with the data. The information you provide will be used only for the purposes of this study. Please answer all questions honestly.

What is your age in years? _____

What is your gender?

_____Male

_____Female

What is your ethnic background (mark all that apply)?

_____Caucasian

_____Black or African American

_____Alaska Native or American Indian

_____Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Ancestry

_____Asian (e.g., Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese)

_____Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

_____Other (Please specify:_____)

What national culture or nationality do you most identify with (e.g., Chinese, American, Hispanic,

 German, Swedish, etc…)? _____

What is your year in school?

_____Freshman (0-30 credits)

_____Sophomore (31-60 credits)

_____Junior (61-90 credits)

_____Senior (91-120 credits)

_____Graduate student

What is your major? _____

Have you ever worked full-time?
_____Yes
_____No

Have you ever worked part-time?
_____Yes
_____No

What fields have you worked in?
_____Retail
_____Food Service
_____Clerical
_____Call Center
_____Management/Supervision
_____Customer Service
_____Other (please specify): _____

How many times have you interviewed somebody for employment or any other opportunity?

_____0
_____1-2
_____3-5
_____6 or more

APPENDIX G: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Notice of Expedited Initial Review and Approval

From : **UCF Institutional Review Board**

FWA00000351, Exp. 10/8/11, IRB00001138

To : **Laura C. Gallaher**

Date : **July 31, 2009**

IRB Number: **SBE-09-06328**

Study Title: **Training and Interview Performance**

Dear Researcher:

Your research protocol noted above was approved by **expedited** review by the UCF IRB Vice-chair on 7/30/2009. **The expiration date is 7/29/2010.** Your study was determined to be minimal risk for human subjects and Expeditable per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.110. The category for which this study qualifies as expeditable research is as follows:

6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

□ The IRB has approved a **consent procedure which requires participants to sign consent forms.** Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Subjects or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

All data, which may include signed consent form documents, must be retained in a locked file cabinet for a minimum of three years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained on a password-protected computer if electronic information is used. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

To continue this research beyond the expiration date, a Continuing Review Form must be submitted 2 – 4 weeks prior to the expiration date. Advise the IRB if you receive a subpoena for the release of this information, or if a breach of confidentiality occurs. Also report any unanticipated problems or serious adverse events (within 5 working days). Do not make changes to the protocol methodology or consent form before obtaining IRB approval. Changes can be submitted for IRB review using the Addendum/Modification Request Form. An Addendum/Modification Request Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at http://iris.research.ucf.edu .

Failure to provide a continuing review report could lead to study suspension, a loss of funding and/or publication possibilities, or reporting of noncompliance to sponsors or funding agencies. The IRB maintains the authority under 45 CFR 46.110(e) to observe or have a third party observe the consent process and the research.

On behalf of Tracy Dietz, Ph.D., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Janice Turchin on 07/31/2009 11:01:07 AM EDT

IRB Coordinator
University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901, 407-882-2012 or 407-882-2276

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