

Development and Validation of the Humour at Work Scale

Maren Louisa Rawlings
B Sc, M Ed, PDACPsych (University of Melbourne)
SDES (University of Oxford)

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

June 2011
Department of Psychology
Swinburne University of Technology

Abstract

Anecdotally, people maintain that one characteristic of a satisfactory workplace is associating with others who have a “good sense of humour”. The aim of the present study was to create a metric for the way people both use humour in the workplace and perceive the humour of those with whom they work. The question was whether work humour differs from general humour. From previous studies on humour in general and humour in work settings, items for a *Humour at Work* (HAW) scale were created and validated against scales measuring individual differences and work-place measures. Below are descriptions of the areas that were perused to develop the item bank.

Humour in the individual can be “playful” and either pleasant or unpleasant and “strategic” humour can be pleasant or unpleasant. Ancient Greek writers influenced the deliberations of Enlightenment philosophers and together their views form the justification for “Superiority Theory”, the use of humour to favourably compare the self with those who are either the butt of the humour or unable to understand the humorous reference. Concepts and real objects linked in some nonsense relationship were regarded by some writers during the Industrial Revolution as being more purely humorous in “Incongruity Theory”. For others, making people laugh gave power to the instigator of humour. Freud (e.g., 1905, trans. 1960) however, reserved humour for the “superego” to calm the “ego” as a parent calms a child, in a version of the “Relief Theory”.

In the work-place, workers are often required to fake pleasantries and to go along with humour from customers and functionaries. Strategies employed to respond to unwanted humour include “laughing along” and “resisting”, together with “jokemes” (culturally held implications about ascribed roles) and gossip (information exchange about someone not present). One way of teaching social poise is teasing. A continuum of humorous teasing ranges from bonding to nipping to biting, i.e., from pleasant to unpleasant. When the speaker and the referent are one and the same, self-denigrating humour occurs. Joking about one’s limitations may be a particular jokeme of self-deprecation that has socially adaptive functions.

There are many studies on humour originating from personality considerations. We may signal information about our personality type to others by our preferences for particular humour. Social boundaries, including ethnic and cultural boundaries are constructed and conveyed through the use of humour. In a similar manner, workplace conventions about rates of production and fairness are reinforced through the use of humour in work groups and meetings. Management may use humour to engender belongingness, culture and creativity.

Developing and validating a workplace humour scale.

Based on the above sources of applications of humour, Study 1 collected people’s responses to statements written from surveys in the following areas:

physiological (e.g., mood), emotional labour, discourse management, (e.g., irony), cooperative effort, teasing, nipping and biting, personality, ethnic differences, politeness, management and leadership. This 230 item pool was reduced to 150 items: 75 about the behaviour of the individual in the workplace and 75 about the behaviour of others. An international sample of 350 (mainly from Australia) responded to the online questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis revealed an optimum solution of 62 items comprised of 8 factors.

In Study 2, a snowball sample of Australian people in work ($N = 379$) responded to an online questionnaire, consisting of the HAW, Mood (PANAS - Watson & Clark, 1988), altruism (IPIP – Goldberg, 1999), impression management (EPQ-R lie scale - Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985, Paulus, 1984), Personality (M37- Rawlings, 2001, normed in Australia) and Humour Styles (HSQ – Martin et al., 2003), together with scales relevant to work behaviours, *Climate of Fear* (CF - Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003), *Job Satisfaction* (JS – Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979) and scales of the *Occupational Climate Measure* (OCM – Patterson et al., 2005). Confirmatory factor analysis of the scales of the HAW was carried out and reliabilities were calculated. All 8 scales (46 items), together with the other scales in Study 2, fell within the following range: Lowest $\alpha = .68$ HSQ-aggressive, Highest $\alpha = .92$ Job Satisfaction. The eight scales of the HAW did not form a satisfactory discriminatory model. Further confirmatory factor analysis of all 46 items

revealed two scales, “Pleasant Climate” (8 items) and “Unpleasant Climate” (5 items).

No meaningful significant correlations were found with this 13 item version of the HAW and any demographic measures, nor with personality factors. Significant positive correlations were found between the “Pleasant Climate” scale and the “Affiliative” and the “Self-enhancing” scales of the HSQ and there was a statistically, but not practically, significant positive relationship with “Self-defeating” humour. Similarly, between the “Unpleasant Climate” scale and the “Affiliative” and “Self-enhancing scales” there was a negative trend, and a positive practical trend with the “Aggressive” scale, both of which reached statistical significance ($p < .01$). The “Unpleasant Climate” scale was found to positively correlate with CF and negatively correlate with JS and seven scales (chosen for their relationship to productivity) of the OCM, all at the “practical” and statistically significant level. After confirmatory factor analysis of the relevant scales, Structural Equation Modelling revealed that the “Unpleasant Climate” scale of the HAW predicted 9% of the variance in the combined OCM “productivity” scales. With CF acting as a mediator, “Unpleasant Climate” predicted a combined 48% of the variation in Job Satisfaction.

It was concluded that people report their use of humour in the work situation differently from their use of humour in a general social context. In

addition they perceive the humour of others in the workplace to be relevant to their own level of anxiety, to their job satisfaction and to their perception of the productivity of their workplace. Because the HAW is about humour, it appears to be “off the record” and is not influenced by “impression management” or “mood”. The 13 item HAW was not meaningfully related to influences such as age, gender, or level of employment or even to measures of personality characteristics.

The short 13 item version of the HAW provides a validated instrument for use by human resources personnel. It could be used to indicate work environments which employees found were not conducive to “productivity” and job satisfaction because of the behaviours of their colleagues. The longer (46 item) version of the HAW could be used to investigate *how* humour is used in the work place; whether sharing or gossiping humour act as conduits of information, making people feel more empowered at work; or whether stirring or teasing occur as unofficial resistance when controversial managerial moves are made. This *type* of humour use needs to be investigated further, with appropriate organizational measures.

This is to certify that:

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award to the candidate of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome;

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome;

Where work is based on joint research or publications, the thesis discloses the relative contributions of the respective workers or authors.

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Maren Louisa Rawlings

June 2011

I, Maren Louisa Rawlings, declare that the research reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the principles for the ethical treatment of human participants as approved for this research by the University Human Research Ethics Committee.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Bruce Findlay, for unfailingly encouragement, constructive continuous feedback and supportive humour. In addition, I have really appreciated his attendance and support at conferences at which I presented in Australia and overseas. My admiration and gratitude goes to Dr. Denny Meyer, for her generous gift of personal time to teach the basics of Structural Equation Modelling to a mature age student. Many thanks are given to Dr. Roger Cook for his conscientious reading of the draft of this thesis and for his personal support as my second supervisor.

My spouse, Dr. David Rawlings has been my emotional and social backup in this project, cooking, shopping and generally keeping me cheerful. He has accompanied me, with a very generous spirit, to places that he has been several times before. My thanks go to him also for the use of the M37. To Andrew and Katherine Rawlings goes my gratitude for always maintaining that I could complete the thesis, for enthusiastic dinner conversations and for access to their friendship lists.

Finally I would like to thank the participants: friends, students, teachers, choristers, parents, members of the international humour research community, Australian workers and all others who were willing to give of their time to explore the concept of humour at work.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Overview of the Thesis

The studies to be reported were initiated in response to the comments of many acquaintances of the author that there was “not much humour” where they were working. In the author’s workplace, people were bemoaning the fact that there was no time for humour, that being humorous was not appreciated, and that there was too much “nasty stuff” going on, to risk being humorous. Possibly the negative views about humour were due to the restructuring then being undertaken in many workplaces in Australia where there had been a tradition of the “Eight Hour Day” (since 1856). In any case, the comments received suggested the usefulness of research focused specifically on workplace humour.

Meisiek and Yao (2005) commented that humour “at the workplace has not received much attention from organizational scholars” (p. 148). They remarked that it is assumed that humour is peripheral to profitability, efficiency, and job satisfaction. Where humour had been studied in the workplace, there appeared to be an emphasis on joke-telling or joking behaviour, rather than comments on the work-situation itself. Appraisal of literature on humour in organisations revealed the role of emotional labour, where smiling and light-hearted humour was used for impression management and black humour was used to manage debriefing situations (Boyle, 2005). Humour at work appears to

operate under constraints that are not present in general social situations, so the use of existing measures of humour seems to be inadequate for the work context.

It seemed reasonable to study how people created humour in a range of situations, to make up statements about this humorous behaviour and then to ask a sample whether such behaviours occurred in the work situation. The initial stage of the research involved a survey of many fields which examined humour, laughter and play. Studies in linguistics suggested that humour could be created in different forms for different contexts. For example laughter may be an evolutionary “fixed action pattern” to an unexpected outcome in a non-threatening context. The behaviour generalizes to “non-serious social incongruity” (Gervais & Wilson, 2005, p. 399) for adults. Such incongruous stimuli are identified as humorous, because they evoke laughter. These stimuli, because of their transient nature may not be readily identified as jokes because they lack portability outside the immediate situation. Such refreshing instances of humour, however, allow people to bond and identify common areas of interest and knowledge. The way in which the humorous stimulus is expressed, through extreme case formulations for example, is analysed in linguistics (Attardo, 2001; Norrick 2004b).

As groups form, social psychology suggested, they produced their own styles of social interaction or “communities of practice” (Wenger, McDermott

& Snyder, 2002). A distinctive part of the culture of a community of practice is the way in which humour is expressed. Over time the type of comic discourse in the group comes to characterize the group to its members. “Sarcastic remarks, gaffes, pranks or jokes are capable of being referred back to by group members..... and can provoke fond or upsetting reflection, even after group activities have terminated” (Fine & De Soucey, 2005, p.2). These references can form a set of related ideas that persist because they have humorous meaning either in a group or within a culture.

Individuals are assumed to be aware of social roles that are appropriate to each social situation. If some serious import of the humour is suspected, then the speaker can justify the comic offering as part of good fellowship. Cognitive psychology implies that the “joking self” is distinct from the “real self” and remarks made “only in fun” can be dismissed (Fine & De Soucey, 2005, p 3). Humorous behaviour appears to be playful interaction and is distinguished from more serious or goal directed behaviour. The playful function of humour provides a change or break from the goal-centred behaviour that characterises work (Apter, 1991). “Getting” humour involves switching attention to the humorous, and cognitively accommodating the humorous message, a process that increases arousal (Murgatroyd, 1991). Whether an individual associates humorous behaviour with changes in application, or in efficiency or satisfaction with the job in the workplace is one focus of the present research.

The history of humour is deliberately truncated in this thesis to a consideration of ancient Greek culture because of its influence on Western thought; and then to philosophers and other writers from the Age of Enlightenment to the present, because in that period, workers began to exchange their labour for wages independently of traditional guild or inherited ties. As set out in Chapter 2, the writings of Greek philosophers and their theories of humour and subsequent development are examined. “Superiority Theory” (Hobbes, 1651/1914) maintained that the creator of humour was demonstrating superior skills usually by the use of a “butt” whose weaknesses formed the laughable. During the Industrial Revolution (1760-1850), creating humour for others was believed to cause a restructure of audience perception in a move from serious discourse to some ludicrous concept in “Incongruity Theory” (Schopenhauer, 1819 cited in Lewis, 2005). At the beginning of the last century, when a threatening object or situation could be rendered laughable, its emotional salience was thought to diminish in “Relief Theory” (Freud, trans. 1960). These theories are still current.

Research based on the theories above has yielded a number of scales for the measurement of humorous behaviour or styles in general situations. These instruments were generated with particular constraints in mind, such as “agency” and “communion” (Wiggins, 1991, subsequently used by Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003). Chapters 3 to 7 involve accounts of previous theories of humour and humour research. These appraisals were used

to generate items for a new, empirically based measure of humour at work. A particular emphasis was placed on transcripts of people actually involved in humorous conversations, so that phrases or situations that represented humorous remarks, pranks or throw-away lines could be utilized. The items created in this way were then tested to select and refine a number of scales of different types of work humour.

The first study is described in Chapter 8. Two hundred and thirty statements were written from surveys in the following areas (as in chapters 3 to 7): physiological (e.g., mood); emotional labour; discourse management, (e.g., irony); cooperative effort; teasing, “nipping” and “biting”; personality; ethnic differences; politeness; management and leadership. About consultation and discussion about overlap, similarity and duplication, this item pool was reduced to 150 items: 75 about the behaviour of the individual in the workplace and 75 about the behaviour of others. An international sample of over 300 (mainly from Australia) responded to an on-line questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis revealed an optimum solution was 8 factors for 62 items. Factor analysis of the factors revealed two superfactors named “Pleasant Climate” and “Unpleasant Climate”. The scale was named the *Humour at Work* (HAW) scale.

In Chapter 9, the second study validating the HAW scale is described. A snowball sample of Australian people in work ($N = 379$) responded to an on-line questionnaire, consisting of the HAW, Mood (PA/NA – Watson, Clark &

Tellegen, 1988), altruism (Goldberg, 1999), impression management (EPQ-R lie scale - Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985; Paulus, 1984), Personality (M37- Rawlings, 2001, Boldero, Rawlings & Haslam, 2007, normed in Australia) and Humour Styles (HSQ – Martin et al., 2003), together with scales relevant to work behaviours: *Climate of Fear* (CF - Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003), *Job Satisfaction* (JS – Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979) and scales of the *Occupational Climate Measure* (OCM – Patterson, West, Shackelton, Dawson, Lawthom, Maitlis, et al., 2005).

Confirmatory factor analysis of the separate scales of the HAW was carried out (reducing the long form of the HAW to 46 items) and reliabilities of all scales involved in the subsequent analysis were calculated. Confirmatory factor analysis of all 46 HAW items together revealed two scales, “Pleasant Climate” (13 items) and “Unpleasant Climate” (5 items). After confirmatory factor analysis of the relevant scales, Structural Equation Modelling using Multiple Indicators Multiple Causes (MIMIC – Munck, 1979; Buehn & Schneider, 2008) tested these two short scales against the validating scales. Possible practical uses of the scale within the workplace environment to indirectly gauge the influence of humorous behaviours of the work group on individuals’ perceptions of job satisfaction and productivity are suggested. A summary of the research and suggestions for further study are given in Chapter 10, together with some indications of applications for the scales developed.

Chapter 2

How they thought humour should be done

2.0 Overview

Three groups of theories about humour, involving the ideas of superiority, incongruity and relief are generally acknowledged in current literature. The ancient Greeks were wary of superiority, and considered that humour was a method of enhancing hubris. The Age of Enlightenment was much influenced by Greek thought, but philosophers also considered a form of humour that they decided was without guile, that is, nonsense. The Victorian Era was characterized by considerations of power developed in work organizations and relief from the constraints brought about by these industrial changes. Chapter Two discusses how these three groups of humour arose.

2.1 Introduction

“Work is typically viewed as ‘serious business’ and it seems to be the very antithesis of play” (Martin, 2007, p. 360). In current Western cultures, work is considered to provide a purpose to life and for most individuals, work is unavoidable. If an individual is to be happy then a reasonable amount of satisfaction should be part of the work experience. Work should be productive, otherwise it is pointless. Non-serious or humorous conversation or activities in the work environment might be considered as the theft of time and application, or they might enhance the personal job satisfaction of individuals in this

important facet of their daily lives. The level of satisfaction with the job may have an effect on productivity.

There is apparently a fair degree of ambivalence about the relationship between humour and work. Managers and employees are believed to value a sense of humour in each other (Avolio, Howell & Sosik, 1999; Decker, 1987) and this belief has given rise to “humour consultants”, who are hired to give workshops to managers and employees on how to be more humorous at work (Westwood, 2004). Work appears to be lubricated by the use of humour, although usually it is considered irrelevant to the product, but not to productivity, the increase in quality or quantity of product. Our beliefs about civilized behaviour, especially in the workplace, stem from contributions from ancient Greek traditions. This chapter considers comments that were made about humour in Ancient Greece, Restoration England and in various Western philosophical theories, with a view to discerning the purposes of humour and their relationships to current perceptions of work.

2.2 Playful and strategic laughter

Biologists claim an evolutionary origin for laughter. It is considered that humour is one stimulus for playful laughter that is spontaneous, a fixed action pattern or a complex set of reward responses for recognizing “non-serious social incongruity” (Gervais & Wilson, 2005, p. 399). There is also a strategic “dark side” (Panksepp, 2000, p.185) of humour where the laughter is not reflexive, but

is calculated as a form of social control. Instigators of such laughter can empathically judge the likely emotional outcome of a stimulus and couch their responses as humour to influence others.

The first recorded example of humor being used to improve the atmosphere of a work-place can be found in Homer's *Iliad*, written about 800 years Before the Common Era (BCE). Hêphaistos, to forestall a domestic argument between his parents, offered a jest against himself "Just as the sun dropped down I dropped down too, on Lemnos - nearly dead" (Homer, trans. 1974, p.31) as a warning to Hêra, not to argue with Zeus who could enact unpleasant retributions. Then, the lame Hêphaistos lampooned cup-bearing, serving the "blissful" gods and receiving their "quenchless" laughter. Hêphaistos was clearly a successful work-place clown because that night Hêra and Zeus bedded together.

This kind of playful humour which occurs in the moment and has not been previously thought through, Halliwell (1991) contended, was at one pole of an essential contrast in Greek understanding. At the other pole was humour that he labeled "consequential" (p.280), used for practical, strategic purposes against a target. A case can be made, however, for the use of playful humour to be either pleasant or unpleasant, depending on one's point of view and the circumstances. Hêphaistos, being lame, was a laughable god; he failed to fit the picture of perfection, so his miming the role of cup-bearer was a social incongruity to the

beautiful gods (Hêphaistos could “take a joke” or was being a “good sport”). But in highlighting his deformity, arguably, the beautiful gods were being unpleasant to him. Strategic or consequential humour can be pleasant or unpleasant as well. Hêphaistos’ tale, told to his mother Hera, was a strategic warning. He made her smile, it was a pleasant jest, but as he intended, she also got the hint and ceased quarrelling with her spouse, Zeus.

Strategic or consequential humour was part of the arsenal of Thersîtês, “thinking himself amusing to the troops” (Homer, trans. 1974, p.42). His invective was directed at Agamemnon, contrasting the king’s prizes from the battles with the misery of the soldiers, asking them in a supercilious tone, to desert the king and to return home. Perhaps the first recorded use of humour on the shop-floor, this strategic appeal was deemed inappropriate by the Achaeans. No soldier laughed and he was rebuked and beaten by Odysseus “You spell-binder! You sack of wind! Be still!” (p.43). The troops “for all their irritation, fell to laughing at the man’s disarray” (p.44) their strategy being to signal solidarity with Odysseus and Agamemnon. Thus attempts at work humour may not always be successful, though an amusing butt may contribute to group cohesion.

Strategic humour was used when Conon and his sons engaged in a long feud with Ariston. Their behaviour disrupted the peace in a garrison in north-west Attica. Finally Ariston brought a charge of physical assault, but in his

speech *Against Conon*, Demosthenes (about 340 BCE) claimed that a graver charge of gratuitous offensiveness could have been brought. The foul insults and crowing like a cock, enacted by Conon and his sons, with mocking dances of triumph, signalled a strategic victory. The other side of the case (to be pleaded by Conon but anticipated by Ariston) was that the young men were engaging in playful humour, connected with ritualized sexual innuendos, that characterized excesses of late adolescence (Halliwell, 1991); that is, they did it spontaneously and without any intention to harm Ariston (another example of the amusing butt contributing to group cohesion).

Socrates (469 BCE) believed that we delight in laughing at those who have inflated views of themselves, those who, for example, consider themselves wiser, richer or better looking than they really are. Humour, for Socrates, was entirely strategic and so laughing at false conceits was in effect laughing at the evil of ignorance. Mockery could be used to illuminate and teach. Pleasure was accompanied by pain in most circumstances. Exceptions could be found perhaps in the appreciation of simple geometrical forms, pure colours or notes of sound, certain smells and in some instances, the acquisition of knowledge (Plato, trans. 1982, 51-52). Socrates' banter separates the concept of pleasure from the concept of the good (53). For example, women exercising naked in the manner of men would be ridiculous, "clever jokes .. are bound to be made aboutthe education of women" (Plato, trans. 1974, 5.452), i.e., it would provide pleasure, but Socrates concluded that the *excellence* of the best women (who could be

Guardians in his philosophy), stripped and exercising, would be “all the clothes they need” (5.457).

The Guardians of the state should be discouraged from laughing and even Homer was called into question by Socrates, who maintained that reputable characters would not be overcome by laughter so the blissful laughing gods were misrepresented. As managers, however, the Guardians might use humour, strategically, to teach the young to discriminate overwrought emotion from modest feeling (Plato, trans.1974, 3.388-9). Socrates was portrayed as a comic figure himself in a play “The Clouds” by Aristophanes. Socrates attended the performance “to look down on the theatre goers” (Billig, 2005, p. 42), demonstrating that he could rise above the jibes of low comedy as a model of the philosopher and could “take a joke” (Halliwell, 1991, p.287).

Aristotle (350 BCE), remarked that wit was a form of “educated/cultured hubris” (Halliwell, 1991, p.284). He allowed for some playful humour, when he recognized that making others laugh was an aspect of entertaining conversation, part of life’s relaxation (Lippitt, 2005). “Those who joke in a tasteful way are called ready-witted....for such sallies are thought to be movements of the character...” (Aristotle, trans. 1969, IV, 8). Aristotle contended that the ludicrous or ridiculous was to be found in defects that were neither painful nor destructive, “some error or ugliness that is painless and has no harmful effects” (Aristotle, trans. 1968, V, 4) and that comedy was an imitation of “baser men”.

Those who carried humour to excess were vulgar buffoons who did not attempt to avoid giving pain to the object of their fun.

Having the ability to amuse others tactfully was a sign of having a desirable character, “the kind (of jokes) he can put up with are also the kind he seems to make” (Aristotle, trans. 1969, IV, 8). Thus, being able to take a joke was identified as a positive characteristic and the advantage of tactfully making others laugh was appreciated not only as an attribute but as a virtue (Lippitt, 2005). The boorish and unpolished were those who could not make a joke or would not put up with the humour of others. It should be noted that Aristotle described a general use of humour, rather than humour at work. There was no work, as such, for the citizen, a “good and well-bred man” (Aristotle, trans. 1969, IV, 8). The artisan or labourer was unable to fully achieve “the goodness of a citizen”, unless relieved of all “menial tasks” (Aristotle, trans. 1962, III, 5). It was possible for a citizen, judged by the merits of birth, wealth, virtue and power to be regarded as “a god among men” (Aristotle, trans. 1962, III, 13). Any excess above the general level enjoyed by citizens was condemned. “Lop off the tops¹”, said Aristotle and recommended “ostracism in democratically organized cities” (trans. 1962, III, 13). Being able to joke in a self-deprecating fashion was probably a survival tactic for good citizens.

¹ While walking in a field Periander lopped off the tallest stalks to reduce all to the same level, demonstrating to Thrasybulus, who received the message, that he should remove outstanding men (Aristotle, trans. 1962, p.133).

There were three classes of working women in Athens: the married “gynaekes” who bore children and guarded the households; “pallakae”, slaves, who attended to the bodily needs (including sex) of the citizen ; and for pleasure, “hetaerae”², who had some education and were independent, largely foreign, tax paying courtesans (or “working girls” who were expected to entertain). None of these qualified for the same level of virtue as the “citizen” for Aristotle (trans. 1962). In *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes, the women plotted to end the Peloponnesian war by removing their services or “striking” from their married roles and “scabs” among these women sneaked home from the Acropolis in secret (Pomeroy, 1975). Light relief was provided by this buffoonery during the very real war.

2.3 Virtuous or vicious wit – Superiority theory

The Classical Greek ideas of breeding and refinement were avidly taken up by the courts of Europe during the Enlightenment. The person who “waiting for his moment,...with apparent innocence he suddenly makes his crack” (Kant, 1978, p.168) was identified as a wit, having a talent for making others laugh. Kant even quoted the Duke of Rochester, “Here lies King Charles II who said many wise things in his life, but never did anything wise”, a jest spoken directly to the king (p. 93). Surprise, if it was not too intense, often resulted in laughter, as Descartes suggested. He saw joys mixed with hate or shock as causes of humour (Keith-Spiegel, 1972). The salient characteristic of the witty *bon-mot*

² Demosthenes’ Speech *Appollodorus against Neaera* 59.122 <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Dem.+59+122>, accessed 10th December 2009.

was ambiguity. Mistress of Charles II, Nell Gwyn made the life of her French rival, Louise de K roualle, a misery with her ready wit. This “working girl” surprised the London mob with her frank confession “Pray, good people, be civil, I am the *Protestant* whore” (Herman, 2004, p.180), so that they desisted from turning over her carriage. This was an obviously successful example of strategic humour, because the mob hated Charles’ Catholic mistress.

The 17th century, in which the “put-down” flourished, was one of political and social instability, resulting from the plague and the great fire of London. These tensions of uncertainty (where the king’s favorites could change at a whim or the court could withdraw to Oxford as in 1665), encouraged an atmosphere of permitted subversion, strategic games of humour that were less harmful than outright attacks. In this atmosphere Thomas Hobbes proposed that wit was the display of personal superiority (Keith-Spiegel, 1972). We achieve “sudden glory” by observing infirmities of others and comparing them with our own “eminence” (Hobbes, 1615/1914, p. 27). Humour was a defect, however, revealing weakness because those who used wit were “forced to keep themselves in their own favour, by observing the imperfections of other men” (p.27).

Hobbes, like Socrates, had to rise above the mockers. “Here comes the bear to be baited” (Davies, 2009, p.51) was the greeting of Charles the Second to Hobbes, who, as his former tutor, enjoyed free access to the King. Hobbes

believed there was a fundamental conflict between individual passions and social order. He noted that people could invent humour in inappropriate settings, “...where Wit is wanting, it is not Fancy that is wanting but Discretion” (Hobbes, 1615/ 1914, p. 34). It is likely that the atmosphere of his work-place (like that of Socrates) influenced his appreciation of the role of humour. Davies contended that Hobbes’ theory of humour was a “description of a particular circumstance.... Urbane indifference to being laughed at would rob the game of much of its point and excitement...” (Davies, 2009, p. 51).

The political situation became more stable in England with the Glorious Revolution (1688), in which Protestant reform won ascendancy. Social contracts (for those who had education and standing) could be negotiated and one’s lot in life was not inevitable. World trade increased national wealth. Locke (1632-1704) introduced the idea of *tabula rasa*, the mind being blank at birth. Locke distinguished between judgment, in which two similar ideas are discerned as different by careful contemplation; and wit, in which two different ideas were seen to be similar with “quickness and variety... for agreeable visions in the fancy” (Locke, 1952, p. 144). People became weary of “put down” witticisms by the end of the seventeenth century, because people should not be laughed at for peculiarities for which they are not responsible. Instead the “imperfect world and human nature” should provide content for benign humour (Ruch, 1998, p.8). It became fashionable to have sensibility or refined sensitiveness in matters of taste. In the congress of the coffee house, discussions arose about the limits

of wit. Scottish philosophers Beattie and Campbell presented early drafts of essays on laughter, wit and humour to the Wise Club (Billig, 2005).

Addison, in the *Spectator*, a broadsheet for coffee houses, suggested that a stupid butt was not fit for the conversations of the witty. What was required was a butt who would provide “play”, who could match the raillery – *Ride si sapiis*, i.e., Laugh if you are wise (Billig, 2005, p. 69). Ideas were more powerful than words, so puns were examples of false wit. True wit resembled poetic metaphor. There was a social function in raillery, which was witty ridicule, but banter was the coarse ridicule of lower classes. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury (1711) regarded ridicule as a tool to test ideas in areas such as religion, extravagance or folly, echoing Socrates (Plato, trans. 1974). In the educated classes, moral and aesthetic senses responded to harmonic form and proportion and those senses should be repelled by incongruity. Thus ridicule should only be applied to incongruous behaviour or objects. So ridicule, strategically, could be used to maintain acceptable (not incongruous) standards of social behaviour among equals (Billig, 2005).

2.4 Incongruous humour

During the 18th century, benevolent forms of laughter were termed “amiable humour” (Billig, 2005, p. 61) and those who elicited only this form of playful laughter were seen to not only to be creative, but also to take a joke against themselves. Incongruous humour developed as a result. Laughter was

“an affect arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing” (Kant, trans. 2007, p. 161). A person who had a “topsy-turvy view of things” involuntarily could be said to have “humours”, but “if a person can assume them voluntarily....(on behalf of a lively presentation drawn from ludicrous contrast) he and his way of speaking are termed humorous” (p. 164). Thus a good temperament was inferred from a good sense of humour.

Early in the 19th century, Schopenhauer (1819) maintained that laughter resulted from “the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real object which have been thought through in some relation” (cited in Lewis, 2005, p. 36). His example, “our own bitter laughter when the terrible truth by which firmly cherished expectations are shown to be delusive reveals itself to us” (Lewis, 2005, p. 37-38) implied that there is intent of emotional expression in laughter. Incongruity may be perceived as either pleasant or unpleasant, so that the “faculty of reason, (is) for once convicted of inadequacy” (Lewis, 2005, p. 42). Laughter comes as a relief.

The humorous mood was self-conscious and reflexive and this was the source of comedy. “We suddenly recognize the incongruity of an intuitively perceptual representation and an abstract representation” (Lewis, 2005, p. 43). The tangent to a circle was a source of incongruity that made Schopenhauer smile (alluding, perhaps to Socrates and the pleasure of the simple geometric form; see above). Schopenhauer also found incongruous an epitaph of the child

of a freed African slave that compared him to a lily (Billig, 2005). Today, as Billing remarks, we find the latter idea shallow and indiscreet.

2.5 Power from humour

Apart from relief, the emotion resulting from power over people was also related to laughter, because humour provides a context in which to compare ourselves with others (similar to Hobbes' superiority theory, acknowledged by Bain, 1859). "...in everything where a man can achieve a stroke of superiority, in surpassing or discomforting a rival, is the disposition of laughter apparent" (Bain, 1859, p. 153). The pleasant realization of power was not fully experienced unless the powerful felt some empathy with the less powerful. "The man that has been in a high position all his life, feels his greatness only as he enters into the state of those beneath him; if he does not choose to take this trouble, he will have little conscious elation from his own pre-eminence" (Bain, 1875, p. 257). The boss must be able to imagine the state of the worker, to fully enjoy his superior station.

The act of making others laugh was also an act of power. Bain compared this feeling of power with the feeling of luxuriating in "wide control" of "Large Operations", such as "the employer of numerous operatives, all working for his behoof" (Bain, 1875, p. 258). Laughter could result from either making a shock or as relief from constraint. If dignified and constraining solemn states were degraded (shockingly), relief resulted in laughter, "...the actor's comparison of

his own power with the prostration of the sufferer occasions the burst of the joyous elation” (Bain, 1875, p. 258). Laughter could represent rebellion against an imposed order and could provide a moment of personal anarchy against oppression.

Life and its adversities provided material for comedy and tragedy to reveal truths about human existence. Ours was the worst of all possible worlds, according to Schopenhauer, but we could bear the unbearable because we could laugh at it (Lewis, 2005). The educated classes had moved from bullying each other to cheerful cleverness. Darwin (1809-1882) acknowledged both incongruity and superiority in his definition of adult subjects for laughter. He felt that laughter was the most prevalent of emotional expressions and quoted Homer describing the laughter of the gods as “the exuberance of their celestial joy after their daily banquet” (Darwin, 1998, p.195).

Darwin defined laughter as the “expression of mere joy or happiness” (1998, p. 195), but acknowledged that laughter could be used to conceal other states of mind, even anger. Darwin reported that Bulmer, missionary to Australian aborigines (Koories) in Victoria, observed “they have a keen sense of the ridiculous; they are excellent mimics, and when one of them is able to imitate the peculiarities of some absent member of the tribe, it is very common to hear all the camp convulsed with laughter” (Darwin, 1998, p. 207-208). Also, he reported a correspondent’s observations of German soldiers in the siege of

Paris (1870). Their behaviours supported Darwin's idea that excess nervous energy was expended in nervous laughter. This idea of laughter providing relief had previously been suggested by Herbert Spencer and by Alexander Bain and they were quoted by Darwin in his introduction.

2.6 Relief in laughter and Psychoanalysis

The idea of relief in laughter at the unbearable was part of Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Freud also read Herbert Spencer's ideas (Freud, 1899, trans. 1965). Reacting to the comic represented, for Freud, a saving in psychic energy, owing to an economy of thought. Wit circumvented inhibition, allowing repressions suddenly to be released. Humour turned an event that would otherwise cause suffering into one of less personal significance, where the ego allowed the pleasure-principle to assert itself (Keith-Spiegel, 1972). Freud (1928) claimed that he "was able to show that pleasure proceeds from a saving in the expenditure of affect" (p. 1), that creating humour is a defence mechanism (Freud, 1905, trans. 1960). Humour provides a means of refusing suffering and "victoriously upholds the pleasure-principle without quitting the ground of mental sanity" (p.3).

Humour might be referenced either to the self or other people (Freud, 1928). When Socrates, having been found guilty of heresy and corrupting the minds of the young, was asked to propose a suitable punishment, he suggested that for such a person as himself, it would be free maintenance at the state's

expense (Plato, trans. 1959, 37). Instead of feeling the anguish (expenditure of affect) accompanying an impassioned plea against obvious injustice, witnesses to Socrates' plight were spared by his playful rebellion. In Freudian terms, "the hearer must have copied the process in the mind of the humorist" (Freud, 1928, p. 2). Socrates made light of his fate and this saving of unpleasant feelings provided relief.

Freud postulated a kind of superiority theory in humour use within the individual, between two of the three structures of the unconscious, "one is adopting toward the other the attitude of an adult towards a child" (Freud, 1928, p. 3). In the role of adult, the superego was prominent. The superego repudiated reality and provided the ego with an illusion. "This is all this seemingly dangerous world amounts to. Child's play – the very thing to jest about" (p. 5) and this statement echoed Schopenhauer. Freud acknowledged that Schopenhauer's philosophy had anticipated psychoanalytic theory (Billig, 2005). "Joke-work", the creation of jokes, involved id processes, like condensation or displacement (Freud, 1905, trans. 1960), creating incongruous associations. Socrates, found guilty of a capital crime, could ask for a pension, for example.

We can appreciate a comic object or person while alone, but there is a natural variation among people in their abilities to create jokes that are appreciated by others, that is, those who have wit. Freud believed that joke-

work was independent of other faculties like intelligence, imagination or memory, but was the result of “special inherited dispositions or psychical determinants” (Freud, 1905, trans. 1960, p. 172). Jestings was a play on one’s own words, but was only a joke (a completed product) if another person judged the joke-work as succeeding. “Innocent jokes” (or playful humorous attempts) had no particular aim and provided pleasure to the instinct (exhibiting cleverness). “Tendentious jokes” were the result of other more basic instincts (aggressive and sexual) and were directed (or strategic).

For Freud (1905/1995), the personal instincts of sex and aggression afforded the most personal pleasure but were antisocial, and needed to be constrained from an early age, so that cooperation and moral sense could be engendered, “in order to suppress this unpleasure effectively, build up the mental dams....shame, disgust and morality” (p. 262). The instinctual energy, being repressed, must be diverted to other socially acceptable activities. This process of displacement was never completely successful, and residual energy (in adults) welled up in dreams, slips of the tongue and in humour.

Although both innocent and tendentious jokes used similar techniques, it was the thought behind them that categorized the intention. “Have you taken a bath?” “.....is there one missing?” (Freud, 1905, trans. 1960, p. 55) did not count as tendentious because for Freud, its clever joke-work as a play on words, captured attention. Although the set-up of the bath joke was between two Jews,

Freud assumed that the meaning of a joke was contained within the joke itself. In fact it could be applied to any “out-group” as Davies (1982) expounded. Tendentious jokes gave pleasure by lifting inhibitions provided by “reason, critical judgment, suppression” (Freud, 1905, trans. 1960, p. 169). Innocent jokes were merely play, but both were successful in releasing “fore-pleasure” (p. 168). Freud wanted to illustrate his theory of jokes with only those jokes that made him laugh. “A wife is like an umbrella. Sooner or later one takes a cab” (Freud, 1905, trans. 1960, p. 132) was explained in detail, only because it came from a joke-book from an artists’ carnival in Vienna. Strikingly, that was the most tendentious sexual joke that he analyzed (Billig, 2005).

In order to achieve adulthood, the individual had to forgo the unconscious process of *Pleasure Principle* (immediate satisfaction) and to adopt the conscious process of the *Reality Principle* (delayed satisfaction). “Under the reality principle, the human being develops the function of *reason*” (Marcuse, 1969, p. 31), learning to distinguish between good and bad, true and false, useful and harmful. Phantasy, however, was protected and stayed committed to the pleasure principle. “The creation of the mental domain of phantasy has a complete counterpart in the establishment of ‘reservations’ and ‘nature-parks’ in places where the inroads of agriculture, traffic, or industry threaten to change the original face of the earth...” (Freud, 1920, trans. 1952, p. 381).

2.7 “Modern times”³

The period in which Freud was formulating his theories was one in which support for women’s suffrage and general condemnation of child-labour were emerging. The wealth provided by the Industrial Revolution had enclosed (middle-class) women in the home and carefree childhood had been elevated to an ideal that is still current. Taylorism (Taylor, 1911/1947), the scientific management of labour, time and motion studies, discussed in the next chapter, was proposed only six years after *Jokes and their relation to the Unconscious* was first published. Work was the world of men engaged in increasing productivity by eliminating wasteful motions and practices. Women were as peripheral to this (American) theorizing as they were peripheral to Freud’s (European) emphasis on tendentious humour. Women gained prominence as workers as a result of the World Wars.

In the creation and performance of humour at work, the workers expressed repressed ideas (e.g., “tall poppies”, self-deprecation, “outgroup”, for example). People, however, were “evaluated on (their) ability to make, augment and improve socially useful things.....the progressive replacement of an uncontrolled natural environment by a controlled technological environment” (Marcuse, 1969, p. 129). In finding humour in the workplace, people were reacting to the imposition of the reality principle in the need for productivity. “...material production ...can never be a realm of freedom and gratification; but

³ 1936 film directed and written by Charlie Chaplin. The “Little Tramp” struggled to survive automated industrial processes in the Great Depression.
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Times_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Times_(film)) accessed 15th April 2010

it can release time and energy for the free play of human faculties *outside* the realm of alienated labor” (Marcuse, 1969, p. 129). Marcuse’s hypothesis was that truly “free play” (including pleasant humour) was divorced from the “reality” of work and production.

2.8 Summary

Humour involves a playful response to non-threatening social incongruity, according to evolutionary theory. It can be adopted strategically, however, as a social signal, to influence others. The historical overview presented in this chapter suggested that in a social situation, people can be “pleasant” or “unpleasant” when using humour, but this value dimension is relative to the “taste” of the particular period in which the humour occurs. In intention, humour may be playful (e.g., adolescent sexual bravado) or may be strategic (e.g., designed to publicly humiliate a foe). Three broad theoretical approaches to humour sought to explain its nature and to differentiate humour from other forms of communication. Superiority theory maintained that the person creates humour, either as a form of self-enhancement, or in making a joke against someone else (the butt). Incongruity theory maintained that it is the sudden surprise of the joke that is the motivation of the humour, the intended nonsense. Those who are able to create humour and make others laugh exercise a form of power (either suppression or rebellion) by persuading others to laugh. In psychoanalytic theory, humour is created by the superego to assuage the ego (the conscious self) by providing relief from reality, in the way that an adult

plays with a child to reduce the significance of an intense experience. Chapter 3 examines observations of humour of the individual in the workplace during the twentieth century.

Chapter 3

I do humour my way, if they let me.

3.0 Overview

While in the company of friends or within the family, people exhibit many behaviours involving humour and these have been studied with questionnaires of humour in general. In the current research, however, it is contended that people will choose to use humour differently in different contexts. An overview of previous research on contextual characteristics that influence the style and frequency of humour is undertaken in chapters 3 to 7, with each chapter providing a source of items for the original factor analysis and these items are listed in the Appendices. Chapter 3 appraises research literature pertaining to the use of humour by the individual in relation to two themes. The first describes physiological and developmental considerations in the use of humour by the individual, and the second theme describes emotional labour, gender and class considerations. The chapter closes with an account of research on gender differences in humour use. For each of the two themes a number of survey items were created and these are listed in Appendices A and B as indicated in each section.

3.1 Early work

An early systematic study of humorous behaviour in individuals employed, with the use of diaries, Vassar College students (Kambouropoulou, 1926). The number of humorous incidents and their length was recorded and

these data were analyzed against academic and psychological measures but no significant relationships were found. The female students laughed where there was no obvious objective cause, laughed at physical causes including “slapstick”, laughed at the mental inferiority of others in general (stupidity, mistakes, ignorance, simplicity), at witty or teasing remarks directed at others and at incongruities in a situation or in ideas (interpretations echoing the three broad theoretical approaches to humour: superiority; incongruity and relief, described in Chapter 2). The curriculum of a tertiary institution in the USA in 1926 would have included classics (probably Homer) and philosophy (possibly Plato and Aristotle, Locke and Schopenhauer) as reviewed in Chapter 2, so the possibility of demand characteristics in the diaries of the participants cannot be excluded.

3.2 Physiological and developmental considerations

Wundt first coined the term “hedonic tone” (translation of “Gefühlston”, Baldwin, 1901). The concept covered the idea of a continuum of pleasure and pain. This idea of an optimal positive state was later acknowledged in the literature on motivation and persuasion. Janis (1971) discussed an “inverted U-shaped” phenomenon. The theory of *Locus of Control* (Rotter, 1954) suggested that people learn differently in situations where reward is perceived to be based on chance or random effects from when reward is perceived to be resulting from skilled performance or personal characteristics. When an individual is subjected to experiences where there is no perceived “control”, then expectation of not

having control will generalize. The locus of control will be external in their perception. When individuals can control the timing and type of reward, the locus of control is internalized. A similar model was adopted as a basis for a theory of coping behaviours (Lazarus, 1999). Non-optimal arousal from anticipated threats that were uncontrollable resulted in “emotion-focussed coping” rather than “problem-focussed coping” (p.77). If appraisals of the threat resulted in circumstances being controllable, then arousal was less overwhelming, that is, optimal.

The concept of not struggling for control when it is not possible, that is, resolutely becoming more external on the internal-external control dimension is, in some circumstances, attractive, according to Lefcourt (2001). He proposed that humour could be one possible avenue towards accepting uncontrollable events. His experience of his father’s funeral and his reading of Norman Cousins’s (1979) *Anatomy of an Illness* suggested to him that humour could play an important role in dealing with adverse uncontrollable circumstances. The application of humour could reduce personal perception of circumstances to a “non-serious social incongruity” (Gervais & Wilson, 2005, p. 399) of a playful type. In the workplace, there can be a number of circumstances that are adverse and not within the control of the individual. Humour could be applied to lighten perceptions, or to make the uncontrollable appear non-serious.

An evolutionary exposition proposed that humour replaced more primitive adrenaline responses to the sorts of stressors that the human species experienced. Sensory deprivation and sensory overload and uncertainty (leading to lack of prediction) are three major stressors. Humour enables the individual to gain some “semblance of control” against the “unpleasant inflow” of information (Dixon, 1980, p. 282). While acknowledging the necessary condition of the “normal inverted-U relationship between arousal and performance” (p. 286), Dixon went further to hypothesize that the cerebral processes contributing to the production or appreciation of humour increase the individual’s ability to deal with external stressors. Dixon’s analysis stood on the assertion that humour finds its power in reducing intense situations so that they are perceived as neither too novel nor too threatening. This notion of humour as a signal that reduces the import of the situation was echoed in the biological hypotheses of Gervais & Wilson (2005).

Dixon (1980) drew on the evidence of Pollio and Edgerly (1976). They used two styles of comedy: the “nice-guy” whose proponents use themselves and the past to invoke the empathy of the audience (suggesting self-deprecating humour, or “taking a joke”, approved by Aristotle, see chapter 2) and the “hostile” whose proponents used a present victim or situation to invoke tendentious humour (suggesting aggressive strategic humour, such as employed by Conan, see chapter 2). Pollio and Edgerly demonstrated, by using confederates, that group cohesion influences the laughter responsiveness of

individuals. More laughter was observed from participants viewing the “hostile” style of humour when with friends than in the presence of strangers. Participants who were viewing the “nice-guy” humour were not observed to suppress their humour responses as much between the situations of viewing with friends and viewing with strangers. The “nice-guy” humour in their study was filmed material of Bill Cosby⁴ and the “hostile” humour was filmed material of Don Rickles⁵. There may have been a confounding effect of racial differences in their source material.

The suggestion that the humour response is a cognitive alternative to the stress response rests on several considerations. First, it is a relatively harmless alternative to the maladaptive consequences of physiological stress and more appropriate to evolved stressors – that is, words are less harmful than actions. Second, it depends on the ability to analyze complex abstractions and detect multiple meanings from an incoming array of information – that is, it involves cognitive appraisal. Third, the physiological symptoms of humour resemble in attenuated form the symptoms of normal psychological stress, suggesting an evolutionary origin. This close relationship to the mechanisms of the stress response is supported by the dependence of jokes on “drive-related” topics (Dixon, 1980, p. 287) such as sex, aggression or death and the fact that it is successfully used to treat illness. Last, since it controls and manipulates

⁴ William Henry "Bill" Cosby, Jr. (born July 12, 1937) is an Afro-American comedian. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Cosby , accessed December 15, 2009.

⁵ Donald Jay "Don" Rickles (born May 8, 1926) is a white American comedian. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Rickles , accessed December 15, 2009.

information, humour may help reduce the anomalies of information flow. The instigator of humour reframes the context of the stressor for an audience

One explanation for sick humour, that relates to disasters (man-made or natural), may be that it is a form of emotion-focused coping (Hertzog & Karafa, 1998), allowing us to attack the victims, those we perceive to be responsible or to challenge the media which gives the socially acceptable view of the situation. In Australia, for example, the death by dingo attack of baby Azaria, in 1980, was the subject of many jokes⁶ which mostly blamed the dingo, in a variety of media. Hertzog and Bush (1994) factor analyzed preference ratings among a broad sample of sick jokes to identify four sick-joke categories: General humor, Death, Dead-Baby and Handicapped. The two death categories had the lowest mean preference ratings and the Handicapped category had the highest preference rating. When analyzed for joke properties, the most preferred jokes were those independently rated as lowest in vulgarity but highest in fit (between punch-line and preceding situation) and surprise. These findings supported the Dixon (1980) considerations above, in that it was the closer horror (fear of handicap rather than death) and the most cognitive (jokes that “fit” the set-up to the punch-line surprise) that were preferred.

More recently, Weisfeld (2006) suggested that humour appreciation is an adaptive aesthetic emotion. Humans have cultivated some of their positive behaviours as art forms, for example, gastronomy, love-making and joking.

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azaria_Chamberlain_disappearance

Other arts that also combined multiple emotional satisfactions, were design, conversation, drama and courtesy. Weisfeld believed that humour was informative because all forms of humour provided the recipient with edifying experiences or information that served to enhance future individual fitness. The clown fascinates children because the joke bag includes mimicry, mockery, squelches, ridicule and sarcasm, so clown models warn about how not to behave. Affectionate teasing is also instructive, holding a mirror to the individual. Sometimes the cleverness of a joke comes from seeing humour in a situation and drawing others' attention to it. We may see similarities between a previous humorous situation and a current one, referring back to an old joke (Fine & De Soucey, 2005). However something about the humour must be novel because we cannot learn anything new from an old joke.

Ruch, McGhee and Hehl (1990) believed that people's positive or negative reactions to humour were appreciations based on the net effect of both funniness and aversiveness. Their participants were respondents to a vocational guidance project offered by a well-known German consumer magazine. There were 3057 males and 1235 females aged between 14 and 54 years. Humour tests were included in the fourth and fifth questionnaire. Ten jokes or cartoons were used in each test from a pool of 10 incongruity-resolution items and 10 nonsense items. These were rated for funniness and aversiveness on two uni-polar 5-point scales. Ruch et al. (1990) explained personality correlates of preference for incongruity resolution over nonsense by those who have a general intolerance to ambiguity (as measured by a number of personality

dimensions). They maintained that age-related changes in preference for incongruity-resolution over nonsense humour were predicted by age-related changes in conservatism.

Instead of a predicted linear increase in incongruity-resolution funniness scores with age, Ruch, et al. (1990) found a curvilinear U-shaped relationship with age that resulted from higher scores amongst teenagers ($n = 691$) and groups in their forties ($n = 166$). They acknowledged that their research was cross-sectional and liable to reflect cohort effects but did not mention in their article the ferment in Germany which culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall in November, 1989. It can be speculated that this may have had an effect of increasing conservatism in the adolescents, faced with perceived educational and vocational competition, and it may also partially account for an increase in conservatism in those in their forties who would have had to re-establish relationships with people they had been separated from for over twenty years.

On the question of whether the elderly lose their sense of humour or have heard all the jokes before, Ruch, et al. (1990) could not shed much light. Their study had only 37 participants above 50 years of age. Preference for incongruity resolution humour may be related to the sophistication of thinking in the mature adult compared with the relative naïveté of the young. If humour functions to make humans more adaptive to the environment, then it should run a developmental course (though, hopefully, the humorless human does not represent optimal development!). Whereas play in other mammals is limited to

immaturity, in humans play persists into the mature years, probably because it contributes so powerfully to social learning (Weisfeld, 2006).

The above research studies on physiological and developmental considerations led to the creation of the items for the survey to be found in Appendix A. As previously mentioned, items for Study 1 were selected from this pool. The work situation has been identified as a factor that causes adults to hide emotions or to pretend to have emotions that they do not feel and this phenomenon is explored in the next section.

3.3 Emotional labour and gender class considerations

In chimpanzees, laughter was reported as occurring during tickling, wrestling and play attacks (Provine, 1996). These situations were exclusively to do with contact or threat of contact and the individual being chased laughed the most. As Provine observed, most adult laughter in humans occurs in the absence of contact. Provine and three undergraduate female assistants gathered 1200 instances of laughter occurring naturally in speech at social gatherings. They found less than 20% of the laughter occurred in response to positive attempts to make jokes. “Mutual playfulness, in-group feeling and positive emotional tone – not comedy – marked the social settings of most naturally occurring laughter” (Provine, 1996, p. 41). Laughter did not interrupt the speech stream, but instead punctuated it and Provine coined the term “punctuation effect” to describe this function of laughter in speech. In their North American sample, the average

speaker laughed about 46% more than the audience and the gender of the principles involved was crucial, with female speakers laughing 126% more than their male audience and male speakers laughing 7 % less than their female audience. Neither male nor female speakers laughed as much with their female audiences as they did with their male audiences. Provine asserted that these gender differences in behaviour were observable in children as young as six years of age.

Welsh primary school children in the United Kingdom, provided further evidence (Foot and Chapman, 1976). Girls laughed significantly more in the presence of a boy companion than with a girl companion. Generally, Western women may punctuate definitive statements with laughter to soften the message for audiences in which there are males and apparently they learn to do it when they are very small. Many differences between men and women with regard to humour appreciation were found in the literature by Duncan, Smeltzer and Leap (1990). They concluded that “jokes perceived to be disparaging one sex are not enjoyed by its members” (p. 261). Women preferred nonsense or absurd humour, whereas men preferred sexual humour (in which, of course, women are often objects or victims). Laughter itself is an *ambiguous* response to a perceived ambiguous situation (Chapman, 1976). People laughing are relieved, at least momentarily, of having to respond and can give themselves time for clarification.

All conversational acts including humorous ones, carry risk depending on the person to whom they are directed (Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 1998). In twenty-three studies conducted between 1970 and 1996, few gender differences were found between the appreciation of non-tendentious or neutral humour and hostile humour, although where there were significant differences, there appeared to be a greater preference in women and girls for neutral humour. Similarly, five adult studies reported no sex differences for nonsexist sexual humour. Lampert and Ervin-Tripp described a number of studies that demonstrated that men's humour was more likely to be competitive and focused on self-enhancement and women's humour was more likely to be supportive and concerned with the validation of personal experiences. They made the point that whether men or women shared funny stories or told jokes may depend on whether they were in a same-sex group or in a mixed group; whether the group was of close friends or acquaintances; and the group composition.

As part of a two-stage questionnaire, undergraduate psychology students were instructed to write about a single occasion on which they laughed a lot at a situation that was not sparked by a joke or other form of prepared humour (e.g., "when the sea touches our navel" was suggested by Potter, 1954, p. 24). Van Giffen and Maher (1995) then trained the participants to classify their anecdotes using 6 themes: "superiority, aggression, sex, stupidity, self-disparagement, ethnic/ prejudice and other" (p. 43) The authors found that the highest proportion of anecdotes from men and women contained themes that centered

on the stupidity of others (43%) or the superiority of the self (17%). Men's anecdotes were found to contain proportionately more male butts than women's (63.6% vs. 36.7%) and women's anecdotes had more female butts (50.0% vs. 21.2%).

When the stories were analyzed for their settings, it was found that the butts of the humorous anecdotes were almost always present when they were initially laughed at (85%). The presence or absence of the butt did not affect the funniness ratings of the stories. A follow up study with trained research assistants found low agreement on the themes selected by students, but strong agreement on the butt (77 %). Follow-up interviews with the original respondents emphasized that contextual relevance was necessary for the stories to be understood as humorous. The authors concluded that the themes focused on human awkwardness rather than on harm or exploitation. These findings reflected Aristotle's view that humour should be restricted to defects that were neither painful nor destructive (Aristotle, trans. 1968, V, 4). Lampert and Ervin-Tripp (1998) made the point that the findings could reflect the social contexts of the participants (college, single sex halls of residence, for instance). The students may also have studied the classics described in chapter 2.

Although Lefcourt (2001, see above) considered that humour may relieve stressful situations, he made no mention of gender differences. Abel (1998) demonstrated a moderating effect for humour between stress and anxiety

for men only. Her participants were 70 female and 61 male students participating for course credit by completing self-report scales. When humour was low, a positive relationship was found between stress and anxiety. There was no relationship when humour was high. When humour was low, stress was related to physical symptoms but no relationship was found when humour was high.

3.4 Are you happy in the job? Humour, deindividuation and rebellion.

Hochschild (2003) made the point that in the twenty years since she first identified “emotional labour” in workers such as airline cabin crews, nurses, bill-collectors and sales persons, more jobs were becoming available that were substitutes for family or relationship: labour, child-minding, event/party organization, aged care, de-cluttering households, arranging for and paying for utilities, maintenance and repairs of private homes. Further, Hochschild (2003) suggested that what was required of a person at work may be the style adopted by the parents in child-raising. She drew on the work of Bernstein (1974, p. 78-9) who distinguished between the positional control or “restricted code” (do it here and now as I tell you to; that is “*local* means and ends”) and the personal control or “elaborated code” (at this time, usually it is done in this way; that is “*general* means and ends”).

In the positional control system there were clear and formal rules based on formal attributes such as age, sex and parenthood. In the personal system

children were asked to consider feelings, both their own and those of their parents. The *personal* child must be persuaded to the right course of action and must come to perceive it as right personally, whereas the *positional* child was only expected to comply. It could be speculated that contractors in the new service jobs, described by Hochschild (2003) above, are expected to act with personal control, that is, they have to consider and anticipate the feelings and needs of their employers, who expect to treat them with positional control, that is just giving them instructions. Resistance to losing one's individual identity might be achieved through humour. Bernstein (1974) noted that one important aspect of individuated communication was "humour, wit or the joking relationship", but that an important effect of humour was to "reinforce the solidarity of the social relationship" (note 2, p. 93).

Tannen (1996) argued from Goffman's (1967) formulations, that in the work situation, men and women were recognized in discourse as different classes, rather than as individuals, and she called this "sex-class linked framing of talk at work." (p. 195). Ways of behaving with respect to gender, according to Tannen, had to do with display rather than with identity. She used two scripts of work exchanges to illustrate that men's discourse in the absence of women was characterized by vulgarity, play challenge, alternative displays of helping, expertise, of needing help or needing no help and bonding against women (that

is, “Men will be boys”⁷). Women’s discourse in the absence of men was characterized by lengthy complimenting, focus on clothing and shopping, balancing of display and gaze and of expressive intonation (that is, “I am woman”⁸).

In addition Tannen (1996) argued that women were expected to smile more often than men, and that they were seen as more severe and lacking in humour if they rarely smiled, whereas men who smiled less were not as likely to meet with negative reactions. Evidence supporting these assertions is found in the research of Provine (1996) above, where women speakers laughed 126% more than their male audience and male speakers laughed 7% less than their female audience. The requirement for women to “take a joke” as a gender class was observed by Lyman (1987) in the male jokes, “a mechanism by which the order of gender domination is sustained in everyday life” (p. 148) perpetrated on a sorority. As one woman reported, “The men... were the controlling force, then they jump into the car and take off” (p. 149).

Goffman (1967) made the point that deference may be rendered to an individual because of membership of a class (boss? female?), rather than who the individual is. Some organizations like the military operate explicitly on this premise. The ranks were expected to engage in surface acting when responding

⁷ Title of article by Michael Kimmel (*New York Post*, 7 September 2008) in which an extract of his book “Guyland: the perilous world where boys become men” (HarperCollins, 2008) was published.

⁸ Title of a song written by Helen Reddy and Ray Burton (1972).

to orders. This code caused the success of “saluting traps” (prearranged practical joking by the ranks) instigated on unsuspecting officers (Milligan, 1971, p. 113) during World War Two. This prank (and others) could have been interpreted as insubordination or rebellion, by Milligan’s superiors, but they largely ignored his humorous turns because these were seen to increase morale (increase solidarity, as Bernstein, 1974, noted).

3.5 We’re all laughing together here.

“Extended shared laughter marks an episode of celebration in talk” (Glenn, 2003, p. 84). Drawing on the systematic analysis of conversation by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), Glen noted that, in conversation, “turns are a scarce resource available only to one party at a time.....The sequential roles of ‘current speaker’ and ‘other’ come up for grabs at each transition relevance place” (Glenn, 2003, p. 85). He suggested that people negotiate participant alignments in conversation by either *laughing at* to promote distancing, disparagement and feelings of superiority or *laughing with* to promote feelings of affiliation and bonding. Four keys were provided to distinguish the two types of laughter: The laughable (that which caused laughing in others), the first laugh, the (possible) second laugh and subsequent activities.

In *laughing at* environments, the laughable nominated someone who was co-present as a butt (Glenn, 2003). The production of the laughable (either intentional or unintentional) might be by someone else or by the butt. The

person who produced the first laugh by someone (including the current speaker) other, however, than the butt indicated that it was a *laughing at* situation. In multiparty situations further laughter by other parties, except the butt, indicated a *laughing at* conversation whereas in two party situations, the butt did not respond with laughter. If there was no shift of topic, but further talk continued (perhaps including an attempt to repair the situation), then it confirmed a *laughing at* situation.

If the butt produced the first laugh and the second laughs came from others and if there was a shift of topic, the situation was identified as *laughing with*. Obviously, there are shifts from disaffiliation to affiliation and *vice versa* within conversations among a group of people, so Glenn (2003) continued his analysis with the concepts of *laughing along* and *resisting*. *Laughing along* occurred in response to teases and improprieties, showing a willingness to go along in the play frame, but stopped short of outright affiliation with what was going on. In *resisting*, the recipient laugher showed appreciation only, or even reluctance with, what the laughable was doing.

Laughing along while resisting was the strategy most commonly employed by women when responding to sexual overtures from men (Glenn, 2003). Where participants had produced words or actions that could be considered improprieties, such as breaches of ethics, tact or courtesy, Jefferson, Sacks and Schlegloff (1987) considered that possible responses could be

arranged on a continuum. Stages in their formulations were: Overt disaffiliating, declining to respond, dissatisfying to the impropriety but responding to some innocuous part of the utterance, appreciating the impropriety with laughter and/or talk, affiliating by replicating the impropriety in the next utterance or escalating with a new impropriety. Glenn (2003) thought that laughter provided a mid-point on this continuum of disaffiliation to escalation and he pointed out that a recipient's laugh might be derisive, appreciative or embarrassed. This idea corresponds to that of Foot and Chapman (1976) that laughing can be an ambiguous response, momentarily relieving the laugher of the need for action. In Lyman's (1987) research, the men protested that the women *laughed* when lined up and surrounded by the men and forced to watch "pledges" (initiates) perform naked jumping jacks: "if you'd just ignored us, it wouldn't have been any fun" (p. 151).

Laughter can be used to resist improprieties, but it can also be used to resist "troubles-talk". People engaged in conversation about personal troubles, often laugh. This is indicative of personal coping or bravery and does not usually elicit laughter from others when the import of the conversation is taken seriously. Jefferson (1984) listed many examples of a speaker laughing while describing personal troubles and a second person responding seriously without laughter to the context of the troubles, for example: "G: You don't want to go through all this hassle? S: hhh, I don't know Geri, I've stopped crying uhheh-heh-heh-heh-heh. G: Were you crying?" (Jefferson, 1984, p. 346). This pattern corresponded with the idea of humour causing relief.

During troubles telling, two other patterns emerge according to Jefferson (1984). The first is the “buffer topic” where the troubles teller introduces some light-hearted material which is laughed at as a humorous aside. In her example a woman related what appeared to be a breakup with a partner, in which she said, “...immediately he told me I was- I went crazy and then hh the first thing I thought of was the animals.....when Brad found Miao this morning I just hh her- her whiskers are all singed”. This last statement elicited a laugh from a second female and a run of discourse between them about the cat tending to have whiskers removed. “The dog pulled out one” was accompanied by laughter from both women and then a return to the previous topic. “So we’ll be staying here at my mother’s” (Jefferson, 1984, p. 351-2).

The second case of laughing at troubles-talk is the exceptional case where the recipient of the troubles-telling laughs to mark their resistance to hearing about the troubles. Jefferson analyzed one conversation in which the troubles-teller recounted a death and listed some other sufferers of emphysema and then suggested that she may be getting it herself. This led the second speaker who had initially responded seriously, to begin laughing (Jefferson, 1984). When it was obvious that the laughter was inappropriate the second speaker claimed to be laughing at a kitten. This was an attempt, Jefferson (1984) thought, to introduce a buffer topic, but it was unsuccessful in getting the troubles-teller off the topic of her troubles.

Jefferson (1984) did not discuss sex differences in troubles-telling. Glenn (2003) suggested that males tended to exhibit what Jefferson termed “laugh-resistance”, that is when it was clear that laughter had been invited, they refused to laugh along. In the case of troubles-telling, males were more likely to laugh to demonstrate their resistance to receiving troubles-talk. Females showed the reverse pattern, they were receptive to troubles-telling and they did not laugh unless invited by humorous asides. When the first laugh by a male invited a second laugh, they provided it, but they did not laugh at male troubles-telling. According to Glenn, Jefferson caricatured these profiles as Tarzan and Jane, summarizing her arguments as “Janes interacting with Tarzans exhibit receptiveness and Tarzans interacting with Janes exhibit resistance” (Jefferson, 1984, sub-title page: also reproduced in Glenn, 2003, p. 155).

Glenn (2003) tried to test these Jefferson gender caricatures by selecting data from people in male-female relationships that were characterized as acquaintance, friend, courtship-relevant or romantic-intimate. He found 12 separate interactions of troubles telling varying in length from one minute to one hour. For each instance of laughter he and his colleagues coded who produced the laughable, who produced the first laugh, whether a second laugh was relevant, whether a second laugh occurred and if so by whom. There were 101 times when females produced the laughable and laughed first and 27 times a male joined with a second laugh. In comparison 70 times males produced the

laughable and laughed first and 26 times a female joined in. These differences were not statistically significant.

3.6 Observed gender differences in humour use.

The functions of humour in discourse were explored by Hay (2000) in 18 friendship groups of Pakeha (White European descent) New Zealanders. Her data consisted of 18 conversations, six between four male friends and six between four female friends and six between groups consisting of two males and two females. Hay (2000) adopted the definition of humour “as being anything the speaker intends to be funny” (p. 715). She did not consult the speakers about their intentions and was corrected by an anonymous reviewer who remarked that “this technique effectively amounted to situating myself as part of the audience, and assessing the utterance’s function by its effect on me” (p. 715).

In this capacity Hay (2000) took into account sudden changes in pace or pitch in the conversation as well as laughing or smiling voice and other verbal cues. Her process of judging humorous utterances resulted in 815 examples. Single-sex male groups made 333 utterances and single-sex female groups made 216, 163 from males in mixed groups and 103 from females in mixed groups. She used log-linear analysis to test a hierarchical model of humour. At the top of the tree was the general function of humour which subsumed three needs: solidarity based, power-based and psychological needs. The psychological need

was divided into two sub-needs: to defend and to cope, the latter was divided into non-contextual and contextual categories. In contrast solidarity (S) and power (P) were divided into a number of strategies: For solidarity these were share, highlight, boundaryS, teasesS, other. For power the strategies were conflict, control, boundariesP and teasesP. Thus the strategies of boundaries and teases could be used to indicate to others either solidarity (S - communion) or power (P - agency), reflecting the theory of Wiggins (1991).

Hay (2000) suggested that the strategies (above) could be seen as more precise definitions of the functions. Her results for the individual strategies revealed that women were more likely to use sharing humour than men (9.8 times) in mixed conversations and in single sex conversations (8.7). For solidarity, both sexes, however, were more inclined to use sharing humour in single-sex rather than mixed sex conversations. Women in single sex groups were more likely to use “other” types of solidarity humour than men in mixed groups. Males in single sex groups were more likely to share and to teaseS than in mixed sex groups (Hay 2000). Although the author mentioned trends, it is likely that the friendship bases of the groups in the study militated against finding strong power strategies. Similarly, in the psychological functions, defending did not demonstrate strong odds ratios. Males were more likely to use coping strategies in single sex groups.

This last finding supported the idea that men group to “act” or get things done. In summarizing her qualitative explorations of the corpora, Hay (2000) remarked that in (New Zealand Pakeha) friendship groups women are more likely to use humour for the specific function of forming or maintaining solidarity than men. Women use solidarity based humour to share personal information about themselves, to indicate a sense of trust. When using solidarity based humor, men are more likely to share common experiences or highlight similarities. Men are more likely to use humour to increase solidarity and status and to “perform positive work on their personal identities” (Hay 2000, p. 738). Men more often use humour to cope with a contextual problem, whereas women are more likely to use humour to cope with situations that were not specific to the immediate. Hay also identified teasing in her scripts of conversations but found that the teasing was largely restricted to single-sex groups.

3.7 Summary

In this chapter the theoretical inverted U-shaped distribution of pain to pleasure (Janis, 1971) has been discussed in the context of coping, where rendering something humorous in an intense situation would reduce the perceived intensity of the stimulus. Creating humour may be an emotion-focussed strategy that relieves the symptoms of stress. Applying humour may enable an individual to gain control over the flow of information. As an adaptive aesthetic emotion humour could be applied to situations in which the individual is relatively powerless, for example, where emotional labour is a requirement of

the work. People could choose to laugh along or resist attempts at humour in which they were expected to play the butt or expected to be a sympathetic listener, particularly as a member of a gender class. Humour would appear to satisfy three needs: Solidarity; power-based and psychological needs, although some gender differences within these categories were observed.

The above research studies on emotional labour and gender class led to the creation of the items for the survey in Appendix B. Chapter 4 considers the paralinguistic cues that are adopted in humour, to enhance the non-serious nature of the message. The functions of humour, solidarity, power, defence and coping are further explored in chapter 5 where gossip, teasing, nipping and biting are examined.

Chapter 4

Paralinguistic cues of Humour: What I said was all in the delivery

4.0 Overview

People signal their intention to “play” in a situation in which they use humour by enacting paralinguistic cues and other devices to suggest that their communication is not serious, not real and true. These devices have been the subject of research analyzing transcripts of humorous conversations and media scripts. Chapter 4 examines some of ways people signal humour. Items pertaining to paralinguistic cues were generated and are to be found in the Appendices C and D as indicated at the end of each section.

4.1 Definitely off the record: how humour is signalled

The introduction of inappropriate content, in order to elicit laughter, may be intended to move conversation to a more relaxed, unguarded and spontaneous set of utterances in an attempt to increase intimacy and solidarity. Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff (1987) observed that such attempts were resisted by declining to respond or by “disattention”. Affiliation was signaled by laughter and often by the proffering of another impropriety. People in conversation were observed to take turns with one another and to follow other conventions that indicated the flow and end of a speech statement. So people were able to signal, without speech to one another, whether or not they would take part in a particular game of humour.

4.2 The “sing-song” of humour

Prosody is characterized by three practices: by pitch peaks that indicate that the next syntactically possible completion is designed to end the turn; the opening sequences of conversation as a negotiation of appropriate pitch; and to indicate the nature of the action which an utterance is implementing (e.g., rising pitch indicating an upward direction). Schegloff (1998) provided transcript of two women discussing a basketball game, in which one had taken part, as evidence for these postulations. The humorous story within the exchange was offered in the sixth turn. One man was tall and was opposed by two women. “And I had, I was – I couldn’t stop laughing it was the funniest thing, but you know you get all sweaty up and everything and we didn’t think that we were going to play, hh and oh I’m knocked out” (pitch peaks underlined, Schegloff, 1998, p. 239). The second speaker laughed at this statement in the seventh turn, which concluded both themes, the silliness of two women opposing a tall man and playing so hard after a long time.

The beginnings of conversations are platforms for parties to work through issues such as their respective identities, current states and moods and to arrive at some order for their concerns to be mentioned and taken up. Thus openings are composed of a series of very short turns of simple and recurrent syntactical form. A telephone conversation between two college women provided evidence: “Hello. Hi, Hi, Howareyuhh, Fine How’r you, Okay, Good, (laugh) What’s doing, Ah nothing, You didn’t go meet Graham (laugh) Well, I

got home” (Schegloff, 1998, p. 245). The import of the conversation began at turn 5 and was completed in turn 6. These two college women went on to discuss a young man with whom one hoped to set up the other, for a date. Again the humorous story began at about the fifth turn and was completed in the sixth.

The display of power may be signaled by strategies such as irony. Attardo, Eisterhold, Hay and Poggi (2003) used television situational comedies to investigate phonological and facial markers of irony and sarcasm between which they did not differentiate. The ironical intonation they remarked from previous literature was a “flat contour” although they listed many exceptions, including questioning intonation, inverse pitch obtrusion (uttering the stressed syllable at a lower pitch rather than a higher one), higher pitch, exaggerated pitch or extremes. The use of a marked succession of prominent syllables as a “beat clash” – perhaps as in “We have ways of making you” or singsong melody, falsetto, separation of pauses between words, heavy exaggerated stress and relatively monotonous intonation, and even softened voice were enumerated. Attardo et al. (2003) also suggested that the rate of speech may be a marker where irony was displayed with slowing down. Among facial markers listed were: eyebrows raised or lowered, eyes wide, squinting, or rolling, winking, nodding, smiling and blank face.

The data used by Attardo et al. (2003) were taken from American situation comedies aired in 1999. Five trained judges evaluated the irony of the

data selected. These data were then subjected to a broad analysis of pitch patterns. Then untrained observers were asked about the facial expressions. The researchers found three characteristic pitch patterns in the ironic utterances. These were: strong within-statement contrast, compressed pitch pattern and pronounced pitch accents. Attardo made the point that ironic utterances cannot be studied in isolation and that contrast in pitch patterns may go beyond sentence boundaries. For them, no contours of intonation alone signalled irony, but the contrast between what is said and the contour, or what is meant and the contour or both also signalled the use of irony.

Poker players use a “poker face” to prevent leaking information to opponents about the game and this feature was compared by Attardo, et al. (2003) to the “blank face” that they found as an irony marker. In a pilot study they asked 36 native speakers, who were student volunteers in an undergraduate linguistics class, to describe the facial expressions of the ironical speakers. The free responses included: “dead-pan, no expression, stone-faced, stoic, straight-faced, non-expression, lack of facial movement, motionless” (Attardo et al., 2003, p. 255). The “blank-face” Attardo considered a paracommunicative alert because it accompanied the ironic statement. A metacommunicative alert was the signal “I am being ironical” or “just kidding” because it described the statement.

4.3 But can you be funny about it? – the effect of context.

An expansion of the approaches of Schegloff (1998) and Attardo et al. (2003) can be found in the theories of Gumpertz, presented by Levinson (2003). Gumpertz believed that utterances could carry contexts with them and this had implications for contextualizing humorous utterances. Contextualizing could be done by inference alone. The exchange between A and B: “A: Hey, how about supper together? B: I have a jealous husband” (p. 35) provided any number of inferences, e.g., supper is an intimate act and it is not wise to make a spouse jealous. In addition contexts could be invoked by a cue. “Just kidding” might be a humorous example. Gumpertz suggested that there could be a foreground and a background in the message structure, “the opposition between the central message content, coded propositional information and peripheral, more loosely associated information, a sort of informational penumbra. The opposition has aspects at different levels: form, content and cognitive saliency” (Levinson, 2003, p. 35). The foreground of *form* is lexico-syntactical and the background includes particles, modifiers, prosody and kinesics. My example would be “I shall come” compared with “*I shall come*” where prosody changes are implied by italics.

With respect to *content*, the foreground is propositional and communicative but the background can be general/vague or non-propositional. The statement “You shall come” infers several foregrounds, e.g., formal conditional proposition (“You shall come, if...”), an order, or a question. In

contrast, the background can be meta-communicative, e.g., the remark may only be a way of counting up those who are coming. Finally in *cognition*, the foreground is usually salient and conscious but the background can be inconspicuous or unconscious, e.g., “You shall come” but I don’t want you to.

The analysis above leads to the obvious conundrum that if understanding is so complex, how do people actually know what others are doing? According to Levinson (2003), Gumpertz believed that people who share a network learn to associate a particular class of interpretations with a highly specific set of linguistic cues that are “invisible to those in other networks” (p. 38). In terms of Bernstein’s (1974) theory, the better people know each other, the more restrictive the code they utilize when communicating. This concept has implications for work-place culture, power and leadership. New recruits are automatically excluded until they are initiated into the humour culture. Humour about leaders can be shared amongst the workers so that a word or a gesture conveys meaning and knowledge for those in the know, but excludes management.

Irony can signal the understanding of paradox and ambiguity. Hatch and Ehrlich (1993) observed a series of routine staff meetings held by the senior managers of a unit within a large, multinational computer company. “Security” was a topic for which Hatch and Ehrlich produced transcript in their article. “Piggybacking” of one person behind another, who is the security card swiper,

was the issue. The humour was provided by: “I think the fingerprint and the retina scan...” and “How about a chromosome check?” (p. 511) both of which produced laughter that caused the discussion to move to a new issue. These statements appeared to be exaggerations or extreme case formulations (ECFs, Norrick, 2004a). It was reported that some employees had put up a sign saying “Big Brother” (p. 512). In their meeting this statement elicited no laughter from the managers, who undoubtedly recognized the power of humorous rebellion (Bain, 1875, see chapter 2), because the gesture could be seen as an attempt to use irony in the service of sarcasm with the cultural reference to *Nineteen Eighty Four* by George Orwell (1949).

One manager claimed that the issue with the swipe cards was to do with employees thinking that the company was checking on their coming to and going from work. This brought out the retort, “Well if it is good enough for (CEO), it’s good enough for us”. Another immediately remarked “By the way, he piggybacked. (CEO) didn’t swipe” (Hatch & Erlich, 1993, p. 512). The researchers did not record whether the last remark caused laughter. There was a definite paradox, to do with leadership and CEO behaviour in these statements. Because the observations were bereft of pitch and facial expression, intent cannot be ascribed to those uttering the remarks.

Another humorous remark, “It was hard for MFG (a retiring manager) to get all that stuff out of here” (Hatch & Ehrlich, 1993, p. 513) appeared to be a

tease, for obviously the manager was not responsible for the theft that was the issue causing increased security measures. Another remark that you could leave the building after hours, “You can, but it’s noisy” (p. 513), pointed to the inevitability of having to crash through the door, if you wanted to work late. Serious consideration for building a guard shack was countered with “Next we’ll have to put a gun turret on top” (p. 513) and finally “You will all be searched and seized when you come into work” (p. 514). This last statement is nonsense, for people take things from work as they go home, but “searched and seized” reflects fascist characteristics and is another cultural reference. In this way the managers appeared to be exploring the concerns of both the “top management” into the pilfering and those of the “employees” who appeared to feel that they were no longer trusted. Hatch and Erlich maintained that the spontaneous humour of meetings focused on the relatively unnoticed aspects of issues which were actually fairly central to the deeper aspects of the culture of the organization, i.e., employee power and trust.

4.4 You won’t get away with that humour here – power and cohesion.

In the workplace there were a number of roles that Duncan, Smeltzer and Leap (1990) thought humour would perform including power and leadership, group cohesiveness, communication and culture. They maintained that the characteristic of something being funny was that it resulted in mirth. Berger (1976) believed that dissecting humour could lead to its death, but he proposed that when we laugh we are responding to messages, information about

relationships between persons, places and things. All humour could be collapsed to “bipolar oppositions” that were incongruous and were presented with suddenness. This concept can be compared with “bisociation”, “the perceiving of a situation or idea...in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference” (Koestler; 1964, p. 35). Berger suggested the term “jokeme” (p. 114) to represent acts, actions or bits of stories that can form the *elements* of humour. His publication coincided with Richard Dawkins’ (1976/1989) book, *The Selfish Gene*, in which the term “meme” (an idea passed from one person to another, analogous to gene transmission of DNA information) was first coined. *Relationships* are established between elements by using various techniques (an example is exaggeration) and suddenness is a factor. Business terminology, for example, can be satirically defined: “action” – delegate a task, or “achievement” – abandon a larger task (Marks, Marks & Spillane, 2006, p.2-3).

In Berger’s (1976) scheme, *humour* was a consequence. He felt that “culture-codes” were responsible for the generation of jokemes (e.g., mothers-in-law, priests, hippies). It could be argued that the business of doing humour in a culture could be best described as a “memplex” between jokemes. Blackmore (1999) defined a memplex as a group of memes such that “the memes inside it can replicate better as part of a group than they can on their own” (p. 20). From the data provided by Hatch and Ehrlich (1993), much of the humour about security formed a memplex of the extremes of security technology connected with computers. The game appeared to be to find out the cultural and cognitive

limits of allusions within the memplex. This humour preceded the definitive film *Gattaca* written and directed by Andrew Niccol in 1997 and distributed by Columbia. The hero of the story was barred from his chosen vocation of space-travel by inadequate genes and kept out of the space facility by finger prints, retinal scans and blood scans for chromosome checks. The fact that the same memplexes in the Hatch and Erlich study subsequently appeared in formal media publications such as film, gave support to Blackmore's proposition of memplexes.

What made script oppositions or jokemes and their relationships or logical mechanisms funny, according to Duncan, et al. (1990) could be summarized with recourse to three classes of theories; incongruity, cognitive appraisal and superiority. They saw superiority as a form of cognitive appraisal. That left two classes of theories, one dealing with nonsense or "silly" humour and the other dealing with elements that had some emotional value within the culture-code. Those values were different for different groups, e.g. gender, ethnic and those in particular contextual situations. The cognitive appraisal group of theories maintained that emotions are a combination of physiological arousal and cognitive appraisal of that arousal (echoing Rotter, 1954, see Chapter 3). A person could be triumphant when others appeared bad in comparison (superiority) and this was a form of emotional defence. So Duncan et al. (1990) quoted the joke about the Jew who asked to convert to Catholicism on his deathbed. When he was asked why he replied, "Better one of them would

die than one of us” (Raskin, 1985, p. 220). A person who disparaged the self was better off than one who let others do it (self-deprecation, to avoid ostracism, see Chapter 2) and this Duncan et al. (1990) maintained was another form of cognitive appraisal.

Ambiguous, ironic and teasing statements were observed in the study of phone conversations between five adolescents by Antonopoulou and Sifianou (2003) who identified 268 humorous utterances. Although there appears to be rather obvious grounds for participant effects arising from the demographics the researchers required to be recorded, no mention was made of dealing with these. In Greek, the ‘Please’ has a high salience for conventional meaning, and it is the more formal and more old-fashioned conventional telephone opening. In addition, among students in Greece, there was presumably a heavy usage of mobile phones. The authors did not say which types of phone conversations were being manually recorded. Because the five participants were known to each other and could easily determine that they were part of the research, the humour game could include teasing as for example (“*ring*⁹, ‘Please?’ ‘Do you beg a lot?’” and “*ring*, ‘Please?’ ‘Don’t beg too much’” and “*ring*, ‘Please?’ ‘Who are you begging and for what?’” (Antonopoulou & Sifianou 2003, p. 749).

What Antonopoulou and Sifianou (2003) found may have had to do with the display of numbers belonging to the friend before the phone was answered.

⁹ *ring* –indicates the signal noise of an incoming call.

People on mobiles feel free to make incongruous remarks as an opening because only those who know their mobile number should be ringing and can in turn often be identified on the display, before an answer is made. The game that was documented could be explained as identity display in normal Greek conversations, as in the following “*ring* ‘talk to me’, ‘What ‘talk to me’ are these? I don’t speak English’” or “*ring* ‘pronto’, ‘Come on, what ‘pronto’ is this? Are you trying to pass for an Italian?’” (p. 748).

For a text to be funny, Antonopoulou and Sifianou (2003) maintained that it had to follow the postulates of the General Theory of Verbal Humor by Attardo (2001). It must contain two scripts that oppose each other, be non-bona-fide because the speaker was not committed to the truth of what they said and it may be informed by six knowledge resources: Script Opposition, Logical Mechanism (the way that the two scripts are brought together), Situation (the context of the humour), Narrative Strategy (the organization of the text including adjacent pairs and figures of speech), the Target or butt of the humour; and the Language or information necessary for the verbalization of the text. The five student participants demonstrated these knowledge resources, as recognized by Antonopoulou and Sifianou. Attardo (2001) suggested the distinction between jab-lines and punch-lines and placed the latter at the final point in the humorous narrative, whereas jab-lines could occur in other positions. Attardo stressed “that both jab lines and punch lines do not differ semantically” (p. 29). Antonopoulou and Sifianou found this distinction difficult

in the context of phone conversations because although adjacency pairs were easily identified, playful turns could be interrupted by bon-fide ones and then the playful humour would be resumed.

Attardo (1993) demonstrated that jokes and humorous utterances could be generated by flouting the maxims proposed by Grice (1989). Similarly, Antonopoulou and Sifianou (2003) suggested that humour could be generated by flouting the rules of politeness. In one example a complaint about waiting to connect a call with a friend used the most formal of markers, implying that the recipient of the call had distanced themselves in the friendship by being unavailable to take it. The caller allowed a number of turns in the formal mode, because the receiver apparently did not recognize the caller, before remarking, “‘..your-PL¹⁰ memory isn’t very good because we were having coffee together yesterday.’ ‘Oh Hi George, I didn’t expect you-SING to ring so soon’” (p. 762). Another, calling his cousin, addressed him with his full rank and with formal address, “I have the honour to...” as if he were having an encounter with a ranking officer. The cousin later congratulated him for being a member of the glorious Greek army.

The Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) was used to explain that telephone humour might serve bonding purposes for a social group which was oriented to positive politeness, emphasizing shared backgrounds and

¹⁰ PL- indicates plural form, a polite form of address, whereas SING indicates a familiar form of address.

values and attenuating face-threatening acts. Negative politeness strategies, such as the adoption of formal modes of address, were ridiculed in the game. For Antonopoulou and Sifianou (2003), aggression was an attack on negative politeness conventions, on formality and distance and on telephone conversation conventions. They made the point that jocular abuse was exploited with frequent exchanges of abusive address, but no feelings appeared to be hurt. The reciprocity of exchanges of superficially face-threatening actions appeared to be reminiscent of a table-tennis match. A table-tennis match requires a cooperative effort and humour appears to require cooperative interpretation of the discourse, as discussed in the next section. The above research on discourse management, irony and extreme case formulations, jokemes and memeplexes, led to the creation of the items for the survey in Appendix C. As previously mentioned items for Study 1 were selected from this pool.

4.5 “We’re all mad here”¹¹ – humour can be deliberately silly.

4.5.1 Why reality is mundane and humour is not.

Taking a philosophical stance, Grice (1989) maintained that the adequacy of language could be judged by its ability to serve the needs of science. An expression or analysis of meaning must be possible and be mutually dependent. People learn this in childhood and find that they need to expend a good deal of effort to depart from the habit of speech cooperation. It is normally easier, Grice claimed, to tell the truth than to invent lies. The Cooperative Principle he defined as “Make your conversational contribution such as is required at the

¹¹ Statement made to Alice by the Cheshire Cat (Carroll, 1865/1982, p. 64)

stage at which it occurs by the accepted direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice 1989, p. 26). He distinguished four categories of maxims that were subsumed to the cooperative principle: “quantity”, “quality”, “relation” and “manner”.

Quantity related to the amount of information to be provided and it consisted of the maxim of making the contribution as informative but no more informative than was required. A shaggy dog story, where irrelevant detail expands the set up of a usually weak punch-line, could be thought of as an example that breaks the quantity maximum. The category of *quality* encompassed the maxim of trying to make your contribution one that is true and not saying that which is false and not saying that which lacks adequate evidence. This category can be contrasted with irony where there is a deliberate attempt to state the opposite of what is believed. The category *relation* has the maxim, “be relevant”. This maxim is easily reversed in humour by introducing the irrelevant, particularly in nonsense. The category of *manner* related to how something was said and involved, for Grice (1989) the supermaxim, “be perspicuous”, by avoiding obscurity, ambiguity and by being brief and orderly. Obviously ambiguity and obscurity are the strengths of humorous conversation and these may work to enlarge the length and circumlocution of assertions.

A participant in a talk exchange may fail to fulfill a maxim by unassumingly violating a maxim (e.g., telling a lie), opting out of the

conversation, or finding he is faced with a clash between maxims (e.g., be informative but have no evidence for what you say) or he may flout a maxim in a way that exploits the connection between assertion and implicature. To illustrate implicature Grice (1989) related the following: “Suppose that A and B are talking about a mutual friend C, who is now working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies, *Oh quite well I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn’t been to prison yet.*” (p. 24). From this last ambiguous clause, the hearer may assume that C is not honest, or that his colleagues are treacherous, two of a number of implicatures. But the last clause is more likely to be meant as humorous.

This suggestion that the violation of Grice’s maxims in conversation may be connected to producing humour was taken up by Attardo (1993). He demonstrated that jokes could be generated by flouting each of the maxims. Flouting or exploiting a maxim was a superficial and temporary violation which the hearer assumed was occurring because the speaker was fulfilling the other three maxims. All conversational exchanges regarding humour shared some characteristics and so situational factors also had to be taken into consideration. Humour was paradoxical because it appeared to be non-cooperative. The “hearer processes the text, is misled by the violation of the principle of cooperation, backtracks, and reinterprets the information provided in the text on the basis of the ‘humor’ maxims, switches to the non bona-fide mode of humor and reacts accordingly (i.e., laughing, smiling, etc.)” (p. 551). This non bona-

fide mode of humour was first suggested by Raskin (1985), who maintained that the switch involved a different set of maxims in which the hearer accepted strange and unrealistic events.

4.5.2 We see eye-to-eye, except in humour.

In order to make sense of the world, people assume that in the social situation there is only one reality. According to Pollner (1987) for almost everyone, the world is assumed to be the same for all parties. “From the point of view of mundane inquiry, the world is an *a priori* facticity” (p 15). For mundane inquiry the world is a “determinate order which exists independently of methods of observation and description” (p. 48). Pollner used the term “mundane reasoners” to describe those who account for discrepancies between accounts of reality by recourse to, usually, someone else’s perceptual, intellectual or linguistic incompetence. He explained that disjunctures in beliefs are examined by people in terms of a unitary world. This practice constantly reinforces our reliance on a unitary form of serious discourse. Serious speakers are obliged to avoid speaking in two contradictory ways at once. The boundary between the real and the unreal world will be clearly defined in serious speech and the boundary should coincide between two different speakers. This assumption is the basis for most scientific reasoning.

When paradox, ambiguity or inconsistency occurs in serious discourse, usually the premises from which arguments are derived are re-examined. The

assumption that there is one real world and that it is the same for all participants is never examined. Mulkay (1988) appraised the premises of Raskin (1985). A serious analysis of humour must first “provide complete and non-contradictory descriptions of the data and thus distinguish any such description from a non-description”; second “provide a procedure and an evaluation measure for comparing two alternative descriptions of the data and for preferring one of them over the other” and last “provide a procedure for the corroboration of the description by other competent persons” (Raskin, 1985, p. 48).

According to Mulkay (1988) the principles and practices of the humorous mode of speech could be identified as opposite to those adopted during serious discourse. Humour depends on opposing possibilities. Humour was a kind of controlled nonsense as judged by the criteria of serious discourse. Koestler (1964) coined the term “bisociation”, “the perceiving of a situation or idea...in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference..” (p. 35). In identifying bisociation and distinguishing it from single meanings in serious speech, the first of Raskin’s premises was addressed. Appreciation was a necessary condition of humorous discourse for Mulkay (1988). He believed that “getting” the joke was essential or the humour had not worked. Explaining the two meanings of humorous speech, or the “Joke-work” (Freud, 1905 trans. 1960, see Chapter 2), signalled a failure of the intent of the discourse, to make a joke. Suls (1972) proposed that, in incongruity theory, the process of humour involved two stages, particularly in jokes, where the story or narrative was “set

up”, implying how the story should evolve. Because in the serious mode there would only be one likely outcome, the humour relied on the sudden incongruity of the “punch-line”. According to Suls, the experience of an abrupt disconfirmation of a prediction about the story-line constituted the joke.

For Mulkay (1988), humour was bisociative, because it had this dual characteristic of congruence (making sense in its own logic) and incongruence (breaking the rules of serious discourse). “In the realm of humour, recipients....have temporarily abandoned the assumptions of the ordinary world and are responding to, registering and celebrating a world of discourse where interpretative duality is the basic principle and understandable incongruity the overriding aim” (p. 37). So he thought that the model proposed by Suls (1972) was flawed. Suls proposed that the recipients of jokes were expecting serious discourse and were surprised by the incongruous ending, but the “set-ups” in jokes are often ludicrous (e.g., someone meets St Peter at the Heavenly Gates). People go along with the internal logic of a joke, choosing to “do humour” rather than try to make sense of a discourse. Incongruity and its resolution are found in other stimuli such as mathematical dilemmas and word puzzles. Suls answered this exception by saying that the solutions to mathematical dilemmas and word puzzles were not incongruous and that humour was. Schopenhauer (Lewis; 2005, see chapter 2), however, thought some geometry was incongruous.

Several conversational scripts were recorded in a work situation that involved more than one person contributing to the “joke” in what Holmes (2006) termed “conjoint humor” (p. 33). An example involved the most senior woman deciding to put a chart so high on the wall that her underwear would be exposed when she tried to write on it. Her two female subordinates developed the theme by recounting the problems of bending over in a short skirt and suggested a longer skirt. At this point one of the men suggested that this would take away the pleasures of work for the other men. The men replied that “we (the men) hadn’t noticed”, “never” (p. 43). While Holmes construed this sequence as reinforcing gender identities, it could be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the boundary between office propriety and actual sexual tension. Mulkay (1988) suggested that participants in humour needed to know and to be able to inform each other which discursive mode was in operation. If the participants failed to recognize a switch from serious discourse to humour then misunderstanding and inappropriate responses were likely. One way of doing this is through smiling or laughing, gesture or voice quality – these were the paralinguistic signals of humour.

There were also semantic signals, Mulkay (1988) suggested, such as the “story set-ups” at the beginning of jokes, or someone using irony in an over-the-top statement. Extreme statements were a clue to humour because they were paradoxical, and not part of genuine discourse. His assertions could be compared with the extreme case formulations suggested by Norrick (2004a),

who believed that the extreme case formulation had to occur in otherwise serious or banal discourse to be funny. He suggested that extreme cases that expressed extreme emotion occurred without being embedded in serious discourse. Mulkay saw humour as operating only as a result of interpretative work to construe more than one meaning. Even real events could be the basis for either humour or serious discourse, depending on the interpretative procedures that were adopted.

The idea of humour being conjoint between two or more individuals was further developed by Veale (2004). He considered that incongruity in humour was an epiphenomenon. Humans were social beings who were conditioned “to find self-deprecation much more appealing than arrogance, so there is an elegant symmetry to a narrative arc that begins with feigned pride and ends in humiliating honesty” (p. 422). The need for self-deprecation to avoid being “lopped off” (Aristotle, 1962, p. 133) was previously described in Chapter 2. In the sequence reported by Holmes (2006) above, the most senior female was parading her gender in a self-deprecating way to balance her status as the most senior. She was making a joke of her rank by deprecating her behaviour when using the chart.

Incongruity resolution might be a symptom of the listener’s natural freedom to choose between two or more conflicting interpretations, Veale (2004) speculated. Choice highlighted the conflict but was not the cause. It was

the intrinsic value of available options that drove the decision-making process. One could seriously think that the boss was demonstrating an error of judgment in her placement of the wall chart, or one could think that she was only kidding. Veale asserted that social conditioning made us more gratified with narratives where “pomposity is deflated, excessive authority is thwarted, modesty is rewarded and arrogance is punished.....Office jokes that poke fun at a dictatorial boss or a hopelessly inept colleague work best when we share the scorn of the speaker and thus jump directly to the most derisive interpretation” (p 425-6). For Veale, jokes were like gossip. “To allude to a much discussed joke in humor research, a story about a colleague’s affair with the doctor’s pretty young wife is good gossip, but a story about the same person’s bronchial cough is not” (p. 426). The roles of gossip, teasing, nipping and biting in humour are explored in the next chapter. The above research, on discourse as a cooperative effort, led to the creation of the items for the survey in Appendix C.

4.6 Summary

People can signal that they are using humour by changing the pitch and speed of speech and by using accents to indicate words that may have more than one meaning. In using humour they also may deliberately break rules that are the basis of cooperative discourse, or positive politeness. Ironic humour may be indicated by using forms of negative politeness, particularly amongst close associates. Attempts at humour are only successful if they do not have to be explained, so the audience must cognitively appraise a humorous remark for its

appropriateness, depending on contextual and paralinguistic cues, as for example in extreme case formulations, particularly when people are engaging in self-deprecating humour. Incongruity resolution may be the intention of the humour but the interpretation rests with the audience.

Chapter 5

I was just joking: Gossip, teasing, “nipping” and “biting”

5.0 Overview

Four functions of gossip were identified by Foster (2004): “entertainment”, “friendship”, “influence” and “information”. In contrast Dunbar (2004) suggested an evolutionary explanation of gossip in which the four functions were “social comparison”, “social control”, “self-enhancement” and “social cheat”. In each case the first two functions could be subsumed under the category “communion” and the second two under the category “agency” (Wiggins 1991). Items pertaining to Gossip were created and are to be found in Appendix D, as indicated at the end of this chapter.

Teasing was observed by Hay (2000) in office discourses. Terrion and Ashford (2002) observed put-downs of self, shared identities, out-groups and in-groups in Canadian police personnel. Goffman (1967) viewed the tease as a social skill, a mechanism for inducing poise in others. Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997) suggested a continuum of teasing that ranged from bonding through nipping to biting. A special case of self-teasing they thought of as “self-denigrating”. Items pertaining to teasing, nipping and biting are to be found in Appendix E as indicated at the end of this chapter.

5.1 Introduction

Half a century of gossip research was reviewed by Foster (2004). The use of the term “gossip” is old because the Oxford English Dictionary suggests a derivation from “godsibs” or relationships given through baptism (Dunbar, 2004, p. 100). The number of friendships that a human mind is capable of handling is about 150 or the size of a village (Dunbar, 2004, p. 102) and this network is maintained largely by exchange of information about individuals who are not present. Gossip is typically about third parties, according to Foster, and is characterized by evaluative content. He believed, however, that there had to be situational factors, such as an atmosphere of intimacy. Foster identified four social functions of gossip. It may serve as a mechanism for information exchange; for entertainment and “fun”; for friendship within groups with shared histories and meanings; and for influence, a form of informal policing. “Coworkers learn what is expected of them by hearing stories holding high performers up to praise and low performers to shame; the ‘corporate culture’ of an organization is commonly expressed this way in gossipy stories” (Foster 2004, p. 86). Foster asserted that culture was dependent on repetition of norms and mores in both formal and informal functions to maintain its hold on its members. Gossip functioned well because it required no special skills, like story-telling or singing. Everyone could practise it. When groups were under pressure to survive or in open competition with each other, then gossip was observed to become more vitriolic. People minimized their eccentricities in those circumstances and also tried to minimize gossip about themselves.

5.2 I don't gossip, but I heard X say that

Because gossip is given negative sanction socially, it has the frisson of puncturing the boundaries of serious discourse. "People must have at least tacit awareness that the information exchanged, or even created, in gossip is not entirely accurate" (Wert & Salovey, 2004, p. 133). We say things in gossip mode that we would never dream of uttering in official public discourse. Wert and Salovey defined gossip as "informal, evaluative talk about a member of the discussants' social environment who is not present" (p. 123). In a long review of the field of social comparison, they concluded with four related arguments. The first was that people gossip to calibrate their own experiences with comparison information and to be socially connected. Second, there were situational triggers that heightened the four social comparison motives: self-evaluation, self-improvement, self-enhancement and the establishment of social identity. These situational triggers were: the need for moral information, suspicion of injustice, competition or rivalry (including jealousy and envy), pressure to make ingroup and outgroup distinctions, powerlessness, the "coffee-klatch" situation of mutual agreement to gossip with the gloves off, and anxiety and ambiguity. Third, gossip may be necessary for healthy social functioning. The authors, however, made the point that "powerful but mysterious people may be likely to be the subject of negative gossip" (Wert & Salovey, 2004, p. 133). The fourth and most transparent motive of the individual gossiper was self-enhancement, they reasoned, and so all members making themselves look good would threaten

the well-being of the work community. It may pay to down-size your attributes in gossiping circles, to be self-deprecating.

The tension between individual goods and the goods of the collective is suggestive of an evolutionary explanation of gossip. Dunbar (2004) used evolutionary theory to explain why humans are both intensely social and inclined to gossip. Sociality, according to Dunbar, is dependent on two cognitive abilities, theory of mind and the use of trust or obligation. The more stress that is imposed on individuals, the more effective their alliances must be to buffer against these stresses. Buffering of stress in primates is achieved through grooming, a pair relationship. Primate groups are typically about 80 members. Humans usually know about 150 others personally so that conversation has overtaken grooming as the stress buffer. Conversational groups typically contain on average four members, one speaker and three listeners. Language allows exchange of information, to seek out what individuals cannot monitor personally and to pass on information of critical relevance to others.

Four functions of gossip were described by Dunbar (2004). One was to seek advice (a “social comparison” function). The second was to provide a policing function against social cheats and free riding (a form of “social control”). The third was the possibility of advertising ourselves (the “self-enhancement” function above) and the fourth was the opportunity to be a social cheat or free rider by deceiving others. Gossip, Dunbar decided, acquired its

negative connotations because the most potent use of gossip is to cast aspersions on those of whom there is disapproval. When we advise potential victims of the danger of a “free rider” or social cheat, we are exercising a kind of social censure and spoiling the range of possible interactions between the target of the gossip and the receiver.

In business, the *grapevine* is an informal organization for spreading information. In the theoretical dyad model proposed by Kurland and Pelled (2000), the receiver’s reaction decided the power of the gossiper. They defined gossip as “informal and evaluative talk in an organization, usually among no more than a few individuals, about another member of that organization who is not present” (Kurland & Pelled, 2000, p. 428). They proposed three characteristics of gossip: sign (positive or negative content), credibility (the extent to which the message of the gossip is believable) and work-relatedness (the degree to which the message concentrates on the job performance, career progress, relationships and general behaviour of the subject of the gossip).

Power was modelled by French and Raven (1959) in a typology which included reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. Kurland and Pelled (2000) postulated that coercive power was enhanced by negative gossip, whereas positive gossip enhanced reward power. They also proposed that gossip enhanced a gossiper’s expert power if the gossip was credible. They thought, however, that referent power would be reduced

particularly if the gossip were negative. Kurland and Pelled (2000) suggested that the employee who engaged in work-related gossip had a greater chance of influencing perceived rewards and punishments than one who engaged in more personal topics. Finally, they suggested that when work-relatedness was high, then the reward, coercive and referent power of the gossipier would be strong. When the relevance of the gossip to the work-place was evident, there would be less sanction directed at the gossipier.

Using humour as the mode for gossip protects the gossipier from sanction because of the informality humour implies. The butt is absent in gossip and cannot be seen to be suffering from the humour, so there is less anxiety about hurt feelings in a gossiping group. Humorous remarks might be interpreted as slighting a person who is present, but in the case of gossip, the absent butt might never come to know the import of the humour. When the target or butt is present in the group, these humorous directed remarks are referred to as “teasing”. Items generated from the above discussion about gossip are to be found in Appendix D.

5.3 You’re such a tease!

Formal jokes can occur at any stage in a conversation provided there has been some pretence at a polite introduction. Jokes are complete in themselves and do not need to refer to previous statements. “Did you hear about the lady who was asked if she smoked after sex? ‘I don’t know I never looked’”

(Mulkay, 1988, p. 59) has completion, with a punch-line and portability. In contrast, what Mulkay designated as “pure, spontaneous humour” does not contain punch-lines, and the conversation it is derived from continues to flow about the same topic even when laughter is induced in the hearers. Mulkay reported a conversation in which the tape-recorder at a dinner party became the topic of conversation. One participant related, “I say, get that thing off the table. She says Oh yeah okay I’ll take it off the table and I look,...two minutes later and it’s back.” This line elicited laughter and may be categorized as a jab line (Attardo, 2001) because the conversation continued, “....What’s to analyze? There hasn’t been *one* misunderstanding, we’ve all understood each other perfectly.” To which another jab line was added by another individual, “What do you mean by that?” Mulkay (1998, p. 62). The author recognized script opposition (see Chapter 4) in this type of informal humour and noted that the punch-lines in such humour seem indirect or allusive. In addition this humour did not transfer in the way of formal jokes. Mulkay recognized that there was, in the interpretation of some of the phrases, a possible second meaning, incompatible scripts, which he attributed to Raskin (1985): “two minutes later and it’s back” (did she do it, or is it animate?) “We’ve all understood each other perfectly” (we have not come to blows) and “What do you mean by that?” (a play on “understood each other”, p. 62).

Spontaneous humour depends on knowledge that is short-lived and socially restricted. It is typically produced by the bisociation of local frames or

by the opposition of local scripts. Although some spontaneous humour can be offered solely for the pleasure of others (as appeared to be the case above), Mulkay (1988) suggested that spontaneous humour can also be “applied” or strategic. The implications of a humorous remark could be denied, even when the content was seriously meant. When hearers acknowledge humorous intent, then they accept the possibility of the content of the message being retracted. Archakis and Tsakona (2005) studied conversations between a single cohesive group of four young men on the island of Patras in Greece. The male participants were 18 years old, described as having their hair long, wearing earrings, dressing casually, wearing badges of rock or punk groups and appearing generally scruffy. The two researchers were 20 years old, conducting open and some participant observation. Of the humorous utterances focused on, all had a target, either third parties not present and part of the outgroup of the four young men, such as parents, teachers, other students, priests or the Church as an institution, or members of the ingroup, which could be the small group, the whole peer group or even the narrator. Thus, most of the narration was “gossip” but a large part of its content was “teasing”.

A narrative was provided by one group member, “Yannis” about a biology test where a female student, “Maria” did not provide a piece of illicitly solicited information. She resisted by first providing him with her note-book, which was thrown back. Even so Yannis persisted in his request, although, as he remarked to the hearers, “the answer wouldn’t be right anyway”. To which they

all agreed. Then she passed a note with, “What do you want, she says to me, why are you bothering me”, forcing Yannis to reply with his initially spoken request, “What is an elliptical circle?” She replied in note form, “I’ll tell you later” and then waited until the teacher was standing right behind Yannis to turn and tell him, “Elliptical circle is the cells which cause.....she keeps on talking, talking, talking and the teacher is watching her, well she is absolutely mad.” (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005, p. 53). The humour, according to the authors, was provided by Maria’s incongruous actions. For the (presumably male) authors, Maria and then the female teacher was the target of the humour.

The recounting by Yannis (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005), however, could be interpreted as an attempt at self-deprecating humour and as a warning to the other members of the ingroup, providing “information” (Foster, 2004) about Maria’s games. Maria played her interlocutor along, forcing him to return her note-book, then to write his request on paper and give it to her and, finally, she complied when she had a formal witness. Maria was a dangerous person and the humour could have been an attempt to attenuate what has been a serious loss of face for Yannis. In fact the first mention of Maria’s name elicited an “Oh fuck!” from another group member. This could be interpreted as a negative emotion in connection with previous experiences involving her. The hearers went along with the pretence that it was Maria’s “incompetence” at cheating, to preserve the face of the speaker and reinforce his “self-enhancement” (Dunbar, 2004).

Another narrative, that the authors construed as Yannis “attacking himself” in a disparaging manner, really appears to be using humour in a self-aggrandizing manner, the superiority use of humour (Raskin, 1985). On a school visit using the new Metro in Athens, Yannis started to chew his return ticket and then he spat it out in front of a crowd of first graders. The female teacher remonstrated with him quietly, “I saw you spitting she says, it wasn’t me spitting I say, I just ate the ticket.” When she pointed out that he needed the ticket for the return journey, he claimed that he was hungry and she had not provided him with any food. “Go away I tell her or I’ll eat you up, I am starving, starving”. (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005, p. 58). Yannis was deliberately rude to the female teacher and showed off in front of the young children, providing “entertainment” in relating this incident which demonstrated his coercive power and “influence” (Foster, 2004). The last remarks from an eighteen year old male could also be interpreted as a sexual innuendo. The narrator’s teacher was part of the outgroup and the authors interpreted Yannis’ actions as incongruous rather than blatant.

There was information (Foster, 2004), however, in Yannis’ humorous story for his audience. This particular teacher could be trapped and humiliated, if a suitable situation arose. But Yannis could also protest that he was not being insubordinate, he was just having fun. Gottman (1994) proposed patterns of conflict, that were described by Metts (1997) as “variations on a theme of aggressive face work” (p. 378) or face threatening acts (FTAs, discussed in

detail below). These were expressed with “criticism”, attacking someone’s personality or character, “contempt”, the intention to insult or psychologically abuse, “defensiveness”, unwillingness to take responsibility for setting things right and “stonewalling” or communicative withdrawal, or passivity (Gottman, 1994, p. 110-113). Yannis appeared to be contemptuous and defensive in his interactions with the teacher, but expected appreciation of his wit from his peers in recounting his dealings with her.

Unlike a joke, a tease cannot be politely introduced. The whole point of a tease is that the victim does not initially understand. Mulkay (1988) defined teasing as “necessarily and actively directed at someone else. To tease is to say or do something that is intended light-heartedly to make fun of somebody else’s words or actions” (p. 73). The tease may be initiated by a serious remark from the potential recipient of the tease. Mulkany maintained that teases are designed to be very apparent in not being real or sincere proposals because they are constructed as very obviously exaggerated versions of some action.

In surface acting, of which teasing is an example, we deceive others about how we really feel, but we do not deceive ourselves (Goffman, 1967). Diplomats and actors hide the clues to their feelings the best and children cannot hide feelings at all. In any culture, face-to-face interactions seem to require capacities for the suppression of embarrassment and fluster, when people are faced with incongruity. To achieve this, individuals develop multiple selves,

each appropriate to a particular segment of possible audiences. Each self is a perceptual set of expectancies about how the social interaction should proceed. If individuals' projected selves are threatened during interactions, they are expected to show poise by suppressing all signs of shame and embarrassment. One way of teaching this social skill is the tease. The individual also has to learn to shorten the latency of response when faced with incongruity. One method of filling this latent period is laughing. If this default behaviour is inappropriate, a polite apology is all that is required, "You're serious. Oh, I'm sorry."

All forms of humour provide the recipient with edifying experiences of information that enhance future fitness (Weisfeld, 2006). Humour prepares people for the exigencies of living in society. We are warned "...against committing social gaffes (by)...mimicry, mockery, squelches and sarcasm" (p. 6). In a survey of the literature, Alberts, Kellar-Guenther and Corman (1996) found that teasing could be characterized by four elements; aggression, playfulness, humour and ambiguity. The last they maintained played the central role in the performances and interpretations of teases. The recipient of the tease had three alternatives of response: to "laugh along", to act in a neutral manner, or to act to "set the record straight", treating the tease as serious, although there is also the possibility of "seeing what others will do".

5.4 We all need a “put-down”: nipping and biting

Characteristics that enhance individual fitness are usually present in rudimentary or over-generalized forms in the infant and have to be refined as the organism develops in a social group (Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young & Heerey, 2001). Breast fed infants do not bite those who feed them until they begin teething. The act of biting usually undergoes behaviour modification. As children develop, they learn language and replace biting with words. Keltner et al. (2001) commented on the offer-withdrawal games that occur between parents and children, bullying in the playground, flirtatious pinching and eye covering among adolescents, and ritualized insults, adult banter and romantic nicknames that adults use, all are behaviours that are suggested developmental outcomes of the first “bite”.

Keltner et al. (2001) drew on the work of Goffman (1967) to theorise that maintaining face in social interactions was a motivated collaborative endeavour. This caused norms of politeness, modesty and self-control, which Goffman referred to as “demeanour”. Expressing appreciation of each other, Goffman termed “deference”. Individuals engaged in face work (maintaining face) to avoid sensitive topics and to disregard actions that threatened the face of another. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), individuals resort to strategic indirectness to avoid imposition or casting aspersions. One form of strategic indirectness was the use of off-record markers. These could be contrasted with on-record communication analyzed by Grice (1989) as being

direct, relevant, honest, and to be taken literally. Brown and Levinson (1987) considered politeness as one form of strategic indirectness. According to Keltner et al. (2001), other forms were flirtation and teasing. They defined a tease as “an intentional provocation accompanied by playful off-record markers that together comment on something relevant to the target” (p. 234.). The act must be intentional to be labelled teasing and the provocation may be verbal or non-verbal (a remark or a poke in the ribs, for example).

The biting provocation referred either to something about the target of the teasing, or to the relationship between the teaser and the target or to some object of interest to the target, according to Keltner et al. (2001). Formulaic expressions are common to teasing (e.g. the Australian “pull the other one” or “fair dinkum”, as vaguely crude rejoinders when a statement is taken as suspect or the American “yeah, yeah, yeah, whatever”). Teasing may involve the use of exaggerations or extreme case formulations as suggested by Norrick (2004a). The more ironic and exaggerated the tease, the more likely it is to be seen as light-hearted according to Keltner et al. (2001).

In their survey of the literature, Keltner et al. (2001) noted that largely observational correlation studies identified two kinds of disruptions in social interactions that led to teasing, norm deviations and interpersonal conflict. Norm deviations were illustrated in their paper by the teasing between adolescent boys, where they attributed female characteristics or girl’s names to each other,

or used referents to homosexuality. Interpersonal conflicts were illustrated in the review with observations of young siblings in families engaging in increasing amounts of teasing behaviour with age. In adolescence teasing among girls could relate to “crushes” and boyfriends. In my experience in education, girls also teased about norm deviations such as the display of competencies, (“I’ll bet you got full marks for *everything* in Physics”, “Are you feeling “blonde” today?”) or physical appearance (“You are so thin, if you turn side-ways you disappear”, “I know you’re not into perfection, but...”).

Student volunteers, aged 13 to 15 years, from five junior high schools in a Swedish city were studied by Thorlander and Aronsson (2002). The participants were involved in a larger project on the micropolitics of group work. The authors found that the response work, produced by recipients of the teases, could be analyzed as a continuum of defensive-offensive moves. Recipients made elaborate accounts involving excuses or justifications at the defensive end. Denials were somewhat less defensive and were not followed by elaboration. Minimal responses were ambiguous, the recipient appearing neutral. Offensive strategies included playful retaliation, serious retaliation and proactive response work to ensure that the teasing could not occur again. Thorlander and Aronsson thought that the last strategy involved perspective taking on the part of the recipient.

One example provided by Thorlander and Aronsson (2002) involved boys teasing a girl, Jasmin, about putting on make-up in front of the male teacher. The boys suggested that they did all the work because Jasmin was otherwise occupied. The teacher went along with the tease by suggesting that it is not “a make-up class”. This caused the rejoinder “I mean God, ...” (repeated when interrupted) and the teacher said “You sure talk a lot about God”. Then one of the boys exclaimed that “it isn’t a religious class either” and another “Did you lose the thread, Jasmin?” After the teacher took away the make-up there was some conversation about its ownership and then one of the boys said “I told her putting on make-up wouldn’t help. She still looks just as ugly”. Jasmin replied with artificial laughter. The authors interpreted this as a minimal response. The teacher however rebuked, “Now you are being mean”. Jasmin added “Yes cause I’m so goddamned gorgeous” (Thorlander & Aronsson, 2002, p. 574-5). The teacher then returned to the official subject of the class. Jasmin’s final self-enhancing words could be interpreted as a playful retaliation.

A behavioural metaphor was adopted by Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997). In situational humour or conversational joking, they suggested, teasing occupied a continuum that ranged from bonding to nipping to biting. Samples of taped conversation occurred in homes, bars, restaurants, stores and gyms. Most participants were “status equals” and included family members, friends, acquaintances and strangers. Conversational joking was different from joke telling because it had a play frame created by the participants, according to

Boxer and Cortés-Conde, and contained non-verbal communication. “Being there” (situational cues) was an important part of “getting it” (understanding the humour). In conversational joking, however, misunderstandings or misfires were more likely and implied an increased risk of loss of face for the initiator of the humour. The authors identified three types of conversational joking: teasing, joking about an absent other and self-denigrating joking.

Teasing required the humour be directed at someone who was present. This person was the centre of a humorous frame (the butt). Teasing ran along a continuum of bonding through nipping to biting, as mentioned previously, so these constructs were not mutually exclusive and boundaries were not always clear. The exact message could not be decoded without interpreting the meta-messages of exaggerated intonation, laughs or winks (see chapter 4). The play frame decided whether the message was a nip and absence of play denoted a bite. Whether bonding occurred as a result of teasing depended on the intimacies shared between the teaser and the teased. A husband had a long illness and had gratefully suggested that his perspective had changed and he wanted to help others with the disease. His wife admonished that “You don’t have enough energy to help anybody right now” (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, p. 280). This was said in front of a close female friend and in the authors’ estimation was considered a nip.

In contrast, as an example of joke telling about an absent other, the name of a famous architect was invoked as designer of the spine when two close female friends were talking about their back problems. There was less ambiguity in this situation than in the situation above and so the bond between the women in sharing this is clearer. Other examples of joking about absent others were provided by word plays used by the expatriate Uruguayan community in Gainesville, Florida. Some of these were *infiernary* (hell) for infirmary and *Gailesbiano* (Gay/lesbian) for Gainesvileano. Neither of the butts of these words were part of the expatriate community and the “in-crowd” terminology was thought by Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997) to be part of the bonding of that community.

Where the speaker and the referent were one and the same and the put-down was initiated by the speaker, self-denigrating humour or self-teasing occurred. For example two women who were strangers at a swimming pool: “Oh, I’m not interested in the thighs. They’re beyond hope” (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, p. 281). By complaining about one’s physical short-comings, the authors felt that the speaker was signalling that she was self-effacing and approachable. There is some discussion currently about whether this type of conversational joking is better designated self-deprecating humour (see chapter two). There was no indication from the transcript that the speaker seriously thought that her thighs were too large, but rather that she was using exaggeration or an extreme case formulation (“beyond hope”) as described by

Norrick (2004a). Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997), considered that this form of humour was in fact in line with Norrick's ideas on self-effacing humour.

Some very severe self-effacing humour was found in the narratives of Pollner and Stein (2001). Members of *Alcoholics Anonymous* (AA) recounted in an ironically humorous fashion their alcoholic past behaviours (such as incontinence and vomiting). This had the effect of distancing the present self from the past self (the target of gossip). Defects of character associated with the signs of alcoholism such as pride, resentment and dishonesty were ruthlessly attacked, "No I was a heavy drinker and a victim of unusual circumstances, rotten drivers and bad whiskey, but I ain't no alcoholic" (Pollner & Stein, 2001, p. 55). This form of self-denigrating humour appeared to be closely linked to disgust, and Heath, Bell and Sternberg (2001) showed that the area of disgust had particular fascination for humans. They demonstrated that people were more willing to gossip about or to pass along stories that elicited stronger disgust, and they preferred to pass along the version that had the highest level of disgust. Examples of stories involved food contamination, eating pets, hit and run accidents, scrotum repair and hair infestations. The AA self-denigrators ensured that their stories would be disseminated as a warning or information (Foster 2004) by engendering disgust in others.

The "put-down" was studied in a group of 26 men and one woman Canadian police personnel, ranging in age from 38 to 53 years and with

experience from 17 to 34 years (Terrion & Ashforth, 2002). The participants had come together for a residential six week Executive Development Course at the Canadian Police College in Ottawa. They were informed that the purpose of the research was studying patterns of group development. Each candidate was asked to discuss a number of jokes and humorous incidents, describing what was meant and why it was or was not funny. The authors identified four types of putdowns: Putdowns of self; put-downs of shared identities, put-downs of external groups (out-groups) and put-downs of each other (in-group).

Putdowns of self, or self-deprecating humour, was very obvious at the start of the course. “I’m a goofy Newfie” – slang for Newfoundlander was rejoined with “I’m trying to learn English too” – from a Francophone, and “like my friend over there, I am trying to learn English” – from a Scot (Terrion & Ashforth, 2002, p. 63). On the next day there were putdowns of shared identities. Resource person: “So if you are a poor speller, don’t worry. I suspect a lot of police officers were more interested in recess than in spelling”. Candidate: “Still are” (p. 64). Putdowns of external groups were observed at the beginning of the second week. Resource person: “What do they teach in military schools?” Scot: “How to kill people”. Resource person, “No, I meant in military *primary* schools.” Scot: “How to kill wee people.” (p. 64.) The first putdown of the ingroup was made by the Course Director on the first day when he suggested to the woman candidate that it was nice to “see a fresh face....., not that these guys aren’t fresh....but you won’t have to sit with these ugly guys

for the whole time” (p. 65). On the third day of the course, others introduced “Newfie” jokes about the Newfoundlander who had high status and was well liked. The second week marked the beginning of more “uninvited” direct putdowns, the nips. When one candidate made a presentation that was more flamboyant and well prepared than others on the day, the second speaker dropped the first speaker’s note-pad to the floor with a sarcastic, “Good presentation, guys” (a bite?) and a great deal of laughter followed.

Most of the direct putdowns that were examined in interviews, the participants suggested were for “gently poking fun”, presumably nipping not biting. One person however, was perceived as violating an important group norm against being a “suckhole” and he was subjected to deliberately meant hurtful putdowns. In fact there were implicit rules associated with putdowns involving group members (Terrion & Ashford, 2002). These were: *Don’t put down a group member who isn’t present*. Putdowns in the absence of the target in interviews seemed to be construed as criticism. *A group member who is the target of a putdown has to be able and willing to laugh at him or herself*. An absent target had no way of demonstrating the “good sport” aspect of putdowns. Often the putdown can be used to test a person’s character (reminiscent of Aristotle, 1969, see chapter 2). *Don’t offend the group member who is a target of a putdown*. If the target did not take the putdown well, then it was thought that it should be retracted. *Certain people should not be the target*. People with personal stigmatizing attributes, loners, relatives of group members or people

who were not liked were not subjected to putdowns. *Violators of group norms are fair game*. Those who were seen to be too friendly or too compliant with the administration were punished (a bite). Throwing the previous speaker's notes to the ground was a signal that you "don't push it on us" (p. 75). Items pertaining to teasing, nipping and biting are found in Appendix E. As previously mentioned, items for Study 1 were selected from this pool.

5.6 Summary

In human societies there is a tension between wanting to be an individual (agency) and wanting to be part of the group (communion). Gossip provides information about other members of the group that are not present. In producing gossip, generally individuals relate to others their experiences within the interpretative frame that enhances them personally (they have more knowledge than the audience). Teasing provides a mechanism for testing information and for testing the emotional investment of the informer. More pointed negative judgments are conveyed with nipping and biting. People have to face uncertain conditions with equanimity to function appropriately in social situations. When confronted by ambiguity, people often laugh as though it is a tease to protect their poise or they may engage in self-deprecating humour, teasing themselves, to elicit fellow feeling. In chapter six, the individual's interpretation of the behaviour of others is explored and categories used to describe the humour of others are identified.

Chapter 6

Other people's humour: Personality and ascribed traits.

6.0 Overview

Differences in personality can be observed within an ingroup of people who acknowledge similarities of background and interests. Chapter six describes research literature that categorizes people into groups based on the way they see themselves or the way others see them in their usual patterns of humorous behaviour. Martin (2007) considered that a “sense of humor may be viewed as.....a set of loosely related traits..referring to consistent tendencies to perceive, enjoy, or create humour in one's daily life” (p. 191). The chapter opens with a discussion of personality traits relevant to the creation of humour and its appreciation. Items created from this discussion are to be found in Appendix F.

Outgroups are characterized by differences that distinguish people on some ascribed characteristic and chapter six continues with a discussion of the effects of ethnicity on differences between people's humorous behaviour. The influence of the workplace politeness on people's behaviour is explored. Items created from the consideration of ethnicity and politeness, are to be found in Appendix G.

6.1 Introduction

Social interactions are shaped by three processes according to Shiota, Campos, Keltner and Hertenstein (2004). First, the emotional experiences in social interactions provide information about the world. People learn and remember patterns of behaviour in themselves and others (Ekman, 1992). Second, emotional displays elicit complementary or matching emotions in others. The display of a facial expression can be interpreted by others because it evokes the same emotion in the observers (Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle & Schwarz, 1996). Third, emotion provides incentives for desired behaviours. Laughing, for example, has a primary function of inducing positive affect, but this emotion depends on factors like the current mood of the recipient and the past history of those who are interacting. “Laughing with” is different in intention to “laughing at” someone. To make a successful joke that elicits laughter is to enter into a positively changed relationship with the laugher (Owren & Bachorowski, 2001). Many studies have confirmed that having a good sense of humour is considered a general social asset and it appears that sense of humour is a personality characteristic that most people want to claim for themselves (Cann & Calhoun, 2001; Lefcourt & Martin, 1986).

6.2 Humour and personality

In everyday life we find humour in our own spontaneous behaviours and in those of others around us. We take note of these instances of humour and we discuss these as intentional humour with acquaintances. We also use humour to

dissect the demeanour and behaviour of note-worthy individuals. An individual's reputation for humour results in social consequences (Craig & Ware, 1998). People can be regarded as agents of integrated actions within a distinct social network. The network observes a particular agent and judges characteristics such as sense of humour, deviousness or defection, self-defeating tendencies, and altruism. These characteristics are useful for evaluation (and the formation of gossip) and decision-making (which could lead to direct interactions, such as teasing, as discussed in Chapter 5).

The Humorous Behavior Q-sort Deck (HBQD - Craig, Lampert & Nelson, 1996) is a technique that can be used to investigate everyday humorous conduct in either the agent or the network. University students independently used the HBQD to record their impressions of professional comedians with whom they were not personally acquainted, but with whom they were familiar through performance (Craig & Ware, 1998). Within the 100 HBQD statements, five themes were identified. These humorous style indices were *socially warm v. cold*, *reflective v. boorish*, *competent v. inept*, *earthy v. repressed* and *benign v. mean-spirited* with high scores indicating the first of each style pair.

Psychology students completed the HBQD for themselves (Craig, Lampert & Nelson, 1996). Four self reports: sense of humor, humor rank, HBQD - good sense of humor and HBQD - relative humor, were used to derive an Overall

Sense of Humor Index (OSHI). Then all 100 HBQD items were correlated with the OSHI. The correlations revealed a number of themes:

Positive correlations with the OSHI included: enhances humorous impact with timing and wit; maintains group morale through humor; has an infectious laugh with a strong sense of humor. The OSHI was negatively correlated with provocative and challenging uses of humour: delights in parodies and/or embarrassing or hidden issues; only with difficulty can laugh at personal failing and displays a fixed smile . The OSHI was also negatively correlated with difficulties in comprehending the humour of others: misinterprets the intent of other's good-natured kidding; fails to see the point of jokes. Finally, the OSHI was negatively correlated with items that described a reticence to either responding to or initiating humour: responds with a short-lived smile; is a ready audience but infrequent contributor.

(Craik, Lampert & Nelson, 1996, p. 278-280).

Because a sense of humour is a highly prized personality characteristic, it could be argued that positive correlations between the humour styles indices of the HBQD reflect mostly a value of social desirability. In their study, Craik, Lampert and Nelson (1996) investigated the relationship between social desirability and these humour styles. They found that 125 individuals gave themselves an "average sense of humor score of 3.83 out of a possible rating of 5, and 96% of them had scores of 3 or higher" (p. 285). Then they asked a panel of 13 university students to independently rate each of the 100 HBQD items on

its social desirability, using a nine-point scale and the instructions “when applied to other people”. The HBQD mean item values correlated .66 with their rated social desirability.

It may appear that the research by Craik, Lampert and Nelson (1996) just reflected a test-taking bias by the students who took part, in that they had made socially valued responses (in the context of psychological research) rather than those reflecting their own self-perceptions. The authors used the “Good Impression” and “Well-being” scales of the California Personality Inventory (CPI, Gough, 1956/1987) to evaluate whether there was participant bias in their results. For the *benign v. mean-spirited humor style*, the “Good Impression” scale showed a significant association but this did not occur for the “Well-being scale”. In addition the “Well-being scale” correlated with *competent v. inept*. The authors concluded that only minimal levels of test-taking bias were reflected in the OSHI and the five styles of humorous conduct.

Continuing with their investigation of personality correlates of self-rated sense of humour, Craik, Lampert & Nelson (1996) used the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI, Myers & McCaulley, 1962/1985) to investigate introversion and extraversion as defined by Carl Jung (1923). Extraverts have a primary orientation toward the outer world of people and objects whereas introverts are oriented primarily to their own inner world of thoughts and ideas. Craik, Lampert & Nelson (1996) had both MBTI scores and OSHI scores for 119

participants. The bipolar extraversion scale showed a modest, significant correlation with the OSHI scores, indicating that in general, extraverts rated themselves higher on having a sense of humour. Boyle (1995) noted, however, that social desirability response set appears to influence scores on the Extraversion-Introversion scale.

The two style indices correlating significantly with extraversion were: *socially warm v. cold* and *reflective v. boorish*. When extraverts were separated from introverts, significant correlations between the OSHI and the HBDQ occurred for the humorous style *socially warm v. cold* for extraverts and *socially warm v. cold* and *competent v. inept* for introverts (p. 289). From this sample (presumably from the USA), the authors concluded that introverts were more likely to value humour competence in their personal humour styles than extraverts, who felt they had a good sense of humour if they did not use vulgarity.

The 100 item California Q-set was initially developed by Block (1961, 1978). Lanning (1994) demonstrated that two items, *initiates humor* and *responds to humor* showed factor loadings on dimensions of the Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality structure developed by John (1990). These dimensions were Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness. The item *initiates humor*, from Lanning's results, loaded positively on extraversion, negatively on conscientiousness and negatively on

neuroticism while the item *responds to humor*, showed no salient dimensional loadings. Lanning found, after partialling out the five factors for *initiates humor*, substantial inter-rater agreement remained and he suggested that there was residual consensual meaning beyond the Five Factor Model structure about the role of making humour. This may have been related to the humour competence style valued by introverts in the study by Craik, Lampert and Nelson (1996).

Craik and Ware (1998) reported in their table 6 (p. 84) that their styles of humorous conduct also had loadings on a composite score of the Five Factor dimensions and the NEO-FFI of Costa and McCrae (1992). These were *socially warm v. cold*, positive loadings for extraversion and agreeableness, *reflective v. boorish* positive loadings for openness, *competent v. inept*, negative loadings for neuroticism, and *benign v. mean-spirited* positive loadings for agreeableness and conscientiousness. They concluded that styles of humorous conduct appeared to be associated with a broad range of personality characteristics.

German adults who were heterogeneous with regard to profession, education and status, were participants in a study by Ruch and Hehl (1998) that involved the use of the NEO-PI (Costa & McCrae, 1992) a measure of five factors of personality, and the 3-WD Humor test (Ruch 1992). The *3-Witz-Dimensionen* Humor test was designed to test the funniness and aversiveness of jokes and cartoons in three humour categories: incongruity-resolution humour, nonsense humour and sexual humour. Ruch and Hehl found a previously well-

established association between the personality factor of openness and appreciation of humour structure (nonsense and residual incongruity) and a negative association between openness and the funniness ratings of incongruity resolution humour. They concluded that “irrespective of how *much* individuals appreciate humor, open individuals tend to prefer unresolved or residual incongruity and closed individuals prefer resolvable incongruities” (Ruch & Hehl, 1998, p. 134).

Twenty-four functions of humour derived from past studies (Graham, Papa & Brooks, 1992) were given to 191 college students. A five point response scale was provided for participants to indicate from 1 *almost never* to 5 *almost always*, whether they used humour to fulfill a particular function. Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation revealed three factors made up of 11 items which accounted for 54.9% of the variance in this *Uses of Humor* scale. These factors were: *positive affect*, *expressiveness* and *negative affect*.

Items that loaded for *positive affect* included making light of a situation, playful and developing friendship. Five items reflecting self-disclosure and the expression of feelings defined *expressiveness* and three antisocial uses of humour such as demeaning and belittling others, saying negative things and putting others in their place were contained in *negative affect*. The Situational Humor Response Questionnaire (SHRQ, Martin & Lefcourt, 1984) was used to provide convergent validity to the 11-item, *Uses of Humor* scale. There were

significant positive correlations observed between the SHRQ and *positive affect* and *expressiveness*. Graham, Papa and Brooks (1992) noted that there were no items in the SHRQ that depict negative uses of humour. Criterion validity was addressed through the use of friends' perceptions of the participants' uses of humour.

The perceived specific qualities associated with a good sense of humour were investigated by Cann and Calhoun (2001). Their 150 female and 86 male participants were introductory psychology students from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Noting that research has shown that most individuals believe that they have an above average sense of humour (e.g., Martin & Lefcourt, 1983), they randomly allocated participants to each of three groups by giving them the instruction to rate on 36 qualities categorized by Alicke (1985), either someone with "a below average sense of humor", "a well above average sense of humor", or "someone who is a typical college student" (Cann and Calhoun, 2001, p.120).

Alicke's (1985) work had four categories, with nine qualities in each: High desirability-high control; high desirability-low control, moderate/low desirability-high control and moderate/low desirability-low control. The 36 qualities were analyzed in a 2 (Gender) x 3 (Humour Type) multivariate analysis of variance. Only the humour type main effect was significant. Cann and Calhoun (2001) concluded that persons with a well above average sense of humour were seen as more positive. Low social desirability was only associated

with a well above average sense of humour if the person was judged “Boastful” or “Restless”. Persons with an above average sense of humour, however, were rated lower on “Mature”.

To determine the underlying dimensions that separate impressions of a high and low sense of humour, the ratings of the 36 qualities were subjected to a principal components factor analysis using varimax rotation. A three factor solution accounted for 49% of the variance and 33 of the 36 qualities had factor loadings over 0.5 on a single factor. Cann and Calhoun (2001) named these factors *Socially Undesirable* qualities, *Socially Desirable* qualities and *Social Sensitivity* qualities. These can be compared with the *negative affect*, *positive affect* and *expressiveness* factors found by Graham, Papa and Brooks (1992), mentioned above. The “Humor Type” main effect and the “Gender x Humor Type” interaction were significant, but univariate analysis indicated that the interaction was significant only for *socially desirable* qualities. The Humor Type main effect was significant for both *socially desirable* qualities and *socially undesirable* qualities.

In a second study, Cann and Calhoun (2001) used the same instructions as for the first study but replaced Alicke’s (1985) qualities with a two-page modified version of the NEO-FFI (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The scores for the five NEO-FFI factors were analyzed in a 2 (Gender) x 3 (Humor Type) multivariate analysis of variance. Only the Humor Type main effect was

significant and on all five factors. The Well Above Average Type was perceived as being less Neurotic, more Extraverted, more Open, more Agreeable, and less Conscientious than the Below Average Type. Compared to the Typical College Student, the Well Above Average Humor Type was less Neurotic, more Extraverted and more Agreeable, but more Conscientious and there was no difference on Openness. These results for perceived personality factors can be compared with those of Lanning (1994), mentioned above, where 18 *initiates humor* (from the California Q-set) loaded positively for Extraversion and negatively for Conscientiousness and Neuroticism on the Five Factor Model. It appears that in the area of humorous behaviour, there is a relationship between what people perceive themselves to do with respect to personality and what others perceive them to do, and that this is pertinent to getting people to judge the attitudes of others to humorous behaviour in the work-place.

The above research, on humour and personality, led to the creation of the items for the survey in Appendix F. As previously mentioned, items for Study 1 were selected from this pool. In section 6.3, the individual's interpretation of the behaviour of groups identified by ascribed terms is explored and categories used to describe the humour of others have been appraised.

6.3 Ethnic differences

Using the typology provided by the work of Bakan (1966, also Wiggins, 1991) the distinctions of leadership, status and power drawn by Duncan,

Smeltzer and Leap (1990) could be further categorized into *agency*; and similarly, group cohesion, communication and organization could be categorized as *communion*. Agency and communion are meta-concepts that are broadly relevant to the understanding of interpersonal behaviour. Agency is manifested in strivings for mastery and power that enhance and protect one's sense of differentiation. Communion is manifested in behaviours that strive for intimacy, union and solidarity with larger social or spiritual unities, according to McAdams (2006) who suggested that the distinction was related to gender differences and had significance in understanding people's motivational tendencies. The "not in my backyard" response to people of other ethnicities is an example of agency applied to personally local territory. The "charitable welcome" response of providing lessons in English and sharing social functions with people of different ethnicity is an example of communion.

Humour is often used, as a positive politeness device, to construct ingroup cohesion and solidarity. It is also a strategy for managing tensions that arise in the interactions between different groups in society. In informal situations, it is appropriate and socially sanctioned to use humour to signal awareness of ethnic boundaries between the subservient and dominant groups in a society (Holmes & Marra, 2002a). Humour in conversations often indicates points of tension between groups. An example is an Australian-born foreman of

an inter-racial work team referring to himself as the “Aussie-wog”¹² to diffuse ethnic tensions.

Material from the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English (WCSNZE) completed in 1998 and the Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) was analyzed by Holmes and Marra (2000a). It had 350 participants and over 500 recorded interactions at 12 different workplaces. They remarked that many instances of humour required a good deal of shared knowledge in order for the “addressee” to understand and appreciate them. “Humour actively constructs and reinforces social boundaries, including ethnic and cultural boundaries” (Holmes & Marra, 2002a, p. 381). An anecdote about the short run of the film *Geronimo* was used to illustrate this idea. Two Maori male friends decided that the lack of audience could be attributed to the fact that the hero was not white “ ‘Well, ‘pparently didn’t have enough *whities* in it.’ ‘no lead role (eh)’ ” (p. 381).

In another anecdote, a different young Maori male said that he recently got into trouble because he did not have a standard signature. “it’s just on everything: your passports and bull-shit like that” “well that’s hoohaa: paperwork eh” (Holmes & Marra, 2000a, p. 383-4). The authors claimed the

¹² The term “wog” is now applied to any foreigner in Australia, but it formerly applied to people of Southern European, or Middle Eastern, origins according to the Macquarie Dictionary (“Worthy Oriental Gentleman”, according to C. W. White, an ANZAC during WWI – personal communication).

word “hoohaa” as Maori¹³. The meaning that they ascribed was “boring, pesky”. In another excerpt, “Ginnie” a Samoan manager chided her team for errors in their production records, “the ones we did were bloody shocking all bullshit we managed to pack nearly six thousand cases on this line here in three and a half hours” (p. 384). Holmes and Marra suggested that Ginnie used sarcasm to soften the rebuke she was delivering to the team.

Lampert and Ervin-Tripp (1998) applied a coding system (form, function and context) to the content of discourse from the UC Berkeley Cognitive Science Data Base of natural language (*Disclab*), for texts of men only, women only and mixed sex conversations involving two to four speakers of the same age in peer interaction. The first sample contained talk from 114 individuals across forty mixed and same sex conversations. They looked at ethnic differences by comparing European-American, Asian-American and Latino families. They found that European- American women were the most likely to joke, tease or tell a funny story (median = 10.7 humorous instances in 100 conversational turns) European-American and Asian/Latino men in mixed groups had medians of 9.0 and 8.4 respectively and Asian/Latino women had the lowest median (7.1).

When they analyzed the targets of humour, Lampert and Ervin-Tripp (1998) looked for four categories: “(1) self-directed humor that made light of personal problems and inadequacies; (2) ingroup directed humor , which

¹³ The word “hoohaa” has the meaning of “fuss, commotion, turmoil or bustle”, according to *The Macquarie Dictionary* http://www.credoreference.com/entry/macqdict/hoo_ha retrieved 28/10/2010

covered all attempts to tease or ridicule another participant in the current interaction; (3) outgroup-directed humor, which included jokes about individuals not present in the current social interaction, and (4) socially neutral humor, which did not overtly poke fun at anyone” (p.266). Their categories were similar to those used by Terrion and Ashforth (2002), see chapter 5. They found no significant differences for socially neutral or ingroup-directed humour. They found, however, that European-American women followed by European-American men were more likely in mixed sex groups to joke about non-group members (medians 5.4 and 3.4 contributions in 100 conversational turns). In contrast, Asian/Latino men and women had medians of 0.0 and 1.0 respectively. In same-sex groups, speakers from all the ethnic backgrounds made comparatively few out-group remarks. The greatest number of self-directed remarks in mixed groups were made by European-American men (median 2.1), significantly more than in all male conversations (median 0.0). European-American women had more self-directed remarks in single-sex groups (1.8) compared with mixed groups (0.0). It may be that those with the most status in their groups were being self-deprecating (teasing themselves to be humorous).

With respect to ethnic differences, Duncan, Smeltzer and Leap (1990) summarized their survey of the field with a statement that ethnic humour was seen as most humorous when “the originator of the humor is not a member of the joke’s focus group” (p. 262) and this generalization was obviously in the superiority section of cognitive appraisal humour. They recognized a second

function of ethnic humour however, “to express defiance toward the object of social domination” (p. 262)¹⁴.. From these discussions of Duncan et al. (1990), it might be argued that the issues involved in ethnic humour, in a particular culture, are similar to the issues involved in humour in the workplace. Duncan et al. (1990) considered leadership, power and status, group cohesiveness, communication in group settings, and organizational culture as major issues.

The above research on ethnic differences led to the creation of the items for the survey in study 1 found in appendix G. There is more latitude for expressing distinctiveness in gender and ethnicity in social or family situations compared with workplace situations, where equity and representation are of concern to human resources departments. The need for consideration of others in the workplace and for political correctness, may lead to the behaviours that are discussed in Section 6.4.

6.4 Workplace exchanges, politeness and social discourse

Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) takes into account the particular “face needs” of both a speaker and an addressee. Within the theory, any person has two roles, speaker and addressee. They assert that among all people it is “mutual knowledge” that they all have *positive face* and *negative face* and all people are *rational agents*, choosing a means that will satisfy their ends. Negative face is a basic claim to territories, personal preserves, or rights to

¹⁴ An Australian example of indigenous defiance to Caucasian supremacy is presented in footnote 15 in the next chapter.

non-distraction, all summarized as freedom of action and freedom from imposition, whereas positive face is consistent with self-image or personality, the desire that the self-image be approved of or appreciated by others. Brown and Levinson's notion of face is implicated with the notions of embarrassment and humiliation associated with "losing face" as used in the English speaking world. They maintained that people cooperate and assume cooperation in maintaining face in mutual interactions. Their particular contribution was the idea of "face wants". These assume that adults want their actions to be unimpeded by others and want to appear desirable at least by some others.

Participant interactions with the confederate in the experiment of Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle & Schwarz (1996) can be analyzed in terms of negative face. In this study a naïve participant, while chewing gum, was asked to take a form down a corridor. A confederate bumped into the participant and his reactions were recorded by two trained observers. One was on the floor and another was facing the participant. The saliva of the participant was collected subsequently. The confederate's bumping action and calling the participant "ass-hole" could be interpreted as an attack on negative face as well as on positive face. The participants in this case were observed to show either amusement or anger.

The theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) suggests that the participants assumed that a Face Threatening Act (FTA) had been committed and they showed this by following particular strategies. Whereas the Southern

participants assumed that the FTA was “on the record”, baldly or intentionally made without allowing for redress and they signaled this interpretation by showing anger, the Northern participants allowed for the strategy of an FTA which was “with redressive action”. Redress allows for the action to “give face” to the addressee. They allowed the confederate to adopt a code of positive or of negative politeness in a further interaction and they signalled this interpretation by showing amusement (Cohen et al., 1996). Laughter can be ambiguous (Chapman, 1976), as discussed in Chapter 3, allowing the laughter time to consider a further response. The protocols of the research, followed by the confederate, did not allow for a further exchange to emerge. In the case of the Southern participants, their hormone levels were appropriate to reciprocating the bald FTA (they reacted with anger). However, the action of allowing for redress (by being amused), was accompanied by lower hormone reactions in Northern participants.

Sharing a humorous exchange provides a strategy for positive politeness and for preserving positive face. The reaction of the Northern participants suggested that they were preparing for a positive politeness strategy. What the Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) failed to address was the initial “arse-hole” outburst. Mullany (2004) listed many criticisms of Politeness Theory, but amongst the most obvious was why anyone would make such a remark if all people are driven by face-saving needs. There are occasions where speakers will perform utterances that are intended to be offensive. Brown and

Levinson concentrated only on avoidance of FTAs. The question remains whether humorous sarcasm, irony or teasing (e.g., the outburst by the Samoan manager “Ginnie” above), can be interpreted as forms of face threatening acts that allow for “redressive action”.

In the workplace, humour is most likely to be context bound. Because situations that are hilarious to those in a particular work context may appear mystifying to outsiders, humour can function as a force to create and maintain solidarity and a sense of belonging to a group. Shared humour is an important ingroup versus outgroup boundary marker (Holmes, 2000). It can be a management strategy, either attenuating or reinforcing power relationships. Holmes analyzed 120 hours of material from 330 workplace interactions in four government departments in New Zealand. The participants included Pakeha (Caucasian), Maori and other ethnic groups (Samoan, Chinese and Thai). At least five interactions from each of the four workplaces were selected, with single sex, mixed sex, involving both Pakeha and Maori participants. Her analysis identified 200 instances of humour. The definition of humour used was “utterances identified by the analyst on the basis of paralinguistic, prosodic and discursual cues, as intended by the speaker(s) to be amusing and perceived to be amusing by at least some of the participants” (p. 163). Holmes noted that addressees often added their own humorous remarks, thus indicating willingness for the humour to continue.

Humour generally is more prevalent in informal contexts, but subversive humour is proportionally much more frequent in workplace meetings. Holmes and Marra's (2002b) analyses demonstrated that subversive humour was conveyed in such a way as to create social distance and emphasize social boundaries between the speaker and the target of the humour. Using critical discourse analysis they examined data from the Victoria University Language in the Workplace Project. Their definition of instances of humour was the same as that of Holmes (2000). They pointed out that a wide range of contextual and linguistic clues are relevant, including the speaker's tone of voice and whether the audience responds. A total of 217 instances of humour spread through 875 minutes of recordings were identified in the business meeting data set. Each instance of humour was classified independently by both authors, and rechecked at a later date. The level of inter-rater reliability was 95%.

Almost 40% percent of the humour in the organizational meetings consisted of subversive humour. The other 60% consisted of reinforcing humour, which supported existing solidarity relationships and power relationships. There appeared to be an interaction between group size and personality, where in larger groups more "extroverted (*sic*) and confident personalities" (p. 69) made more contributions. The authors, however, did not do any testing of personality. Subversive humour was the main focus of Holmes and Marra (2002b). The focuses of subversive humour were either on the individual, the group or organization, or the society at large.

For the 48% of utterances involving an individual, such subversive humour intended to undermine the power, status or “mana” (*Oceanic: personal force to be wondered at*) of the target. The humour was in the form of teasing quips or irony. For the 42 % of utterances at the group or organizational level, relevant values, attitudes or goals of the organization were targets as well, with the members of the group being fairly explicit about dissention. Only 10% of humorous interaction was aimed at the societal level, where the ideology of the business community and broader institutional and social values were questioned. Participants drew on a range of discourse strategies that included the quip, jocular abuse, role-play and terms of address. Because of the nature of business meetings where there is work to be done and humour is seen as being off-task, there were more quips than other types of exchange. These often involved irony and exaggeration. Holmes and Marra (2002b) remarked on the relatively few instances of fantasy in business meetings (only nine instances or 10% compared with subversive humour).

The purpose of subversive humour, Holmes and Marra (2002b) concluded, is to distance the target, for whom the encoded humorous message is of critical intent. This appears to be in accord with the notion of satire. The butt of the humour is distanced in a socially acceptable manner. Particular linguistic devices and paralinguistic cues could be used to emphasize the message. In business meetings humour provided an acceptable means of disagreeing with

the direction of the discussion and for questioning decisions taken by the group. It was the “discursive means of ‘doing disagreement’” (p. 83), a socially acceptable means of challenging and contesting authority. These findings can be compared with those of Nisbett and Cohen (1996). The Northern participants found the interactions with a large confederate who called them an “arse-hole”, amusing. The analyses by Holmes and Marra suggest that this amusement was probably subversive, a way of distancing the participant from the perpetrator of the distressing incident.

As a linguist, Holmes (2006) saw humour as one of the important functions in constructing and maintaining good relations with fellow workers. The data were collected by the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project. Spontaneous, collaborative humour differs from formal joke telling, so Holmes asked her volunteers to record conversations by either carrying equipment or leaving it running on their desks for two or three weeks. Holmes defined “conjoint humour” as jointly constructed humour sequences. She distinguished a number of functions of humour in the workplace. Humour may construct and maintain solidarity, but it can also be used to “hedge” in the face of unwanted directives, criticisms or insults, deliberately implying ambiguity in a situation where intent is clear. Where relative power is a feature of the interaction, it might be used repressively to exert control by those in authority, while they appear to be maintaining a collegial approach. It could be used by subordinates

to mount a challenge which subverted authority by encoding a criticism in socially acceptable terms, making a negative innuendo less easy to challenge.

As an illustration of the problem-solving and the contestive nature of humorous conversations, Holmes (2006) recorded, in full, an exchange in a meeting in a government department where the *bona fides* of a person being discussed was raised (this was gossip). The first premise was that he was popular locally and this was supported by his reputation as a caring employer. Then however, his standing with “across the way” and with “the Minister” was juxtaposed with “he’s quite an honourable guy” (one interpretation of the sequence is that it is a pun on the titles of members of parliament in the Westminster systems of government and an implication that he “is on the inside” of parliamentary policy). This changed premise was then played with by a comment on his manner (“he is a sort of a handshake and I trust you type guy”) and an inference that he and the Minister went to the same type of school (“the old boys’ network”, endemic, one presumes, in Westminster systems of government, even in New Zealand). But a new construction was put on the second comment by a further remark: that this man would not “employ many women workers” (an exclusive *boys* school?). To which a female rejoined “Oh, I probably wouldn’t want the job, either” (Holmes, 2006, p. 39) and this terminated the play. In each case all participants followed the conversational turns, punctuating the remarks with laughter (which acted as reinforcement for those contributing to the flow of remarks). As part of the fun, a range of

concepts were canvassed and a fairly comprehensive assassination of character resulted. The final remark by a woman contained no room for incongruity and appeared to signal the end of the “joke”.

There was interaction of pragmatic force and style in some of the observations analyzed by Holmes (2006). Turn taking in these runs of conversation was also characterized by contributions which challenged and contested previous arguments, rather than pragmatically supporting them (as in the “honourable guy”, above). Sarcasm and irony appeared to be the forms of humour adopted. Holmes distinguished between *supportive* and *contestive* contributions to conjoint humour with regard to content. Supportive contributions agree with, add to, elaborate or strengthen the arguments of the previous contributor (as seen in the gossip above). Contestive contributions challenge, disagree with or undermine the arguments put forward by the previous contributor.

Holmes did not use the word “wit” for contestive humorous statements although there appeared to be some relation to the work of Goodchilds (1972) who reported findings from a study made in 1959. The *Observer Wit Tally* (OWT; Goodchilds, 1972) involved scoring when an observer judged that a group member had said or done something which resulted in an audible laughter response from at least two other members of the group. Inter-rater reliabilities typically achieved were .85 to .90.

This method of tallying wit was used as an objective measure of who had and who had not been humorous in a sample of supervisor personnel in a large eastern corporation. The participants were part of a highly interactive 5-day management development course. There were seven mixed-sex groups of 11 or 12 members. A non-interacting training assistant recorded the humour count and noted which tallies represented remarks that were mainly “sarcastic in tone”. Based on the tallies, more men than women caused humorous outbursts. Of those who were identified as humorous, only males (in the assistants’ judgments) made sarcastically toned jokes. On post-course self-ratings the more “witty” of both sexes, compared with others, gave themselves more positive personality profiles and saw themselves as more active in on-task and group maintenance type roles. Interestingly, when rating each other, all the group members agreed with the favourable self-descriptions of the “witty” members. Those males who were more sarcastic than other males were seen to be even more active, more varied in role function and more favourably rated by themselves and their peers (Goodchilds, 1972).

The findings of the 1959 study were essentially replicated in a study in 1964 (Goodchilds, 1972). The six-person groups were made up of adult male strangers who met for one hour sessions to “assist in a government sponsored study of team-work”. They were recruited at the California Department of Employment Office and were paid for their time. Two standard tasks, each involving an individual pre-discussion answer, a monitored group discussion

requiring consensus on a group answer, and a post-discussion individual answer were administered in a standard order. Those who were highest on the OWT reported themselves to be “talkative and intelligent and generally all-around good fellows” (Goodchilds, 1972, p. 184). They were significantly less willing to go along with the group on the post-discussion answers to the task problem. Those who were humorous and identified themselves as being “witty” were more apt to be in groups that were correct on the task problem (in the second task) and reported more satisfaction with the group experience.

City firemen were another population to be studied by Goodchilds (1972). The method of group engagement was the same as in the study of people from the Employment Office. An experimenter and an observer went to 20 individual fire-houses (10 single-unit houses and 10 double-unit houses) which were randomly selected and scattered over an entire metropolitan area. There were an average of five men in a single-unit house and 10 men in a double-unit house on any day ($N = 153$). Interestingly, neither self-ratings of being humorous, nor scores on the OWT (a score was measured as an instance when two or more people laughed in response, see p. 121) could significantly distinguish “witty” firemen from their non-humorous peers. The author concluded that the need to establish one-self as humorous may not be needed in a long-term situation. Amongst the 10 five-person crews (each within a single-unit house), those groups containing a member who identified himself as humorous, reported more humour (which agreed with the OWT), were more

satisfied with their group, had clearer role expectations of themselves and others and were more efficient in the second problem-solving task. In the double-unit houses there were no positive effects from humour and the author attributed these findings to the structurally complex “built-in dual leadership” associated with the two units. Goodchilds obtained equivocal results using a modified version of the method with teams of military airmen (4 groups of eight). The error variables appeared to be the rank structure (sergeants and airmen) and ethnic groups (Caucasian- Americans and Afro-Americans).

6.5 Summary

Humour use of a particular type is enjoyed by people with similar personalities. People can be pleasantly witty, or can be unpleasant and score points. Some people do not enjoy humour at all. Participants have rated the humorous behaviours of themselves and others on dimensions that correlated with personality variables like extraversion and agreeableness. Other people’s humour may involve either in-groups or out-groups. In-group humour may appear arcane or cryptic to outsiders because the context and history is not generally known. Humour directed towards outgroups may serve to solidify relations between workers as well as providing distinctions about the group itself.

The above research, on workplace exchanges, politeness and social discourse led to the creation of the items for the survey in Appendix H. As

previously mentioned, items for Study 1 were selected from this pool. Agency and communion are concepts that are relevant to leadership in the workplace. In fact Duncan, Smeltzer and Leap (1990) referred to the type of humour involving agency that may lead to litigation as “harassment” and the type of humour involving communion that might lead to litigation as “horseplay” (p. 256, figure 1). Chapter 7 explores how humour has been used in observed leadership situations.

Chapter 7

If it is managed, is it humorous?

7.0 Overview

A continuing tension exists between the interests of workers (who want a fair reward for their labours) and the interests of their employers (who wish to maximize profits) in Western industrialized societies. Humorous communication in the workplace can be classified as either social (with friends) or about the work (advice or questions to others). Those in supervision positions are rated as better leaders if they are rated high on having a sense of humour. Dissatisfaction with other workers or with supervisors can be signalled using humour as unofficial criticism.

7.1 Introduction

The compartmentalization of the life of the individual in Western society is in stark contrast to the almost total control that operates in societies with more hierarchical, traditional or totalitarian structures. In Western culture the various aspects of life, family, leisure, and work are carried out in the company of different people in different situations. “To be laughed at in one context does not affect your standing in another....it is possible for there to be seemingly insulting exchanges in a meeting...and for participants to lunch together calmly and amicably afterwards” (Davies, 2009, p. 59). This chapter looks at

contributions of humour in the workplace in some Western democracies during the last century and emphasizes the contexts in which the humour took place.

7.2 Getting even

In the Western tradition, the labourer was worthy of his hire (Luke 10.7). For example, the builders of the University of Melbourne on 21st April 1856 walked off the job and marched on Parliament. Workers on other buildings joined in as a protest and this movement led to the “Eight Hour Day” (Bellamy, Chisholm & Erickson, 2006), eight hours work without a reduction in pay rates. Currently, this achievement is celebrated at the end of a week-long “Moomba” festival (“Let’s get together and have fun”). This was not the first effort towards fairness (for white Australian males) in the work-place, but it was a “Trades and Labour” improvement, where the workers set the agenda, and it lasted almost 100 years in Australian history. Now the name of the festival is acknowledged as a hoax¹⁵, but the Melbourne City Council proudly continues its use.

The work behaviour identified as “soldiering” was the deliberate restriction of output by highly skilled craft workers in the USA. Taylor (1911/1947) recognized that these workers held the agenda for the pace of output and he reasoned that “soldiering” was the result of inefficient or “unscientific” management practices. His work principles he summarized as

¹⁵ Lippman (1969; cited in Bellamy, Chisholm & Ericksen, 2006) suggested that real “Koorie” meaning of “Moomba” was “bottom up”, glossed in Australian slang to “up your bum”, that Aborigines (without the franchise or equal work opportunities) got even with the White administration of the City of Melbourne in 1951, the year of the Australian Federation 50 year Jubilee.

“Maximum output, in place of restricted output. The development of each man to his greatest efficiency and prosperity”.. (p. 140). Henry Ford introduced the moving assembly line in 1913, the pace of work being controlled by the machinery.

In the United Kingdom, the “Scientific Management” movement, incepted by Taylor (1911/1947), was strenuously resisted. The Guilds, which had traditionally sought to limit available skilled labour, embraced socialism and the small informal work group was the arbiter of production times and practices (Goodrich, 1920). The trade union leaders were bound not to lead strikes first by the "industrial truce" agreed on at the beginning of the First World War, later by the anti-strike provisions of the Munitions Act. The term “rank and file movement” came from the 1915 “tuppenny strike” (Goodrich, 1920, p. 8). The struggle for control of labour between management and workers became entrenched.

In a study in the USA, beginning with the “Depression” (November 1931 to May 1932), fourteen workers were closely observed in a separate room (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939/1964). The workers deliberately kept their rate to making 6,600 connections a day at the Western Electric Company; despite a team incentive of higher pay for more output (Homans, 1951/1975). Three wiremen, one solderman and one inspector formed a team.

“Higher ranking” wiremen initiated a change of jobs (forbidden by the Company) with the “lower ranking” soldermen to relieve the monotony. There were games within the work situation and in the breaks. There was a competition for the longest interviewing record (who could keep the research interviewer tied up the longest). A man who worked too fast was exposed to “merciless ridicule. He was called a ‘rate-buster’ or a ‘speed-king’a man who turned out too little was a ‘chiseler’...” (Homans, 1951/1975, p. 60).

Almost anything was used for betting for very small amounts, although horse-racing was very serious – the fastest worker was known as “Cyclone” or “Pharlap”¹⁶. The shortest man was the butt of jokes (“hang him up by his heels to stretch him out a little”, Homans, 1951/1975, p. 76). This man was recorded as helping out more other workers (“jeering one moment, friendly the next”) than anyone else, but he was seldom helped himself. He was celebrated for his imitation of “Pop-eye the Sailor”¹⁷ and he made wise-cracks and dirty jokes.

The most unpopular man was an Armenian inspector, much older than the others (40 years) and he had three years of college education. Another, who was not much liked, had the highest score on the intelligence test (given as part of

¹⁶ “Pharlap” was a New Zealand born, famous Australian race horse who won North America's richest race, the Agua Caliente Handicap, in 1932. (<http://museumvictoria.com.au/pharlap>). Accessed 18th February, 2010.

¹⁷ “Pop-eye the Sailor” first appeared in the daily *King Features* comic strip *Thimble Theatre* on 17th January, 1929. An animated version did not appear until 1933 (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popeye>). Accessed 18th February, 2010.

the research) and was lowest in output and quality of work. Perhaps having access to education, or not “pulling weight” were characteristics perceived as unfair in bank-wiring. Homans (1951/1975) made appropriate caveats for the size of the sample, the likelihood of participant effects (the famous “Hawthorne Effect”) and detailed the measures taken to detect them, and the cohort effect of the study participants being isolated and discriminated against by other workers. The types of humour and games that the workers employed, however, appeared to Homans to be aimed at adjusting the wage-effort exchange in their favour.

The situation changed with the return of servicemen after the Second World War. In a variety of industries in the USA during 1951 to 1955, fooling around occurred in shipping departments, where young men considered themselves temporary, and humour was reported amongst the welders, who had skills that were not readily learned. ““The welders are always patting each other on the back....kid each other and have a lot of spirit’ The self-assurance and bravado of welders cannot be overstressed..” (Sayles, 1958, p. 26). They controlled the pace of their labour, as a “strategic” group characterized by a “high-level of self-interest activity” (p. 25). Generally, Sayles found that humour appeared absent on assembly lines and conflict with management dominated this post-war work milieu. A dozen workmen could shut down a plant of 10 000 to 15 000 workmen with a wild-cat strike. Humour was used strategically between departments to try to limit these occurrences “Over in the

toolroom, I heard they laughed at us when we had our strike; they said the company ought to fire the whole lot of us” (p. 53).

In the United Kingdom humour was seen as a “countervailing force” to address “workplace subjugations” (Warren & Fineman, 2007, p. 95). Filling the elevator with oversized “Russian Dolls” (dressed in business dress and representing minorities) when clients were expected, was a strategy commenting on unfavorable management practices (p. 101). Deliberately play was aimed at relieving boredom, such as “target dough”, hurling dough at a clock 30 feet away, and “blackberry golf” using frozen fruit and a squeegee (Linstead, 1985, p. 18). Supervision was resisted by using strategic humour. A male supervisor checked a female employee for the second time and was told “I see, you don’t want to trust me, you want to marry me”, an irony inferring power and gender imbalance, (Ackroyd & Thomson, 1999, p. 112). The site services inspector (“Stop! Health and Safety!”) was set up with a faked accident involving a microscooter (Warren & Fineman, 2007, p. 102).

7.3 Humour and External Stressors

Sensory deprivation, sensory overload and uncertainty, leading to lack of prediction, were three major stressors at work, as in other aspects of life, for Dixon (1980). Humour enabled the individual to gain some “semblance of control” against the “unpleasant inflow” of information (p. 282). Dixon hypothesized that the cerebral processes contributing to the production or

appreciation of humour increased the individual's ability to deal with external stressors (a type of relief theory). His evidence for these assertions was initially drawn from case studies of the military during the Second World War, amongst which Spike Milligan¹⁸ featured. "We had 'Saluting Traps'. A crowd of us round a corner smoking would get the tip off 'Officer Coming'. We would set off at ten-second intervals and watch as the officer saluted his way to paralysis of the arm" (Milligan, 1971, p. 113). This was humour in the service of worker communion. Another famous case study offered was that of T. E. Lawrence (as Aircraftman Ross) who finally silenced a bullying sergeant with "a bit of toffology": "Specifically, Sergeant, we can know nothing, unqualified. But like the rest of us, I've always fenced my life with a scaffolding of speculative hypotheses!" (Dixon, 1980, p. 283). This was humour in the service of worker agency, because Lawrence, a recruit, was no longer subjected to torment.

In a London department store, humorous remarks by workers were directly observed. They occurred between individuals and between groups: "mutual teasing about personal habits, appearance, love experience, morality and, in particular, work and method of work" (Bradney, 1957, p. 183). Horse-play was rare and only occurred between young males (who also used obscenity with each other). The humorous remarks that Bradney observed expressed frustration, solidarity with other employees and mild rebuke, generally to cope with "difficult" conditions imposed by management practices, but sometimes

¹⁸ Spike Milligan, writer and star of *The Goon Show* was Anglo-Irish, born in India. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spike_Milligan#Biography

just couched as an exchange of pleasantries, “How’s my best boy-friend today?” “I shall be all right now I’ve seen you” (an exchange between an assistant and the lift-man, p. 184). Bradney stressed the role of humour in ascertaining whether a new-comer was “fitting in”, that is “conforming with a permanent informal tradition of the work group” (p. 185).

The interaction which takes place in a working group could be divided into “cooperation over work” (advice and information) and “social activity” (jokes, fooling about and teasing) according to Argyle & Henderson (1985, p. 251). Workers in a large fish-processing plant in the United Kingdom reported that they teased and joked with their friends at work nearly all the time. About half the workers reported a fair amount to a great deal of satisfaction with their interactions with their friends-at-work, chatting casually, joking with and teasing the other person. Argyle and Henderson reported that “talking about work or about ourselves with friends-at-work” (p. 254) made workers more satisfied with the job, but greater interaction with social friends (workers who were friends outside the plant), was associated with less stress.

7.4 Agency and Communion

Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) argued that, after the Second World War, easing trade restrictions increased competition in domestic markets so that management was forced to increase quality to compete with external volume

markets. This required high levels of conscientiousness and commitment from employees (high communion/solidarity). On the other hand, employees have “an active interest in personal involvement in, and social reward from, their work” (p. 101) (high agency/status). Companies were advised by Peters and Waterman (1982) to develop a company language (which implied communion and solidarity) such as “Family Feeling, open door, Rally, Jubilee, Management by Wandering Around, on stage” (p. 260) and to view themselves as an extended family. In addition there should be “an apparent absence of a rigidly followed chain of command” (p. 262), to which there was a need to “socialize incoming managers” (p. 265). The advice was supported by reference to increased company profits in a range of companies (Hewlett-Packard, Tupperware, Walmart,) in the USA.

Employees, however, may wish to express themselves and to display their own judgments, especially with dissenting or unacceptable points of view to the “family feeling” within a company. Taylor and Bain (2003) observed employees in two call centre companies, where humour was deliberately used to erode the authority of team leaders and to subvert attempts by supervisors to control workplace banter or promote fun. In one centre, union concerns were enhanced by the strategic use of humour. In the other centre “barbs would fly at the employer and managers”, and despite “leafleting forays by two unions” (p. 1498), no strategic challenges eventuated from the humour (apparently just a form of relief).

Joking or humour is made potent precisely because it is a mode of discourse that is in contradistinction to serious discourse (Pollner, 1987). Joking is appropriate when the group in power (managers) wish to be intimate (with employees, particularly to disguise the chain of command), but it does not admit equality. With the rise of the information age and the explosion of inventions, companies now want to appropriate the creativity and innovations of all employees (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999; Peters & Waterman, 1982). Workers can resist appropriations of their intellectual “free space” by the use of humour, and management can use humour to provide a “playroom” to get workers’ “creative juices flowing” (Warren & Fineman, 2007, p. 98).

7.5 Management and the use of humour.

A survey of two hundred and ninety workers (131 males and 159 females) who were employed in a large Southeastern metropolitan area in the United States of America was conducted by Decker (1987). Eighty-three had female supervisors and 207 had male supervisors. The materials consisted of an anonymous questionnaire. Eight items were intended to measure job satisfaction (taken from the Brayfield and Rothe, 1951, Index of Job Satisfaction). The humour items from the scale were: “My supervisor has a good sense of humour” and “My supervisor uses sexual humour”. Thirteen items began “My supervisor is...” with the endings: “an effective leader”, “intelligent”, “friendly”,

“confident”, “witty”, “respected”, “motivating”, “decisive”, “popular”
 “competent” “pleasant” and “masculine” (Decker, 1987, p. 227).

Decker (1987) used analysis of variance to investigate the main effects of participant age, participant and supervisor gender, supervisor sense of humour and supervisor’s use of sexual humour on measures of job satisfaction and impressions of supervisors (13 items mentioned above, p.227). Only the main effect of supervisor sense of humour was significant. Participants who rated the supervisor sense of humour higher reported higher job satisfaction and rated their supervisors higher on those 13 items. Decker found a significant interaction between the age of participants and rated supervisor sense of humour and concluded that the importance of supervisor sense of humour may be greater for younger workers. A three-way interaction revealed the older female workers rated supervisors who used sexual humour lower while other participants did not. Rated supervisor sense of humour correlated significantly with the leadership qualities “pleasant”, “witty”, “friendly” and “motivating” (all between $r = .44$ to $r = .52$, p. 228).

The use of humour has a positive direct relationship with active leadership according to Avolio, Howell & Sosik (1999). Their study was conducted at a large Canadian financial institution organized into four strategic business units (investments, group insurance, general insurance and individual life insurance) and three functional support areas (human resources, market

development and customer service). Their sample consisted of 115 leaders at the top level of management and their 322 respective followers. The leaders were 97% men who had worked on average for 20 years for the company. Each target manager had an average of four followers. Five items were used to measure a leader's use of humour. These were: "uses humour to take the edge off during stressful periods", "uses a funny story to turn an argument in his or her favor", "makes us laugh at ourselves when we are too serious", "uses amusing stories to defuse conflicts" and "uses wit to make friends with the opposition" (p. 221).

The company provided two performance measures. The first represented the degree to which a manager achieved target goals for the year (percentage goals met) from individual contracts negotiated annually. The second measure was an individual performance appraisal measure ranging from "1 marginal" to "5 outstanding", comprising the manager's accountability, job-related competencies and major strengths appraised by his/her direct supervisor annually. The measure of humour was significantly positively correlated with variables of transformational leadership, contingent reward leadership, leader's performance appraisal; and negatively with laissez-faire leadership. The relationship with unit performance was not significant.

A criticism might be offered that only positive uses of humour were canvassed in the five items chosen. Further analyses by partial least squares, however, revealed more complex relationships. Contingent reward leadership

was more negatively related to performance when leaders used humour more often, a phenomenon attributed to the organization's goal of reducing costs while achieving higher goals each year. Avolio. et al. (1999) speculated that coupling the use of humour with a less human-relationship oriented leadership style was perceived by followers as insensitive. Humour also appeared to create a climate where followers were less dissatisfied with leaders using laissez-faire styles of leadership.

Effects of manager gender on the perceived value of manager humour were investigated by Decker and Rotondo (2001). Without committing to definitions, they hypothesized that "positive humor by managers will be positively associated with subordinate perceptions of task behaviors and overall leader effectiveness" (p. 452) and that negative use of humour would be negatively associated. Based on the previous Decker research (1987) above, Decker and Rotondo extended the model to include gender of the manager and hypothesized that the positive perceptions of leader behaviour and effectiveness would be greater for male managers who used positive humour than for female managers. For the use of negative humour by managers, they thought that the positive ratings would be more for male than for female managers. They used a "random sample" by mailing a questionnaire to each of 998 randomly selected participants. Fully completed returns numbered 359, with 217 being males and 135 females as well as 7 who did not report gender. Those respondents having exactly one manager reported 216 male managers and 105 female managers. All

items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with 7 items concerning their manager's perceived enjoyment of humour and sense of humour and six items concerning their manager's leadership behaviours.

The humour items were analyzed using Principal Components Analysis and a two-factor solution explained 72.6 % of the variance. Five items: "has a good sense of humor, communicates with humor, enjoys jokes, tells jokes, uses non-offensive humor" made up the *positive humor* factor, while "uses sexual humor, uses insult humor" made up the *negative humor* factor. Three items loaded on the *leader behaviour* scale as *relationship behavior* ("is popular at work, is friendly at work, shows concern for people") and three loaded on the *task behavior* factor ("shows concern for production, is decisive, accomplishes what his/her superiors expect"). The two factors of the second scale *leader behaviour* explained 77.03 % of the variance (Decker & Rotondo, 2001, p. 455).

Male managers were perceived as using more of both positive and negative humour. *Positive humour* correlated significantly with *leadership behaviour*. *Negative humour* did not correlate with any of the dependent variables, so the first of the two hypotheses was supported. The effect of *positive humour* use by managers, however, was dramatically greater in perceived *leadership behavior* ratings for female managers than for males. Using negative humour led to lower ratings on these two factors for female managers compared with males. Both interactive effects were present when the

gender of the respondent was held constant (Decker & Rotondo, 2001, p. 457). There appeared to be an empirical basis for proposing that *positive humor* and *negative humor* operates within the workplace in the perceptions of the employees. Further evidence for these uses of humour is found in the discourses recorded below.

Humour can be used to gain compliance in managerial business meetings. Data were recorded by Mullany (2004), from six business meetings (three from a retail company and three from a manufacturing company. One female (“Amy”) chaired two meetings and another chaired one. Three meetings were chaired by different males. Mullany reported discourse and used discourse analysis to demonstrate what she termed the use of “repressive humour” to gain compliance. In the first instance, “Amy” gained compliance by overstating the emotion useful to the task (“burning desire”) using a smile voice and, in the second, a person not present was referred to as “the lovely Tom”, and Amy said she needed her “thinking cap” to write his managerial profile. Then those present were invited to gossip: “So if any of you have got any dirt” (Mullany, 2004, p. 24). In another instance Amy was reported as criticizing a member from a different department in order to increase solidarity within her own groups. Amy included herself in the task when in fact only her two female subordinates would have had to undertake it.

When Amy announced that the sales figures were down, a male subordinate raised his eyebrows and started to laugh, so she asked him directly, “What are you laughing at?” which elicited the reply “rabbits out of a hat”. Then Amy conceded, “Yeah we’re doing really well actually” (Mullany, 2004, p. 26). The author considered that Amy’s challenge, “What are you laughing at” was a face attack act while classifying Tony’s remark, “rabbits out of a hat” as ambiguous. Tony’s remark, however, could be considered to be a face threatening act mitigated by humour, as he had already begun to laugh. Tony clearly thought something was impossible, either the sales figures or the company wanting to get increased sales. In another meeting Amy chided a male subordinate for only turning up to meetings when his department had successful figures, a remark that the author interpreted as another face attack act and suggested it was mitigated with humour when Amy concluded with “I’m only pulling your leg, James” (p. 27).

The second female chair, “Carrie” also employed repressive humour to indicate to the group that they would only be allowed to leave at 1 p.m. on Christmas Eve. The second excerpt involved the group (with one exception) not replying to an email about the building closure between Christmas and New Year. She mitigated her criticism by suggesting that this group would have to bribe (with fish and chips) their way in (Mullany, 2004, p. 29). Stylistic differences of using repressive humour to the group, rather than to an individual were not commented on. Mullany (2004) recorded that there were no instances

of male chairs of meetings using repressive humour. It appeared from the transcripts that male chairs expected and received compliance, although in the author's opinion, they all paid attention to their subordinates' face needs. From the summary (Table 2, on p. 32), Mullany interpreted the female chairs as using bald unmitigated on-record strategies in Amy's case 4% of the time and in Carrie's case 15.2% of the time compared with 0% for all the male chairs.

In contrast, Holmes, Marra and Burns (2001) examined the recordings of 22 meetings taken from data from the Wellington Language in the Workplace project. Nine meetings occurred in the (New Zealand) government sector and thirteen took place in private enterprise settings. The number of participants ranged from three to 13, and there were seven large meetings with 10 or more participants. Three meetings involved only women and three involved only men. Nine meetings were chaired by women and 13 were chaired by men. The average length of a meeting was one hour (range 14 to 122 minutes). Humour in the workplace created and maintained solidarity and may hedge or attenuate face threatening acts and negative affective speech acts such as criticisms and insults. Holmes, et al.'s definition of humour required that it be successful (seen as humorous by at least some of the recipients). They provided excerpts of transcripts demonstrating a wide variation in the amount of collaborative humour in meetings, ranging from no examples in two meetings to 71 in 100 minutes in another meeting.

The highest amount of humour was actually recorded at a tea-break, reflecting the authors' statement that work meetings are transactional and have definite goals. When the instigators of humour in meetings were identified by gender, it was found that women on average instigated humour 25 times in 100 minutes of meetings compared with the men's rate of 14 in 100 minutes. The greatest number of instigations of all kinds of humour occurred in female only groups and about half of those were classified as "collaborative" (Holmes, Marra & Burns, 2001, Figure 1, p. 94).

Mixed gender groups had more humour instigations and more collaborative humour than men only groups. Scatterplots (Figures 3 & 4, p. 95) demonstrated that there was more overall humour when there were more women in a group and there was more collaborative humour as the percentage of women in a group increased (although this latter effect was not strong). The percentage of humour instigated by a female chair was 37 % in a single-sex group compared with 40% in a mixed gender group and for a male chair 22% in a single-sex group compared with 27% in a mixed gender group (Figure 5, p. 97). Holmes et al. (2001) concluded that there was more humour in meetings when women were participating and there was more collaborative and extended humour. In addition, there was more humour overall and more collaborative humour when a female was a chair than when a male was a chair, and female chairs instigated collaborative humour sequences more often than male chairs.

Finally, women were more likely to instigate collaborative sequences than men in mixed gender meetings.

7.6 Summary

“Agency” and “communion” (Wiggins, 1991) are suggested in this chapter as the themes underlying the ploys of management and employees to separately control the work output. Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939) observed workers in the USA using humour to control the output of others. When not much work was required, playful humorous behaviour was observed (Linstead, 1985). Recently companies tried to develop “play” in an attempt to harvest worker creativity to improve products and productivity (Warren & Fineman, 2007). Managers were expected to be “motivating” and this characteristic was related to “supervisor sense of humour” (Decker & Rotondo, 2001). Although managers may use repressive humour to gain compliance, generally in meetings the humour observed was collaborative (Holmes, Marra & Burns, 2001). Items pertaining to the use of humour by managers and employees in the workplace are found in Appendix I. As mentioned previously, items for Study 1 were selected from this pool.

Evidence for use of humour in business in the past century suggests that humour is an integral part of communication in the work-place. The purpose of the second study was to establish whether humour influenced an individual’s job satisfaction or even individual anxiety produced by the work atmosphere. A

connection with company productivity might be anticipated, if humour was used to challenge management practices or strategically to further personal goals among employees. Chapter 8 describes Study 1 in which items were selected for response by a sample of international and Australian origins, and these responses were then subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis. Chapter 9 describes Study 2 in which the resulting Humour at Work scale was validated against workplace measures.

Chapter 8

Study 1: Developing a workplace humour scale

8.0 Overview

In this chapter the method used to develop the *Humour at Work* scale (HAW), is described. The results of an exploratory factor analysis of responses to an Internet survey are presented and discussed.

8.1 Method

8.1.1 Participants

In this first study, participants were from an opportunistic sample of 339 people who were invited by email to respond to an on-line survey with the purpose of developing a measure of humour in the workplace. People invited to take part were the members of the *International Society of Humor Scholars*; those teachers of pre-degree psychology in the Victorian government and private school systems who attended the Psychology Conference (February, 2007) of the *Science Teachers' Association of Victoria*; those who attended the April 2007 Colloquium of the *Australasian Humour Scholars Network*; members of the *Star Chorale*, a classical voluntary SATB¹⁹ choir (70 members); those invited to the *International Congress on Creativity* (the Golitsin-2007 conference) held in Moscow beginning 27th June, 2007; the first-year Psychology and post-graduate Life Sciences students of Swinburne University of Technology; and friends and acquaintances of the researcher and her family.

¹⁹ Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass – all members were adults.

The Swinburne first year undergraduate university students who completed the questionnaire were given course credit. The emails contained a request to forward on the email using a blind copy technique (so that the sample would “snowball”) to others who might be interested. The email used to recruit participants and the plain language statement, are found in appendix L.

The data was examined for missing cases and 20 respondents were deleted because they failed to respond to any question in the survey. This reduced the number of respondents to 319. Two hundred and seventeen respondents were from Australia, 62 were from the United States of America, 7 from Canada, 4 from the United Kingdom, 3 respondents were from Germany, 3 from Norway, 3 from Portugal, 3 from Switzerland. Two respondents were from Greece and 2 were from New Zealand. One respondent only came from each of the following 13 countries: Brazil, China, Cyprus, Finland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Romania, South Korea, Tunisia and the Ukraine.

For 318 respondents (one did not report age), ages ranged from 18 years to 81 years. The mean age was 38.8 years with a standard deviation of 16.8. Of the 319 respondents who gave their gender, 187 (58.6%) were female and 132 (41.4%) were male. There were 69 (21.7%) respondents who gave their level of education as secondary and 249 (78.3%) gave their level of education as tertiary. Two hundred and sixty-two (82.6 %) respondents were currently in work and 55 (17.4%) were not in work. Sixty-one (19.2%) respondents

responded to a question about how many years it was since they were in work of 20 hours a week or more. The range for that descriptive was 0 to 35 years and the mean was 3.1 years ($SD = 5.5$). The minimum number of contacts made each day by a participant with other work colleagues was one and the maximum was 500, with a mean of 23.9 ($SD = 46.2$). The number of men that respondents met at work each day ranged from 0 to 130 with a mean of 8.8 ($SD = 12.1$). The number of women that respondents met at work each day ranged from 0 to 400 with a mean of 13.0 ($SD = 27.8$). The types of workplace respondents came from is shown in Table 1.

Half the people (153 participants or 50.2%) who responded considered that they were “general employees”. The next largest category was middle management with 42 (13.8%) respondents compared with 30 (9.8%) in lower management and 27 (8.9%) in upper management. Nineteen (6.2%) respondents were self-employed whereas the “other” category accounted for 34 respondents (11.1%). The organizations that employed the respondents were categorized as having more than 100 employees by 155 (48.7%) compared with 20 to 100 employees by 86 (27.0%) or fewer than 20 employees by 77 (24.2%).

8.1.2 Materials

Literature surveys were made in six areas (theories, development and physiology, paralinguistics and kinesics, gossip and teasing, personality and

Table 1

Frequencies of Respondents Indicating Categories of their Current or Most Recent Workplace

Category	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Education	121	35.7
Retail sales	49	14.5
Hospitality	30	8.8
Information technology	17	5.0
Government	15	4.4
Manufacturing	5	1.5
Primary industry	2	0.6
Other	58	17.1
Missing	42	12.4

ascribed traits, management and organization) described in Chapters 2 to 7.

After consultation and discussion to identify overlap, similarity and obscurity, the 229 items (see Appendices A to I) from these literature surveys were reduced to 75 personal items about behaviour in the workplace and 75 items about others' behaviour in the workplace. Items from the categories above were

colour coded and then arranged in a random sequence (<http://www.random.org/sequences>). The colours assisted a check for random clustering on one theme, and then were changed to black (see appendix J). From those generated for each chapter, the number of items chosen were as follows: physiological considerations 15, paralinguistic cues 22, emotional labour 16, gender 18, individual differences 24, gossip 16, teasing 17 and management/leadership 22. Twelve demographics questions were written (See appendix K).

The seven point Likert response scale for the 150 items had categories labeled *strongly disagree*, *moderately disagree*, *somewhat disagree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *somewhat agree*, *moderately agree*, *strongly agree*.

8.1.3 Procedure

After approval by the University Ethics Committee, the plain language statement and the items (in the random order) were loaded into *Opinio*, a web-based program hosted by Swinburne University of Technology, and the email, containing the URL for the survey, was sent to members of the organizations listed in the *Participants* section.

8.2 Analysis

Three overarching theories of humour were introduced in Chapter 2. The theories provided the “saturated” understanding of the construct (Gilgun, 2004).

From these theories an understanding of humorous behaviour developed and was used in selection of research. All possible types of humour practised in the workplace could not be identified, but it was reasonable to expect that humour used in other situations may be applicable. The appraisal of this research led to the “satisfying” content from which the operational humorous items or “concrete indicators” could be created (Gilgun, 2004, p. 1014, Fig. 1). The purpose of Chapters 3 to 7 was to ensure that there was content validity in the items that were created as a result of the research that had been appraised. Literature surveys were made in six areas (theories, development and physiology, paralinguistics and kinesics, gossip and teasing, personality and ascribed traits, management and organization). After consultation and discussion to identify overlap, similarity and obscurity, the 229 items (see Appendices A to I) from these literature surveys were reduced to 75 personal items about behaviour in the workplace and 75 items about others’ behaviour in the workplace. Items from the categories above were colour coded and then arranged in a random sequence (<http://www.random.org/sequences>). The colours assisted a check for random clustering on one theme, and then were changed to black (see appendix J). It was believed that Exploratory Factor Analysis would illuminate the connections between items that composed the “instrument” (Gilgun, 2004).

The translation of the ideas from previous research into items constitutes face validity, “Does the scale *appear* to measure what it claims to measure”

(Abell, Springer & Kamata, 2009, p. 101). Two problems arise with face validity. The first problem is that people may not interpret items the way the creator intended, that is, items pertaining to some aspect of humorous behaviour at work may not been seen by respondents as relevant. It was believed that those items that respondents felt were not related to humour would be unlikely to survive the Exploratory Factor Analysis. The second problem arises when items seem to be too obvious or politically correct, so that participants may adopt a pattern of socially desirable, or mischievously wrecking, responses. Scales are usually validated against other criteria (such as tests of Social Desirability) to address this problem. Criterion validity will be dealt with in Study 2.

The first decision to be made in the analysis of a snowball sample of responses to a survey is how many participants constitute enough for robust statistical analysis. Based on the model of Guadagnoli & Velicer (1988), a sample size exceeding 300 was considered acceptable for factor analysis. With a survey conducted on the Internet, especially one containing over 150 items for response, it was anticipated that missing data would be likely. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) asserted that if only a few data points were missing in a random pattern from a large data set, almost any procedure for handling missing values yielded similar results. It was decided to substitute a group mean for the missing value. The procedure for missing cases is found in Appendix M , “Syntax for dealing with missing cases”.

As the aim of Study 1 was to produce an empirically based scale, there were no hypotheses about the underlying structure of the variation in responses to the items presented. Using the investigations of Finch and West (1997) as a model, it was presumed that a parsimonious and interpretable structure would result from the analysis. Consequently, exploratory factor analysis was adopted as the method of analysis for all the 150 items described above.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is an index for comparing the magnitudes of the observed correlation coefficients to the magnitudes of the partial correlation coefficients. Large values for the KMO measure indicate that a factor analysis of the variables is a good idea (Norusis, 2005). Exploratory factor analysis is a statistical technique for summarizing the patterns of variance shared between individual items. All items are assumed to be related to humorous behaviour in this study, but each resulting factor should have items that share larger variances with each other than with items in other factors. In factor analysis, shared variance is estimated by communalities, with maximum likelihood extraction (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Although it was assumed that the factors would be correlated, direct oblimin (i.e., oblique rotation) was chosen with the aim of minimizing cross products of loadings on each factor. The decision on the number of factors to accept was based on the parallel analysis method of Horn (1965). This method generates a large number of random correlation matrices with the same number of variables and the same sample size as the sample data. Then the eigenvalues in the observed matrix are

compared with the eigenvalues in the random matrices. Simulation studies have found this method to be the most consistently accurate of the various alternatives for deciding on the proper number of factors (Finch & West, 1997; Zwick & Velicer, 1986).

The Maximum Likelihood method of factor extraction was employed since the SPSS output provided a goodness-of-fit test (Finch & West, 1997). Velicer, Peacock and Jackson (1982) concluded from their simulation studies that this method provides results which are similar for all practical purposes with Principle Component Analysis. Oblique rotations were employed because independence of factors was not assumed. Oblimin was employed as a popular method of oblique rotation. Oblique rotation provides an “*embarrasse de richesse*” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 616), so items with large cross-loadings on more than one factor were removed.

Removal of cross-loadings produced more clearly independent scales with a reduced number of items. Parallel analysis was performed to check the factor number for the items that survived. In addition, factors that had few items or whose items had low loadings were examined by computing alpha internal consistency correlations (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). Finally, a decision was made about how many items to include in each scale. For each factor, five or six marker variables, are considered adequate (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). In this case, six to eight items was considered appropriate).

When the factor items were decided and the factors had been named a factor analysis of the factors was carried out to reveal superfactors. Then the correlations between the factors were examined. Edwards (2008) commented on the dangers of accepting low but significant correlations when the sample size (N) is large (see also Royall, 1986, on the distinction between statistical and “practical” significance in large samples). A criterion of $\alpha = .30$ was adopted as providing “practical significance” when comparing the scales.

8.3 Results

The sample size was large and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was greater than .88, a “meritorious” result according to Kaiser (1974, cited in Norusis, 2005, p. 392). This merit indicated the appropriateness of proceeding with factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). In factor analysis, shared variance is estimated by communalities, with maximum likelihood extraction (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Although it was assumed that the factors would be correlated, direct oblimin (i.e., oblique rotation) was chosen with the aim of minimizing cross products of loadings on each factor. Factor Analysis using a maximum likelihood extraction method and a rotation method of oblimin with Kaiser normalization of the 150 variables that consisted of the items with a 7-point response scale was carried out using SPSS 14.0. A parallel analysis of 150 random variables, ranging from 1 to 7 revealed an eigen value (2.24) for the 10th factor equal to the eigen value for 10th factor for the factor analysis of the items in Study 1. The scree plots for both studies

were assumed to cross at this point, so the first 10 factors of Study 1 could be assumed to be influenced by contingencies other than chance (Horn, 1965, cited in Zwick & Velicer, 1986). Simulation studies, such as the one by Finch and West (1997) have found this method to be consistently accurate for deciding the number of factors.

In addition to the parallel analysis, the scree plot of the eigen values also was examined. The eigen values for the first 15 factors were 20.52, 17.19, 5.75, 4.12, 3.19, 3.03, 2.70, 2.46, 2.33, 2.22, 2.11, 1.94, 1.87, 1.85, 1.83. Ten factors were rotated using Direct Oblimin. Rotation converged in 54 iterations. The pattern matrix for the factor analysis can be found in appendix N. The ten factors explained 42.3% of the variance in scores on the survey for Study 1. The percentage of the variance accounted for by each variable was 20.52, 17.12, 5.75, 4.11, 3.19, 3.03, 2.70, 2.46, 2.33 and 2.22. The 10 factors were named: 1 *Supportive uses of humour*, 2 *Ways of using humour*, 3 *People sharing humour*, 4 *Kinesics of humour*, 5 *Nice workplace*, 6 *Strategies for personal gain*, 7 *Nasty workplace*, 8 *I have no humour*, 9 *Gossip is good*, and 10 *Sarcasm is good*.

Oblique rotation provides an “*embarasse de richesse*” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 616). To produce more clearly independent scales, items which had larger cross loadings on factors were identified and excluded from the analysis. The resulting scale of 74 items was then factor analyzed and the results were compared with a parallel factor analysis of 74 items. A comparison of

Eigenvalues indicated that the screeplots would cross after the ninth component. Nine factors explained 48.92% of the variance.

Alpha reliabilities for the subscales were calculated and the four items from the scale with lowest reliability ($\alpha = .54$) were deleted. A factor analysis of the remaining 70 items was undertaken and compared with a parallel analysis. The optimum solution was eight factors. Briefly, the first factor referred to *Sharing* humour ($\alpha = .85$). The second factor referred to a *Nasty workplace* ($\alpha = .85$). The third factor referred to *Gossip*, in the direction of disapproving of gossip ($\alpha = .80$). The fourth factor referred to a *Nice workplace* ($\alpha = .78$). The fifth factor referred to *No Humour* in the sense of the individual limiting humour in the presence of others ($\alpha = .69$). The sixth factor referred to *Stirring* or challenging others with humour ($\alpha = .76$). The seventh factor referred to *Teasing* ($\alpha = .73$). The eighth factor referred to *Supporting* ($\alpha = .81$). For each factor, five or six marker variables, are considered adequate (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). With the exception of *No humour* (which had only six items), the eight items with the highest loading on each factor were chosen to form the variables in the *Humour at Work* (HAW) scale of 62 items.

The eight factors were then factor analyzed and two superfactors emerged, the first involving a “Pleasant Climate” of the factors *Supporting*, *Stirring*, *Sharing*, *Teasing*, and *Nice workplace*. The second involved an “Unpleasant Climate” of the factors *Nasty workplace* and *No humour*. The *Gossip*

(disapproving) scale did not contribute at a significant level to either factor.

Further analysis of the *Gossip* scale can be found in Appendix P. Table 2 shows the number of items, ranges, means, standard deviations and Cronbach alphas for the eight scales of the *Humour at Work* (HAW) questionnaire.

From table 2, inspection of the means shows that participants who were most likely to respond to items in the 1 *Sharing*, 2 *Gossip*, 3 *Nice Workplace*, 4 *Supporting* and 5 *Teasing* scales as “like them”, were also least likely to respond to items from the 6 *No humour*, 7 *Nasty Workplace* and 8 *Stirring* scales as “like them” (and vice versa). When the standard deviations are compared with the theoretical ranges for each scale, it can be seen that no factors are restricted in their range and that the factors are represented by a spread of scores, i.e., participants differed from each other on the items chosen for each factor and on the factors they measured (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The correlations between the scales are shown in Table 3.

In a sample size of over 300, only correlations over .30 might be considered to evade a Type I error (Edwards, 2008; Royall, 1986). This was the criterion adopted in Study 1. From Table 3, positive practical correlations occurred between factors in the Pleasant Climate superfactor (*Sharing*, *Nice workplace*, *Supporting* and *Stirring*). Positive correlations occurred between factors in the Unpleasant Climate superfactor (*No humour*, *Nasty workplace*). *Teasing* was negatively correlated with both *Supporting* and *Stirring* and

positively correlated with *Gossip-disapproval*. Further analyses of the factors *Teasing* and *Stirring* are to be found in Appendix P.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and Reliabilities for the Eight Scales in the Humour at Work Scale before Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Scale	Number of items	Range (theoretical)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
1 Sharing	8	8-56	43.27	6.74	.85
2 Gossip (disapproving)	8	8-56	36.32	8.11	.80
3 Nice Workplace	7	7-49	35.71	6.45	.78
4 Supporting	7	7-49	34.18	6.54	.81
5 Teasing	7	7-49	23.57	7.11	.73
6 No Humour	8	8-56	26.61	7.14	.69
7 Nasty Workplace	9	9-63	26.22	9.96	.85
8 Stirring	8	8-56	33.14	7.28	.76

Table 3

Correlations between the eight scales of the Humour at Work (over $r = .30$, $p < .01$)

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Sharing		.37	.48					
2 Gossip					.32			
3 Nice WP				.53				
4 Supporting					-.35			.43
5 Teasing								-.32
6 No humour								.38
7 Nasty WP								.34
8 Stirring								

As a second study was planned, to validate the *Humour at Work Scale*, investigations of endorsement and skew were postponed until after the Confirmatory Factor Analysis described in Chapter 9. The final 62 items that comprised the *Humour at Work Scale* are listed in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Items in the Humour at Work Scale that were used in the validation in Study 2.

Humour at Work

In their employment, people experience and express humour in many different ways. Below is a list of statements describing different ways in which humour might be experienced where you work. Please read each statement carefully, and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it. Please respond as honestly and objectively as you can.

- 1 I like to share funny things that happen to me with the women I work with.
- 2 I try to make up something humorous when people are talking about their troubles at work.
- 3 Friendly put-downs are always negative in my opinion.
- 4 When a woman is being funny at work, I usually laugh.
- 5 I pretend to join in when others are being humorous in case they think I am not part of the team.
- 6 I think my weaknesses go over best when I joke about them.
- 7 I do not see much to be humorous about in this workplace.
- 8 People who are humorous with each other seem to get on more in this place than other people.
- 9 Being humorous is a good way to pass on gossip.
- 10 There is not much kidding around or fun happening in this place.
- 11 I do not like people who make negative humorous comments about others.
- 12 In our workplace we use humour to put people at ease.
- 13 People who pass on humorous rumours are just being gossips.
- 14 We like to do silly humour, that relates to nothing in particular, in this workplace.

- 15 At this workplace generally people have an 'above average' sense of humour.
- 16 The ones who are humorous in this workplace are the ones who can help you if you need it.
- 17 I think this is a really good humoured place to work in.
- 18 I like to approach work problems by telling humorous stories.
- 19 In this workplace people are always putting down other people.
- 20 I find a neutral expression is safer at work than letting my humour show.
- 21 People like to make aggressive remarks in a humorous way in this workplace.
- 22 I don't like my conversation made funny by someone else picking up puns or word plays.
- 23 Most women around here appreciate the humorous remarks I make.
- 24 In this workplace the humour from the supervisors is really condescending.
- 25 Our supervisor in this workplace has an above average sense of humour.
- 26 I like to say things "dead pan" (with a blank face) to make them funnier.
- 27 I don't like people who make jokes about other people who are not around.
- 28 The people who make humorous remarks in this workplace are usually more open to the ideas of others.
- 29 I am annoyed by people who gesture and dramatize their conversation to be humorous.
- 30 People never find anything funny in this workplace.
- 31 People use humour in this workplace for nasty reasons.
- 32 When a man is being funny at work, I usually laugh.
- 33 Most men around here appreciate the humorous remarks I make.
- 34 Around this workplace we use humour to boost morale.
- 35 Usually I am able to contribute when I have to join with people having a humorous conversation.
- 36 I just like to do the job without any humorous distractions.
- 37 I like to share funny things that happen to me with the men I work with.
- 38 We use humorous banter to challenge each other in the job.

- 39 People in this workplace are too boring to be humorous.
- 40 The people who make humorous comments about work seem to be more “in the know”.
- 41 I like to stir things up by using humour.
- 42 I use humour when I have offended someone to minimize or neutralize what I said.
- 43 I like being teased.
- 44 I am careful not to make humorous remarks in case they offend.
- 45 I like to keep serious talk and humour separate when talking to work colleagues.
- 46 If people are upset in this workplace then they use more sick humour.
- 47 I use humour to show people what I am capable of.
- 48 There is no harm in a little humorous gossip in this workplace.
- 49 I like to say something nonsensical in a good way to make humour.
- 50 The humour in this workplace is really hostile.
- 51 I do not like put-downs.
- 52 I like to fool the people I tease so they are last to get the joke.
- 53 Even when I don't find something funny, I join in to be part of the group.
- 54 I use humour to tease my supervisor.
- 55 I use humour to give the boss a hint if necessary.
- 56 People use humour in this workplace to point up others' mistakes or faults.
- 57 I feel uncomfortable when people are being witty.
- 58 I know that the supervisor likes some people because s/he is always teasing them.
- 59 Around this workplace people think they can act like children and call it humour.
- 60 In this workplace the boss teases us when s/he wants us to do something extra.
- 61 I tease people by calling them “pet” names that are opposites, like “Shorty” or “Slim” when they are tall or heavy.
- 62 I think of teasing as part of our play in the workplace.
-

8.4 Discussion

In factor analysis it is assumed that the responses given for many different questions are driven by underlying factors that are relatively independent of each other. These factors are thought to reflect the underlying processes that create correlations between the variables. Thus exploratory factor analysis “provides a tool for consolidating variables and for generating hypotheses about underlying processes” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 584).

The historical overview presented in Chapter 2 suggested that there were two uses of humour; play and strategy (Halliwell, 1991). There could be pleasant or unpleasant motives when using humour for play (Davies, 2009) as there could be pleasant or unpleasant motives for using humour for strategy (Bane, 1875). The use of humour for hubris or self-enhancement was described, along with the use of humour for self-deprecation. All these could be thought of as uses of humour within Superiority Theory (Hobbes, 1651/1914). The items that made up the *Nice workplace*, for example, “There is not much kidding or fun happening in this workplace” (*negative*) and “We do silly humour that relates to nothing in particular in this workplace” suggest pleasant or playful motives for humour whereas items from *Nasty Workplace*, for example, “People in this workplace are always putting other people down” and “People like to make aggressive remarks in a humorous way in this workplace” suggest unpleasant or strategic motives for humorous remarks.

It was suggested in Chapter 3, that humour enabled the individual to gain control over the flow of information (Dixon, 1982) and that this was an adaptive aesthetic emotion (Weisfeld, 2006) against stresses such as “emotional labour” (Hochschild, 2003). People could choose to “laugh along” or “resist” (Glenn, 2003). From data collected in work situations, Hay (2000) identified three needs, which were fulfilled with distinct types of humour: Solidarity (share, highlight, boundary-solidarity, teases-solidarity); Power-based (conflict, control, boundary-power, teases-power, and Psychological needs (to defend and to cope). These uses of humour appear to support Relief Theory (Freud, 1905/1960). The scales *Supporting* (e.g., “People who are humorous with each other seem to get on more in this place with other people”) and *Sharing* (e.g., “Most people around here appreciate the humorous remarks I make”) appeared to arise from solidarity and psychological needs.

From Chapter 4, it was expected that people would use non-verbal behaviours to reinforce their humour, and that they would recognize and create humour by deliberately breaking Grice’s (1989) maxims with irony, sarcasm, extreme case formulations and bisociation, as was observed by Hatch and Erlich (1993) in the routine staff meetings of senior management. These creative ways of expressing humour emphasize its incongruous nature, although Holmes and Marra (2002) observed that there were relatively few instances of “fantasy” in business meetings (only 10 % of the rate of remarks of “subversive” strategic humour). Perhaps Incongruity Theory contributes more to play situations that

are non-verbal. This area did not yield a distinct scale, although some items generated from the appraisals in Chapter 4 loaded highly on other scales. For example, “I like to say things ‘dead-pan’ (with a blank face) to make them funnier” loaded on the *Stirring* scale.

Teasing was observed by Hay (2000) in office discourse and Lennox-Terrion and Ashforth (2002) observed put-downs (of self, shared identities, out-groups and in-groups) in Canadian police personnel, as related in Chapter 5. Goffman (1967) regarded the tease as a mechanism for inducing poise as a social skill. Boxer and Cortes-Conde (1997) suggested a teasing continuum that ranged from bonding through nipping to biting. A special case of self-teasing they thought was “self-denegrating”. The scale *Teasing* (e.g., “I liked being teased”, “I use humour to tease my supervisor”) reflected the use of using teasing for office discourse, where items were about general teasing and about teasing managers.

Also in chapter 5, Foster (2004) identified four functions of gossip: entertainment and friendship (categories that appear to be subsumed by play) together with influence and information (categories that appear to be subsumed by strategy). An evolutionary explanation for gossip was that it was a “stress-buffer” (Dunbar, 2004), with four functions: social comparison and social control together with self-enhancement and social cheat. The first two of these functions could be subsumed under the concept of communion and the second

two under the concept of agency (Wiggins, 1991). After Exploratory Factor Analysis, items in the scale labelled *Gossip* were, all but one, in the negative direction or disapproving of gossip (e.g., “Friendly put-downs are always negative in my opinion” and “Being humorous is a good way to pass on gossip” (*negative*). Analysis (see Appendix P) demonstrated gender differences in patterns of responses to this scale.

Within an in-group of people who acknowledge similarities of background and interests, there are differences in personality which are identified in an individual’s behaviour. Out-groups are characterized by differences that distinguish people on some ascribed characteristic (e.g., ethnic differences). Review of the literature on these topics was undertaken in chapter 6. The study of differences in humorous behaviour with respect to personality by Craik, Lampert and Nelson (1996) revealed a general dimension of positive behaviours (enhances humorous impact, maintains group morale, starts others laughing) and negative behaviours (delights in parodies, laughs at personal failings with difficulty, misinterprets the intent of others, fails to see the point of jokes and infrequent contributor). The scale of *Sharing* appears to reflect an individual’s positive humorous behaviours (e.g., “Most women around here appreciate the humorous remarks I make” and “When a man is being funny at work I usually laugh”). In contrast, the scale *No humour* (e.g., “I find a neutral expression is safer at work than letting my humour show”, “I don’t like my conversations

made funny by someone else picking up puns or word plays”) appeared to reflect the negative behaviours outlined in the study by Craik et al.

With respect to ethnic differences in chapter 6, Holmes and Marra (2000a) observed that humour actively constructed and reinforced social, cultural and ethnic boundaries in New Zealand (where the right of Maoris to Parliamentary representation is enshrined in their constitution), whereas Lampert and Ervin-Tripp (1998) observed in the USA, that people of all ethnic backgrounds made comparatively few out-group remarks. Perhaps, acknowledging their superior status, Caucasian men made more self-directed humorous remarks in mixed groups and Caucasian women made self-directed humorous remarks in single-sex groups, a form of self-deprecation. No items involving using humour in situations involving others of different ethnicity survived the Exploratory Factor Analysis to be associated with the eight scales.

Correlations amongst the factors of the HAW suggested two further dimensions. The factors were factor analyzed and two superfactors emerged, the first involving a “Pleasant Climate” of the factors *Supporting*, *Stirring*, *Sharing*, *Teasing*, and *Nice workplace*. The second involved an “Unpleasant Climate” of the factors *Nasty workplace* and *No Humour*. Decker and Rotundo (2001) found in their study of managers and employees (see Chapter 7) two major factors which they called “Positive Humor” and “Negative Humor” (p. 455), in a similar way to the factor analysis of the factors for Study 1. These findings were

also in partial accord with those of Graham, Papa and Brooks (1992, see Chapter 6) who found in their investigations of their 11 item *Uses of Humor* scale, the factors Positive Affect (“make light of a situation”, “help develop friendships”, “be playful”), Expressiveness (“disclose difficult information”, “allow others to know me”, “let others know likes/dislikes”, “avoid telling others about me”, “express my feelings”) and Negative Affect (“demean and belittle others”, “say negative things to others”, “put others in their place”). For college students judging other people’s humour, the three factors, reported in the findings of Cann and Calhoun (2001, see Chapter 6) about humour, were Socially Undesirable, Socially Desirable and Social Sensitivity. Perhaps the workplace, being less relaxed than the college setting, precludes social sensitivity or expressiveness, or maybe the older participants in work-place research make it less likely that such a factor will emerge.

Another explanation involves the tendency for people to evaluate processes according to whether they are benign or threatening. Patterns of response, “bivalent action dispositions towards stimuli” have been investigated. There is a general tendency to distinguish the “hostile from hospitable” in the environment. This tendency results in bivalent structures that are “stochastically and functionally independent” (Cacioppo, Gardner & Berntson, 1997, p. 5), particularly where the underlying beliefs are a guide for behaviour. The *Pleasant Climate* superfactor was “hospitable” in terms of humour in the workplace and the *Unpleasant Climate* superfactor was definitely “hostile”.

Two limitations of the method adopted in Study 1 are, first that people can only respond to the statements presented to them, and, secondly that differences in the number of items on any one topic can influence the pattern of responses. These limitations are the inevitable consequence of presenting, for practical purposes, a closed set of items. An alternative methodology would comprise an open-ended qualitative study that undertook interviews with people about how they saw themselves engaging in humour at work. In the present study, parts of transcripts from actual places of work (e.g., Holmes & Stubbe, 2003) were appraised to create items that mirrored actual behaviour rather than just recollection. In the case of paralinguistic cues, for example, there were 22 items included in the survey of 150 items but no distinct scale survived the analysis. People may use paralinguistic cues when they are uttering humorous remarks, but they do not recall these as being “like them” in the context of other statements about workplace humour. Topics that did survive from the input phase to the final phase of the analysis were items from *Gossip* (initially 16 items) and *Teasing* (initially 17 items). The scales *Supporting*, *Sharing*, *Stirring*, *Nice workplace* and *Nasty workplace* and *No humour* were comprised of items from a number of different input topics. The possibility of the topics of gossip and teasing forming scales because most items contained these specific terms must be considered.

In summary, the behaviours that clustered to form the superfactor *Pleasant Climate* included *Sharing* (personal ability to join in humour), *Stirring*

(personal ability to create humour), *Nice Workplace* (perception of pleasant humour of others) and *Supporting* (use of humour to actively support others). The *Teasing* scale (personal use and receiving of humorous teasing) was negatively associated with *Pleasant Climate*. The behaviours that clustered to form the superfactor *Unpleasant Climate* included *No Humour* (personal dislike for humour in the workplace) and *Nasty Workplace* (perception of unpleasant humour by others). The *Gossip-disapproving* scale (personal disapproval of humorous gossip and put-downs) was not associated with the superfactors.

The 62 items in eight scales emerging from Exploratory Factor Analysis were submitted for ethical consideration along with measures of the work-place as outlined in Chapter 9, to establish the validity of the *Humour at Work* (HAW) scale.

Chapter 9

Study 2: Validating the *Humour at Work* scale

9.0 Overview

The *Humour at Work* (HAW) scale was constructed using exploratory factor analysis as described in Chapter 8. Study 2 attempted to establish the factor structure obtained in the initial study using a more rigorous statistical tool, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The nature of the questionnaire, and the constructs it represented were then clarified, by correlating the final scales, first, with a popular humor questionnaire, the *Humor Styles Questionnaire* (HSQ) of Martin et al. (2003), and then with several established constructs from a range of areas: mood, personality, altruism, and impression management. The HAW was validated against measures pertaining to the workplace. Finally all the items were subjected to CFA, resulting in a shortened form of the HAW. A Multiple Inputs Multiple Causes (MIMC) model was used to elucidate the contribution of the HAW to job satisfaction and to measures pertaining to productivity.

9.1 Introduction

A number of self-report instruments have been developed to measure humor-related constructs, such as the sense of humor (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1991; Ruch & Kohler, 1998; Svebak, 1996; Thorson & Powell, 1993; Ziv, 1984.) These various scales conceptualized sense of humor

as either unidimensional or multidimensional, and came from a range of methodological and theoretical perspectives. Similarly, the popular measure of humor styles developed by Martin and his colleagues (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003), and the measure of how people use humor as a coping strategy (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983), were scales that explored individual differences.

Taken together, the above measures produced an extensive array of studies which facilitated a fuller understanding of the humour construct. Within each questionnaire, however, specific items typically referred to a range of different environments, making the assumption that people behave somewhat similarly across situations. Items, for example, in the *Humor Styles Questionnaire* (Martin, et al., 2003) typically mention either “other people”, “friends” or “family” (p.58). No measure focused on humour within a particular context, such as the workplace, an environment in which most people spend a large amount of their waking hours, and in which they typically share, or are confronted with, humorous communications. The present study describes the validation of an instrument (the HAW) specifically constructed to gauge a person’s use of and reaction to humour in the work-place.

9.2 General humour

The empirical approach taken here contrasts with the approach taken in the development of most questionnaires in this area. For example, in selecting items

for the *Humor Styles Questionnaire*, Martin et al. (2003) assumed a major dimension which differentiated humour that focuses on the self and humour that focuses on others, in addition to benign and detrimental dimensions. Similarly, Thorson and Powell (1993) assumed six elements of humour, prior to the production, through factor analysis, of their four-factor *Multi-dimensional Sense of Humor Scale*. Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield's (1991) *Humor Orientation Scale* was developed within the framework of Communication Theory; while Ruch and Kohler's (1998) model was strongly influenced by the Five Factor Model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Among the more well-researched measures in the area of humour is Martin et al.'s (2003) *Humour Styles Questionnaire* (HSQ), representing the various ways in which individuals use humour: Self-enhancing, Affiliative, Aggressive, and Self-defeating uses of humour. The four reliable scales have been correlated with a number of measures, including the five factors of the Five Factor Model of personality, as represented in the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R; Costa & McCrae, 1992). Affiliative Humor Style correlated with Extraversion and Openness; Self Enhancing Humor Style with Extraversion, Openness and (negatively) Neuroticism; Aggressive Humor Style negatively with both Agreeableness and Conscientiousness; and Self-defeating Humor Style positively with Neuroticism and negatively with both Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. Males scored higher on Aggressive and Self-defeating Humor Styles.

More recently, Yip and Martin (2006) correlated the *Humour Styles Questionnaire* with several other measures, including measures of cheerfulness, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal competence. These writers concluded that the judicious use of humour may contribute to other social competencies to initiate social interactions, provide emotional support and manage conflict. In addition, humour is used to cope with stress to maintain a cheerful perspective in the workplace or to enact a response (Doosje, De Goede, van Doornen & Goldstein, 2010). In the present study, the final HAW scales were correlated with each of the measures of the HSQ.

9.3 Personality and humour

An area of particular interest concerned possible connections of the scales of the HAW with an established contemporary model of personality, such as the Big Five (Goldberg, 1993). In addition to the HSQ, many studies have established correlations between personality measures and humour scales (see chapter 6). As noted above, however, the HAW items were developed on the basis of specific work-related behaviors rather than broad generalized traits, suggesting that the relationships with personality dimensions might be somewhat weaker than those found for the HSQ, for example. In order to avoid an overlong questionnaire, a short adjective checklist measure of the Big Five was employed in the present study. The M-37 (Rawlings, 2001) is a 37-item checklist with its five reliable scales developed on the basis of several large scale exploratory factor analyses and a confirmatory factor analysis; it was

published in Boldero, Rawlings, & Haslam (2007), and is normed on Australian samples.

9.4 Mood

As noted by Ruch and Kohler (1998) in their description of the State-Trait Cheerfulness Inventory, traits refer to relatively permanent individual characteristics, while states refer to relatively short term changes in feelings, moods, and emotions. This distinction is measured, more generally, in the Positive Affect-Negative Affect (PANAS) scale developed by Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988), an adjective-checklist measure that enables the two relatively unrelated constructs of positive affect and negative affect to be measured either as long term traits or short term states, simply by changing the instructions concerning which particular time-frame the individual is to consider. The present study requested that participants should indicate how they felt “right now”, to control for possible effects of present mood on scales such as the HSQ. Given this very short time frame, it was thought that substantial correlations with the HAW scales would be unlikely.

9.5 Impression management

An initial concern with self-report questionnaires is the tendency of some participants to make socially desirable replies rather than to express their true feelings or behaviors. These tendencies have been labeled “self-deceptive positivity” and “impression management” by Paulhus and Reid (1991). The first

label describes those who tend to “distort self-perception to be consistent with self-attitudes” (the participants think that they are telling the truth) and the second describes behaviors that are “intended to provide an instrumental bias for a specific audience” (p. 307), changing the truth for a specific reason (usually to give a favorable impression to others).

This second factor seemed particularly relevant to the possible strategic use of humor. A number of studies investigated what happens when “fun cultures” were imposed on workers; they tended to respond less positively to invitations for play and humour. Case studies (Fleming, 2005; Warren & Fineman, 2007) described worker dissatisfaction and resistance to management attempts to manipulate the environment to produce enjoyment and communion. Alferoff and Knights (2002) documented employee responses to imposed “theme days” requiring “dressing up” and games in three call centres, and concluded that the workers perceived the strategies as attempts to induce conformity and to reduce the workers’ sense of their own personality. Call centres require workers to use protocols or scripts (a form of strategic self-presentation) rather than natural conversations as part of their work. This form of impression management was clearly resisted by some workers.

Using the theory of impression management, Higgins and Pittman (2008) described a number of studies that demonstrated strategic self-presentation to manage the perceptions of others. Tyler and Feldman (2004)

found, experimentally, that self-presentation efforts (untruthful statements) increased and the number of unrecalled untruthful statements increased in high importance situations where there was a goal to make a competent impression. Humour is considered to be an unofficial means of communication (Martin, 2007); it might be also used to resist self-presentation through impression management. Paulhus (1986) investigated different scales and found that the lie-scale from the *Eysenck Personality Inventory* (EPI; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1964) loaded 0.50 on the impression management factor, but only negligibly on the self-deception factor (Figure 1, p.149). The lie scale from the EPI contained items that were specific to contexts, e.g. making declarations at Customs (EPI Form A, item 36). It was decided to use the later and more general lie-scale from the short form of the *Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised* (EPQ-R; Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985) as a measure of impression management for Study 2.

9.6 Altruism

Using participants from a wide variety of employment situations, Bowling, Beehr and Swader (2005) found that the altruistic behavior of giving positive job-related support (talking positively about things that occur at work) was strongly related to the receiving of positive job-related support; while giving negative job-related support (talking negatively about things that occur at work) was related to receiving such negative support. However, these relationships did not hold outside the workplace situation, where personality

factors influenced the giving of non-job related support. The study suggested the possible usefulness of a measure of altruism in the present study. Podsakoff, McKenzie, Paine and Bachrach (2000), in their review, identified altruism as one of several organizational citizenship dimensions within the work situation, in three different studies. The question to be answered was whether workplace humour was an expression of altruistic behavior in an individual worker, or whether it was a phenomenon of the interaction between workers, a “tit-for-tat” (Dawkins, 1976/1989). If the latter phenomenon was operating, then altruism would be a discriminating variable. The Altruism facet scale from the *International Personality Item Pool* (IPIP, A3:NEO; Goldberg, 1999) was employed as a measure of altruism.

9.7 Individual Apprehension, Job Satisfaction and Productivity

It was important to include within the test battery validating measures which had been developed with particular reference to the workplace. Ashkanasy and Nicholson (2003) maintained that an emotional climate required a shared perception of the emotion in question, and defined fear as “a generalized experience of apprehension in the work-place” (p.24). The lack of humour in the workplace, or the existence of humour intended to hurt or belittle might convey the shared perception of fear. In the study by Ashkanasy and Nicholson, their *Climate of Fear* measure (CF) correlated negatively with both innovative leadership and communication culture, from the Organizational Culture Profiles of Ashkanasy, Broadfoot and Falkus (2000). The CF results

varied between worksites, but there were no significant organization effects. Ashkanasy and Nicholson reported Cronbach's alpha reliabilities between .79 and .85. In Study 2, the CF was subjected to Confirmatory Factor Analysis and then was used to validate the scales of the HAW as workplace measures.

Warr, Cook and Wall (1979) defined job satisfaction as "satisfaction with the job as a whole" (p.133). Using participants from the United Kingdom (UK), they developed a global job satisfaction scale of 15 items (with responses obtained on a 7-point Likert-type scale). Cronbach alpha reliability has been reported at .85 and above (Warr, et al., 1979). While the scale met with general acceptance (e.g., Fields, 2002), finding a connection between job satisfaction and productivity measures appeared more elusive, with most studies reporting subjective approximations of productivity through performance appraisal (e.g., Hosie, Sevastos, & Cooper, 2006), raising concerns about validity. In Study 2, the *Job Satisfaction* scale was subjected to Confirmatory Factor Analysis and then used to validate the HAW scale.

In contrast to the appraisal approach, Patterson, Warr and West (2004) studied 42 manufacturing companies in the UK using an objective measure of productivity, "indexed as the logarithm of the financial value of net sales per employee" (p.11). Profitability was measured as profits before tax, after controlling for company size. They also used the scale by Warr et al. (1979) to measure job satisfaction. Average job satisfaction in a company was found to

predict later company productivity and the significance of the association remained after controlling for previous productivity, company size and industrial sector. Patterson et al. concluded that the influence of organizational climate is likely to operate through variations in employee affect (job satisfaction), generating “variations in active work behaviour, enhanced commitment and mutual helpfulness, and responsiveness to group affective tone” (p.19). Patterson et al. also found a significant difference between the mean response of managers and the mean response of employees in Job Satisfaction, with managers on average scoring higher than employees.

The goal of the research by Patterson et al. (2004) was to develop scales of organizational climate which could be used to predict productivity. They found that the indices of organizational climate measure (OCM), productivity and company profitability were highly inter-correlated. Of the 17 scales in their OCM, eight were found to be significantly related to productivity in the following year, after controlling for previous company performance and variations in size and industry sector. These scales were supervisor support, concern for employee welfare, skill development or training, effort, innovation and flexibility, quality, performance feedback, and formalization. The authors reported Cronbach alpha reliabilities ranging from .77 to .91. In Study 2, the eight scales of the OCM which predicted productivity were subjected to Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The resulting combined scale was labeled

Productivity Predictors and was used in the validation of the scales of the HAW.

9.8 Common Method Variance

Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff (2003) pointed out that common method variance can either inflate or deflate the observed relationships between constructs, leading to both Type I and Type II errors. They produced a summary for controlling common method variance in different research settings. Four of their methods were adopted in Study 2. The first method was to ensure that previous answers could not be compared (the participants could not access previous pages in the questionnaire). The second method was to vary the type of response required on the different scales. The third method is to take the lowest correlation between two variables in a study as an indication of the effects of common method variance. In addition, common method variance (a bias in response style) would be expected if these scales were mixed together.

9.9 Aims of Study 2

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the HAW and establishing reliability of the resulting scales was the first aim of Study 2. An acceptable level of practical significance needed to be adopted since the sample of the second study ($N = 379$) was large. As discussed in Chapter 8, Edwards (2008) commented on the dangers of accepting low but significant correlations when the sample size is large (see also Royall, 1986, on the distinction between statistical and

“practical” significance in large samples). In a sample size of over 300, only correlations over .30 might be considered to evade a Type I error. This level of .30 was the criterion was adopted in Study 2. The second aim was the validation of the HAW against an established humour scale (HSQ – Martin et al., 2003). Third, the effects of mood, personality, altruism, impression management and the possibility of common method variance were to be established. Fourth, after confirmatory factor analysis of the relevant scales, the relationships between the HAW and work-place measures of apprehension, job satisfaction and productivity were to be investigated to facilitate the development of a Multiple Inputs Multiple Causes model. Finally, the effects of demographic variables such as gender, level of management and educational level on that model were to be gauged. From the discussions in sections 9.2 to 9.9 above, the following hypotheses were generated.

The scales of the HSQ were assumed to measure general humour and were deliberately constructed to have a benign and a detrimental dimension (Martin et al., 2003). The scales of the HAW were assumed to measure humour at work and were found after analysis of the factors in Study 1 (see chapter 8), to have a positive dimension called *Pleasant Climate* and a negative dimension called *Unpleasant Climate*.

Hypothesis 1a. It was expected that the *affiliative* and *self-enhancing* scales of the positive dimension of the HSQ would correlate positively to a

practical level of significance, with the *Pleasant Climate* dimension of the HAW and that the *aggressive* and the *self-defeating* scales of the negative dimension of the HSQ will correlate negatively to a practical level.

Hypothesis 1b. It was expect that the *aggressive* and *self-defeating* scales of the negative dimension of the HSQ would correlate significantly positively to a practical level with the *Unpleasant Climate* dimension of the HAW and that the *affiliative* and *self-enhancing* scales of the positive dimension of the HSQ would correlate significantly negatively to a practical level with the *Unpleasant Climate* dimension.

The scales of the HSQ were correlated with various Big-five personality factors (Martin et al., 2003), so it was assumed that the scales of the HAW would also be associated with personality factors.

Hypothesis 2a. It was expected that there would be significant positive correlations to a practical level between the *Pleasant Climate* scale of the HAW and the extraversion and openness personality factors of the M37 and a significant negative correlation to a practical level with neuroticism.

Hypothesis 2b. It was expected that there would be significant positive correlations to a practical level between the *Unpleasant Climate* scale of the HAW and neuroticism and significant negative correlations to a practical level with agreeableness and conscientiousness.

The giving of both positive and negative job support is related to receiving the same sort of support at work and these relationships do not hold outside the work situation (Bowling, Beehr & Swader, 2005). Altruism, however, is identified as an organizational citizenship dimension in the work situation (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Humour at work appeared to be more implicated with job-related support (talking both positively and negatively about things that occur at work), than with acting positively for others or for the organization, so it appeared that altruism might be a discriminating variable for the HAW.

Hypothesis 3. No significant correlations to a practical level were expected between the altruism scale of the IPIP and the scales of the HAW.

Individual apprehension at work was measured by *Climate of Fear* (Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003). The *Humour at Work* scale (HAW) consists of both a positive component (measured by the *Pleasant Climate scale*) and a negative component (measured by the *Unpleasant Climate scale*).

Hypothesis 4a. There would be a significant positive correlation to a practical level between individual apprehension at work (measured by the *Climate of Fear* scale) and the *Unpleasant Climate* dimension of the HAW.

Hypothesis 4b. There would be a significant negative correlation to a practical level between individual apprehension at work (measured by the *Climate of Fear* scale) and the *Pleasant Climate* dimension of the HAW.

Job satisfaction was defined as “satisfaction with a job as a whole” (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979, p.133).

Hypothesis 5. There would be a significant positive correlation to a practical level of *Job Satisfaction* with the *Pleasant Climate* dimension of the HAW and a significant negative correlation to a practical level with the *Unpleasant Climate* dimension of the HAW.

It was expected that humour at work (measured by the scales of the HAW) would be associated with the productivity of the workplace (measured by the *productivity predictor* scales of the OCM).

Hypothesis 6a. There would be a significant correlation to a practical level between the *Pleasant Climate* scale of the HAW and the *Productivity Predictor* scale of the OCM.

Hypothesis 6b. There would be a significant negative correlation to a practical level between the *Unpleasant Climate* scale of the HAW and the *Productivity Predictor* scale of the OCM.

As the time of day, the context and the conditions of undertaking the survey were the choice of individual participants, mood was controlled for, together with impression management (which was previously discussed in this chapter in Section 9.5).

9.10 Method

9.10.1 Participants and Procedure

A snowball sample ($N=460$) of people in work in Australia was obtained by approaching 42 Australian companies and organizations and the third year undergraduate students (who received course credit) from Swinburne University of Technology. Cases with more than 5% missing observation were deleted reducing the sample to 377. The companies and organizations were either contacted through “Contact Us” facilities on their web-sites or their Human Resources units were contacted by phone. If the relevant representative agreed to consider the survey, the email (including the URL and letter approved by the University Ethics Committee) was sent. Third year undergraduates were invited to take part by their lecturer and were requested to recruit, if possible, two other adults in work. Missing values were imputed using the Missing Values Analysis (EM) option in SPSS 16 (which had been installed by Swinburne University of Technology after the analysis of Study 1).

There were 234 women (with a mean age of 31.28 years, $SD = 12.39$) and 143 men (mean age of 36.93 years, $SD = 14.93$). Fifty percent of the sample was aged between 20 and 29 years, and 47.2 % of the sample was aged between

30 and 70 years (2.8% did not give an age). One hundred and eight (28.5%) respondents gave their level of education as secondary and 271 (71.5%) gave their level of education as tertiary. Two hundred and thirty-four (61.7%) participants categorized themselves as general employees and 100 (26.4%) participants categorized themselves as in management. Twenty respondents were self-employed and 20 used the “other” category to describe their position in work (10.4% combined). Five cases (1.3%) did not report their employment status. Table 5 gives the employment categories chosen by participants in Study 2.

9 10.2 Materials

Ethics approval for use of the 62 items in the HAW scale (that resulted from Study 1) was granted, together with approval for the use of other relevant measures (see Appendix O). All were listed on the website in the following order: mood (PANAS; Watson & Clark, 1988), using a five point scale ranging from 1 (*Very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (*Extremely*); the HAW using a seven point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*); altruism (IPIP, A3:NEO; Goldberg, 1999) and impression management (EPQ-R lie scale; Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985) with items randomly mixed and a five point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*); personality (M37; Boldero, Rawlings & Haslam, 2007), using a five point scale ranging from 1 (*Definitely unlike me*) to 5 (*Definitely like me*); Humour styles (HSQ;

Martin et al., 2003), using a seven point scale ranging from 1 (*Totally disagree*) to 7 (*Totally agree*); the eight scales of the OCM which predicted productivity

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentage Frequencies of Employment for Participants: Study 2

Employment category	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Education	63	16.5
Emergency services	5	1.3
Government	28	7.3
Health	42	11.0
Hospitality	31	8.1
Information Technology	27	7.1
Manufacturing	20	5.2
Primary Industry	4	1.0
Retail Sales	66	17.3
Sport & Recreation	4	1.0
Other	76	17.3
Missing	16	4.2

(Patterson, Warr & West, 2004), using a four point scale from 1 (*Definitely false*) to 4 (*Definitely true*); and Climate of Fear (CF; Ashkanasy & Nicholson,

2003) using a seven point scale from 1 (*I'm extremely dissatisfied*) to 7 (*I'm extremely satisfied*). Respondents were prevented from accessing previous pages of the questionnaire as it was completed.

9.10.3 Analysis

In the process of theory development, the use of Exploratory Factor Analysis maximizes shared variance between variables because factors (or latent variables) are thought to “cause” scores on the variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). An unwanted effect for scale development is that variables that are too closely related inflate reliability because they repeat an exact contribution to the factor (i.e., they are semantically equivalent). In contrast, Confirmatory Factor Analysis is associated with theory testing, where hypothesized relationships among the variables are subjected to statistical verification. Those variables which correlate higher with each other than with the hypothesized factor to which they contribute can be examined and repetition can be eliminated. The procedure used in *Amos 16* indicated which items in each scale were redundant, contributing spurious reliability (Kline, 2005).

The “just-identified” model produced in Confirmatory Factor Analysis is compared with an idealized model in which the value of the Chi-square is equal to zero and has no degrees of freedom (Kline, 2005). As the value of the Chi-square calculated from the data rises, the worse the model’s fit to the data

becomes. Usually it is unrealistic to expect that a model will have a perfect fit because bigger correlations lead to higher values of Chi-square. A large sample size is required to interpret the Chi-square as a test statistic, which, in turn, is sensitive to sample size. As a result, “some researchers divide its value by the degrees of freedom”....called a **normed chi-square**” (Kline, 2005, p. 137).

Three other indices of fit are recommended by Kline (2005). The first is the root mean square error of approximation (RSMEA), in which the fit of the researcher’s model to the population is not assumed to be perfect. The second is the comparative fit index (CFI) which also does not assume a prefect fit or zero error of approximation. The third is the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), which is based on covariance residuals (ideally zero for a good model) and is a measure of the mean absolute correlation residual. All these indices of fit were considered in developing the models for the long and the short form of the *Humour at Work* questionnaire.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 8, the criterion validity of the *Humour at Work* (HAW) scales was tested against the scales of the well-established *Humour Styles Questionnaire* (Martin et al., 2003). The possibility of socially desirable responding was examined by comparing responses on the HAW with those on the lie scale of the *Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised* (Eysenck et al., 1985). Mood was thought to be a possible confound, that was controlled for by using the *Positive Affect/ Negative Affect Scale*

(Watson & Clark, 1988). Altruism was adopted as a discriminatory variable (measured by IPIP, A3:NEO; Goldberg, 1999). The effects of personality on the responses to the HAW were gauged by use of the M37 (Rawlings, 2001), an Australian scale. To validate the HAW as a measure of work behaviour correlations with *Job Satisfaction* (JS, Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979) and with the *Occupational Climate Measure* (OCM, Patterson, et al., 2005) were examined.

Complementary to factor analysing the factors in Exploratory Factor Analysis, the complete model of confirmed related scales of the HAW was subjected to Confirmatory Factor Analysis. It was expected that further reduction in factors would occur, but the resulting scales could be used in a Multiple Indicators and Multiple Causes (MIMC) Model (Buehn & Schneider, 2008; Munck, 1979) to indicate predictive possibilities. This structural equation model for the data was decided by the validation instruments relating to job satisfaction (JS, Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979) and occupational climate (OCM, Patterson, et al., 2005). The hypotheses assumed that humour at work would contribute both to personal job satisfaction and to a person's perception of the work practices of others.

The final model was tested using indices of fit as discussed above, together with the Bollen-Stine Bootstrap. This index assumes that the population and the sample have the same basic shape. Large numbers (usually 1 000) of random samples are generated and compared with the data under

consideration, so the probability of the model occurring by chance can be calculated (Kline, 2005).

9.11 Results

Confirmatory factor analysis was carried out on the 62 items of the HAW using *Amos 16*. The procedure used in *Amos 16* indicated which items in each scale were redundant, contributing spurious reliability (Kline, 2005). Briefly, *Sharing* was reduced to 5 items ($\alpha=.77$), *Nasty workplace* remained at 8 items ($\alpha=.83$), *Gossip* was reduced to 5 items ($\alpha=.72$), *Nice workplace* became 4 items ($\alpha=.76$), *No humour* had 6 items ($\alpha=.64$), *Stirring* retained 7 items, ($\alpha=.72$), *Teasing* became 5 items ($\alpha=.69$), and *Supporting* retained 6 items ($\alpha=.68$). For comparison, the lowest reliability of the validating scales was for the HSQ – aggressive humor ($\alpha=.68$). These 46 items made up the long form of the *Humour at Work* (HAW) scale.

Table 6 shows chi-squares, degrees of freedom, probability and model fit indices for the eight scales of the HAW after Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Both the *Nice workplace* and *Nasty workplace* scales yielded significant Chi-squares, although their normed Chi-squares (division of Chi-square by Degrees

Table 6

Chi-square Values, Degrees of Freedom, Probability and Model Fit Indices for the Confirmatory Factor Analyses of the Humour at Work (HAW) Scale – Long Form

	Sharing	Stirring	Gossip	No Humour	Nice Workplace	Supporting	Nasty Workplace	Teasing
Chi-square	8.776	23.211	11.452	14.962	2.249	15.249	32.742	8.127
Degrees of freedom	5	14	9	9	2	9	20	5
Probability	.118	.057	.246	.092	.044	.084	.036	.149
GFI	.991	.980	.990	.987	.992	.986	.979	.992
AGFI	.972	.967	.977	.969	.960	.968	.961	.976
TLI	.983	.964	.989	.955	.967	.967	.979	.981
CFI	.992	.976	.994	.973	.989	.980	.985	.991
RMSEA	.045	.042	.027	.042	.075	.043	.041	.041
SRMR	.022	.034	.028	.035	.021	.031	.030	.028

GFI Goodness of Fit Index; AGFI Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index; TLI Tucker Lewis Index; CFI Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR Standardized Root Mean Square Residual

of Freedom) were less than 3 (1.13 for *Nice workplace* and 1.63 for *Nasty workplace*, see Kline, 2005, p.136 for arguments about normed Chi-square, where differences between observed and predicted covariances are slight). *Nice workplace*, however, had an unusually high root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of .075. All other scales had acceptable indices of model fit. The scale items for the final *Humour at Work* questionnaire – Long Form are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

The Items of the Humour at Work scale – Long Form and Subscale Reliabilities

Sharing (Cronbach alpha =.76)

When a woman is being funny at work I usually laugh
 Most men around here appreciate the humorous remarks I make.
 I am usually able to contribute when I have to join people having a humorous conversation.
 I just like to do the job without humorous distractions.*
 I like to share funny things that happen to me with the men I work with.

Stirring (Cronbach alpha =.72)

I try to make up something humorous when people are taking about their troubles at work.
 I like to say things ‘dead pan’ (with a blank face) to make them funnier.
 I like to stir things up by using humour.
 I use humour when I have offended someone to minimize or neutralize what I said.
 I use humour to show people what I am capable of.
 I like to say something nonsensical in a good way to make humour.
 I like to fool people when I tease.

Gossip (Cronbach alpha =.71)

Friendly put-downs are always negative in my opinion.
 I do not like people who make negative humorous comments about others.
 People who pass on rumours are just being gossips.
 I don’t like people who make jokes about other people who are not around.
 There is no harm in a little humorous gossip in this workplace.
 I do not like put-downs.

Table 7 (cont'd)

No Humour (Cronbach alpha =.63)

I pretend to join in when others are being humorous in case they think I am not part of the team

I find a neutral expression is safer at work then letting my humour show.

I don't like my conversation made funny by someone else picking up puns or word plays.

I am annoyed by people who gesture and dramatize their conversation to be humorous.

I am careful not to make humorous remarks in case they offend.

I feel uncomfortable when people are being witty.

Nice workplace (Cronbach alpha =.75)

There is not much kidding around or fun happening in this workplace.*

We like to do silly humour that relates to nothing in particular, in this workplace.

At this workplace people generally have an 'above average' sense of humour.

I think this is a really good humoured place to work in.

Supporting (Cronbach alpha =.68)

People who are humorous with each other seem to get on more in this place than other people.

In our workplace we use humour to put people at their ease.

The ones who are humorous in this workplace are the ones who can help you if you need it.

I like to approach work problems by telling humorous stories.

The people who make humorous remarks in this workplace are usually more open to the ideas of others.

The people who make humorous comments about work seem to be more 'in the know'.

Nasty workplace (Cronbach alpha =.83)

In this workplace people are always putting down other people.

People like to make aggressive remarks in a humorous way in this workplace.

In this workplace the humour from supervisors is really condescending.

People never find anything funny in this workplace.

People use humour in this workplace for nasty reasons.

If people are upset in this workplace then they use more sick humour.

The humour in this workplace is really hostile.

Around this workplace people think that they can act like children and call it humour.

Teasing (Cronbach alpha =.69)

I like being teased.

I use humour to tease my supervisor.

I use humour to give the boss a hint if necessary.

I know that the supervisor likes some people because s/he is always teasing them.

I tease people by calling them pet names that are opposites, like 'Shorty' or 'Slim' when they are tall or heavy.

* Items to be reverse scored.

The limitation, discussed in Chapter 8, that the *Gossip* and *Teasing scales* were a result of sharing these terms within their items, was partially discounted by examination of the 5 items in the *Gossip* scale that survived the confirmatory factor analysis. Only two contained the word “gossip”. In contrast there were 4 out of 5 items in the *Teasing* scale that contained the term “tease”. One other item, in the *Stirring* scale (7 items) also contained the term “tease”.

Examination of the levels of skew in the eight scales after Confirmatory Factor Analysis revealed that when Skewness was divided by Standard Error of Skewness, there were two scales that had levels over 3 (indicating that the level of skew was of concern). These scales were *Nice workplace* (-4.73) and *Nasty workplace* (4.05).

To validate the eight confirmed scales of the HAW as involving humour, they were correlated against the scales of the *Humor Styles Questionnaire* (HSQ; Martin et al., 2003). The correlations above the 0.3 level of practical significance are reported in Table 8. From Table 8 it can be seen that all scales except *Nasty Workplace* correlated with the scales of the HSQ, so it was concluded that the long form of the HAW had convergent validity as a measure of humorous behavior. The *Nasty Workplace* scale contained items pertaining to other people only, and there was a trend just under the 0.3 level for a negative correlation with *Affiliative HS* ($r = -.29, p < .01$).

Table 8 *Correlations Between the Scales of the Humor Styles Questionnaire and the Confirmed Humour at Work Subscales.*

	Affiliative	Self-enhancing	Aggressive	Self-defeating
Sharing	.59**	.38**		
Stirring			.46**	.39**
Gossip (disapproving)			-.46**	
No Humour	-.40**			
Nice Workplace	.35**			
Supporting	.32**	.37**		
Nasty Workplace				
Teasing			.33**	.30**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Other scales of interest included a measure of mood (*PANAS*; Watson & Clark, 1988), the lie scale of the *Eysenck Personality Questionnaire – Revised* (*EPQ-R*; Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985) and altruism (*IPIP*, A3:NEO; Goldberg, 1999). There were no correlations to a practical level of significance between the *PANAS* scales and the confirmed eight scales of the *HAW*. There were no correlations to a practical level of significance with the lie scale of the *EPQ-R*. With respect to altruism, however, *Sharing* ($r = .38, p < .01$) and *Nice Workplace* ($r = .32, p < .01$) were positively correlated to a practical level of

significance and *Nasty Workplace* ($r = .30, p < .01$) was negatively correlated just to criterion.

When personality factors were compared with the eight confirmed scales of the HAW, only two scales showed relationships at a practical level of significance. These were *Sharing* which positively correlated with extraversion ($r = .33, p < .01$) and *Gossip (disapproving)* which positively correlated just to criterion with agreeableness ($r = .30, p < .01$)

The HAW scales were correlated with those scales of the *Occupational Climate Measure* (Patterson, et al., 2005) that predicted productivity. It was found that *Nice Workplace* correlated to a practical level of significance with *Supervisory* ($r = .35, p < .01$), *Training* ($r = .32, p < .01$) and *Effort* ($r = .30, p < .01$). *Nasty Workplace* correlated to a practical level of significance with *Supervisory* ($r = -.45, p < .01$), *Training* ($r = -.47, p < .01$), *Welfare* ($r = -.48, p < .01$), *Innovation* ($r = -.45, p < .01$), *Effort* ($r = -.48, p < .01$), *Performance* ($r = -.38, p < .01$) and *Quality*, ($r = -.40, p < .01$).

In addition the confirmed scales of the HAW were correlated with *Job Satisfaction* (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979) and with *Climate of Fear* (Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003). Both *Nice workplace* ($r = .33, p < .01$) and *Nasty workplace* ($r = -.44, p < .01$) correlated to a practical level of significance with *Job Satisfaction*. *Sharing* correlated to a practical level of significance with

Climate of Fear ($r = -.35, p < .01$) together with *No Humour* ($r = .37, p < .01$), *Nice Workplace* ($r = -.33, p < .01$) and *Nasty Workplace* ($r = .57, p < .01$). The long form of the *Humour at Work* scale was deemed to be validated as convergent with these other workplace measures.

Post-hoc analyses (see Appendix P) using Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) of the demographic differences in the eight scales of the long form of the HAW after confirmatory factor analysis (and the four scales of the HSQ) revealed gender and position effects after controlling for age. Males scored significantly lower on the (disapproving of) *Gossip* scale, suggesting that the negative, practically significant correlation between *Gossip* and the HSQ Aggressive Humor style may be due in part to gender differences.

It was found that male employees scored significantly higher on the *Stirring* scale, compared with female employees and managers (of either gender). The correlations between *Stirring* and all four HSQ scales suggested that this kind of humour can be adopted by people with all humor styles, although the higher, practically significant correlations with the HSQ Aggressive and HSQ Self-Defeating humor styles suggested a common male factor.

The eight HAW scales were then analyzed in a model using *Amos 16* to examine the discrimination between them. It was evident from the implied

correlations for all variables that there were two groups of factors, the first (Pleasant Climate) comprising the scales *Sharing*, *Stirring*, *Nice workplace*, *Supporting*, *Gossip* and *Teasing* and the second (Unpleasant Climate) comprising *No humour* and *Nasty workplace*. The second-order factor analysis of the factors in Study 1 had indicated that such a relationship existed. Within each group, the items from the CFA model for each scale were tested again. The resulting model for *Pleasant Climate* consisted of 11 items and the model for *Unpleasant Climate* consisted of 10 items. Indices of fit for these two scales are shown in table 9.

From table 9, it can be seen that both models were significant. The normed Chi-square of *Pleasant Climate* was 2.29 and the normed Chi-square of *Unpleasant Climate* was 1.96, supporting adoption of the model, if taken together with the satisfactory RMSEA measures that represent “reasonable error of approximation” (Kline, 2005, p. 139).

The two Climate scales were represented together in a model to analyze whether they discriminated against each other. In this final model, *Pleasant Climate* was reduced to 8 items ($\alpha = .78$) and *Unpleasant Climate* was reduced to 5 items ($\alpha = .78$). The scales were only moderately negatively correlated ($r = -.33$) and the model revealed: Chi-square (64) = 93.51, $p = .009$, CMIN/DF = 1.46, GFI = .964, AGFI = .948, TLI = .974, CFI = .973, RMSEA = .035 and SRMR = .042. A Bollen-Stine Bootstrap ($p = .141$) was

Table 9

Indices of Fit for the Pleasant Climate and Unpleasant Climate Scales

	Pleasant Climate	Unpleasant Climate
Chi-square	100.77	68.47
Degrees of freedom	44	35
Probability	<.001	.001
GFI	.95	.97
AGFI	.93	.95
TLI	.90	.95
CFI	.92	.96
RMSEA	.059	.051
SRMR	.050	.039

GFI Goodness of Fit Index; AGFI Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index; TLI Tucker Lewis Index; CFI Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR Standardized Root Mean Square Residual

performed (Bollen & Stine, 1992), indicating that the model was a good fit to the data. The final short form of the *Humor at Work* scale, showing standardized total effects and implied correlations, is shown in table 10.

Edwards (2008) commented on the dangers of accepting low but significant correlations when the sample size is large (see also Royall, 1986, on the distinction between statistical and “practical” significance in large samples). In a sample size of over 300, only correlations over .30 might be considered to evade a Type I error. If such a criterion is adopted, then *Pleasant Climate* is only marginally negatively correlated with *Unpleasant Climate* and discrimination between the scales has been achieved.

Dividing the skew by the standard error of skew for the *Pleasant Climate* scale revealed an acceptable level of -2.62. However the *Unpleasant Climate* scale was of minor concern with the skew divided by the standard error of skew at 3.98. The distribution of this scale was characterized by the mean and median being close together (14.25 and 14.00 respectively) but the mode was 12.

The confirmed scales (*Pleasant Climate*, *Unpleasant Climate*) of the short form of the *Humour at Work* scale (HAW) were then correlated with demographic variables. In the second study, 45.1 % of the respondents worked in organizations that employed 10 people or fewer and 48.5% of respondents worked in organizations of between 11 and 50 people. There were no significant correlations with number of people in the organization, number of men contacted each day or number of women contacted each day. There was no significant correlation between age and *Pleasant Climate* or *Unpleasant Climate*. For these shorter scales of the HAW, those who were educated to the

Table 10

Standardized Total Effects and Implied Correlations for the Items in the Humour at Work Scale – Short Form

<i>Humour at Work</i>	Standardised Total Effects		Implied Correlations	
Item	Unpleasant Climate	Pleasant Climate	Unpleasant Climate	Pleasant Climate
People use humour in this workplace for nasty reasons.	.75	.00	.75	-.25
In this workplace people are always putting other people down.	.71	.00	.71	-.24
People like to make aggressive remarks in a humorous way in this workplace.	.64	.00	.64	-.21
In this workplace the humor from supervisors is really condescending.	.64	.00	.64	-.21
If people are upset in this workplace they use more sick humor.	.45	.00	.45	-.15
I like to share funny things that happen to me with the men I work with.	.00	.70	-.23	.71
I just like to do the job without humorous distractions.*	.00	-.68	.23	-.68
Most men around here appreciate the humorous remarks I make.	.00	.67	-.22	.67

Table 10 (cont'd)

Usually I am able to contribute when I have to join with people having a humorous conversation.	.00	.64	-.21	.64
In our workplace we use humor to put people at ease.	.00	.48	-.16	.48
There is not much kidding around or fun happening in this place.*	.00	-.45	.15	-.45
When a woman is being funny at work, I usually laugh.	.00	.44	-.15	.44
People who are being humorous with each other seem to get on more in this place than other people.	.00	.39	-.13	.39

* Items to be reverse scored.

tertiary level were compared with those who were educated to the secondary level. The results ($\text{CHIDIST}[12] = 11.00, p = .53$) indicated no significant difference in the pattern of response attributable to education level. When the model was compared using female and male samples, the results ($\text{CHIDIST}[12] = 14.60, p = .26$) indicated that there were no significant gender differences. Similarly when those in management were compared with general employees on the model, the results ($\text{CHIDIST}[12] = 7.00, p = .86$) indicated that there

were no significant differences in the way these two groups responded to the HAW.

Pleasant Climate correlated positively with positive mood (PA, $r = .21$, $p < .01$) and *Unpleasant Climate* correlated positively with negative mood (NA, $r = .15$, $p < .01$), but neither of these results reached the criterion level of $r = .30$. The correlates of the HAW scales with Big Five factors in the M-37 (Rawlings, 2001), were investigated. There were no significant correlations above the .30 criterion level. *Unpleasant Climate* correlated significantly and negatively with extraversion ($r = -.14$, $p < .01$) and agreeableness ($r = -.23$, $p < .01$). *Pleasant Climate* correlated significantly positively with extraversion ($r = .16$, $p < .01$) and openness ($r = .19$, $p < .01$). For comparison, correlations between the scales of the HSQ and the M37 showed that HSQ *Affiliative* correlated positively with extraversion ($r = .38$, $p < .01$) and HSQ *Aggressive* correlated negatively with agreeableness ($r = -.48$, $p < .01$). Other correlations were below the criterion level. These findings are reported in Appendix R.

When the scales of the HAW were correlated with those of the *Humor Styles Questionnaire* (HSQ; Martin et al., 2003), *Pleasant Climate* of the *Humour at Work* scales correlated to criterion level with the HSQ *Affiliative* scale ($r = .36$, $p < .01$) and the HSQ *Self-enhancing* scale ($r = .34$, $p < .01$). There was a significant (but not practical, Royall, 1986) correlation between

Pleasant Climate and the Self-defeating scale. The pattern of correlations between the HAW and the HSQ is shown in Table 11.

Table 11

Correlations of the HAW Climate Scales with those of the HSQ (Martin et al., 2003)

HAW scale	Affiliative HSQ	Self-enhancing HSQ	Aggressive HSQ	Self-defeating HSQ
Pleasant Climate	.36**	.34**	-.03	.13*
Unpleasant Climate	-.25**	-.19**	.19**	.07

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

From table 11, it can be seen that *Unpleasant Climate* has a significant (but not practical) negative correlation with the HSQ Affiliative and Self-enhancing scales and a significant (but not practical) positive correlation with the HSQ Aggressive scale.

After Confirmatory Factor Analysis on the *Climate of Fear*, *Job Satisfaction* and *OCM Productivity* scales (see Appendix Q), these three workplace scales were correlated with the *Humour at Work* scales, *Pleasant Climate* and *Unpleasant Climate*. The bivariate correlations for *Climate of Fear*, *Job Satisfaction* and *OCM Productivity* with the HAW scales are shown in Table 12. Although HAW *Pleasant Climate* had significant correlations with the

three work scales used for validation, the size of the correlations was not considered practically significant. The *Pleasant Climate* scale was ignored for the rest of the analysis.

The HAW scales of *Pleasant Climate* and *Unpleasant Climate* were correlated with the workplace scale *Climate of Fear* (Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003). The correlation between *Pleasant Climate* and *Climate of Fear* was found to be negative ($r = -.16, p < .01$), though not practically significant, but the correlation between *Unpleasant Climate* and *Climate of Fear* was positive ($r = .51, p < .01$), significant and practical.

Table 12

Bivariate Correlations between HAW Pleasant Climate and Unpleasant Climate Scales and Climate of Fear, Job Satisfaction and OCM Productivity

	Pleasant Climate	Unpleasant Climate
Climate of Fear	-.16**	.51**
Job Satisfaction	.20**	-.43**
OCM Productivity	.14**	-.52**

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Altruism (IPIP, Goldberg, 1999) correlated negatively with *Unpleasant Climate* ($r = -.25, p < .01$) and positively with *Pleasant Climate* ($r = .27, p < .01$). Neither of these findings, however, were of practical significance, considering the criterion correlation of $r = .30$. Thus Altruism (as a personality characteristic, indicating support) appears to be a discriminatory variable for the short form of *Humour At Work*. By way of contrast, Altruism correlated significantly positively (just at the criterion level) with the HSQ Affiliative Humor score ($r = .30, p < .01$) and significantly negatively with the HSQ Aggressive Humor score ($r = -.37, p < .01$). The HSQ Self-Enhancing Humor score correlated significantly with Altruism ($r = .26, p < .01$), but not to criterion level.

In the current research, the Lie scale of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised (EPQ-R; Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985) was used to measure impression management. Responses to this scale had no significant correlations with *Pleasant Climate* nor with *Unpleasant Climate*. This Lie scale was mixed with the Altruism scale to give a measure of common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). The correlation between the Lie scale of the EPQ-R and the Altruism A3-NEO scale was $r = .15$ ($p < .01$), indicating that very little of the variance could be attributed to similarities in the method of response in the questionnaire.

The HAW *Unpleasant Climate* scale, Climate of Fear, Job Satisfaction and the OCM Productivity scales were entered into a Multiple Indicators and

Multiple Causes (MIMC) Model (Buehn & Schneider, 2008; Munck, 1979) using *Amos 16*. Table 13 shows the calculations of *Lambda* and *Error* from the Reliabilities and Standard Deviations of each of the scales.

Table 13

Alphas, Standard Deviations, Lambdas and Errors for HAW Unpleasant Climate, Climate of Fear, Job Satisfaction, and OCM Productivity.

Variable	Alpha	Standard Deviation	Lambda	Error
HAW Unpleasant	.78	5.85	5.16	7.64
Climate of Fear	.84	9.44	8.64	14.34
Job Satisfaction	.86	10.56	9.87	13.93
OCM Productivity	.94	11.69	11.31	8.61

The final model is shown in Figure 1.

The direct relationship between the latent variables pertaining to *Unpleasant Climate* (UnP) and *Job Satisfaction* (JoSa) was found to be not significant (Critical Ratio = -1.3, $p = .21$) and this connection was removed from the model. The direct relationship between the latent variables pertaining to *Climate of Fear* (cF) and *Productivity* (pP) was found to be not significant (Critical Ratio = -1.1, $p = .25$) and this connection was removed from the

model. The final model fit was good (Chi-square [2] = 2.89, $p=.24$) and the indices of fit were acceptable (GFI = .996, AGFI = .980, TLI = .995, CFI = .998, RMSEA = .034, SRMR = .012, Bollen-Stine Bootstrap $p = .29$).

From Figure 1, the model explains 67% of the variation in scores of OCM *Productivity*. HAW *Unpleasant Climate* has a direct negative effect of $-.30$ on OCM *Productivity* scores, contributing 9% of the variance. From Figure 1, the indirect negative effect of HAW *Unpleasant Climate*, is $-.30$ or another 9% of the variance, acting through *Climate of Fear* to decrease *Job Satisfaction*. Standardized Total Effects for the four scales are found in Table 14.

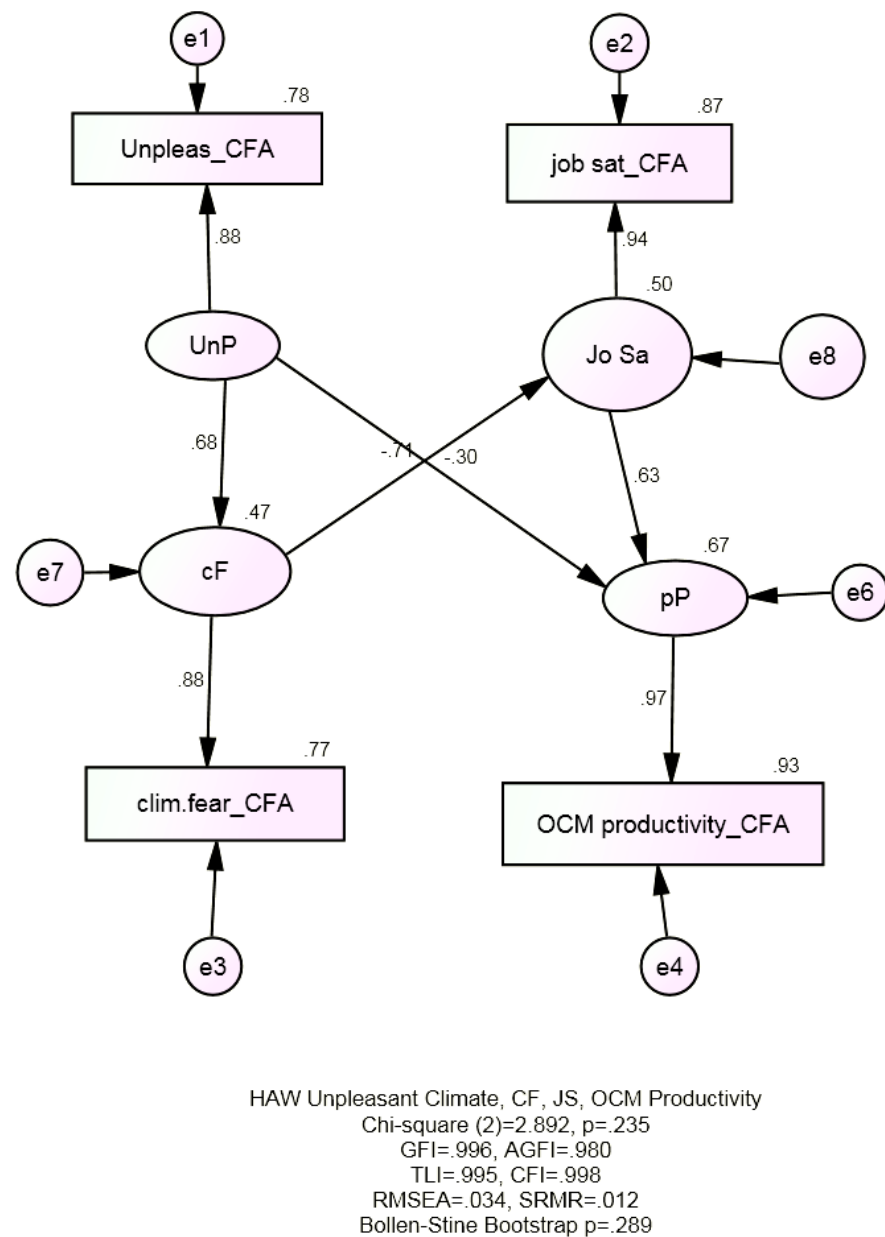


Figure 1 Multiple Inputs Multiple Causes model for Humour at Work Unpleasant Climate, Climate of Fear, Job Satisfaction and Occupational Climate Measure Productivity

Table 14

Standardized Total Effects for HAW Unpleasant Climate, Climate of Fear and Job Satisfaction on OCM Productivity.

	HAW Unpleasant Climate	Climate of Fear	Job Satisfaction
Climate of Fear	.68	.00	.00
Job Satisfaction	-.48	-.71	.00
OCM Productivity	-.30	-.45	.63

9.12 Discussion

Previously developed humour scales do not define a specific context for the enactment and appreciation of humour. The current research aimed to produce a questionnaire that would be useful both in identifying the different ways that individuals prefer to use humour in the workplace, and in identifying how they perceive the humour of others in the workplace. The approach was empirical, and items were generated from references to humorous behavior derived from a number of psychological theories and from previously published transcripts of actual humorous conversations held in natural workplace situations or social groupings, in experimental settings, or reported anecdotally.

The 150 original items were presented on-line to an international (though substantially Australian) sample of 319 participants in Study 1. Exploratory factor analysis yielded eight scales, six of which involved types of humorous behavior (labeled *Sharing*, *Supporting*, *Stirring*, *Teasing*, *Gossip*, and *No humor*) and two of which involved perceptions of the humorous behavior of others in the workplace (*Nice Workplace* and *Nasty Workplace*), each with at least moderate reliability.

A second sample of 377 people in work in Australia was recruited on-line to validate the HAW questionnaire in Study 2. Using the more rigorous process of confirmatory factor analysis on this sample, the initial eight factors which comprised the long form of the *Humour at Work* scale were reduced to 46 items.

Podsakoff et al. (2003) pointed out that common method variance can either inflate or deflate the observed relationships between constructs, leading to both Type I and Type II errors. They produced a summary for controlling common method variance in different research settings. Predictor and criterion variables should be obtained from different sources or measured in different contexts. In the present research, the HAW items were derived from one (partially international) sample and were validated (together with criterion variables) on another sample, however, the same medium (internet questionnaire) was used on each occasion. The “consistency motif” was partially overcome by preventing respondents from

going back to previous pages of the questionnaire. The scales were chosen to be “psychologically different”. The PANAS (Watson & Clark, 1988) and M37 (Rawlings, 2001) were composed of adjectives, the HAW and the HSQ (Martin et al., 2003) were separated by items from the EPQ-R (Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985) and A3NEO (Goldberg, 1999). These last scales were converted to statements in the first person and were randomly mixed. These EPQ-R and A3-NEO scales that were mixed, did correlate, but not to the criterion level. The CF (Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003) occurred at the end of the questionnaire. Positive and negative wording was used in the HAW and items that were reverse coded survived the confirmatory factor analysis. Anchor points on the Likert scales were varied: The PANAS, EPQ-R and A3-NEO had 5 points, the HAW, the HSQ and the CF had 7, the OCM (Patterson et al., 2004) scales had 4. Mood was the first variable to be measured. The length of the whole questionnaire was considerable, preventing much recall from short-term memory.

After Confirmatory Factor Analysis on items within each of the scales of the HAW, satisfactory levels of reliability were found. The 46 items were named the long form of the *Humour at Work* scale. Demographic differences were investigated (see Appendix P). The long form of the HAW was then correlated with the HSQ for validation as an instrument that measured humorous behaviour. All scales correlated to a level of practical significance except *Nasty Workplace* which correlated just under criterion. It was concluded that the HAW was validated as a measure of humorous behaviour.

Because the circumstances under which the on-line questionnaire was completed were not controlled, it was felt that a measure of present mood was appropriate. Correlations between the scales of the PANAS and those of the HAW were not significant to a practical level. It was concluded that mood had no significant effect on responses to the HAW scale. Impression management was measured using the EPQ-R lie scale. There were no correlations that reached a practical level of significance between the lie scale and the HAW scales. It was concluded that impression management was not significantly related to the behavioural measure of the HAW. With respect to altruism, *Sharing* and *Nice Workplace* were positively correlated to a level of practical significance and *Nasty Workplace* was negatively correlated just to criterion. It was concluded that altruism was among the motives people endorsed in their humorous behaviour at work. Two scales from the M37 (Rawlings 2001) measure of personality were found to correlate to a practical level of significance with scales of the HAW, *Sharing* positively with extraversion and *Gossip (disapproving)* positively just to criterion with agreeableness. It was concluded that the scales of the long form of the HAW predominantly reflected humorous behaviour, with less influence from personality traits compared with the scales of the HSQ (a comparison of personality correlates from the M37 with both the HAW and the HSQ for the sample in the second study is found in Appendix R).

From these findings it appeared that the scales in the longer form of the HAW might have an application in the field of Human Resources by providing indications of how humorous behavior differs between males and females and between managers and employees. Types of behaviours, e.g., sharing or supporting can be explicated by discussion of the individual items as these have been endorsed as typically occurring in the workplace. Both positive and negative instances of humorous behaviour can be explored using the scales of the long form of the HAW.

When all the items of the long form of the HAW were examined in *Amos 16*, the model was reduced to two factors labeled *Pleasant Climate* and *Unpleasant Climate*, comprising respectively eight and five items. This 13-item questionnaire became the short version of the HAW. These factors reflected the two superfactors that were found in Study 1.

Given the large sample size, a correlation of $r = .30$ was adopted as the criterion for practical significance (Royall, 1986). Using this criterion, there was no practically significant correlation of either the *Pleasant Climate* scale or the *Unpleasant Climate* scale with age or with several self-report demographic measures administered with the HAW in Study 2, i.e., there were no significant differences on either scale of this short questionnaire with respect to gender, education level, or employment status.

The relationship between the two HAW scales, *Pleasant Climate* and *Unpleasant Climate*, resembled the bi-variate structure suggested by Cacioppo, Gardner and Berntson (1997) where underlying beliefs are the “target for deliberation or a guide for behaviour” (p.5). These two HAW scales were only moderately negatively correlated ($r = -.33$, at just over the criterion level), in accord with previous research conducted by Cacioppo et al., (1997). The assertion, by Cacioppo et al., that such a bi-variate relationship reflected functionally independent evaluative processes, partially explained the findings of different patterns of relationships to those expected with the validating scales discussed below.

As expected, the two scales of the HAW did not correlate practically with measures of positive and negative affect (PANAS), nor did the two scales of the HAW correlate at the criterion level with a measure of impression management (the EPQ-R lie scale). When the HAW scales were correlated with an established humor instrument, the HSQ (Martin et al., 2003), *Pleasant Climate* correlated at the criterion level with both of the “positive” scales of the HSQ, *Affiliative humor* and *Self-enhancing humor*, though the correlations were not strong. This finding partially supported Hypothesis 1a. Some construct validity was established for the HAW short form as a measure of humour. There were no practical correlations of *Pleasant Climate* with the HSQ *Aggressive* and *Self-defeating* scales. None of the

correlations with *Unpleasant Climate* reached the criterion level, so hypothesis 1b was rejected.

There were no practically significant correlations between the scales of the M37 and the *Pleasant* and *Unpleasant* scales of the HAW, so both the hypotheses H2a and H2b were rejected. One correlation between M 37 *Agreeableness* and *Unpleasant Climate* could be described as a trend ($r = -.23, p < .01$). (see Appendix R).

Altruism (IPIP;A3 NEO; Goldberg, 1993) was a discriminatory variable, as the correlations with the HAW scales were not practically significant and H3 was supported.

A clear correlation was found between the workplace-related *Climate of Fear* measure of Ashkanasy and Nicholson (2003) and the HAW *Unpleasant Climate* scale, so hypothesis H4a was supported. There was no practically significant correlation between *Climate of Fear* and the HAW *Pleasant Climate* scale so hypothesis H4b was rejected.

Satisfaction with a job as a whole (*Job Satisfaction*) was expected to be related positively in practical significance to *Pleasant Climate* and to have a negative relationship to a practical level of significance with *Unpleasant Climate*. Only the latter correlation reached the criterion, so H5 was only partially

supported. Similarly, the only practically significant correlation between the *productivity predictor* scale of the OCM was negative with *Unpleasant Climate*, so hypothesis H6b was supported and hypothesis H6a was rejected.

To establish connections between indicators of productivity from the OCM (Patterson, Warr & West, 2004), *Job Satisfaction* (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979) and *Climate of Fear* (Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003), these scales had to be subjected to Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The account of these analyses is found in Appendix Q. A Multiple Inputs Multiple Causes model of these work-place measures with *Unpleasant Climate* revealed that 46 % of the variance in *Climate of Fear* scores could be attributed to *Unpleasant Climate*. This latter scale contained no items pertaining to the first person, in contrast to the CF items which were all in the first person. *Climate of Fear* moderated the effect of *Unpleasant Climate*, explaining 49% of the variance in *Job Satisfaction*. *Unpleasant Climate* directly explained 9% of the variance in *OCM Productivity*. Moderated by *Climate of Fear* and *Job Satisfaction*, *Unpleasant Climate* explained another 9% of the variance in *OCM Productivity*. The combined effect of *Unpleasant Climate* on *OCM Productivity* (the individual's perception of the productivity of the organization) was therefore another 18 %. All these scales were conceptually and statistically distinct, reflecting aspects of work to do with the individual (*Climate of Fear*, *Job Satisfaction*) and to do with the behaviour of others (*Unpleasant Climate*, *Productivity*).

Pleasant Climate correlated ($r = -.31$) with *Unpleasant Climate*, presumably because both involved humour, but they were distinct scales (Cacioppo, Gardner & Berntson, 1997). The role of pleasant humour in the work-place does not appear to influence an individual's personal job satisfaction, nor the individual's perception of the productivity of other work colleagues. Sharing pleasant humour at work appears to be playful and as suggested by Martin (2007, p.360), unrelated to the "serious business" of work. Similarly Marcuse (1969) reasoned that work could only release time and energy for play outside "the realm of alienated labor" (p.129). A pleasant climate of humour at work, however, may contribute to a individual's cognitive reappraisal of stressful situations, so a "generic humorous coping" strategy (Doosje et al., 2010) may contribute to feelings of personal well-being, that were not measured in the studies reported here.

Companies that introduce schemes to foster a climate of humour and fun may not be addressing one of the causes of distress, the unpleasant use of humour by others. *Unpleasant Climate* measures behaviours in others that directly influence an individual's feelings of apprehension in the workplace. These feelings of fear influence personal job satisfaction and the individual's estimation of factors that are known to influence productivity such as innovation, effort, performance, quality, supervisor support and training. The short form of the HAW can provide a presage of how humorous behaviour is viewed in the workplace. It appears to be minimally influenced by impression management, so should give a valid estimation of humorous communication.

A possible criticism of the samples was that 78% in Study 1 and 71.5% in Study 2 described their education as “tertiary”, a bias which was difficult to counter given the need to be fluent in English and to be familiar with the internet. Over half the participants in both studies considered themselves to be “general employees” of their organizations, with around a quarter in “management”; over 80% were currently in work in Study 1, while all Study 2 participants were working; and almost half in both studies worked in organizations that employed more than 100 people and over a quarter in organizations with between 20 to 100 employees. It appeared that the samples reasonably represented general working conditions in the developed world, though further replication (particularly in developing countries) would clearly provide further support to the obtained model.

One area for further research would be to investigate the relationships between the *Humour at Work* scale and the *Questionnaire of Occupational Humorous Coping* (QOHC, Doosje et al., 2010). This latter questionnaire contains items only about the individual (in the first person) and reflects three orientations to using humour to cope with work stresses. If there is a high level of *Unpleasant Climate* at a work place, will this be reflected in greater use of response-focussed or instrumental humorous coping? Do people who use antecedent-focussed coping use different patterns of humorous behaviour (*Sharing, Stirring or Teasing*) more in comparison with those who are response-focussed?

Employee cynicism has been investigated by Cole, Bruch and Vogel (2006), and they found that positive and negative emotions experienced by employees amidst an organizational crisis fully mediated the relationships between perceived supervisor support and employee hardiness and between perceived supervisor support and employee cynicism. Because *Unpleasant Climate* measures the perceived behaviour of others, it could be investigated as an antecedent to workplace emotions and as a possible causal factor in employee cynicism.

Several other areas are suggested for further research. Although the HAW scale was validated on a sample involving employees from a wide variety of occupations, its value in differentiating the work humour operating at different work sites within one organization is yet to be established. The HAW scale (as an indirect measure) might also be used to predict job satisfaction. Fisher (2000) suggested that frequency of net positive emotion is a stronger predictor of overall job satisfaction than intensity of positive emotion. Items in the *Pleasant Climate* scale imply frequency of humorous interaction with others, and might be used in cross-lagged studies to investigate Fisher's suggestion.

The items in the *Unpleasant Climate* scale only involve the behavior of other people and could be used to predict personal anxiety, as the measure *Climate of Fear* does, but in a manner that did not involve disclosure of personal behaviors and feelings. Furthermore, the concept of "organizational citizenship"

(Posakoff et al., 2000) might be tested using the HAW as a measure of the perceived behaviors of others, as a validation of measures of group cohesiveness (particularly when the latter concept is measured by supervisor ratings).

9.13 Summary

A set of eight scales, which reflect different humorous behaviours that people subscribe to as typical of the workplace, and two scales measuring pleasant or unpleasant humor in workplace environment were validated in Study 2. While there is clearly some overlap between these scales and other constructs in the literature, the scales are substantially unrelated to established measures, due to emphasis on the measurement of specific behaviours rather than broad dimensions, and of a specific form of behaviour (humour) rather than a wide range of behaviours.

Chapter 10

Conclusion and suggestions for further research

10.0 Overview

Chapter 10 briefly describes the reasons for the research into humour at work; provides an overview of the various steps in the development and the validation of the HAW scale; presents some practical implications for the research programme; and outlines some limitations of the studies and suggestions for further research.

Exploratory factor analysis of on-line responses of over 300 mainly Australian participants to 150 items about personal humour use and the use of humour by others in the workplace, resulted in a 62 item, 8 factor questionnaire. This questionnaire was completed by another on-line sample of over 300 Australians in work, together with measures of mood, personality and work-related scales. Confirmatory factor analysis resulted in a 46 item, 8 factor questionnaire that was named the long form of the *Humour at Work* (HAW) scale. Further analysis resulted in a short, 13 item, 2 factor form of the HAW. These 13 items were found not to be related to mood or personality. The short form of the HAW was related to a general humour questionnaire and was found to contribute to the variance between a set of 3 work related scales that came from different sources.

Conclusions from the current research include that there is a set of humorous behaviours which people endorse as occurring in their workplaces. These include a personal ability to join in and to create humour and a perception of the pleasant use of humour by others in the workplace, together with a personal dislike of humour and a perception of the unpleasant use of humour by others in the workplace. Two types of humorous behaviour identified as being less pleasant include teasing and gossiping. The use of humorous behaviour by others for unpleasant reasons was associated with personal apprehension at work, lower job satisfaction and a perceived lowering of workplace productivity,

Practical implications of the development of the long form of the HAW include use (e.g., by human resources personnel) as a diagnostic tool to explicate workplace interactions (particularly with respect to differences in age and gender), training in the informed and judicious use of humour by work leaders, particularly in illuminating the use of humour as a sanction, and in further research into different contexts in which humour can be studied (e.g., schools, resorts). The short form of the HAW could be used to gauge job satisfaction, apprehension at work and productivity, indirectly without involving first person statements.

The current research has obvious caveats associated with the on-line collection of data and its implications of a sample with more than average levels of education. It was conducted largely in a country which introduced labour reforms early in its history and workers continue to enjoy fairly high levels of

benefit from their employment. Further research using different methods, in different countries with different conditions is needed, together with research across work organizations, so that different work units can be compared. Time sampling could be investigated, both within the workers and with customer satisfaction. The connections between the humour used by others and personal humorous coping at work could be elucidated.

10.1 Reasons for the research.

This study sought to investigate whether humour at work was different from the humour generally employed in other contexts. People suggested informally to the author that they adopted different humour-related behaviours in the work situation. A background to this behaviour based on informal comments, is that markets are becoming increasingly competitive and more is required in terms of loyalty and performance in employment. The traditional effort/remuneration equation (fair day's work for a fair day's pay) is being superseded by calls for total involvement in the company against strong competition. Managing up (keeping the bosses happy) and service (keeping the customers happy) are seen as imperatives for renewing contracts. People may need to suppress their natural tendencies to humorous behaviour in the workplace because it is not seen as part of the company's ethos, or it may be interpreted as wasting company time. Employees, however, may unofficially comment through humour, because humour is generally agreed to be off the record. The uses of humour in the workplace might be more strategic compared with the uses of humour among

friends or family. Where there is competition among workers for chances at contract renewal or promotion, it may be that humour is used to draw the attention of management to one's group or oneself or to promote personal work skills. Humour may be used to destabilize the social situation, in an effort to increase anxiety and decrease performance in others. These conjectures suggest a broad context for the empirical investigation.

There were two aspects to investigating humour in a particular context, such as the work situation. The first was how the humorous behaviour occurred, whether methods such as irony or teasing were particularly favoured. Perhaps humour could be used to share with others general topics like canned jokes or to share personal information about other workers in gossip. Appraisal of published excerpts of transcripts from the workplace and from other recorded conversations between friends, suggested that these methods of creating humour were important. It appeared to be useful to identify the types of humorous behaviours people thought were occurring in their workplaces. The second aspect of the investigation involved gauging which (if any) of the identified humorous behaviours were associated with a worker's personal feelings and satisfaction at work. Evidence suggested that a sense of humour was a valued asset in managers, but the current research sought to identify which humorous behaviours supported or diminished an optimum work atmosphere.

Thus the broad question guiding the current research was whether it was possible to develop an empirically based questionnaire measuring various aspects of humour in the workplace and what the structure and nature of such a questionnaire might be. Having developed such a questionnaire, a further question was whether the type of humour people used and experienced in the workplace might be associated with how they felt about the work they were doing or might reflect their job satisfaction or willingness to increase productivity.

10.2 Summary of the studies

10.2.1 Study 1 – Development of the HAW

Study 1 aimed to develop a questionnaire to capture the range of humorous behaviours people endorsed as occurring in their workplaces. Previous research had assumed general social settings in the formulation of questions about humour. If the workplace was constrained by factors such as emotional labour and productivity, then was workplace humour also constrained, or did it reflect a tendency to express discontent? Did people employ humour in the workplace in the same way as they did in the social situations that were already measured (e.g., HSQ; Martin et al., 2003)? Was the “framing” of the work situation different, so that subversive or reinforcing humour became more applicable (Holmes & Marra, 2002)? If people enjoyed work or found their social interactions pleasant at work, would their use of humour reflect these experiences? Previous research in the development of humour scales in general settings (e.g., Cann & Calhoun, 2001; Graham, Papa & Brooks, 1992), suggested that items constructed for a new scale should contain sufficient

variety to express positive and negative forms of personal humour use and positive and negative forms of humour use by others, together with items about social expressiveness or sensitivity.

After appraising research literature, 230 statements were written in the following areas (in chapters 3 to 7: physiological (e.g., mood); emotional labour; discourse management (e.g., irony); cooperative effort; teasing, nipping and biting; personality; ethnic differences; politeness; management and leadership). This item pool was reduced to 150 items: 75 about the behaviour of the individual in the workplace and 75 about the behaviour of others. An international sample of over 300 (mainly from Australia) responded to the on-line questionnaire. A series of exploratory factor analyses revealed an optimum solution was 8 factors for 62 items. Factor analysis of the factors revealed two super-factors called *Pleasant Climate* and *Unpleasant Climate*. Positive correlations occurred between factors in the *Pleasant Climate* superfactor (*Sharing, Nice workplace, Supporting and Stirring*). Positive correlations occurred between factors in the *Unpleasant Climate* superfactor (*No humour, Nasty workplace*). *Teasing* was negatively correlated with both *Supporting* and *Stirring* and positively correlated with *Gossip-disapproval*. The items excluded in the factor analysis were assumed to be idiosyncratic or related to factors not consistently relevant to the workplace (such as the expressiveness of humour or using kinesics to make statements funny). These items were excluded from further analyses.

10.2.2 Study 2 - Validation

A snowball sample of Australian people in work ($N = 379$) responded to an on-line questionnaire, consisting of the 62 items of the HAW, Mood (PA/NA - Watson & Clark, 1988), altruism (IPIP), impression management (EPQ-R lie scale - Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985, Paulus, 1984), Personality (M37- Rawlings, 2001, normed in Australia) and Humour Styles (HSQ – Martin et al., 2003), together with scales relevant to work behaviours, *Climate of Fear* (CF - Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003), *Job Satisfaction* (JS – Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979) and scales of the *Occupational Climate Measure* (OCM – Patterson et al., 2005).

Confirmatory factor analysis of the HAW was carried out and reliabilities were calculated. The reliabilities of the scales used in the validation fell within the following range: Lowest $\alpha = .68$ HSQ-aggressive, Highest $\alpha = .92$ Job Satisfaction. Confirmatory factor analysis of each of the eight scales of the HAW separately reduced the number of items to 46 and this version was named the long form of the *Humour at Work* scale. When all items in the long form were tested together, two scales, *Pleasant Climate* (8 items) and *Unpleasant Climate* (5 items), emerged. This version was called the short form of the HAW. No “practically” significant correlations were found between the two scales of this 13 item version of the HAW and any demographic measures, or personality factors. In contrast, correlations between the HSQ and the M 37 personality instrument revealed that the HSQ *Affiliative* scale positively correlated over the criterion level with extraversion, and the HSQ *Aggressive* scale negatively correlated over the

criterion level with agreeableness. It appeared that humour at work, measured by the HAW was different to humour in general settings, measured by the HSQ. Perhaps people are more likely to censor or constrain their natural personal humour in work situations.

Significant positive correlations were found between the *Pleasant Climate* scale and the *Affiliative* and *Self-enhancing* scales of the HSQ. Similarly, between the *Unpleasant Climate* scale and the *Affiliative* and *Self-enhancing* scales there was a negative trend, and a positive trend with the *Aggressive* scale, both of which reached statistical significance ($p < .01$). It was concluded that the HAW had been validated as a scale that measured humorous behaviour in the workplace in an analogous fashion to the general humorous behaviour measured by the HSQ.

The HAW was also validated in Study 2, as an instrument that reflected attitudes towards workplace behaviours involved the measures of *Climate of Fear* (CF - Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003), *Job Satisfaction* (JS – Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979 and scales of the *Occupational Climate Measure* (OCM – Patterson et al., 2005). These instruments were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (Appendix Q) and then the confirmed scales were combined in a multiple inputs multiple causes model (Buehn & Schneider, 2008; Munck, 1979).

Although *Pleasant Climate* correlated significantly negatively with *Unpleasant Climate*, presumably because both involved humour, they were

distinct scales because the correlation barely reached the practical criterion level. This finding is consistent with research into positive and negative emotion. Cacioppo, Gardner and Berntson (1997) argued that positive and negative emotions are related but separate dimensions. It is likely that the humour experienced in *Pleasant Climate* situations is similarly related to but distinct from the humour experienced in *Unpleasant Climate* situations.

Pleasant Climate was found to correlate statistically but not to criterion with the workplace measures, so was excluded from further analysis. It was found that substantial variance in *Climate of Fear* (CF – Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003) scores could be attributed to *Unpleasant Climate*. This latter scale contained no items pertaining to the first person, in contrast to the CF items which were all in the first person. It appeared that *Unpleasant Climate* measured how people understood the work situation, based on the humour being used. *Climate of Fear* moderated the effect of *Unpleasant Climate*, explaining 49% of the variance in *Job Satisfaction* (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979). *Unpleasant Climate*, itself, directly explained 9% of the variance in *OCM Productivity*. Moderated by *Climate of Fear* and *Job Satisfaction*, *Unpleasant Climate* explained 45% of the variance in *OCM Productivity* (Patterson, Warr & West, 2004). The combined effect of *Unpleasant Climate* on *OCM Productivity* (the individual's perception of the productivity of the organization) was therefore about 9%. All these scales were conceptually and statistically distinct, reflecting aspects of work to do with the individual (*Climate*

of Fear, Job Satisfaction) and to do with the behaviour of others (*Unpleasant Climate, OCM Productivity*).

10.3 Practical Implications

The current study established that there are a set of humorous behaviours endorsed by people as occurring in their workplaces. The behaviours that clustered to form the superfactor *Pleasant Climate* included *Sharing* (personal ability to join in humour), *Stirring* (personal ability to create humour), *Nice Workplace* (perception of pleasant humour of others) and *Supporting* (use of humour to actively support others). The *Teasing* scale (personal use and receiving of humorous teasing) was negatively associated with *Pleasant Climate*. The behaviours that clustered to form the superfactor *Unpleasant Climate* included *No Humour* (personal dislike for humour in the workplace) and *Nasty Workplace* (perception of unpleasant humour by others). The *Gossip-disapproving* scale (personal disapproval of humorous gossip and put-downs) was not associated with the superfactors, but correlated positively with *Sharing* and positively with *Teasing*. These associations illuminate the types of humorous behaviour that people see as positive (supporting one another with openness to ideas and humorous stories, but not teasing) or negative (hostile or sick humour or condescension). The findings may help to explain some ambivalent associations, for example people who like to give and receive humorous teases also disapprove of gossip, but are less likely to be among those who stir things up by creating humour. These findings may help in the development of skills in human relations

(particularly for aspiring leaders). An example might be that if humorous teasing is perceived as unpleasant, it may act as an unintended sanction, or if a sanction is necessary, it might be that humorous direct teasing is less unpleasant than put-downs or reports to management.

The relationships between the types of humour enacted in the workplace and the workers' personal level of anxiety and job satisfaction were investigated together with the workers' perception of the productivity of the workplace. The items taken from the *Occupational Climate Measure* (Patterson et al., 2004) and used in the present research, measure the impressions of the work behaviours of others, but have no bearing on how workers relate socially to each other in the workplace. Measures of the organization (in terms of supervision, training, welfare, formalized procedures, innovation, effort, feedback and quality) were not practically related to how the workers personally used humour as measured by the *Pleasant Climate* scale, nor to the pleasant use of humour by others. Such humour appeared to be the playful behavior that occurred around the serious business of work.

In contrast, the nasty use of humour by others, as measured by the *Unpleasant Climate* scale, was practically and significantly related to decreased scores on items from the *Occupational Climate Measure* (Patterson et al., 2004). Because there is no reference in the items to the first person and no practically significant connections to personality variables, the *Unpleasant Climate* scale

could be used to measure the “dark side” of humour in the workplace, the unofficial protest or standover tactics adopted by others using humour with the possible excuse that it does not count. This is a new dimension for scales measuring workplace relations. The emphasis in previous research has been on the behaviour of the individual (e.g., *Climate of Fear* - Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003) rather than the effects of group behaviours. Interpersonal relationships at work can be influenced by negative remarks (like hostile or sick humour) that are excused as all in good fun, especially if they are endorsed by a majority. Even in the absence of complaint, some may find such humour personally intimidating. The *Humour at Work* scale provides a validated measure of this discomfort for potential use by human resources units as a measure of climate. People spend about half of their waking hours in the workplace. The *Pleasant* and *Unpleasant Climate* scales of the short version of the HAW are unaffected by either mood or personality, suggesting that they may be independent, socially shared estimates of the work environment. There may also be an association between pleasant humour and the alleviation of personal stress at work (as suggested in the next section).

10.4 Limitations and suggestions for further research

Some limitations need to be acknowledged. The method of sampling may be criticized because 78% of participants in Study 1 and 71.5% in Study 2 described their education as “tertiary”, a bias which was difficult to counter given the need to be fluent in English and to be familiar with the internet. A replication using pencil and paper materials, particularly at secondary industrial sites, would

address this concern. Over half the participants, in both studies, considered themselves to be “general employees” of their organizations, with around a quarter in “management”. More precisely worded demographic questions may have found differences between managers and employees that were not found in this study. There was no investigation of union affiliation, for example. The work environment in Australia (where there was early establishment of unions and Parliamentary work practices acts) is not typical of other countries, even in Europe or northern America. Attitudes to work conditions are different in different countries and international replication studies (particularly in developing countries, where worker status is less autonomous) would clearly provide further clarification of the model.

Although the *Humour at Work* scale was validated on a sample involving employees from a wide variety of occupations, its value in differentiating the work humour operating at different work sites within one organization is yet to be established. Items in the HAW scale imply frequency of humorous interaction with others, and might be used in cross-lagged studies to investigate whether it is frequency or intensity of pleasant interactions (or neither) that contribute to job satisfaction. Some research in this area has been undertaken by Fisher (2000). Humour plays a role in the coping behaviours that people adopt at work (*Questionnaire of Occupational Humorous Coping*, Doosje, de Goede, Van Doornen & Goldstein, 2010). The relationship between the use of humour identified by the HAW scale and the coping behaviours identified by Doosje et al.

(2010) may further elucidate relationships between coworkers. If humour provides playful relief from concentrated emotional labour, then humour measured by the HAW scale may be connected with customer satisfaction in those organizations involving a great deal of face work, e.g., retail sales, hospitals or call centres. Cross-lagged studies of customer satisfaction over a period could be compared with changes in the humour climate.

The items in the *Unpleasant Climate* scale only involve the behavior of other people and could be used as an indirect measure to predict personal job satisfaction in a manner that did not involve disclosure of personal behaviors and feelings. As a measure of the behaviour of others the *Unpleasant Climate* scale might be used to rate group cohesiveness in studies investigating “organizational citizenship” or as an indirect measure of work place deviant behaviour (e.g., Lee & Allen, 2002; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Similarly, the HAW could be used to investigate sources of employee cynicism (Cole, Bruch & Vogel, 2006).

The long form of the *Humour at Work* scale (*Sharing, Stirring, Gossip, No humour, Nice workplace, Supporting, Nasty workplace, Teasing*) could be used to investigate the humorous behaviours of particular sub-groups in an organization. In particular it could be an adjunct to discussions about how people communicate with each other and where the organizational boundaries lie (and what constitutes crossing the line). For example, males in the current study (Appendix P) were significantly less disapproving of gossip, than females. Possibly, men think that

they are sharing information about others in a humorous way whereas women regard such jokes about others as gossip, and disapprove. Similarly, male workers were found to engage in humorous stirring. The *Stirring* scale consisted of items that suggested creative contribution to humour at work. This may be strategic humorous behavior for drawing attention to oneself or one's group, or for informing management unofficially of matters of general concern.

There are other contexts in which humour is yet to be investigated. One obvious example is among teenagers in schools. While there have been a number of qualitative studies of specific instances of humour (particularly in Greece), the scales of the HAW could be adapted to investigate the types of humour that students see employed in the school environment. It would be illuminating to see if the types of humour perceived to be used by teachers had a relationship with the types of humour used by students. Similarly, humour use in other environments in which people necessarily engage in high levels of social interaction could be investigated: e.g., sports teams in coaching sessions or bootcamps; the casts of theatre productions; the customers of tourist resorts in which the entertainment is organized; those who are together under forced circumstances in the armed services (particularly in the Navy) or on long shifts (e.g., fly in-fly out on oil rigs or in the mining industry or film production on location).

In conclusion, the long form (46 item) version of the *Humour at Work* scale provides a metric for investigating particular aspects of the humour used in a

workplace, and can be helpful in identifying demographic differences in humour use (Appendix P). The short form (13 item) HAW provides a brief instrument for indirectly measuring the climate of a work unit or organization. This 13 item scale relates, without obvious face validity, to job satisfaction, to apprehension at work and to productivity, and so it may be useful to Human Resources organizations.

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Appendix A

Physiological and developmental considerations

People in this workplace are too boring to be humorous.

I just like to do the job without any humorous distractions.

Around this workplace we are usually too stressed out to be humorous.

I do not have the time to be humorous in this workplace.

I do not see much to be humorous about in this workplace.

I do not do humorous things at work.

When the pressure is off we do some very humorous things in this workplace.

At this workplace things are too out of control for us to be humorous.

The ones who are humorous in this workplace are the ones that can help you if you need it.

I like to approach work problems by telling humorous stories.

In this work place we like to make fun of other departments (our competitors).

I like to think that my humour is acceptable to everyone.

I am careful not to make humorous remarks in case they offend.

When people laugh at my attempts at humour, I feel good.

The people who are humorous in this workplace are never stressed about anything.

You can tell the ones with inside information in this workplace because they are the ones using humour all the time.

If people are upset in this workplace, then they use more sick humour.

I do not like vulgar humour at work.

In this workplace people use a lot of sexual humour.

People like to make aggressive remarks in a humorous way in this workplace.

In this workplace, people act like clowns all the time.

Appendix B

Emotional labour and class considerations

I like humour about vulgarities at work.

Nobody minds some vulgarity at work.

I like to share funny things that happened to me with those I work with

I can always make up something more outrageous when people are being humorous.

At work there are always humorous challenges and teases going on.

At work you can flirt provided it is humorous.

We use humour to keep things smooth in our work group

I use humour to show people what I can do.

I use humour to show people what I am capable of.

We joke about the ladies in this workplace.

We joke about the men in this workplace.

I use humour to compliment other people.

I use humour to tease my boss.

I use humour to tease the slackers in this workplace.

I use humour to tease those who are inappropriate in their comments in this workplace.

People who 'break the rules' in this workplace deserve to be teased about it.

I find I can always amuse people at work by talking about shopping.

I find I can always amuse people at work by talking about drinking.

We use humorous banter to challenge each other in the job.

What we wear to work is always a topic for humour.

When a man is being funny at work I usually laugh.

When a woman is being funny at work I usually laugh.

I laugh when people are talking about their troubles at work

I try to make up something humorous when people are talking about their troubles at work.

I find it best to laugh when people are saying inappropriate things about others at work.

I resist agreeing with other people's inappropriate talk by laughing.

When someone else laughs while they are talking about something humorous I join in.

Appendix C

Discourse management, irony and extreme case formulations, jokemes and memeplexes

I use a sing-song voice when telling funny stories.

I can tell when people are being humorous in this work-place because they use a different voice.

When we start to talk around here, something funny comes up after less than about 20 seconds.

I like to join in when someone is using a silly or funny voice.

I like it when people say something amusing when you have just met up with them that day.

I try to say amusing things with a blank face or dead-pan, to make it funnier.

When I say humorous things, I raise my eyebrows or wink to signal that they are funny.

In this place you can tell when someone is sarcastic because of the face they make.

Around here a lot of the humour is ironic, because of the paradoxical things we deal with.

I use humour to change the topic of conversation in the workplace.

I use humour to give the boss a hint, if necessary.

We use humour to discuss what the top management does in this place.

The worst issues can only be dealt with using humour in this workplace.

Around here we use TV, film or science fiction to make up our jokes and humorous stories.

We like to do silly humour, that relates to nothing in particular, in this workplace.

In this workplace (we know each other so well?) we are always playing games with each other.

If people are formal with you in this workplace, you know that they are having fun.

Appendix D

Gossip as a cooperative effort

I like to keep serious talk and humour separate when talking to work colleagues.

Even the most serious subject at work can be improved with a little humour.

Usually I am able to contribute when I have to join with people having a humorous conversation.

When I am being humorous I tend to exaggerate situations.

I find saying something nonsensical is a good way to make humour.

Being humorous is a good way to pass on gossip.

I would prefer to be humorous about a situation rather than to pass on gossip about it.

I use humour to challenge people when they are gossiping.

When I hear a rumour that makes me anxious, I try to turn it into something amusing.

It is funny to exaggerate rumours to make them more frightening for others.

I prefer to start a rumour about me in a humorous way than leave it to others to do.

I do not like people who make negative humorous comments about others.

I like to make negative humorous comments about others who do not pull their weight (who want a free ride).

I do not like people who make positive humorous comments about others.

People who make humorous comments about work seem to be more friendly.

People who make humorous comments about work seem to be more 'in the know'.

Humour is a good way to get across the truth about others in this workplace.

People who pass on humorous rumours are just being gossips.

Those who make humorous remarks about others seem to know a lot about this place.

I like to make humorous remarks or joke around about other people's work.

I like to make humorous remarks about the personal happenings in other people's lives.

People who are humorous with each other seem to get on more in this place than other people.

People who are full of their own importance are the ones who make humorous remarks

The point of humour in this place is to state the obvious.

Appendix E

Teasing, nipping and biting

Often it is hard to tell if people are trying to be funny or not in this work place.

I exaggerate when I am teasing someone to make it funny.

I don't like people make jokes about other people here when they are not around.

I can tell when someone is teasing me around here because other people start to laugh.

I don't like it when people pretend something together to get a laugh at the expense of someone in their group.

I have had a practical joke played on me in this work-place.

I tease people by calling them 'pet' names that are opposites, like 'Shorty' or 'Slim' when they are tall or heavy.

I tease people about things unrelated to work (for example their sports teams or what they watch on TV).

I tease people about the way they behave at work (for example when they are too slack or working too hard).

The boss teases us when s/he wants us to do something extra.

When we are fooling around, there is a lot of teasing going on.

We make jokes by pretending on the phone to people who know our department/section.

When people are teasing here, they let you know by their expressions and gestures.

I get caught out by people acting seriously when they say they are only teasing.

People who tease others are showing that they are immature.

People who can't take a tease are showing that they are immature.

I like being teased but I do not like put-downs.

When I tease people I try to let them know by exaggerating my actions.

I like to fool the people I tease, so they are the last to get the joke.

In this work place people are always into putting down other people.

I pretend to play along when I get teased.

I find the best way to handle other people's humour in this workplace is to laugh.

It is funny when people try to justify their actions when they are only being teased.

You can find out how clever someone is in this workplace by making a teasing remark.

If you make good around here, then other people make fun of you.

It is only the well-liked people who are made fun of in our work place.

I make fun of people who are over-enthusiastic about their roles at work.

I like to stir things up by using humour.

I know that the boss likes some people because s/he is always teasing them.

I don't like putdowns even if they are deserved.

Only people with higher status are allowed to tease other people.

In this place we have putdowns for everyone.

Appendix F**Humour and personality**

In this workplace people use humour to keep others at a distance.

In this workplace the humour is boorish and uncouth.

In this workplace the humour is very clever.

In this workplace the humour doesn't come off well (is pretty inane).

The humour in this workplace is pretty earthy.

Everyone is very correct with their humour here.

The humour in this workplace is pretty harmless.

People use humour in this workplace for nasty reasons.

The humour in this workplace flows thick and fast.

There are a lot of natural comics in this workplace.

There are many quick witted humorous people in this workplace.

At this workplace generally people have a 'well-above average' sense of humour.

In this workplace generally people have a sense of humour that is below average.

Around this workplace we use humour to boost morale.

In our workplace we use humour to put people at ease.

Most people here are insincere when they say that they are just kidding.

People are quick to misinterpret humorous remarks in this workplace.

If you try to be humorous in this workplace people only give you a short smile.

There are few people in this workplace who make humorous remarks.

Everyone is very serious in their behaviour in this workplace.

There is not much kidding around or fun happening in this workplace.

Appendix G

Ethnic differences

When we talk to others in different ethnic groups at work, we try to put them at ease with humour.

People in the other ethnic groups in this workplace just don't get the humour we use here.

People in other ethnic groups in this workplace get insulted when you make a humorous remark.

Around this workplace people use humour to 'big-note' and draw attention to themselves.

People in this workplace use humour to show you that they want to be friends with you.

The humour in this workplace is really hostile.

We get to feel good about work when someone starts off the humorous remarks and we all join in.

In this workplace people use obscene humour.

In this workplace people use blasphemous humour.

It is OK to be obscene or blasphemous in this workplace on occasion.

People in this workplace use humour to point up other's mistakes or faults.

People in this workplace cannot laugh at their own faults.

People in this workplace are stiff and don't like humour.

The people who make humorous remarks in this workplace are usually more open to the ideas of others.

The people who make humorous remarks in this workplace are the ones who are willing to stick up for others (to see others treated fairly).

This workplace has many people who can start the humour rolling in our conversations.

We do humour all the time in this workplace.

People never find anything funny in this workplace.

Appendix H

Workplace exchanges, politeness and social discourse

I like to listen when people are telling jokes.

Telling jokes wastes other people's time.

I like recounting amusing personal situations to others.

I find my life is not amusing enough to talk about.

I like it when people pick up puns or word plays in conversation.

I don't like my conversation made funny by someone else picking up puns or word plays. When I talk I make what I say more humorous with tone of voice and gesture.

People who gesture and dramatise their conversation for humour annoy me,

I feel uncomfortable when people are being witty.

I try to be witty when people are talking.

Friendly put-downs are always negative in my opinion.

I enjoy a friendly put-down as part of the humour among colleagues.

I think of teasing as part of our collegial 'play'.

Teasing is usually unacceptable among colleagues

I use exaggeration or understatement to be funny.

I try to be brief and plain without trying to be funny.

I think that irony (stating the opposite to what I mean) is humorous.

Irony (stating the opposite of what is meant) is not helpful even when it is humorous.

Using satire is a way of getting your message across.

Using satire is usually destructive of other's ideas.

I find sarcasm amusing.

I do not enjoy sarcasm.

I use humour to underplay my skills and talents to others.

I use humour to present my skills and talents to others.

I find my weaknesses go over best when I joke about them.

I am careful to cover mistakes in case I am laughed at.

Mostly I make humorous mistakes or gaffes that I recount to others

I usually do not find my mistakes or gaffes humorous although others do.

Appendix I

Management, leadership and workplace humour

In this workplace, the boss always makes the first humorous remark.

In this workplace the men, more than women, interrupt to say funny things.

In this workplace the women, more than the men, interrupt to say funny things.

When we are getting tense in meetings, someone always interrupts with something humorous.

We never use humor in our meetings.

The boss is the only one allowed to say humorous things in our meetings.

We often make fun of what happened in our business meetings when they are over.

The men always use humour to big-note themselves in this work place.

The women always use humour to point out their own positives in this work place.

The women in this workplace are always trying to use humour to smooth things over.

The men in this workplace are always trying to use humour to smooth things over.

In this workplace we do not laugh at the humorous remarks of people we do not like.

In this workplace we show people we do not like them by not laughing when they try to be humorous.

Most men in this workplace have a well above average sense of humour.

Most women in this workplace have a well above average sense of humour.

Most men around here appreciate the humorous remarks that I make.

Most women around here appreciate the humorous remarks that I make.

Around here it is only the women who do all the laughing.

Around here it is only the men who do all the laughing.

Our supervisor in this workplace has a well above average sense of humour.

Our supervisor in this workplace has a below average sense of humour.

Our supervisor uses acceptable topics for his/her humour.

I am sometimes offended by the topics my supervisor uses trying to be funny.

No-one in this workplace minds if you put up humorous material (e.g. cartoons or sayings).

We are discouraged from putting up humorous material (e.g. cartoons or sayings) around this workplace.

Our boss keeps saying that this is a happy place to work in.

We are always reminded how fortunate we are to be able to work here.

We like having the boss make humorous remarks about what we do in this workplace.

Our supervisor always humorously exaggerates when s/he thanks us for doing a particular task.

We know when the supervisor is not pleased because s/he makes humorous remarks about our efforts.

Our supervisor uses humorous insults to praise our work.

Our supervisor uses humorous insults to criticize the work we do.

We are cynical about our supervisor's attempts to make things more humorous in this workplace.

Our supervisor uses humour to try to become friendly with us.

Everyone in this workplace is expected to say something funny when talking to the supervisor.

The supervisors only want us to be humorous around here because they think we will be more productive.

The supervisors think that a humorous atmosphere is going to result in better work.

The supervisors think that humour in the workplace leads to having better customer service.

In this work place the humour from the supervisors is really condescending.

In this workplace the humour from the supervisors is well-meant.

We feel patronized if the supervisor makes a humorous remark about our work.

Around this workplace we make fun of the way they treat us all the time.

Appendix J:

Questions for Study 1: Using Humour in the Workplace

- V19 I use understatement to be funny.
- V20 I try to make up something humorous when people are talking about their troubles at work.
- V21 I like to fool the people I tease, so they are the last to get the joke.
- V22 I tease people about the way they behave at work (for example when they are too slack or working too hard).
- V23 I do not usually find my mistakes or gaffes humorous although others do.
- V24 When people laugh at my attempts at humour, I feel good.
- V25 I find saying something nonsensical is a good way to make humour.
- V26 I like to think that my humour is acceptable to everyone.
- V27 Using satire is usually destructive of others' ideas.
- V28 When a woman is being funny at work I usually laugh.
- V29 I use humour when I have offended someone to minimize or neutralize what I said.
- V30 I like to stir things up by using humour.
- V31 I use humour to show people what I am capable of.
- V32 I do not like vulgar humour (about bodily functions) at work.
- V33 I pretend to be annoyed or angry when it is required, but all I want to do is laugh.
- V34 I use humour to underplay my skills and talents to others.
- V35 I am sometimes offended by the topics my supervisor touches on while trying to be funny.
- V36 When I say humorous things, I raise my eyebrows or wink to signal that they are funny.
- V37 Teasing is usually unacceptable among colleagues.
- V38 I don't like people who make jokes about other people who are not around.
- V39 I like to share funny things that happened to me with the women I work with.
- V40 I do not like put-downs.
- V41 I like to say humorous things "dead-pan" (with a blank face) to make them funnier.
- V42 I think of teasing as part of our "play" in the workplace.
- V43 I find a neutral expression is safer at work than letting my humour show.
- V44 Being humorous is a good way to pass on gossip.
- V45 I do not like people who make negative humorous comments about others.
- V46 I like to approach work problems by telling humorous stories.
- V47 When a man is being funny at work I usually laugh.
- V48 I pretend to join in when others are being humorous at work in case they think I am not part of the team.
- V49 I find my weaknesses go over best when I joke about them.
- V50 People who pass on humorous rumours are just being gossips.
- V51 Even when I don't find something funny I join in to be part of the group.

- V52 I can tell when someone is teasing me around here because other people start to laugh.
- V53 I am annoyed by people who gesture and dramatize their conversation to be humorous.
- V54 I prefer to start a rumour about me in a humorous way than leave it to others to do.
- V55 I do not see much to be humorous about in this workplace.
- V56 I use humour to probe sensitive topics with other people.
- V57 I like to share funny things that happen to me with the men I work with.
- V58 Being good humoured at work is like putting on a uniform for work.
- V59 I use humour to tease the slackers in this workplace.
- V60 I do not have time to be humorous in this workplace.
- V61 I feel uncomfortable when people are being witty.
- V62 I like being teased.
- V63 Most men around here appreciate the humorous remarks I make.
- V64 I use humour to tease my supervisor.
- V65 I tease people by calling them "pet" names that are opposites, like "Shorty" or "Slim" when they are tall or heavy.
- V66 People who make humorous comments about work seem to be more friendly.
- V67 I don't like my conversation made funny by someone else picking up puns or word plays.
- V68 I use humour to challenge people when they are gossiping.
- V69 I have had a practical joke played on me in this workplace.
- V70 Telling jokes wastes other people's time.
- V71 I use humour to save other people's face when they make mistakes.
- V72 I can tell when people are being humorous in this work-place because they use a different voice.
- V73 I use exaggeration to be funny.
- V74 People who tease others are showing that they are immature.
- V75 I am careful not to make humorous remarks in case they offend.
- V76 I just like to do the job without humorous distractions.
- V77 I find sarcasm amusing.
- V78 When I talk I make what I say more humorous with tone of voice and gesture.
- V79 Irony (saying the opposite of what is meant) is not helpful even when it is humorous.
- V80 Usually I am able to contribute when I have to join with other people having a humorous conversation.
- V81 Friendly put-downs are always negative in my opinion.
- V82 I like to keep serious talk and humour separate when talking to work colleagues.
- V83 I use humour to change the topic of conversation in the workplace.
- V84 I like it when people say something amusing when you have just met up with them that day.

- V85 I get caught out by people acting seriously when they say they are only teasing.
- V86 I do not enjoy sarcasm.
- V87 I use humour to give the boss a hint, if necessary.
- V88 I psych myself up to join in the humour of this work place.
- V89 I can always make up something more outrageous when people are being humorous.
- V90 People who make humorous comments about work seem to be more “in the know”.
- V91 Most women around here appreciate the humorous remarks I make.
- V92 I pretend to play along when I get teased.
- V93 Using satire is a way of getting your message across.
- V94 In this workplace people are always putting down other people.
- V95 We never use humour in our meetings.
- V96 The men always use humour to big-note themselves in this workplace.
- V97 When we start to talk around here, something funny comes up after less than about 20 seconds.
- V98 The humour in this workplace is really hostile.
- V99 Often it is hard to tell if people are trying to be funny or not in this workplace.
- V100 In this workplace we can laugh at what we like.
- V101 If people are formal with you in this workplace, you know that they are having fun.
- V102 We are discouraged from putting up humorous material (e.g., cartoons or sayings).
- V103 The supervisor is the only one allowed to say humorous things in our meetings.
- V104 People who “break the rules” in this workplace deserved to be teased about it.
- V105 The women in this workplace are always trying to use humour to smooth things over.
- V106 In this workplace, the boss teases us when s/he wants us to do something extra.
- V107 Around here it is only the men that do all the laughing.
- V108 Most people here are insincere when they say that they are just kidding.
- V109 We like having the boss make humorous remarks about what we do in this workplace.
- V110 People who are humorous with each other seem to get on more in this place than other people.
- V111 In this place you can tell when someone is sarcastic because of the face they make.
- V112 People are quick to misinterpret humorous remarks in this workplace.
- V113 People who make humorous remarks are full of their own importance.
- V114 Around this workplace we use humour to boost morale.
- V115 Around this workplace we make fun of the way they treat us.

- V116 The people who make humorous remarks in this workplace are usually more open to the ideas of others.
- V117 At work you can flirt provided it is humorous.
- V118 The ones who are humorous in this workplace are the ones who can help you if you need it.
- V119 In this workplace we are always playing games with each other.
- V120 We know when the supervisor is not pleased because s/he makes humorous remarks about our efforts.
- V121 In this workplace we like to make fun of other departments (our competitors).
- V122 I know that the supervisor likes some people because s/he is always teasing them.
- V123 In this workplace people use humour to keep others at a distance.
- V124 In this workplace we show people we do not like then by not laughing when they try to be humorous.
- V125 We are expected to maintain an appropriate reserve and not to indulge in humour at work.
- V126 Our supervisor uses humorous insults to praise our work.
- V127 Around this workplace people use humour to “big-note” and draw attention to themselves.
- V128 It is OK to be obscene or blasphemous in this workplace on occasion.
- V129 There is a lot of “dead-pan” humour in this workplace.
- V130 Our supervisor in this workplace has an above average sense of humour.
- V131 We joke about the women in this workplace.
- V132 There is not much kidding around or fun happening in this workplace.
- V133 I think that this is a really good humoured place to work in.
- V134 We use banter to challenge each other in the job.
- V135 In this workplace people use a lot of sexual humour.
- V136 People in this workplace are too boring to be humorous.
- V137 The supervisors only want us to be humorous around here because they think we will be more productive.
- V138 There is a real pressure to keep it humorous and happy in this workplace.
- V139 People like to make aggressive remarks in a humorous way in this workplace.
- V140 Around here it is only the women who do all the laughing.
- V141 In our workplace we use humour to put people at ease.
- V142 We do silly humour that relates to nothing in particular, in this workplace.
- V143 Around this workplace people think they can act like children and call it humour.
- V144 In this workplace the humour from supervisors is really condescending.
- V145 Nobody minds some vulgarity at work.
- V146 Only people with higher status are allowed to tease other people.
- V147 People in this workplace use humour to point out others’ mistakes and faults.
- V148 If people are upset in this workplace then they use more sick humour.

- V149 I get annoyed with the “always happy” atmosphere that this place requires.
- V150 The men in this place are always trying to use humour to smooth things over.
- V151 We joke about the men in this workplace.
- V152 Even the most serious subject at work can be improved with a little humour.
- V153 In this workplace the humour usually involves some gossip.
- V154 No-one can express conflict in this workplace, not even in a joking way.
- V155 When we talk to others in different ethnic groups at work, we try to put them at ease with humour.
- V156 In this workplace the supervisor always makes the first humorous remark.
- V157 In this workplace people generally have an “above average” sense of humour.
- V158 The women always use humour to point out their own positives in this workplace.
- V159 Our supervisor uses humorous insults to criticize the work we do.
- V160 We are cynical about our supervisor’s attempts to make things more humorous in this workplace.
- V161 We often make fun of what happened in our meetings when they are over.
- V162 People use humour in this workplace for nasty reasons.
- V163 We feel patronized if the supervisor makes a humorous remark about our work.
- V164 People in this workplace cannot laugh at their own faults.
- V165 Around this workplace we are usually too stressed out to be humorous.
- V166 People in other ethnic groups in this workplace just don’t get the humour we use here.
- V167 People never find anything funny in this workplace.
- V168 There is no harm in a little humorous gossip in this workplace.

Appendix K:

Demographic questions for Study 1

These were presented with the instruction: “Please answer a few questions about your background, so we can describe our sample.” The questions are listed below.

- 1 What is your age? (numeric response)
- 2 What is your gender? (category response, 1. female or 2. male)
- 3 What is your highest level of education? (category response: 1. primary, 2. secondary, or 3. tertiary)
- 4 In what country are you living? (string response)
- 5 Are you currently in work? (category response: 1. yes or 2. no)
- 6 If you are not currently in work, how many years is it since you were in work 20 hours a week or more? (numeric response).
- 7 Which best describes the nature of your current or last workplace? (8 categories as set out in Table 8.1, p.149)
- 8 Which best describes your position in the organization? (category response 1. general employee, 2. lower management, 3. middle management, 4. upper management, 5. other)
- 9 How many people in your organization would you make contact with in an average day? (numeric response)
- 10 How many people are employed in your place of work? (category response 1. fewer than 20, 2. 20 to 200, 3. more than 100.
- 11 Of the other workers that you meet each day, how many are men? (numeric response)

12 Of the other workers that you meet each day, how many are women? (numeric response)

Appendix L

Recruitment Email and Plain language statement for Study 1

“Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am a PhD student at Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn, Victoria, Australia. In the past I have taught VCE and IB Psychology and I am a member of the ISHS. You may even know me from school.

I should like to ask for your help in my research about the role of humour in the workplace. The first stage of my study involves finding out about how people appreciate and make humour in the workplace.

I'd be very grateful if you'd go to this website and complete my survey. It's completely anonymous and takes about 30 minutes to complete.

I should be very grateful if you could forward this email to other people who you think might like to do the survey. Please note that this email was sent using the blind copy facility as regards recipients. If you forward the email on, please could you use a similar facility? Thank you.

<http://opinio.online.swin.edu.au/s?s=1709>

This should be interesting to you and it would be very helpful to me.

Regards

Maren Rawlings”

The plain language statement that preceded the start of the survey read as follows:

“MR: Developing a measure of humour in the workplace.

Researcher- Maren Rawlings

Supervisor- Dr. Bruce Findlay

The current study will explore the association between an individual’s sense of humour and the humour of others in their workplace. To participate in this study, you are required to be over 18 years of age and to have been in employment for 6 months or more at some stage of your life. You will be required to complete an anonymous questionnaire that contains trial items about how you feel and behave at work and how you see others behave in the workplace, as well as providing some demographic information about yourself, such as age, sex, and the nature of your workplace.

Many of the items in the questionnaire are similar, because we are trying to develop the best short version, so we ask you to respond to all of them. Do not spend much time on any one item, your first response is probably the most accurate. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. If others in your workplace or your friends are also completing the questionnaire, we

ask that you do not discuss answers with them until all the relevant questionnaires have been submitted.

Any information you provide will be anonymous and only the researchers will have access to the data on an anonymous spreadsheet. Results from this study may be submitted for publication in a psychological journal, however only group results will be reported. No one person's responses will be able to be identified.

Your participation in this research is greatly appreciated and the completion of this questionnaire will be taken as your consent to participate. Please retain this information page for your records.

Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the senior investigator Dr. Bruce Findlay of the Department of Life and Social Sciences on +61 3 9214 8093 or bfindlay@swin.edu.au. If you feel that the senior investigator was unable to satisfy your query or problem or you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, you can contact: Research Ethics Officer, Office of Research and Graduate Studies (H68), Swinburne University of Technology, P O Box 218, HAWTHORN VIC 3122 , Australia or Tel +61 3 9214 5218."

Appendix M

Syntax for dealing with missing cases

* Missing value analysis showed a random pattern of missing data across the survey as a *whole. Missing values were therefore not replaced. The number of missing values for *each scale was calculated (after reverse coding where appropriate). Scale scores were *then computed, using a score for the missing case derived from the mean for the items *in each scale.

COUNT

nastymiss = v162 v147 v139 v143 v98 v94 v148 v144 v160 v150 v127 v151 v131 (MISSING).

VARIABLE LABELS nastymiss 'number of missing items in nasty workplace'.

EXECUTE.

COUNT

supportivemiss = v118 v116 v90 v114 v110 v141 v152 v71 v89 v58 v109 (MISSING).

VARIABLES LABELS supportivemiss 'number missing items on supportive uses of humour'.

EXECUTE.

RECODE

v168 v117 v132 v136 v55 v167 v154 v140 v103 v86 v32 v27 v76 v107 (1=7) (2=6) (3=5) (4=4) (5=3) (6=4) (7=1) INTO rv168 rv117 rv132 rv136 rv55 rv167 rv154 rv140 rv103 rv86 rv32 rv27 rv76 rv107.

EXECUTE.

COUNT

gossipmiss = v38 v45 rv168 v81 v50 v40 v74 v37 rv117 (MISSING).

VARIABLE LABELS gossipmiss 'number items missing on gossip and teasing are no good'.

EXECUTE.

COUNT

nicemiss = v133 rv132 rv136 rv55 v157 v142 v134 rv167 rv154 v100 rv140 rv103 (MISSING).

VARIABLE LABELS nicemiss 'number missing items on nice workplace'.

EXECUTE.

COUNT

personalgainmiss = v64 v65 v122 v87 v106 v105 v126 v120 v54 v158 (MISSING).

VARIABLE LABELS personalgainmiss 'number missing items on strategies for personal gain'.

EXECUTE.

COUNT

nohumourmiss= v48 v75 v61 v82 v53 v67 v43 v51 v33 v113 v79 v88 (MISSING).

VARIABLE LABELS nohumourmiss 'number missing items on I have no humour'.

EXECUTE.

COUNT

humourusemiss = v30 v25 v41 v19 v20 v29 v31 v21 (MISSING).

VARIABLE LABELS humourusemiss 'number missing items on ways of using humour'.
EXECUTE.

COUNT
suppressmiss = v77 rv86 v95 rv32 v102 rv27 (MISSING).
VARIABLE LABEL suppressmiss 'number missing items on sarcasm is good when
humour is rare'.
EXECUTE.

COUNT
kinesicsmiss = v36 v78 v72 v73 (MISSING).
VARIABLE LABELS kinesicsmiss 'number items missing on kinesics in humour'.
EXECUTE.

COUNT
sharingmiss = v47 v91 v63 v28 v57 v39 rv76 v80 v84 rv107 (MISSING).
VARIABLE LABELS sharingmiss 'number items missing on people sharing humour'.
EXECUTE.

DO IF
(NASTYMISS LE 3).
COMPUTE NASTY = MEAN (v162, v147, v139, v143, v98, v94, v148, v144, v160, v150,
v127, v151, v131)*13.
END IF.

DO IF
(SUPPORTIVEMISS LE 3).
COMPUTE SUPPORTIVE = MEAN (v118, v116, v90, v114, v110, v141, v152, v71, v89,
v58, v109)*11.
END IF.

DO IF
(GOSSIPMISS LE 2).
COMPUTE GOSSIP = MEAN (v38, v45, rv168, v81, v50, v40, v74, v37, rv117)*9.
END IF.

DO IF
(NICEMISS LE 3).
COMPUTE NICE = MEAN (v133, rv132, rv136, rv55, v157, v142, v134, rv167, rv154,
v100, rv140, rv103)*12.
END IF.

DO IF
(PERSONALGAINMISS LE 3).
COMPUTE PERSONALGAIN = MEAN (v64, v65, v122, v87, v106, v105, v126, v120,
v54, v158)*10.
END IF.

DO IF
(NOHUMOURMISS LE 3).
COMPUTE NOHUMOUR = MEAN (v48, v75, v61, v82, v53, v67, v43, v51, v33, v113,
v79, v88)*12.
END IF.

```
DO IF  
(HUMOURUSEMISS LE 2).  
COMPUTE HUMOURUSE = MEAN (v30, v25, v41, v19, v20, v29, v31, v21)*8.  
END IF.
```

```
DO IF  
(SUPPRESSMISS LE 1).  
COMPUTE SUPPRESS = MEAN (v77, rv86, v95, rv32, v102, rv27 )*6.  
END IF.
```

```
DO IF  
(KINESICSMISS LE 1).  
COMPUTE KINESICS = MEAN (v36, v78, v72, v73)*4.  
END IF.
```

```
DO IF  
(SHARINGMISS LE 3).  
COMPUTE SHARING = MEAN (v47, v91, v63, v28, v57, v39, rv76, v80, v84, rv107)*10.  
END IF.
```

Appendix N**Pattern Matrix for Factors in Study One (Oblimin method of Oblique Rotation).**

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8	Factor 9	Factor 10
V162	.615									
V147	.613									
V139	.554									
V143	.552									
V98	.521									
V94	.521									
V148	.487									
V144	.485									
V159	.471				.329					
V160	.467									
V150	.464									
V127	.453									
V151	.452									
V131	.451									
V164	.447			-.356						
V135	.427							.356		
V153	.420									
V124	.418									
V115	.418									
V163	.401									
V146	.396									
V108	.396									
V96	.381									
V128	.371									
V129	.334									
V149	.330									
V99	.315									
V118		.645								
V116		.525								
V90		.516								
V114		.499								
V110		.488								
V141		.474								
V46		.396					.340			
V49		.381					.343			
V66		.374								
V152		.359								.349
V71		.340								
V89		.330								
V58		.323								
V109		.314								
V38			.655							
V45			.616							
V168			-.583							
V44			-.568			.342				
V81			.542							
V50			.541							
V40			.513							
V42			-.432					.397		

V74		.367			
V37		.323			
V117		-.319			
V133			.680		
V132			-.643		
V136			-.636		
V55			-.520		
V157			.470		
V142			.443		
V134			.393		
V165	.362		-.389		
V167			-.388		
V119			.378	.310	
V154			-.339		
V100			.337		
V140			-.326		
V103			-.320		
V130				.537	
V64				.497	
V62				.446	.330
V65				.445	
V122				.339	
V87				.391	
V106				.371	
V156	.337			.370	
V105				.354	
V126				.354	
V120				.349	
V54				.332	
V158				.303	
V48					.442
V75					.428
V61					.406
V82					.395
V53					.386
V67					.380
V43					.379
V51					.377
V33					.350
V113					.323
V79					.323
V88					.306
V30					.498
V25					.443
V41					.443
V19					.426
V20					.404
V29					.400
V31					.376
V21					.327
V77		-.316			.513
V86		.333			-.500
V95					.384
V32					-.369

V102		.341		
V27		-.327		
V36			.428	
V78			.417	
V72			.368	
V83			.303	
V47				.723
V91				.671
V63				.662
V28				.654
V57				.570
V39				.497
V76				-.435
V80				.410
V84				.332
V107				-.327
V24	.313			.315

Appendix O:
Recruitment Email and Plain Language Statement for Study Two

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am a PhD student at Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn, Victoria, Australia. In the past I have taught VCE and IB Psychology and I am a member of the ISHS. You may even know me from school.

I should like to ask for your help in my research about the role of humour in the workplace. The first stage of my study involves finding out about how people appreciate and make humour in the workplace.

I'd be very grateful if you'd go to this website and complete my survey. It's completely anonymous and takes about 30 minutes to complete.

I should be very grateful if you could forward this email to other people who you think might like to do the survey. Please note that this email was sent using the blind copy facility as regards recipients. If you forward the email on, please could you use a similar facility? Thank you.

<http://opinio.online.swin.edu.au/s?s=3513>

This should be interesting to you and it would be very helpful to me.

Regards
 Maren Rawlings

The plain language statement that preceded the start of the survey read as follows:

Developing a measure of humour in the workplace.

Researcher- Maren Rawlings
 Supervisor- Dr. Bruce Findlay

The current study will explore the association between the Humour and Affect at Work (HAW) scale and other factors in the workplace. To participate in this study, you are required to be over 18 years of age and to have been in employment for 6 months or more at some stage of your life. You will be required to complete an anonymous questionnaire that contains items about how you feel and behave at work and how you see others behave in the workplace, as well as

providing some demographic information about yourself, such as age, sex, and the nature of your workplace.

We are testing a newly constructed scale against known scales that relate to the workplace, so there are many items in the questionnaire. Do not spend much time on any one item, your first response is probably the most accurate. The questionnaire will take approximately 80 minutes to complete. If others in your workplace or your friends are also completing the questionnaire, we ask that you do not discuss answers with them until all the relevant questionnaires have been submitted.

Any information you provide will be anonymous and only the researchers will have access to the data on an anonymous spreadsheet. Results from this study may be submitted for publication in a psychological journal, however only group results will be reported. No one person's responses will be able to be identified.

Your participation in this research is greatly appreciated and the completion of this questionnaire will be taken as your consent to participate. Please retain this information page for your records.

Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the senior investigator Dr. Bruce Findlay of the Department of Life and Social Sciences on +61 3 9214 8093 or bfindlay@swin.edu.au. If you feel that the senior investigator was unable to satisfy your query or problem or you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, you can contact: Research Ethics Officer, Office of Research and Graduate Studies (H68), Swinburne University of Technology, P O Box 218, HAWTHORN VIC 3122 , Australia or Tel +61 3 9214 5218.

Appendix P:

Demographic differences in humour measurements: If it's male, managed but not mature, is it work humour?

This paper was presented to the Australian Humour Scholars Network Conference, Women's College University of Sydney, 13th February 2010.

Maren Rawlings and Bruce Findlay
Swinburne University of Technology, Australia

The prevailing notion of an individual having a distinct humour style, closely related to personality and enduring over a range of contexts (e.g Thorson and Powell, 1993) is challenged in this comparative analysis of demographic factors in the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ - Martin et al., 2003) and scales from the longer form of the Humour at Work (HAW) scale. A sample of Australian workers responded to both the HSQ and the HAW and their details of gender, position and age were recorded. Controlling for age, contrasts to Martin's findings were found. These may reflect different uses of humour in the workplace. Scales of the long HAW were analyzed, controlling for age. Gender was a main effect for "Gossip" and "Stirring" and a main effect of position was marginally significant for "Sharing". The most intriguing finding involved an interaction between position and gender for the scale "Stirring" of the HAW.

Hay (2000), using odds analysis on the observations of workplaces in New Zealand, found differences in the rate of humorous utterances between men and women. Men were more likely to use humour to increase solidarity and status and to "perform positive work on their personal identities" (Hay 2000, p. 738). Men more often used humour to cope with a contextual problem, whereas women were more likely to use humour to cope with situations that were not specific to the immediate. Ruch (1990) found age differences in the enjoyment of some kinds of humour. This implies that people may prefer different styles of humour at different ages. Weisfeld (2006) suggested that humor from an individual may reduce the hostility of others. Younger workers, for example, may use humour to avoid more serious conflicts at work.

A general scale of humour use, the *Humor Styles Questionnaire* (HSQ - Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003), reflected demographic differences. The samples that the final version of the HSQ was tested on consisted of 300 undergraduate students (169 female and 131 male with the mean age of 19.7 years) and 152 adults from the general community (106 female and 46 male mean age = 39.1 years). Martin et al. found that males obtained significantly higher scores on all four scales in the HSQ, but the strongest results were found in the Aggressive and Self-defeating scales. The cohorts of below 19 years of age and above 25 years of age were used by Martin et al. to investigate age differences. There was a significant main effect for age on the Affiliative and Aggressive scales, with younger participants having significantly higher scores on both scales.

The aims of the present study were to compare the demographic findings of Martin et al. (2003) with findings from a large sample of Australian workers and then to compare the HSQ with an Australian scale, the *Humour at Work* (HAW) scale. It was expected that males would score higher particularly on the Aggressive and Self-defeating scales and that younger participants would score higher on the Aggressive and Affiliative scales of the HSQ. The effect of Position (employee or manager) on the scales of the HSQ was an area of interest for this study.

As part of a larger study, the HSQ was presented to 379 Australian workers of which 234 were female and 143 were male. Independent sample T-tests were carried out on the four scales of the HSQ for Gender, and Position (234 employees and 100 managers). With respect to Gender, three scales yielded significant differences in the means between females and males. Males scored significantly higher on Self-enhancing, Aggressive and Self-defeating scales.

Table P1:
Means and Standard Deviations of HSQ scales, comparing Gender (females – males).

Scale	Mean (S D)		t (1, 375)	Probability
	Female	Male		
Affiliative	44.38 (7.39)	44.20 (7.32)	.23	.82
Self-enhancing	36.17 (8.40)	27.98 (7.22)	-2.13	.03
Aggressive	26.30 (6.93)	29.23 (6.95)	-3.98	.00
Self-defeating	29.04 (8.74)	31.12 (8.09)	-2.32	.02

When comparisons were made between employees ($M = 35.98$, $SD = 8.10$) and managers, managers ($M = 38.21$, $SD = 8.00$) scored significantly higher on the Self-enhancing scale ($t = 2.3$, $p < .02$).

In research involving questionnaire responses, age is routinely recorded as a continuous variable. Resulting data is cross-sectional and comparisons between age groups are prone to extraneous variables (e.g. cohort effects). Reasoning would suggest that there is a relationship between age and position at work

(employee or manager, for example). Some reckless souls may claim an analogous relationship between age and gender (“winsome” or “witch” and “spunk” or “spent”?). If age is considered to be implicated as a contributor to a dependent variable, it can be controlled for using Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA).

MANCOVA²⁰ analysis of the scales of the HSQ, with Gender and Position, using Age as a covariate was carried out on the sample of 379 Australian workers. Not all participants had reported their age, sex or position. The main effect of Age was significant for the Affiliative style, $F(1, 331) = 20.28, p < .000$ and for the Aggressive style, $F(1, 331) = 7.18, p = .008$. There was a trend ($p = .055$), for older workers to use more Self-enhancing humour. The only significant main effect for Gender was with the Aggressive style $F(1, 331) = 10.97, p < .001$ and the significant main effect for Position was with the Affiliative style $F(1, 331) = 5.43, p < .02$. Controlling for age, there were no significant interaction effects between Gender and Position. Older workers use the Aggressive humour styles more than younger workers, who use the Affiliative style more. After controlling for age, Males use the Aggressive humour style more and Managers use the Affiliative style more (regardless of sex). No significant interaction effects of Position*Gender were found.

²⁰ Box's test not significant, $p = .31$, Wilk's Lambda $p = .00$

The *Humour at Work* scale was developed from 150 items written from the appraisal of various research areas- physiological (e.g. mood), emotional labour, discourse management, (e.g. irony), cooperative effort, teasing, nipping and biting, personality, ethnic differences, politeness, management and leadership. The questionnaire was completed on-line by an international sample of over 300 (mainly from Australia). Exploratory factor analysis revealed the optimum solution was 8 factors for 62 items. A different sample of 379 Australian workers (female 234 and male 143, mean age = 33.6 years, $SD = 13.7$) completed these items together with validating scales. The 62 item form of the HAW was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis. Satisfactory indicators of model fit were found for the individual scales shown below with the change in Cronbach alpha resulting after deletion of items (Cronbach alpha for scales from the EFA of the original sample are in italics):

Sharing (5 items), $\alpha = .77, .85$

Stirring (7 items), $\alpha = .72, .76$

Gossip (6 items), $\alpha = .72, .80$

No humour (6 items), $\alpha = .64, .69$

Nice workplace (4 items), $\alpha = .76, .78$

Supporting (6 items), $\alpha = .68, .81$

Nasty workplace (8 items), $\alpha = .83, .85$

Teasing (5 items), $\alpha = .69, .73$

These scales of the HAW were correlated with the scales of the HSQ as shown in Table P1. A criterion of $r = .30$ and above was selected for “practical” significance because of the size of the sample ($N = 379$). As can be seen from Table 1, the HAW was validated as a measure of humour.

In the larger study the scores of the EPQ-R (Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985) and the IPIP Altruism scale were mixed together on the questionnaire to promote common method variance. The correlation between these scales was low ($r = .15, p < .01$). Any trends discussed were at least 10 percent higher in correlation than this correlation.

Table P1:

Practically significant Correlations between the scales of HAW and the HSQ (all $p < .01$). Trends (also $p < .01$) $r = .25$ or over.

	Affiative	Self-enhancing	Aggressive	Self-defeating
<i>Sharing</i>	.56**	.37**		
<i>Stirring</i>	.25**	.28**	.44**	.45**
<i>Gossip (disapproving)</i>			-.50**	
<i>No Humour</i>	-.40**	-.25**		
<i>Nice Workplace</i>	.38**	.28**		
<i>Supporting</i>	.35**	.40**		.26**
<i>Nasty Workplace</i>	-.27**			
<i>Teasing</i>			-.27**	.32**

Independent T-tests were carried out for all the scales of the HAW to detect significant differences in means for gender (females versus males) and position (employees versus managers). There were significant differences for males scoring higher on *Stirring* and for being less disapproving of *Gossip* (see Table P2).

Table P2

Means and Standard Deviations for Females and Males on HAW Stirring and Gossip.

Scale Probability	Mean (S D)		t (1, 375)	
	Female	Male		
<i>Stirring</i>	30.06 (7.23)	34.01 (7.64)	-5.02	.00
<i>Gossip</i> (disapproving)	36.65 (7.77)	33.45 (7.86)	3.86	.00

There were no significant differences in means comparing employees and managers for the scales in the HAW.

MANCOVA analysis²¹ revealed a significant main effect of Age for *Gossip* $F(1, 331) = 20.00, p < .00$). There was a trend of Position (after controlling for age) on *Sharing*, managers scoring higher than employees ($p < .06$). Gender (after controlling for age) contributed to differences $F(1, 331) = 7.79, p < .01$ for the *Stirring scale* and the *Gossip scale*, $F(1, 331) = 17.13, p < .00$). Males scored higher on the *Stirring scale* and females scored higher on the (disapproving of) *Gossip scale*. An interaction effect for Gender*Position $F = (1, 331) 4.74, p < .03$ with respect to the scores for the *Stirring scale* occurred, after age was controlled for, but the effect was due to gender rather than position. That is, male employees were significantly more likely to score highly on the *Stirring scale* than either

²¹ Box's test not significant, $p = .74$, Wilk's Lambda $p = .00$

male managers or female employees or female managers, regardless of age, as shown in Figure P1.

Discussion

The expectations of similarity with the results of the HSQ were only partially fulfilled. As a main effect, Age was implicated in three of the scales (Affiliative, Self-enhancing as a trend and Aggressive) but not in Self-defeating humor. Inspection of the means after a median cut-point revealed that younger workers scored higher on Affiliative humor style, and the Aggressive humor style but lower on the Self-enhancing humor style. Martin et al. (2003) found a significant main effect for age on only the Affiliative and Aggressive scales with younger participants having significantly higher scores on both scales. Despite slightly different methods of analysis, the findings were in accord.

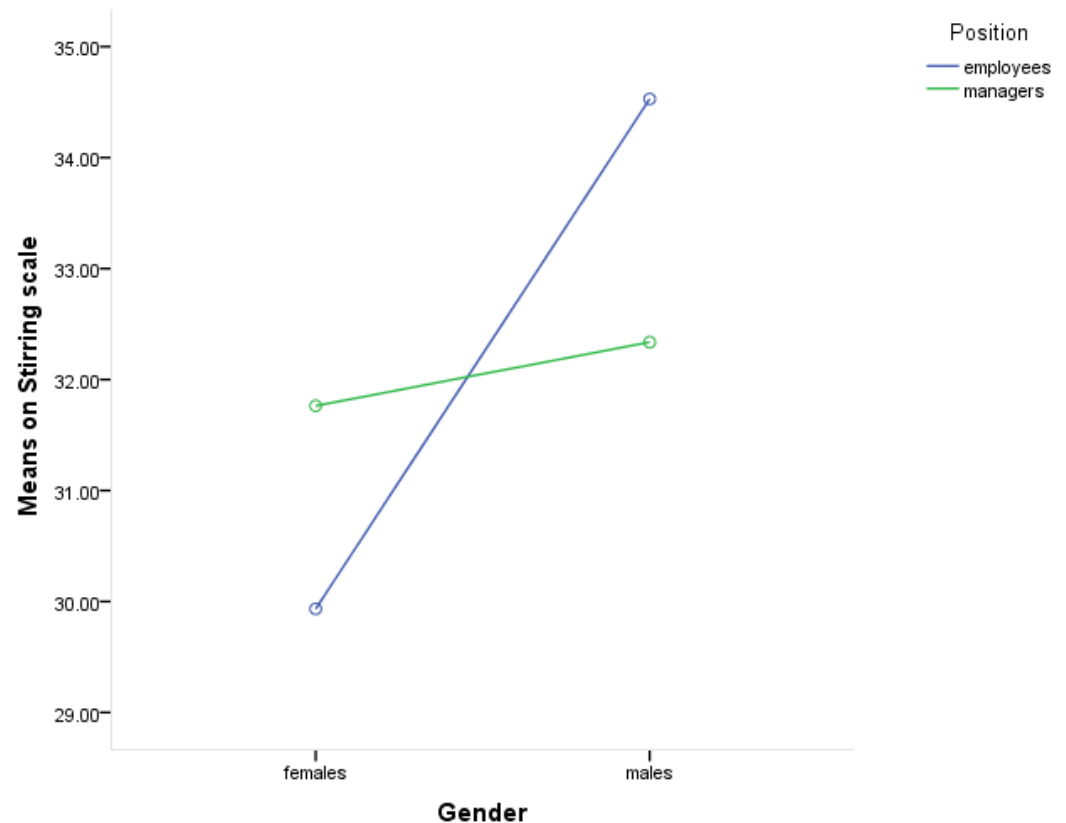


Figure P1:
The means for females (employees and managers) and males (employees and managers) on the HAW Stirring scale, at age 32.

Gender was significant as a main effect for only Aggressive scores when age was controlled, with males scoring higher than females. Martin et al. (2003) found males had consistently higher scores on all 4 HSQ scales. Speculation that age may have been a confounding factor in the analysis by Martin et al. (2003) is tempting. The range for the sample of Australians was restricted to those *in work*, and it might be argued that the highest scoring cohort of males on the self-defeating scale might be out-of-work young men. This cohort would have been represented in the sample of Martin et al (2003). Position was a main effect only

for the Affiliative Humor Style with Managers scoring higher than employees. There were no significant interaction effects of position*gender.

The scales of the HAW were validated through significant correlations with scales of the HSQ. Whereas the HSQ sought to identify a personal humour style in a general context, the HAW placed emphasis on particular humorous behaviours of the individual and of other people at work. By controlling for age, we tried to tease out what effects gender and position had on the scales of the HAW. Males scored significantly lower on the (disapproving of) *Gossip* scale, suggesting that the negative, practically significant correlation between *Gossip* and Aggressive humor style may be due in part to Gender differences.

It was found that male employees scored significantly highest on the *Stirring* scale, compared with female employees and managers regardless of gender (Figure 1). The correlations between *Stirring* and all 4 HSQ scales suggested that this kind of humour can be adopted by all humor styles, although the higher, practically significant correlations with the Aggressive and Self-defeating humor styles suggested a common male factor. We found trends to suggest that *Stirring* humour correlated with “solidarity” (affiliative humor style) and “status” (self-enhancing humor style) as postulated by Hay (2000) but *Stirring* was more highly correlated with negative humor styles.

Two criticisms might be leveled at this study. The first is that repeated analysis of a set of data will result in significance by chance, or the size of a sample will lead to chance results. We tried to address this criticism by adopting a criterion of $r = .30$ for all practically significant results. The second is that the results were due to common method variance but this was controlled for as part of the larger study by mixing items from the ERQ-R and IPIP Altruism and noting the relevant correlation. Discussions of trends were restricted to correlations 10 percent above this figure.

The work situation in Australia is probably different from other countries and further research is indicated in cross-cultural settings using both the HSQ as a general metric and the HAW as a work specific measure.

Gossip scale

I don't like people who make jokes about other people who are not around.

I do not like people who make negative humorous comments about others.

People who pass on humorous rumours are just being gossips.

Negative Being humorous is a good way to pass on gossip.

I do not like put-downs.

Negative I think of teasing as part of our play in the workplace.

Stirring scale

I like to stir things up by using humour.

I like to say things 'dead pan' (with a blank face) to make them funnier.

I try to make up something humorous when people are talking about their troubles at work.

I use humour when I have offended someone to minimize or neutralize what I said.

I like to say something nonsensical in a good way to make humour.

I use humour to show people what I am capable of.

I like to fool the people I tease, so they are last to get the joke.

Appendix Q

Confirmatory factor analysis of Climate of Fear, Job Satisfaction and Productivity predictor scales of the Occupational Climate Measure

As part of Study Two, participants were asked for their age, gender, highest level of education, type of workplace, position in the organization and number of people that were contacted each day, and were asked to complete the following scales.

Climate of Fear. The participants were asked to complete the 13 item *Climate of Fear* scale (CF; Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003), using a 7-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (7). Ashkanasy and Nicholson reported Cronbach’s alpha reliabilities between .79 and .85.

Job Satisfaction. The *Job Satisfaction* scale of Warr, Cook and Wall (JS; 1979) required that participants respond with how satisfied or dissatisfied they feel with 15 features of their job and responses were made on a 7-point scales ranging from “I’m extremely dissatisfied” to “I’m extremely satisfied”. Cronbach alpha reliability has been reported at .85 and above (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979).

Productivity scales of the Occupational Climate Measure. The eight scales pertaining to productivity from the Occupational Climate Measure (OCM - as reported by Patterson et al., 2005) were *Supervisor Support*, *Concern for Employee Welfare*, *Skill Development*, *Effort*, *Innovation and Flexibility*, *Quality*, *Performance Feedback*, and *Formalization*. The 38 items making up these scales

were randomly mixed and presented with 4-point Likert scale, ranging from “Definitely False” to “Definitely True”. The authors reported Cronbach alpha reliabilities ranging from .77 to .91.

Results

Cases with more than 5% missing data were deleted reducing the sample to 377. Remaining missing values were imputed using the Missing Values Analysis (EM) option in *SPSS 16*. Results were analyzed using *SPSS 16* and *Amos 16*. *Climate of Fear*, *Job Satisfaction* and the combination of the eight scales of the OCM were each subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and the reliability of each reduced scale after CFA was determined. Then the three scales were correlated.

The relevant Chi-square statistics, degrees of freedom, probabilities and goodness of fit indices for confirmatory factor analyses of *Climate of Fear*, *Job Satisfaction* and the productivity scales of the OCM are to be found in Table Q1, together with their reliabilities. As can be seen from Table Q1, the models did not achieve the optimum level of probability ($p < .05$), but in each case, the normed chi-square was less than 3. The Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Standardized Root-Mean-Square Residual (SRMR) were of an acceptable level in each case as well. The weakest levels of fit were found for the productivity scales of the OCM, although in this last case both the RMSEA and the SRMR were sufficient. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis reduced *Climate of*

Fear from 13 items to 9, *Job Satisfaction* from 15 items to 10 and the combined productivity-predicting scales of the OCM from 38 items to 22 items. Reliabilities for the three resulting scales were high.

Discriminant validity was tested by examining the implied correlations of items for each latent construct. In each construct, for each item, the implied correlation was higher in that latent construct, than in the other two constructs. These implied correlations are presented for *Climate of Fear* in Table Q2, for *Job Satisfaction* in Table Q3 and for the combined constructs from the OCM in Table Q4. After Confirmatory Factor Analysis (in which items indicated as redundant were deleted), the three reduced scales were subjected to bivariate correlation. *Climate of Fear* was found to correlate negatively with both *Job Satisfaction* ($r = -.65, p < .01$) and the *Productivity* scales of the OCM ($r = -.63, p < .01$). *Job Satisfaction* correlated positively with the *Productivity* scales of the OCM ($r = .72, p < .01$).

Table Q1

Goodness of Fit and Reliability Measures

	Climate of fear (CF)	Job satisfaction (JS)	Productivity (OCM)
Chi square	55.76	89.39	483.28
Degrees of freedom	27	35	223
Probability	.001	.000	.000
CMIN/DF	2.07	2.55	2.22
GFI	.967	.955	.903
AGFI	.946	.930	.879
TLI	.959	.952	.940
CFI	.969	.963	.948
RMSEA	.053	.064	.057
SRMR	.037	.038	.046
Cronbach alpha	.84	.88	.94

GFI Goodness of Fit Index; AGFI Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index; TLI Tucker Lewis Index; CFI Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR Standardized Root Mean Square Residual

Table Q2
Implied Correlations for Climate of Fear

Item	Implied Correlations		
	Climate of Fear	Job Satisfaction	Productivity OCM
I feel afraid at work because management comes down hard on mistakes as an example to others.	.68	-.49	-.45
I feel safe discussing sensitive work issues with co-workers.*	.54	-.39	-.37
I feel at ease in this workplace because punishment is only applied to those who have done something wrong.	*.49	-.36	-.34
I feel anxious when speaking up in this organization, because you have to be able to prove all your remarks.	.67	-.48	-.45
I dread repercussions at work because they are unpredictable.	.68	-.49	-.46
I feel uneasy at work because I do not receive all the information I need to do my job properly.	.75	-.54	-.51

Table Q2 (Cont'd.)

I feel comfortable about giving suggestions – they aren't treated as criticism.*	.59	-.43	-.40
I feel fearful or anxious when I am at work.	.60	-.43	-.41
I feel people aren't totally truthful with me because they worry about what they have to tell me.	.47	-.34	-.32

* These items are reverse coded

Table Q3
Implied correlations for Job Satisfaction.

Item	Implied Correlations		
	Job Productivity OCM	Climate of Satisfaction	Fear
How satisfied or dissatisfied you feel with each of these features of you present job:			
Your job security.	.50	-.36	.41
Your hours of work.	.42	-.30	.34
The attention paid to the suggestions you make.	.81	-.56	.66
Industrial relations between management and workers in your firm.	.74	-.54	.61
Your rate of pay.	.44	-.32	.37
The amount of responsibility you are given.	.61	-.44	.50
Your immediate boss.	.78	-.57	.64
The recognition you get for good work.	.80	-.58	.65
Your fellow workers.	.59	-.43	.48
The freedom to choose your method of working.	.71	-.52	.58

Table Q4
Implied correlations for Productivity Predictors of the OCM

Item	Implied Correlations		
	OCM	CF	JS
People are strongly encouraged to develop their skills	.60	-.41	.49
People receive enough training when it comes to using new equipment	.56	-.38	.46
People are not properly trained when there is a new machine or bit of equipment.*	.61	-.41	.50
This company does not have much of a reputation for top-quality products.*	.67	-.47	.56
People believe the company's success depends on high-quality work.	.62	-.42	.54
Quality is taken very seriously here.	.46	-.31	.37
Assistance in developing new ideas is readily available.	.68	-.46	.55
This organization is very flexible; it can quickly change procedures to meet new conditions and solve problems as they arise.	.65	-.44	.53
Management here are quick to spot the need to do things differently.	.63	-.42	.51
This company tries to be fair in its actions towards employees.	.83	-.57	.68
This company cares about its employees.	.83	-.56	.67

Table Q4 (cont'd.)

This company pays little attention to the interests of employees.*	.76	-.51	.62
People here don't put more effort into their work than they have to.*	.58	-.41	.49
People are prepared to make a special effort to do a good job.	.66	-.45	.54
People are enthusiastic about their work.	.41	-.28	.37
People here always want to perform to the best of their ability.	.57	-.39	.47
Supervisors can be relied upon to give good guidance to people.	.72	-.49	.59
Supervisors here are friendly and easy to approach.	.75	-.51	.62
Supervisors show that they have confidence in those they manage.	.75	-.51	.61
Supervisors here are really good at understanding people's problems.	.66	-.45	.54
The way people do their jobs is rarely assessed.*	.47	-.32	.38
People's performance is measured on a regular basis.	.58	-.39	.47

* These items are reverse coded.

In contrast, significant probabilities were found for both *Climate of Fear* ($p = .04$) and *Job Satisfaction* ($p = .03$) when tertiary educated participants were compared with secondary educated participants. Comparison of the standardized weights demonstrated that in *Climate of Fear* there were two items that were more important for the tertiary educated group than for the group with secondary education. These were “I feel at ease in this workplace because punishment is only applied to those who have done something wrong” (reverse scored, F10) and “I feel safe discussing sensitive work issues with co-workers” (reverse scored, F12). When the model with all items constrained except for F10, was tested, the comparison showed that the weights were significantly different for tertiary educated respondents compared with secondary educated respondents, Chi-square (1) = 5.77, $p = .02$. When the model with weights for F10 and F12 not equal was tested, Chi-square (1) = 4.11, $p = .04$. Subsequent testing led to non-significant probability levels. The change in the reliability of the scale was negligible ($\alpha = .84$ to $\alpha = .83$) when these two items were removed from the scale.

In the case of *Job Satisfaction*, comparison of the standardized weights showed that two items were more important to those respondents with secondary education, than tertiary educated respondents. These were “Your hours of work” (J13) and “Your rate of pay” (J7). Nested model comparisons revealed that, only for the first of these items, “Your hours of work”, were the weights significantly different for tertiary educated respondents compared with secondary educated

respondents. There was no change in reliability of *Job Satisfaction* ($\alpha = .88$) when J13 was removed from the scale.

Appendix R

*Paper presented to the 8th Australasian Conference on
Personality & Individual Differences,
27th November 2009.*

Personality in Work Humour: only when people are pleasant

**Maren Rawlings, Bruce Findlay, Kim Muraca
Swinburne University of Technology**

The approaches taken in the development of most questionnaires in the area of humour studies involved the assumption of major dimensions and then the creation of items tailored for them, for example, Martin et al. (HSQ; 2003), Thorson and Powell (MSHS; 1993) and Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (HOS; 1991). In particular, Ruch and Kohler's (STCI; 1998) model was strongly influenced by the Five Factor Model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Specific items within each questionnaire typically refer to a range of different environments, making the assumption that people behave somewhat similarly across situations. Theories of "Emotional Labour" (Hochschild, 2003) and "Impression Management" (Goffman, 2004), however, suggested that in some situations personality characteristics are suppressed. The present study describes the development of an instrument specifically constructed to gauge a person's use of and reaction to humor in the work-place. When a practical level of correlation was adopted (Royall, 1986), the scale "Sharing" was found to correlated with extraversion and the scale "Gossip – disapproval" was negatively correlated with agreeableness. No personality measures were found to be "practically" significant with items which made up the short form of the Humour at Work scale (HAW).

We celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the Eight Hour Day in Australia in 2006. Although we are experiencing a minerals boom, restructuring is occurring in the manufacturing sector. In particular, value-added production (e.g. clothing and car making) is going off shore, as well as IT service industries. Although there is some expansion in tourism and high-end creative or specialty products, most new jobs are service related and involve shifts that for added productivity, violate the 8-hour-day principle. These positions need a fair amount of "face work" or emotional labour.

In their Australian research on affective well-being and intrinsic job satisfaction in the work-place, Hosie, Sevastos and Cooper (2006) remarked that “Organizations now need employees who will willingly exceed formal job requirements in order to improve organizational productivity. Human resources practices should strive to create an environment that overtly encourages...a social exchange relationship in preference to a purely economic exchange relationship” (p. 254). Companies should create an environment where employees identify with and share the organization’s goals and objectives. Their careful and thorough analysis of the relationships between managers and their employees, however, made no reference to humour, a traditional means of expressing either satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

In contrast, in New Zealand, Holmes (2000; 2006; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003) used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine data from the Victoria University Language in the Workplace Project. They found many examples of humour being used for playful and strategic purposes. In particular Holmes and Marra (2002) found that subversive humour increased in work-place meetings compared with other work-place settings. They reported that 40% of the humour in organizational meetings was subversive, compared with 60% being reinforcing humour.

One of the aims of this study was to elucidate the role played by the personalities of individual workers in their approaches to work-place humour. Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, (2003) designed the *Humor Styles*

Questionnaire (HSQ), a general humour scale, to reflect the individual personality in their *Self-enhancing* and *Self-defeating* scales and to reflect the individual's behaviour to others in the *Affiliative* and *Aggressive* scales. All their items were in the first person. They validated the 32 item HSQ against the 240 items of the NEO PI-R (Costa, & McCrae, 1992) with 152 respondents. For the sake of clarity, only correlations greater than $r = .20$ are reported. Significant positive correlations were found between HSQ *self-enhancing* and extraversion and openness, and significant positive correlations were found between HSQ *affiliative* and extraversion and openness, together with a significant negative correlation with neuroticism. Between HSQ *aggressive* and agreeableness and conscientiousness, there were significant negative correlations. HSQ *self-defeating* correlated significantly positively with neuroticism and significantly negatively with agreeableness and conscientiousness. When a replication was carried out (Greven, Chamorro-Premuzic, Arteché & Furnam, 2008) with a much larger sample ($N = 1038$), this pattern was repeated (correlations between $r = .25$ and $r = .51$), except for that between HSQ *self-defeating* and agreeableness which was much smaller.

The *Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale*, developed by Thorson and Powell (1993) was developed from a literature search that led to the supposition that a person's sense of humour was composed of six elements. After "brainstorming" items that were suggested by these elements and 3 rounds of factor analysis, they developed a four factor model that could be summarized as "I can create humour" (11 items), "Humour helps me to cope" (7 items), "I appreciate humour" (2 items) and "I don't like joking" (4 items). All their items

were in the first person. Ruch and Kohler's *State-Trait Cheerfulness Inventory* (STCI; 1998) was strongly influenced by the Five Factor Model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992) with underlying theoretical dimensions of "cheerfulness, seriousness and bad mood" (Ruch & Kohler, 1998, p. 205). Specific items within each of these questionnaires typically refer to a range of different environments, making the assumption that people behave somewhat similarly across situations, that is, that humorous behaviour is the result of personality influencing consistent humorous traits.

The *Humor Orientation Scale* (HOS) developed by Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1991) consisted of 17 items in the first person, in a uni-dimensional model (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$). They conducted confirmatory factor analysis to test the worth of a one factor model over a two factor model and chose the more parsimonious solution, although the difference was very small. In addition they looked at situations in which an individual will or will not attempt humour by asking respondents to write in a free response task about situations appropriate for humour use and situations inappropriate for humour use. These situations were not constrained and were coded into conceptually similar categories; low humor, non-verbal, impersonation, language, other orientation and expressiveness. They concluded that persons higher on the HOS will perceive more situations as appropriate for humour use and fewer situations as inappropriate for humour use and will use more of the different categories identified.

In a public arena, such as the workplace, Goffman (2004) maintained that the individual was concerned with the presentation of the self and maintained a positive self-image by engaging in face-work, by increasing positive face (concerned with connoted features such as attractiveness or affiliation) and demanding negative face (of denoted features like precedence or personal space) when challenged by the actions of others. People, by frame analysis, understand the social situations they find themselves in (analogous to acting in theatre) and engage in interaction rituals or displays that align the individual with a group (e.g., using humour about a particular class or sex). In such situations of impression management, it would be expected that personality characteristics would be suppressed. Hochschild (2003) suggested that particular forms of employment require the suppression of personality and the adoption of expected modes of address (emotional labour) between server and customer. The use of humour at work could be a strategic or subversive reaction to these constraints because it is considered to be not serious or not on the record. In fact humour is most easily generated (Attardo, 1993) by breaking the rules or conversational maxims of scientifically based real and true communication (Grice, 1989).

In general, extraverts rated themselves higher on having a sense of humour in a study by Craik, Lampert & Nelson (1996). The two humour style indices derived from *The Humorous Behavior Q-sort Deck* correlating significantly with extraversion were: *socially warm v. cold* and *reflective v. boorish*. When extraverts were separated from introverts, significant results were found for the humorous style *socially warm v. cold* for extraverts and *socially warm v. cold* and *competent*

v. *inept* for introverts (p. 289). The authors concluded that introverts were more likely to value humour competence in their personal humour styles than extraverts, who felt they had a good sense of humour if they did not use vulgarity.

German adults who were heterogeneous with regard to profession, education and status, were participants in a study by Ruch and Hehl (1998) that involved the use of the NEO-PI (Costa & McCrae, 1992) as a measure of five factors of personality, and the *3-Witz-Dimensionen* humor test (Ruch 1992). The 3-WD humor test was designed to test the funniness and aversiveness of jokes and cartoons in three humour categories: incongruity-resolution humour, nonsense humour and sexual humour. Ruch and Hehl found a previously well-established association between the personality factor of openness and appreciation of humour structure (nonsense and residual incongruity) and a negative association between openness and the funniness ratings of incongruity resolution humour. They concluded that “irrespective of how *much* individuals appreciate humor, open individuals tend to prefer unresolved or residual incongruity and closed individuals prefer resolvable incongruities” (Ruch & Hehl, 1998, p.134).

The perceived specific qualities associated with a good sense of humour were investigated by Cann and Calhoun (2001). Noting that research has shown that most individuals believe that they have an above average sense of humour (e.g., Martin & Lefcourt, 1983), they randomly allocated participants to each of three groups by giving them the instruction to rate on 36 qualities categorized by Alicke (1985), either someone with “a below average sense of humor”, “a well

above average sense of humor”, or “someone who is a typical college student” (Cann and Calhoun, 2001, p.120). Only the Humour Type main effect was significant. The authors concluded that persons with a well above average sense of humour were seen as more positive. Low social desirability was only associated with a well above average sense of humour if the person was judged “Boastful” or “Restless”. Persons with an above average sense of humour, however, were rated lower on “Mature”.

In a second study, Cann and Calhoun (2001) used the same instructions as for the first study but replaced Alicke’s (1985) qualities with a two-page modified version of the NEO-FFI (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Again only the Humor Type main effect was significant and on all five factors. The well above average type was perceived as being less neurotic, more extraverted, more open, more agreeable, and less conscientious than the below average type. Compared to the typical college student, the well above average humor type was less neurotic, more extraverted and more agreeable, but more conscientious and there was no difference on openness.

The work situation differs in many aspects from the family or social milieu. In a study in the USA, beginning with the “Depression” (November 1931 to May 1932), fourteen workers were closely observed in a separate room (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939; 1964). Humour was used to control other workers’ outputs (the “chiseller” or the “speed-king” (p.60) and to entertain. The types of humour and

games that the workers employed, however, appeared to Homans to be aimed at adjusting the wage-effort exchange in their favour.

The situation changed with the return of servicemen after the Second World War. In a variety of industries in the USA during 1951 to 1955, fooling around occurred in shipping departments, where young men considered themselves temporary, and humour was reported amongst the welders, who had skills that were not readily learned. “The welders are always patting each other on the back....kid each other and have a lot of spirit.... The self-assurance and bravado of welders cannot be overstressed” (Sayles, 1963, p.26). Generally humour appeared absent on assembly lines and conflict with management dominated this post-war work milieu.

In a London department store, humorous remarks by workers were directly observed. They occurred between individuals and between groups: “mutual teasing about personal habits, appearance, love experience, morality and, in particular, work and method of work” (Bradney, 1957, p.183). Horse-play was rare and only occurred between young males (who also used obscenity with each other). The humorous remarks that Bradney observed expressed frustration, solidarity with other employees and mild rebuke, generally to cope with “difficult” conditions imposed by management practices, but sometimes just couched as an exchange of pleasantries.

Humour can be seen as a “countervailing force” to address “workplace subjugations” (Warren & Fineman, 2007, p. 95). Filling the elevator with oversized “Russian Dolls” (dressed in business dress and representing minorities) when clients were expected, was a strategy designed to comment on unfavorable management practices (p. 101). Deliberate pilfering play was aimed at relieving boredom, such as “target dough”, hurling dough at a clock 30 feet away, and “blackberry golf” using frozen fruit and a squeegee (Linstead, 1985, p. 18). Supervision was resisted by using strategic humour. A male supervisor checked a female employee for the second time and was told “I see, you don’t want to trust me, you want to marry me”, an irony inferring power and gender imbalance, (Ackroyd & Thomson, 1999, p.112). The site services inspector (“Stop! Health and Safety!”) was set up with a faked accident involving a microscooter (Warren & Fineman, 2007, p. 102).

In any workplace, workers hear what is expected of their behaviour from stories holding high performers up to praise, and low performers are subjected to shame (Foster, 2004). The corporate culture can be passed on in humorous stories. “Conformity is essential for the survival of the group as a whole...and motivates people.... to minimize their eccentricities” (p.86).

The question to be answered in our research was whether the individual’s humorous behaviour reflected personality traits in the arena of the workplace, or whether the influence of the workplace frame (e.g., face-work, boredom or stress)

caused changes in the style of humour that individuals saw themselves and other people adopting.

Method

Three studies are reported in this presentation. The first involved the development of the *Humour at Work* (HAW) scale. The second involved the validation of this scale against the *Humour Styles Questionnaire* (HSQ – Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003), a measure of general humour use, and further validation involving a measure of personality, the M37 (Rawlings, 2001; Boldero, Rawlings & Haslam, 2007), using a snow-ball internet sample of workers in Australia (largely from Victoria). The third study was a validation of the HAW scale on a sample of Prison Correctional Officers and other correctional employees, all working at a privately owned Victorian Prison.

In contrast to the humour scales outlined above, the approach adopted in the development (in the first study) of the *Humour at Work* scale was empirical. Diverse fields were perused, such as linguistics, evolutionary theory, social psychology and organizational psychology. This led to the development of items in several themes (development, emotional labour, gender-class, discourse management, teasing, personality, ethnic differences, politeness, management and workplace). There were 150 items in the first person and 150 items in the third person chosen for the initial creation of the scale. Although the internet

recruitment was international, respondents were mainly from Australia (217 of 306).

The validation in the second study was carried out with a snow-ball internet sample of 379 Australians in work. The questionnaire consisted of 62 items of the HAW and measures of Mood (PA/NA – Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988), Altruism (Goldberg, 1999), Impression management (EPQ-R lie scale, Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985), Personality (M37, Rawlings, 2001; normed in Australia), Humor Styles (HSQ – Martin et al., 1993), and workplace scales not relevant to this report.

In the third study, the 62 items of the *Humour at Work* scale were presented, together with the *Humor Styles Questionnaire* (Martin et al., 2003), the *Attitude to Life Scale* (ATL – Ryff & Keyes, 1995) and the *Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale* (DASS-21, Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). Respondents were 98 employees of a private Victorian prison (54 men and 44 women whose modal age was 30-39 years). The respondents either used an internet link or were provided with a paper version of the questionnaires.

Results

Exploratory factor analyses lead to the identification of eight scales:

Sharing (8 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$), *Nasty workplace* (9 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$), *Gossip* (8 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$), *Nice workplace* (7 items, Cronbach's α

= .78), *No humour* (8 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$), *Stirring* (8 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$), *Teasing* (7 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$) and *Supporting* (7 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$). Factor analysis of the factors revealed two superfactors, *Pleasant Climate* and *Unpleasant Climate*. This concluded the analysis of results from the first study

In the second study, as the sample was large, a criterion of "practical significance" of $r = .30$ was chosen (Royall, 1986). The correlations of the scales of the HAW (eight scales and 62 items as above) with demographic factors such as age, gender or the number of people interacted with each day, although significant, failed to reach this criterion. There were no correlations that reached this criterion between the scales of the HAW and positive affect (PA) or negative affect (NA), nor with the ERQ-R lie scale. Altruism, however, correlated at a practical level with *Sharing* ($r = .38, p < .01$), *Nice workplace* ($r = .32, p < .01$) and *Nasty workplace* ($r = -.30, p < .01$). Common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) was estimated by mixing items from the Altruism and EPQ-R lie scales ($r = .16, p < .01$) and it was concluded that variation attributable to doing such questions on the internet was of this order.

The HAW scales that correlated with the HSQ scales were as follows: With the HSQ *Affiliative*, *Sharing* ($r = .56, p < .01$), *No Humour* ($r = -.39, p < .01$), *Nice Climate* ($r = .37, p < .01$), *Supporting* ($r = .34, p < .01$); with HSQ *Self-enhancing*, *Sharing* ($r = .36, p < .01$), *Supporting* ($r = .40, p < .01$), with HSQ *Aggressive*, *Stirring* ($r = .48, p < .01$), *Gossip* (disapproving, $r = -.50, p < .01$) and

HSQ *Self-defeating*, *Stirring* ($r = .44, p < .01$), *Teasing* ($r = .31, p < .01$). *Nasty Climate* did not correlate to criterion level with the scales of the HSQ.

Only two of the HAW scales correlated to criterion with scales of the M37. These were *Sharing* ($r = .33, p < .01$) with *extraversion* and *Gossip* (disapproving, $r = .30, p < .01$) with *agreeableness*.

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on each scale of the HAW and as a result of discarding items, reliabilities dropped (range Cronbach's $\alpha = .63$ to $.83$). The final short version of the HAW consisted of two scales, reflecting the superfactors of the exploratory factor analysis in the first study. These scales were called *Pleasant Climate* (8 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$) and *Unpleasant Climate* (5 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$) and correlated with each other ($r = -.33$) indicating that they were distinct scales, in a bivalent model (Cacioppo, Gardner & Berntson, 1997). The indices of fit for this structural model were Chi-square (64) = 93.5, $p = .009$, GFI = .96, AGFI = .95, TFI = .97, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .035, SRMR = .042 and Bollen-Stine Bootstrap $p = .141$.

When the short version of the HAW was validated with the scales of the HSQ, *Pleasant Climate* correlated to the criterion level with HSQ *Affiliative* ($r = .31, p < .01$) and HSQ *Self-enhancing* ($r = .35, p < .01$). There were trends ($r < .20, p < .01$) for *Unpleasant Climate* correlating negatively with the HSQ *Affiliative* and *Self-enhancing* scales and positively with the HSQ *Aggressive* scale. In

addition, there was a trend for the HSQ *Self-defeating* scale to correlate with *Pleasant Climate*.

Correlations between the HAW *Pleasant Climate* scale and *Unpleasant Climate* scales and the scales of the personality measure, M37 were significant but did not reach the criterion level. One correlation between M 37 (*Dis*)*Agreeableness* and *Unpleasant Climate* could be described as a trend ($r = .23$, $p < .01$). Although it had been previously used (Boldero, Rawlings & Haslam, 2007), it could be argued that the M37 (containing 37 items, Rawlings, 2001) was not a suitable measure of personality for a sample in work ($N = 379$). When correlations were taken between the scales of the M37 and the scales of the HSQ, the emerging pattern (see Table R1 below) was similar to that reported by Martin et al., (2003) who used the 240 items of the NEO-PI R with 152 participants and in a subsequent much larger replication ($N = 1038$, Greven, et al., 2008). In particular, significant correlations ($r < .20$) occurred between the scales as described in the replication above, with the exception of HSQ *self-defeating*, where the negative correlation with conscientiousness was very small (of the order of common method variance).

Table R1: *Correlations between the Humor Styles Questionnaire and the M37*

	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
	$\alpha = .87$	$\alpha = .84$	$\alpha = .78$	$\alpha = .80$	$\alpha = .82$
Affiliative			.38**	.21**	
Self-Enhancing	-.24**	.24**	.25**		
Aggressive				-.45**	-.21**
Self-Defeating	.22**			-.11*	-.11*

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The confirmed scales of the HAW were then correlated with demographic variables. In Study 2, 45.1 % of the respondents worked in organizations that employed 10 people or less and 48.5% of respondents worked in organizations of between 11 and 50 people. There were no significant correlations with number of people in the organization, number of men contacted each day or number of women contacted each day. There was no correlation between age and *Pleasant* or *Unpleasant Climate*. For these shorter scales of the HAW, those who were educated to the tertiary level were compared with those who were educated to the secondary level. The results (CHIDIST[12] = 11.00, $p = .53$) indicated no significant difference in the pattern of response attributable to education level. When the model was compared using female and male samples, the results

(CHIDIST[12] = 14.60, $p = .26$) indicated that there were no significant gender differences. Similarly when those in management were compared with general employees on the model, the results (CHIDIST[12] = 7.00, $p = .86$) indicated that there were no significant differences in the way these two groups responded to the HAW.

Within one workplace, a private prison ($N = 98$), in the third study, the HAW was validated against the HSQ. It was found that the HAW *Pleasant Climate* scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$) correlated with all four scales of the HSQ as follows: *affiliative* ($r = .61, p < .01$), *self-enhancing* ($r = .43, p < .01$), *aggressive* ($r = .26, p < .05$) and *self-defeating* ($r = .25, p < .05$). There were no significant correlations for HAW *Unpleasant Climate* scale with the scales of the HSQ. In addition, the HAW *Pleasant Climate* scale had a marginally significant correlation ($r = .20, p = .055$) with *Positive Relations with Others* (pro - ATL – Ryff & Keyes, 1995). When corrected for attenuation (Cronbach's $\alpha = .56$ for the ATL- pro), the correlation improved ($r = .30$).

Two scales of the Depression, Anxiety & Stress (DASS – 21, Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995), *depression* ($r = .25, p = .02$) and *stress* ($r = .22, p = .44$) correlated significantly with the HAW *Unpleasant Climate* scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .67$). There were no significant correlations found between any of the scales and age or gender.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to investigate whether an individual's personality traits were reflected in the way they saw themselves and others use humorous behavior in the workplace. There were a number of well-established studies that showed that the ways people in social situations generally used or preferred humour, was correlated with measures of their personality (e.g., Martin et al., 2003, Ruch & Kohler, 1998; Thorson & Powell, 1993). Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield (1991) developed a unidimensional scale which they subjected to structural equation modeling, but again this was considered only as a measure of humour in generalized settings.

The public arena is the place in which individuals negotiate their personal "face" according to Goffman (1967; 2004), in terms of enhancing their positive face and defending their negative face. In the workplace, actions relating to personal face needs are constrained by the demands of emotional labour (Hochschild, 2003) in managing up (keeping the boss happy) or in service (keeping the customer happy). It was postulated that because humour is off the record and not serious (Attardo, 1993), it might be used to express either playfulness in the work milieu or dissatisfaction or subversion (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939; 1964; Bradney, 1957; Ackroyd & Thomson, 1999; Warren & Fineman, 2007). In the case of boredom, observations had been made of humorous acts that fulfilled both functions (Linstead, 1985 b).

Several different fields were appraised for the study, e.g., linguistics, evolutionary theory, social psychology and organizational psychology. Creation of items in several themes (development, emotional labour, gender-class, discourse management, teasing, personality, ethnic differences, politeness, management and workplace) resulted from the reading. Items beginning with the first person (150) were balanced by items in the third person about other people's behaviour (150) to try to capture humorous influences on both positive and negative face (my humorous behaviour and the humorous behaviour of others). After exploratory factor analysis, eight reliable scales (62 items) emerged, with two superfactors *Pleasant Climate* and *Unpleasant Climate*

The second study involved the validation of the HAW as a humour scale. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on each of the eight scales and then the scales were entered into a model to see if they discriminated against each other. This testing resulted in a two-factor model that was forecast by the superfactors in the first study. These scales correlated with each other at just above the criterion level, suggesting that they were distinct and that the underlying model was bivalent (Cacioppo, Gardner & Berntson, 1997). The HAW *Pleasant Climate* was found to correlate to criterion level with the HSQ *Affiliative* and *Self-enhancing* scales (Martin et al., 2003). There were trends for *Unpleasant Climate* to correlate negatively with the HSQ *Affiliative* and *Self-enhancing* scales and positively with the HSQ *Aggressive* scale. In addition, there was a trend for *Pleasant Climate* to correlate positively with the HSQ *Self-defeating* scale. This observation may be attributed to cultural values found in Australians, who may

indulge in self-denigrating humour as a social behaviour to avoid being labelled a “Tall Poppy” (Feather, 1989; Peeters, 2004a, Peeters, 2004b).

In answer to the question about whether underlying personality factors affected humour at work, the two scales were correlated with the M37. It was established that the M37 was a valid scale by comparing the patterns of correlations between the HSQ and the M37 with two previous studies of the HSQ and the NEO-PI R (Martin et al., 2003; Greven, et al., 2008). Correlations between the HAW *Pleasant Climate* scale and *Unpleasant Climate* scales and the scales of the personality measure, M37 were significant but did not reach the criterion level and only one correlation between *Unpleasant Climate* and M 37 (*Dis*)*Agreeableness* could be described as a trend. There were no practically significant correlations between the HAW *Pleasant Climate* and *Unpleasant Climate* scales and age, gender, or position at work.

The third study provided evidence for validation of the HAW as a measure of humour within one work facility. Within a private prison it was found that the HAW *Pleasant Climate* scale correlated with all four scales of the HSQ. There were no significant correlations for HAW *Unpleasant Climate* scale with the scales of the HSQ. In addition, after correction for attenuation, the HAW *Pleasant Climate* scale had a significant correlation with *Positive Relations with Others* (pro - ATL – Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Additional findings revealed that two scales of the Depression, Anxiety & Stress questionnaire (DASS – 21, Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995), *depression* and *stress*, correlated significantly with the HAW *Unpleasant*

Climate scale. There were no significant correlations found between any of the scales and age or gender. As the *Unpleasant Climate* scale contained items all in the third person, it might be considered to be useful in indicating work environments that are concomitant with personal distress.

In conclusion, the workplace appears to be a public arena in which people are concerned to defend their face needs. If these needs are under little threat by the humorous behavior of others, people are inclined to use a type of humour that is related to their underlying personality and they seek out positive relations with others. They are pleasant to each other. If in the workplace, the humorous behavior of others seen to be unpleasant, then personal feelings of stress and depression may be present. Behaviours reflecting personality, however, are less evident. Conformity may be essential when groups are under pressure.

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Appendix S

Ethics approval documents for Study 1 and Study 2

From: Keith Wilkins
To: Bruce Findlay; Maren Rawlings
Date: 1/12/2006 1:07 PM
Subject: SUHREC Project 0607/083 Ethics Clearance

To: Dr Bruce Findlay/Ms Maren Rawlings, FLSS

Dear Bruce and Maren

SUHREC Project 0607/083 Development of a Workplace Humour Scale

Dr Bruce Findlay/Ms Maren Rawlings, FLSS

Duration of Approval to 1/10/2007

I refer to your emailed response (dated 27 November 2006 with draft publicity email text attached) to ethics appraisal conducted on behalf of Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) by the relevant SUHREC Subcommittee (SHESC1). Your response was given consideration by the Chair of the Subcommittee.

I am pleased to advise that approval has now been given for the project to proceed as per standard ethics clearance conditions given below. However, the Chair would advise that the following or similar line should be included at an appropriate juncture in the publicity email, say, "Please note that this email has sent using the blindcopy facility as regards recipients. If you forward the email on, please could you use a similar facility. Thank you."

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the current *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.
- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator/supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.
- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/ clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project.
- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact me if you have any concerns or queries about on-going ethics clearance and if you need a signed ethics clearance certificate. The SUHREC project number should be cited in communication.

Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely

Keith Wilkins
Secretary, SHESC1

Keith Wilkins
Research Ethics Officer
Office of Research and Graduate Studies (Mail H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
P O Box 218
HAWTHORN VIC 3122
Tel: 9214 5218

From: Keith Wilkins
To: Bruce Findlay; Maren Rawlings
Date: 11/16/2007 4:49 PM
Subject: SUHREC Project 0708/118 Ethical Review

To: Dr Bruce Findlay/Ms Maren Rawlings, FLSS

Dear Bruce and Maren

SUHREC Project 0708/118 Development of a Workplace Humour Scale

Dr Bruce Findlay/Ms Maren Rawlings, FLSS

Proposed Duration: 14/11/2007 to 31/12/2009

Ethical review of the above project protocols was undertaken on behalf of Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) by the relevant SUHREC Subcommittee (SHESC1) at a meeting held on 9 November 2007, the outcome of which as follows.

Approved subject to the following addressed to the Chair's (or delegate's) satisfaction:

- 1) Survey instruments: finalised instruments need to be forwarded for citing/endorsement given the nature of drafts submitted in the ethics application (eg, with HAW scale, 2 versions were given in ethics application); it needs to be clear as to what participants are actually being asked to do. Also, Subcommittee members agreed that completion of the survey instruments would appear to take less than 60 mins as given and if still given as 60 mins could dissuade participation; the consent info statement would need to be corrected if there is a time commitment change.
- 2) Proper authority to enter/involve workplaces would be needed, evidence for which (as applicable) needs to be forwarded to my office for the record.

To enable further ethical review/finalise clearance, please would you rework to the above items (by direct email reply if preferred) attaching any revised research instrument(s) in the light of the above. A full revised ethics clearance is not required and should not be sent; missing, addition or revised text from the application can be incorporated into your response. Please also note that human research activity (including active participant recruitment) cannot commence before proper ethics clearance is given in writing.

Please contact me if you have any concerns or queries about the ethical review process undertaken. The SUHREC project number should be cited in communication.

Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely

Keith Wilkins
Secretary, SHESC1

Keith Wilkins
Research Ethics Officer
Office of Research and Graduate Studies (Mail H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
P O Box 218
HAWTHORN VIC 3122
Tel: 9214 5218

Dear Keith

SUHREC Project 0708/118 Development of a Workplace Humour Scale

Thank you for your email of 16th November 2007.

Please can I clarify the points made in it?

- 1) The survey is now on *Opinio* and can be found at the following address:

<http://opinio.online.swin.edu.au/s?s=3513>

- 2) The application in section **A11** made the following statement:

Institutions, organizations and businesses will be approached after the University Ethics approval of the intended measures has been given. The participants will be voluntary, consenting adults and their responses will be gathered as group data. It is not anticipated that further ethical approvals will be required. If further ethical approvals are required, then the HREC will be provided with this information.

The following further information should be added:

Proper authority to enter workplaces to address staff will be sought and copies of relevant documents (as applicable) will be forwarded to the Research Ethics Officer, Swinburne Research.

Yours sincerely,

Maren Rawlings

Cc Dr Bruce Findlay