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THE RELATIONSHIP OF INSTRUCTOR HUMOR TO CLASSROOM CLIMATE AND STUDENT SUCCESS IN THE COURSE

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# THE RELATIONSHIP OF INSTRUCTOR HUMOR TO CLASSROOM CLIMATE AND STUDENT SUCCESS IN THE COURSE

By

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#### ABSTRACT

# THE RELATIONSHIP OF INSTRUCTOR HUMOR TO CLASSROOM CLIMATE AND STUDENT SUCCESS IN THE COURSE

Ву

Eileen Berlin

This study investigated the relationship of intentional and appropriate use of humor by an instructor to classroom climate and student success in the course. Two questionnaires were administered to 95 undergraduates enrolled in the Introductory Communication course at Michigan State University. The first asked what grade the student perceived as successful in the course. The second asked for student perceptions of instructor use of humor and Results computed by the Pearson productclassroom climate. moment correlation indicate significant positive correlations between intentional and appropriate humor with classroom climate and no significant correlation between intentional and appropriate humor with student success or between classroom climate and student success.

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## CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTION

Humor has long been highly valued in our culture. "In a society that spends vast sums to make itself laugh, where to be labeled 'humorless' is a dire indictment, and where one study (Allport, 1961) found 94% of the subjects rating their sense of humor as equal to or above average, it is clear that humor is something viewed as very important (David and Farina, 1970, p. 175). In another study, subjects tended to rate themselves higher in appreciation of humor than they were rated by their peers (Levine and Rakusin, 1959). These results suggest that sense of humor is a desirable trait that plays an important part in our lives and interactions.

Research has only recently looked at humor as an interaction between the person who generates the humor and the receiver of that humor. This perspective focuses on the social interaction aspects of humor as a facilitative device. According to Martineau (1972, p. 103), humor acts as a "lubricant" to initiate social interaction and keep the interactive machinery operating freely and smoothly.

Based on observations of several college classes, it appeared that instructors perceived as humorous had high class interaction. Students frequently asked questions, made comments, and initiated and contributed to class dis-This interaction should have a positive influence cussions. on the student's motivation and personal commitment to the class, resulting in a cohesive group (Fisher, 1974, p. 31; Shaw, 1976, p. 197). A cohesive group engenders feelings of the group as worthwhile and rewarding to the individual members of that group (Fisher, 1974, p. 31). If the student perceives the class as a cohesive group, the student should find it worthwhile and rewarding to not only contribute to class interaction but to succeed academically in the class as well. A student motivated to succeed academically would be conscious of cues that would aid success. One such cue, humor appropriate to course content, could cue students to the course material that would later be used to assess the student's final grade in the course.

The purpose of this study was to investigate an instructor's use of humor as a facilitative device in the college classroom and its relationship to classroom climate and student success in the course. This chapter describes the contradictory findings of research on effective teaching and the use of humor, the attempts to place a study of humor in theoretical terms, and presents five questions that this study was designed to answer.

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# Humor and the Effective College Teacher

Several studies have found humor to be an unimportant characteristic of effective teaching. Smith (1944) looked at the traits associated with the best university teacher. He asked one hundred students to write a statement concerning "My Ideal University Teacher." This resulted in 447 trait descriptions that were classified and ranked according to the frequency with which they were mentioned. Ranked second was sense of humor. This was described as "has appealing humor, proper balance, uses attention devices, has jokes and stories with definite points" (p. 217). The first ten traits, ranked according to frequency, were then given to four groups of students. The students were asked to arrange these traits according to their importance in relation to each other. The results of these rankings were then compared with the rankings of two similar college studies with eight of the ten highest ranking traits in Smith's study. "Sense of humor" was ranked low in all three studies. One might conclude that humor is unimportant to teaching. However, Smith's (1944) definition of sense of humor sounds more like that of a stand-up comic than an instructor. The students are the passive receivers of the humor and any interaction between them is incidental. Also, one must rely on Smith's judgment that the "similar studies" are actually appropriate for comparison because he does not provide definitions of

traits from the two studies.

Crawford and Bradshaw (1968) attempted to isolate characteristics of "effective" university teachers as judged by faculty, administrators and students. Three hundred undergraduate and graduate students were asked to describe the characteristics they considered most essential to the most "effective" university teacher they knew. An analysis of these descriptions produced thirteen descriptive statements regarding classroom teaching behavior. These statements were randomly arranged for paired comparison analysis. Subjects were instructed to choose from each pair the characteristic they considered more essential to effective university teaching. There was consensus among students, faculty and administrators that sense of humor ranked eleventh out of thirteen. However, sense of humor is never defined so we have no idea if humor refers to the instructor's ability to tell jokes or to provide an environment where varying types of humor are appreciated. These are different skills and will influence the ranking of "sense of humor" differently.

Mueller, Roach and Malone (1971) looked at what students at the University of Windsor considered the most and least important characteristics of the "ideal" professor. They administered Gadzella's 25-item questionnaire (p. 162), "Students' Views of an 'Ideal' Professor" to 642 introductory psychology students. The students were asked to choose

the five most and five least important items out of the 25 statements and rank them in order of importance. Overall, humor was ranked 18th out of 25. Humor was defined as "has a sense of humor, avoids irrelevant and/or distasteful jokes." However, this definition seems to be a qualifier of a good sense of humor. Saying that someone has a sense of humor does not define what humor is. By excluding irrelevant and/or distasteful jokes from humor, Mueller, Roach and Malone imply that humor is the ability to simply tell appropriate jokes. In fact, what Mueller, Roach and Malone meant by humor can only be inferred because no specific definition was offered in their study.

These studies suggest that some kind of humor may be slightly relevant to perceptions of effective teaching, but all suggest that many other traits are more important. Other studies have found sense of humor to be an important characteristic of a good teacher. McComas (1965), using a very limited sample of 33 respondents, found sense of humor to be mentioned by one-third of the students who were surveyed as an important characteristic of an effective teacher. In an effort to obtain a definition of effective teaching as actually described by observers, Hildebrand and Wilson (1970, in Hildebrand, 1973) asked 338 students at the University of California-Davis to identify the best and worst teachers they had had the previous year. The students also were required to answer many questions about the teaching of

those they identified. Also, 119 faculty members identified the best and worst teachers among their colleagues and described each one's performance. In addition, 162 faculty members described their academic activities in detail. A validation survey was then done. Fifty-one classes were chosen to include instructors who had been identified as best teachers, instructors identified as worst teachers and classes where instructors were not named best or worst. Over 1,000 students in these classes answered detailed questions regarding the teaching of these instructors. The researchers found that independent groups of students agreed very closely in their identification of best and worst teachers. Students and faculty also agreed very closely in their identifications. Hildebrand and Wilson then devised 85 one-line characterizations of conditions of teaching performance. According to the investigators, each of these characterizations significantly discriminated the best from the worst teachers as perceived by students. They did the same with 55 characterizations to discriminate best from worst teachers as perceived by colleagues. Included in the five components found to be characteristic of an effective teacher was the effective use of wit and humor, which was found by survey to be descriptive of 75% or more of the best teachers and of only 25% or less of the worst teachers. While possessing characteristics of humor was not sufficient to make a teacher effective, it was a component found to set

the best teacher apart from the worst.

Although the research examining the relationship between sense of humor and effective teaching has produced contradictory results, there is evidence that the ability of instructors to laugh with their class and at themselves is more likely to result in a warm relationship with their students (Gilliland and Mauritsen, 1971, p. 755). Additional evidence was found by Coffman (1954) in a study to determine effective teaching from student ratings of instructors. Using the Oklahoma A. & M. Rating Scale, Coffman asked approximately 2,000 students at Oklahoma A. & M. College to rate fifty-five teachers. The Rating Scale was made up of eighteen specific traits and a general estimate of the effectiveness of the instructor. Students were asked to check a scale which had five descriptive phrases for each rating. Included in the scale was the trait sense of humor. The accompanying descriptive phrases were:

> has keen sense of humor; frequently shows real humor; humor occasionally, but not often exhibited; manifests little or no humor; humor obviously not spontaneous (p. 279).

Factor analysis found one factor, empathy, to be highly correlated with sense of humor.

While the studies that have found humor to make a positive contribution to effective teaching are encouraging, they also do not define humor in terms of a theoretical perspective. Although there is no consensus on an all-

encompassing theory or definition of humor, several views have been considered.

## Theoretical Overview of Humor

Humor has been studied from several different perspectives, including: (1) the appreciator of humor alone, (2) the creator or appreciator of humor separately, and (3) the creator and appreciator of humor together.

Focus on appreciator of humor alone. Laughter is usually an indication that a person perceives something as humorous (Keith-Spiegel, 1972, p. 16). Bergler (1956, in Fine, 1975, p. 793) defined humor as the ability to laugh appropriately. Fine (1975, p. 793), in a study of perceived sense of humor, broke it down into characteristics of quality of laughter, amount of laughter, quality of joking and amount of joking. Godkewitsch (1976) described humor as "a process initiated by some stimulus and ending with a response such as laughter, as well as the ability to tell jokes well" (p. 117).

This focus views humor as an observable response by the appreciator. It is limited in that it does not include the creator of the humor or interaction between the people in the situation. The following perspective does acknowledge the existence of both a creator and appreciator of humor.

Focus on creator or appreciator of humor separately. While many studies of humor have focused on the passive

appreciation of receivers (Treadwell, 1967), some researchers have looked at both the creation and appreciation aspects of Levine and Rakusin (1959) studied sense of humor as humor. a personality trait, with subjects rating themselves and others on their ability to create and appreciate humor. Treadwell (1970) also looked at creation and appreciation of humor by self-report. In a study designed to determine the degree to which humor appreciation, humor creation, intelligence and introversion-extraversion can be distinguished as traits, Koppel and Sechrist (1970, p. 79) described someone with a good sense of humor as "a person who appreciates and understands, or 'gets' most of the jokes told. He may not laugh the loudest but he always appreciates the joke." They describe the joke maker as "NOT the person who can tell old stories well but who can make up funny jokes or comments on the spur of the moment" (capitalization in original).

Babad (1974) attempted to determine the validity of self-report, ratings by others and humor tests by sociometric measurement. Subjects were divided into five humor groups (nonhumorous, passive appreciators, producers, reproducers, and producers-reproducers) on the basis of peer ratings and were then given tests of passive and active humor. Babad found the sociometric technique and the humor tests to invalidate each other. Self-report fell between the two but was more closely related to the sociometric method than to the humor tests. The previously cited studies (Levine and

Rakusin, 1959; Koppel and Sechrist, 1970; Treadwell, 1970) lend support to these findings. All of these studies found ratings by self and others to be more strongly related to each other than the relationship of either with humor test scores.

Of particular interest is the fact that all of the humor tests cited used jokes or cartoons to measure humor. This implies that humor is a result of one's ability to generate jokes or cartoons or one's ability to appreciate However, studies have found a large discrepancy bethem. tween number of jokes told and frequency of laughter. Middleton and Moland (1959) attempted to find out how frequently jokes get told. After studying 220 college students, they found that students reported that they heard between four to six jokes a week. A study cited by Pollio and Edgerly (1976) found that college students laugh at formally funny material about 20% of the time, with the major category being jokes. However, students estimated by self-report that they laughed between 15 and 20 times a day. If subjects are laughing that often but only hear jokes four to six times a week, something other than jokes must account for the additional laughter. The extent to which people laugh at nonverbal behavior, spontaneous witticisms, puns and social interaction components are not considered by the reported studies. The sociological perspective does, however, account for the interaction between the creator and

appreciator of humor.

Focus on creator and appreciator of humor together. Sociological theories look at humor as the interaction between the creator and appreciator, with humor being what is perceived by the involved parties as humorous. It is this interaction and definition by perception that is of interest to this study.

One of the earliest works that looked at humor from the sociological perspective was Obrdlik's article on "gallows humor" (1942). He observed the use of humor while in Czechoslovakia for nine months after the invasion of the "Gallows humor," for Obrdlik's purposes, referred Nazis. to humor used in connection with a precarious or dangerous situation. He looked specifically at the Czechs' use of humor as a way to deal with the Nazis. It was intentional humor that used irony, invectives and sarcasm as a means for social control against oppressors. One function it served was to strengthen the morale of the oppressed. Because "gallows humor" served a specific purpose that required an oppressor and an oppressed, it is not readily generalizable to non-dangerous situations. However, the importance of Obrdlik's observations lies in his treatment of humor as a very important factor in social control. He was among the first to view humor in this manner.

Another situation in which humor may serve a function of social control is in the area of race relations in the

United States. Many sociology researchers have looked at intergroup humor (Davis, Gardner and Gardner, 1941, p. 459; Drake and Cayton, 1945, p. 723). Burma (1946) viewed humor as a means of social control and conflict used by a minority to attain or retain status and morale. However, other researchers (Myers, 1935; Dollard, 1937; Myrdal, 1944) qualified their belief in the conflict-control theory of humor by recognizing that humor is not always malicious. In a later study, Barron (1950) focused on stereotypes found in intergroup jokes. The theme of social cohesion is also prevalent in research on Black intergroup humor (Boskin, 1966; Arnez and Anthony, 1968). In a study of humor in the ghetto, Hannerz (1969) found that the joking relationships helped keep a balance between informality and social distance.

Humon has also been viewed by sociologists as a means of implicit and explicit social control and as a way to approach interpersonal conflict safely (Stephenson, 1951). Miller's study (1967) on the social significance of humor emphasized the communicative function of humor, while Martineau (1972, p. 114) described humor as a vehicle for interaction. Coser (1962), in a study of patients in a hospital ward, found that they used humor as a way to establish a cohesive group identity. Finally, in a study of joking behavior between interviewers in a competitive situation, Blau (1955, p. 92) found that joking was "instrumental

in creating social cohesion by uniting a group in the pleasant experience of laughing together."

Early research from the sociological perspective dealt primarily with oppressor-oppressed and intergroup racial humor. The more recent sociological studies have focused on humor as a facilitator of group interaction, functioning as a means to promote cohesion and to control interaction. The existing research does not, however, include the classroom as a social system. While it appears that the present findings are easily generalizable to the classroom context, the question of whether an instructor's use of humor is related to interaction in the classroom has not been directly investigated.

#### Instructor's Use of Humor and Classroom Climate

The interpersonal relationship between the instructor and students typically characterizes the classroom climate. Climate has been defined as the feeling or emotional tones of a group (Withall, 1949, p. 348; Schmuck and Schmuck, 1975, p. 23) and the extent of a teacher's warmth and liking for the students (Solomon, Bezdek and Rosenberg, 1963, p. 124). Friedrich, Galvin and Book (1976, p. 62) define classroom climate as "those affective states experienced by both teacher and students that may either enhance or detract from the function or goal of the classroom--the achievement of specific tasks," while Flanders (1967, p. 103) views classroom climate as "generalized attitudes toward the

teacher and the class that the pupils share in common in spite of individual differences. The development of these attitudes is an outgrowth of classroom social interaction."

The effective teacher elicits social interaction by arousing positive emotional reactions from students (Mowrer, 1960, p. 174). Providing for guestioning periods and encouraging independent thinking also promote a positive class climate (Mueller, Roach and Malone, 1971, p. 164). The responsibility for creating the class climate rests with the teacher (Withall, 1949, p. 347) and this climate is a direct result of the personality of the instructor (Guthrie, 1954; Ryans, 1960; Bausell and Magoon, 1972; Costin and Grush, 1973; Romine, 1974). As a result, if an instructor attempts humor and this attempt is perceived as unnatural, the reaction of students to this incongruity is not likely to be positive. Therefore, the manner in which an instructor deals with humor should reflect his or her personality in order to be most effective in creating a positive climate (Gilliland and Mauritsen, 1971, p. 754). While humor has been found to reduce negative affective states (Smith, Ascough, Ettinger and Nelson, 1971, p. 243), inappropriate use of humor by the instructor might increase anxiety and result in a less positive classroom climate.

The existing literature on humor and on classroom climate does not look at a direct relationship between the two. The available research does, however, imply that use

of humor by the instructor is associated with classroom climate. The nature of that association has not yet been studied in the context of the college classroom.

## Instructor's Use of Humor and Student Success in the Course

There is very little research investigating a relationship between an instructor's use of humor and student success in the course. While there has been some mention that humor brightens up an otherwise dull subject and acts as a stimulus to learning (Solomon, Bezdek and Rosenberg, 1963, p. 122), McKeachie et al. (1966, p. 243) posit that students are primarily motivated to get grades, regardless of teaching styles. Following their line of reasoning, use or non-use of humor would be irrelevant to how well a student does in a class. However, humor has been found to affect task performance by reducing anxiety (Smith, Ascough, Ettinger and Nelson, 1971, p. 243). The conflicting results of these studies, as well as the small amount of research done in this area, indicate the need for further investigation of the relationship of humor to student success.

Hauck and Thomas (1972) looked at the relationship of humor to intelligence, creativity, and learning in elementary school children, as shown through a learning task. The found that humor facilitated retention that resulted from incidental learning but not from intentional learning. Smith et al. (1971) exposed students to humor by including

humorous test items on some exams. The results supported the hypothesis that humor reduces anxiety, suggesting increased test performance. However, neither of these studies looked at the appropriateness of the content of the humor used and its effect on learning.

A study by Kaplan and Pascoe (1977) took appropriateness of humor in the classroom into account. Intact university classes viewed one of three versions of a lecture. The lecture included either humorous examples related to the concepts in the lecture, humorous examples unrelated to the content, or a combination of the two. After giving two comprehension and retention tests, results indicated that content-related humor did not help immediate comprehension but did significantly improve retention (p. 61). While this study is important because it looked at appropriateness of humor, it has flaws because it checked comprehension and retention by only using one test. It did not look at the effect an instructor's use of humor over an entire term may have on all components that comprise the final course grade, including, but not only, the results of one test. The Kaplan and Pascoe study found humor to be beneficial for recalling humorous examples (p. 64). The student's ability to recall examples and integrate this information into the course material accurately would be apparent in papers, projects and tests received from the student. The relationship of an instructor's use of content-appropriate humor over an

entire term to student success in the course has not yet been assessed.

#### Research Questions

In reviewing the literature on humor and teaching effectiveness, the following issues have been discussed: (1) theoretical perspectives of humor, (2) classroom climate, and (3) student success in the course.

For the purposes of this study, humor was defined as (1) an event that is intentional on the part of the instructor, (2) that elicits laughter or smiling by the instructor and/or student, and (3) is perceived by the student as humorous. All three criteria must be met simultaneously for an event to be considered humorous. This definition was chosen because it is most compatible with the sociological perspective which sets humor in the social context of interaction between people.

This perspective is particularly appropriate for studying the relationship of humor to classroom climate. In this study, classroom climate was defined as the student's perception of (1) the instructor's encouragement to students to express opinions, (2) the instructor's receptiveness to new ideas and others' viewpoints, (3) the student's opportunity to ask questions, and (4) the instructor's stimulation of class discussion.

Although research on the use of humor and student success in the course is minimal, this study views student

success as an important indicator of effective teaching. For the purposes of this study, student success was defined as the corresponding relationship between the grade the student perceived as successful and the extent to which the final grade differed from that perception. This definition was chosen in an attempt to define success by the student's perception rather than impose an arbitrary cut-off point designating success or failure.

As shown in the preceding review of literature, the present research on humor does not look at its relationship to climate and student success in the context of the college classroom and thus does not allow for the prediction of hypotheses. Therefore, this study poses the following questions:

- How is intentional humor used by the instructor associated with classroom climate?
- 2. How is the instructor's use of humor appropriate to course content associated with classroom climate?
- 3. How is intentional humor used by the instructor associated with student success in the course?
- 4. How is the instructor's use of humor appropriate to course content associated with student success in the course?
- 5. How is classroom climate associated with student success in the course?

Chapter II describes the procedures used to investigate these questions, Chapter III reports the results of this investigation, and Chapter IV discusses these results, limitations of this study and implications for future research and practice.

## CHAPTER II

## METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses conceptual and operational definitions of the variables, procedures of instrument construction and the plan of analysis.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this study, humor was defined as (1) an event that is intentional on the part of the instructor, (2) that elicits laughter or smiling by the instructor and/or student, and (3) is perceived by the student as humorous. All three criteria must be met simultaneously for an event to be considered humorous. These three criteria were measured by asking four questions. Question 1 (hereafter referred to as General Humor) was asked to focus students on all behaviors of their instructor that they perceived as humorous. Question 2 (hereafter referred to as Intentional Humor) then distinguished between the student's perception of their instructor's use of intentional and unintentional humor, thus meeting the above criteria. Humor appropriate to the course was defined as humor that is directly related to the content of the course. This was measured by

the response to Question 3 (hereafter referred to as Appropriate Humor). Question 4 (hereafter referred to as Overall Humor) was asked as an index of student perception of overall humorousness of their instructor. The four questions are as follows. Question 1 is presented in its entirety. The other three questions follow the same format (see Questions 2-4 in Appendix A).

- Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor says or does something each class period that makes you laugh or smile is 10. Assume that 0 represents the instructor saying or doing nothing each class period that makes you laugh or smile. How often does your instructor say or do something each class period that makes you laugh or smile?
- 2. How often does your instructor say or do something each class period with the intention of making you laugh or smile?
- 3. How often does your instructor intend to make you laugh or smile by saying or doing something directly related to the content of the course?
- 4. How humorous is your instructor?

Classroom climate was defined as the student's perception of (1) the instructor's encouragement to students to express opinions, (2) the instructor's receptiveness to new ideas and others' viewpoints, (3) the student's opportunity to ask questions, and (4) the instructor's stimulation of class discussion. These four components were measured as the sum of the responses to the following questions. Again, the first question is presented in its entirety. The other three questions follow the same format (see Questions 6-8 in Appendix A).

- Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor encourages students to express their opinions is 10. Assume that 0 represents no encouragement or discouragement for expressing opinions. How much does your instructor encourage students to express their opinions?
- How receptive to new ideas and others' viewpoints is your instructor?
- 7. How much does your instructor provide students the opportunity to ask questions?
- 8. How much does your instructor stimulate class discussion?

Student success was defined as the relationship between the grade the student perceived as successful and the extent to which the final grade differed from that perception. This was measured by the response to the following question:

> What grade would you consider as saying you were successful in this course? "Successful" is defined as meaning that you feel like you did well in the course. (Circle those grades that apply)

> 4.0 3.5 3.0 2.5 2.0 1.5 1.0 0.0

The lowest grade circled was then subtracted from the student's final grade in the class to result in an index of student success.

#### Instrument Construction

Critical Incident Technique. The Critical Incident Technique (Smith, 1976, pp. 751-752) found in Appendix B was administered Winter quarter to assess students' perceptions of humorous behavior by instructors. Seventy-one students responded. The responses were divided into two categories: forty-five of the respondents referred to behavior related to personality quirks or unusual physical appearance of the instructor, while twenty-six of the respondents described behavior that included both intentional and unintentional behaviors (see Appendix B).

Based on this information, the definition of humor in this study was designed to focus on those behaviors of the instructor that were conscious, planned attempts at humor. This definition was used to maximize the intentionality aspect of an instructor's use of humor and minimize the tendency of students to define an instructor as humorous based on unintentional characteristics.

Student Success Survey. In March, 1978, the researcher attended ten introductory communication classes and, using a cover story, asked for volunteers who would receive extra credit in the course for participation. The cover story described the study as an investigation in classroom communication. A total of 353 students completed the Survey which asked what grade the student expected to get in the course and what grade the student perceived as successful in the class. These responses were then categorized by student name and class section.

Several days later, the researcher sent each of the ten instructors a letter asking them to remind the students who participated that they had to complete the second part of the study in order to receive the extra credit. At the end of the quarter, the final grade in the course for the students who had completed both parts of the study was recorded by the researcher.

<u>Pretest</u>. To determine whether to use a Likert or Direct Magnitude Estimation scale on the Humor and Climate Questionnaire, a pretest was constructed utilizing both scales. In Form A, the Likert scale was placed first with Direct Magnitude Estimation items second while Form B was presented in reverse order (see Appendix C).

The instruments were pretested on 29 students enrolled during Spring quarter in either of the two Introductory Communication course sections taught by the researcher. Thirteen of the subjects completed Form A and 16 completed Form B. The results were analyzed by the Hewlett-Packard Basic Statistical Package. The means and standard deviations for each question and form are found in Appendix D.

Although these results indicate a preference for the Likert scale, they may be misleading. It appears that answers to the Direct Magnitude Estimation questions were mentally converted into Likert scales by some subjects. This conversion was probably due to student familiarity with Likert-type scales. In Form A, the Likert scale was presented first.

As a result, students completing this form were cued to that scale. It is possible that, because of that cueing, those students bounded their responses conservatively. Form B shows large standard deviations for the responses to the Direct Magnitude Estimation scale. Because that scale was presented first in Form B, students had no immediate cues from the Likert scale. Due to a sample size of only 29, any responses that varied greatly from the typical responses would substantially increase the standard deviation.

While Likert scales allow for individual differences along the established continuum, research has found the Direct Magnitude Estimation scaling technique to provide greater precision when measuring attitudes (Torgerson, 1958; Shinn, 1974; Woelfel, 1974). Based on the strength of this research, the Direct Magnitude Estimation scale was used in the final instrument, the Humor and Climate Questionnaire (see Appendix A).

<u>Humor and Climate Questionnaire</u>. The Humor and Climate Questionnaire consisted of eight questions. Due to the lack of previous research in the area of humor and the classroom, the four humor-related questions were chosen by the researcher as best fitting the definition of humor used in this study. The four climate questions were taken directly from the Student Instructional Rating System form used at Michigan State University. The four statements were: (1) the instructor encouraged students to express opinions, (2)
the instructor appeared receptive to new ideas and others' viewpoints, (3) the student had an opportunity to ask questions, and (4) the instructor generally stimulated class discussion. When correlated with the factor "student-instructor interaction," correlations were .85, .79, .74, and .75, respectively (Hill and Olson, 1969). Based on this evidence, the four statements were considered appropriate to this study.

The Humor and Climate Questionnaire was administered during May, 1978 (See Appendix A). Only those students who had completed the Student Success Survey (p. 4 of this chapter) were eligible to participate. Administration took place over a period of four afternoons, during which time students completed the Questionnaire under the supervision of the researcher.

### Subjects

Participants were undergraduates enrolled in the Introductory Communication course at Michigan State University at the time of their participation in this study. The Critical Incident Technique data was collected Winter term, 1978. Seventy-one students responded. The pretest, Student Success Survey and Humor and Climate Questionnaire were administered Spring term, 1978. Pretest subjects were enrolled in either of the two sections taught by the researcher. Subjects who completed the Student Success Survey and Humor and Climate Questionnaire were enrolled in one of ten sections. Each of these ten sections was taught by a different instructor.

Twenty-nine students participated in the pretest. Three hundred fifty-three responded to the Student Success Survey and ninety-five of these students completed the Humor and Climate Questionnaire.

### Analysis of Data

Research questions were investigated by the Pearson product-moment correlation using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner and Bent, 1975). Coefficients were calculated for Intentional and Appropriate Humor with Classroom Climate and Student Success and Classroom Climate with Student Success. The results of these calculations are found in Chapter III.

### CHAPTER III

#### RESULTS

This chapter describes the results of the data analysis discussed in the preceding chapter. First, descriptive statistics for each variable will be presented. Then, correlations of the variables will be presented in an attempt to answer the research questions posed in Chapter I. The conventional level for statistical significance was selected as p < .05.

#### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed for each variable. Means, standard deviations and ranges are found in Table 1.

Student success, as defined in Chapter II, is the difference between the student's actual final grade in the class and the student's perception of a successful grade in the course, based on a 0.0 to 4.0 grading scale. The mean difference for student success was .16 with a standard deviation of .62 and a range of -1.5 to +1.5.

Instructor use of humor and classroom climate were measured by the Direct Magnitude Estimation technique as discussed in Chapter II. For all questions, the average or typical instructor was arbitrarily assigned the value of 10 by the researcher. This value was chosen because of its computational facility.

Two extreme outliers were found in the data. In one case, the value of 1,000 was assigned to the General Humor question. A value of 1,000 was also assigned, by a different subject, to the question, "How much does your instructor provide students the opportunity to ask questions?" To correct these outliers, the mean and standard deviation of the distribution were calculated without these extreme values. The outlying values were then specified to be one standard deviation beyond the highest value.

Using these recomputed values the mean, standard deviation and range for each measure of humor and classroom climate are discussed below (see Table 1).

The mean for General Humor was 18.00 with a standard deviation of 17.11 and a range of 0 to 105. The mean for Intentional Humor was 19.36 with a standard deviation of 19.06 and a range of 0 to 100. The mean for Appropriate Humor was 16.77 with a standard deviation of 16.56 and a range of 0 to 100 while the mean for Overall Humor was 23.98 with a standard deviation of 43.37 and a range of 0 to 400.

ables (N=95)		-	
Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Student Success	.16	.62	-1.5-+1.5
General Humor	18.00	17.11	0-105
Intentional Humor	19.36	19.06	0-100
Appropriate Humor	16.77	16.56	0-100
Overall Humor	23.98	43.37	0-400
Classroom Climate	110.33	76.62	27-400
Students encour- aged to express opinions	27.83	22.13	5-100
Instructor's re- ceptiveness to new ideas and others' view-			

23.40

class discussion 27.42 25.76

31.67 24.53

points

Opportunity to ask questions

Instructor stimulation of

20.66

0-100

9-100

0-122

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations and Ranges for Vari-

Classroom climate was defined as the student's perception of (1) the instructor's encouragement to students to express opinions, (2) the instructor's receptiveness to new ideas and others' viewpoints, (3) the student's opportunity to ask questions, and (4) the instructor's stimulation of class discussion. The overall Classroom Climate variable was the sum of the responses to these four components. The mean for overall Classroom Climate was 110.33 with a standard deviation of 76.62 and a range of 27 to 400. The mean for instructor's encouragement to students to express opinions was 27.83 with a standard deviation of 22.13 and a range of 5 to 100. For instructor's receptiveness to new ideas and others' viewpoints, the mean was 23.40 with a standard deviation of 20.66 and a range of 0 to 100. The mean for student's opportunity to ask questions was 31.67 with a standard deviation of 24.53 and a range of 9 to 100 and the mean for instructor's stimulation of class discussion was 27.42 with a standard deviation of 25.76 and a range of 0 to 122. Each of the components of the overall Climate were at least twice the average or typical instructor, with student's opportunity to ask questions three times the average.

Research Question One:

How is intentional humor used by the instructor associated with classroom climate?

The Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to assess the relationship between Intentional Humor and Classroom Climate. The results (see Table 2) indicate a significant positive correlation between the variables (r=.52).

### Research Question Two:

How is the instructor's use of humor appropriate to course content associated with classroom climate?

The correlation of Appropriate Humor and Classroom Climate was computed by use of the Pearson product-moment correlation. The results found in Table 2 indicate a significant positive correlation between the variables (r=.53).

## Research Question Three:

How is intentional humor used by the instructor associated with student success in the course?

To find the correlation between Intentional Humor and Student Success in the course, the Pearson productmoment correlation was calculated. The results (see Table 2) indicate no relationship between the variables (r=-.004).

### Research Question Four:

How is the instructor's use of humor appropriate to course content associated with student success in the course?

The Pearson product-moment correlation was computed for the variables Appropriate Humor and Student Success.

Table 2. Correlation of Intentional and Appropriate Humor with Classroom Climate and Student Success and Classroom Climate with Student Success (N=95)

	Classroom Climate	Student Success
Intentional Humor	.52*	004
Appropriate Humor	.53*	.05
Classroom Climate		08

SPSS computed the significance level at p < .00002.

The results found in Table 2 indicate that the variables are not significantly related (r=.05).

### Research Question Five:

How is classroom climate associated with student success in the course?

The Pearson product-moment correlation was computed for the variables Classroom Climate and Student Success. The results (see Table 2) indicate no significant relationship between the variables (r=-.08).

#### Summary

The results of the data analysis indicate a significant positive correlation between Intentional Humor and Classroom Climate (Research Question One) and between Appropriate Humor and Classroom Climate (Research Question Two). No significant correlation is indicated for Intentional Humor and Student Success (Research Question Three), Appropriate Humor and Student Success (Research Question Four) and Classroom Climate and Student Success (Research Question Five). Chapter IV discusses the implications of these findings.

# CHAPTER IV

# DISCUSSION

## Summary of Findings

This study investigated the relationship of an instructor's use of humor in the college classroom to classroom climate and student success in the course. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the theoretical model investigated.

Three hundred fifty-three undergraduate students enrolled in the Introductory Communication course at Michigan State University completed the Student Success Survey during March, 1978. Students received extra credit for completion of this Survey and the Humor and Climate Questionnaire, which was administered in June, 1978. Ninety-five students completed both the Survey and Questionnaire. At the end of the quarter, final grades were obtained for these students. The measure of Student Success, a difference score, was calculated for each student by subtracting the grade the student had previously designated as "successful" from the final grade received in the course. This score was correlated with (1) instructor's intentional use of humor, and (2) instructor's use of humor appropriate to course content.



Figure 1. Model of Study

Neither correlation was significant (-.004 and .05, respectively). Student Success was also correlated with Classroom Climate. The results indicate no significant correlation between the variables (-.08).

Instructor's use of humor (Intentional Humor) was operationalized as the student's response to the following question:

> How often does your instructor say or do something each class period with the intention of making you laugh or smile?

Instructor's use of humor appropriate to course content (Appropriate Humor) was measured as the student's response to the following question:

> How often does your instructor intend to make you laugh or smile by saying or doing something directly related to the content of the course?

An index of classroom climate was created by summing the students' responses to the following four questions:

How much does your instructor encourage students to express their opinions?

How receptive to new ideas and others' viewpoints is your instructor?

How much does your instructor provide students the opportunity to ask questions?

How much does your instructor stimulate class discussion?

Intentional Humor and Appropriate Humor were correlated with Classroom Climate. In both cases, a significant positive correlation was found (.52 and .53, respectively).

# Discussion

Research Question One: Relationship of Intentional Humor to Classroom Climate

Research question one examined the relationship between Intentional Humor and Classroom Climate. As indicated by previously cited research (Coffman, 1954; Gilliland and Mauritsen, 1971; Martineau, 1972), humor would be expected to be associated with climate. The Pearson product-moment correlation between Intentional Humor and Classroom Climate indicates a significant positive correlation (.52). Intentionality implies a conscious attempt. The high correlation suggests that if instructors are taught to consciously and purposely be humorous, they can have a positive impact on their classroom climate.

Ouestions about General and Overall humor were also asked in the Humor and Climate Ouestionnaire. General Humor was defined as the response to the question, "How often does your instructor say or do something each class period that makes you laugh or smile?" Overall Humor was defined as the response to the question, "How humorous is your instructor?" Both of these guestions include all behaviors and attributes of the instructor. To determine if General or Overall Humor were more strongly associated with Classroom Climate than Intentional Humor, a Pearson product-moment correlation was computed for both of these measures of humor with Climate. The results, presented in Table 3, indicate a significant positive correlation of .57 between General Humor and Climate and a weaker correlation of .37 between Overall Humor and Climate. While the difference in correlations for General and Intentional Humor with Climate is small, the results suggest that Intentional Humor may not be the best measure of the relationship of Humor to Classroom Climate. It may be that an instructor evokes more laughs or smiles than s/he purposely intends. However, results from the Critical Incident Technique discussed in Chapter II (see Appendix B) suggested that many students defined humor by unusual physical appearance or personality quirks not under the control of the instructor. As a result of this information, the definition of humor in this study focused on those behaviors of the instructor that were planned, conscious attempts at humor. For the purposes of this study, humor was defined as (1) an

		om Climate	
General humor	r = .57	p < .00002	
Overall humor	r = .37	p < .0002	

Table 3. Correlation of General and Overall Humor with Classroom Climate (N=95)

event that is intentional on the part of the instructor, (2) that elicits laughter or smiling by the instructor and/ or student, and (3) is perceived by the student as humorous. Given this definition, Intentional Humor could be a subset of General Humor for particular instructors. Therefore, use of General Humor could be much larger than use of Intentional Humor, resulting in a higher correlation of General Humor with Climate. Another possible explanation might be that an instructor who intends, or tries, to be humorous is perceived as being more concerned with being funny than with facilitating a good class climate. However, the results do indicate that Humor, regardless of intent, is associated with Climate.

# Research Question Two: Relationship of Appropriate Humor to Classroom Climate

Research question two asked if Appropriate Humor was associated with Classroom Climate. The Pearson productmoment correlation indicates a significant positive correlation between the variables (.53). This result is not surprising, given that the correlation between Intentional Humor and Climate was also significant (.52). Although there is no research available that looks directly at Appropriate Humor and Climate, previous studies do suggest that humor could be expected to ease tension (Smith, Ascough, Ettinger and Nelson, 1971) and allow students to feel comfortable asking questions, discussing, trying out new ideas and expressing opinions (Coffman, 1954; Blau, 1955; Coser, 1962; Miller, 1967; Gilliland and Mauritsen, 1971; Martineau, 1972). Also, the nature of the course the instructor was teaching must be considered. The Introductory Communication course at Michigan State University requires active participation from the students. Prior to teaching the course, Graduate Teaching Assistants are trained in group dynamics and simulation techniques. In addition, there is certain material that must be taught by all instructors during the term. This material includes a great deal of terminolgy. As terminology has the potential to be quite boring, an instructor using appropriate humor could be expected to be perceived as encouraging class interaction. It seems very possible that adding appropriate humor to what otherwise could be dry, rote material facilitates class interaction, resulting in a positive class climate (Solomon, Bezdek and Rosenberg, 1963). The results of this study are consistent with this earlier research.

Research Question Three: Relationship of Intentional Humor to Student Success in the Course

Research question three asked if Intentional Humor was associated with Student Success in the course. The Pearson product-moment correlation indicates no relationship between the variables (-.004) which supports previous research (Hauck and Thomas, 1972). It is important to note that the Student Success score was the difference between the grade the student perceived as successful and the actual final grade (see Figure 3). The final grade was a composite of grades on several different assignments, including an interview, a speech, several papers, a midterm exam and a final exam. Therefore, although an instructor may intend to be humorous, that humor may be of little consequence to the student when conducting an interview, preparing or giving a speech or writing a paper. Also, how well a student does in a course is probably a function of several forces that may be mutually exclusive of the instructor (McKeachie et al., 1966). Motivating forces--such as class status, future goals, major and GPA--were not considered in this study. While a humorous instructor may make the time spent in class more pleasant (Solomon, Bezdek and Rosenberg, 1963), the unmotivated student is unlikely to be influenced beyond the class time, and the motivated student would do well regardless of the instructor.



Student success (actual grade - perceived successful grade)

Figure 2. Histogram of Calculated Difference Scores for Student Success Measure (N=95).

Research Question Four: Relationship of Appropriate Humor to Student Success in the Course

Research guestion four asked if Appropriate Humor was associated with Student Success in the course. The Pearson product-moment correlation indicates no significant correlation (.05). The limited research related to Appropriate Humor and Student Success (Kaplan and Pascoe, 1977) found humor did not help immediate comprehension but did significantly improve retention. If a student retains more information, he or she should do well on objective assessments of that information. However, in the study undertaken by this researcher, Student Success was measured as the difference between what the student perceived as a successful grade in the class and the actual final grade, rather than by a single grade on one test. It is important to note that the final course grade was comprised of several different types of assignment criteria. It was also the researcher's intent to define success in terms of the student's perception rather than impose an arbitrarily designated cut-off point. However, given the results of the data, further analyses were conducted. Referring back to the Kaplan and Pascoe study (1977), assignments based on retention should have a high correlation with humor while those assignments based on other criteria should correlate less strongly. Also, a more objective measure, such as the student's final grade, might be a better indicator of success than a difference

score based on perception. However, when a Pearson productmoment correlation was computed for Appropriate Humor and Final Grade, the results indicated no significant correlation between the variables (.02).

Based on the results found, there does not appear to be a relationship between Appropriate Humor and Student Success in the course. However, these results may be misleading. Student success was measured with a bounded, discrete scale with very few points and was correlated with a Direct Magnitude Estimation, an unbounded, continuous scale. The low correlation between both Intentional and Appropriate Humor with Student Success may be more a function of the inconsistency of scales than a function of the relationship between the variables.

## Research Question Five: Relationship of Classroom Climate to Student Success in the Course

Research question five asked if Classroom Climate was associated with Student Success in the course. Research implies that the more positive the classroom climate, the more students will want to achieve their goals in the class (Friedrich, Galvin and Book, 1976, p. 62). If a student's goals are the same as the conventional criteria for success, the student should want to do well and, therefore, would work hard to get a high grade. However, the Pearson productmoment correlation indicates no relationship between Classroom Climate and Student Success (-.08). This low correlation may be due to individual differences as measured on the Climate dimension. It may be that even if a student feels free to interact in class, reasons for doing well or poorly in a course are due to factors not controllable by the instructor (McKeachie et al., 1966). Also, students are not usually familiar with classes where they are encouraged to participate. It may be that active participation implies an easy course to students. As a result, student may not spend much time studying or completing assignments. Rather, they may perceive that they can get a good grade in the class simply by participating. In fact, class participation makes up only a small portion of the final grade. The results of this study indicate that Classroom Climate is not related to how well a student will do in a course. However, it would be interesting to have students predict the difficulty of a course based on class climate to check perceptions of positive class climate and student expectations of a course. If students do associate a positive climate with an easy course, not only would their expectations for the course be affected but so would the amount of work they perceive as necessary to meet those expectations. It may be that a positive class climate lowers perceived difficulty of a course, thereby lowering the amount of time spent studying or completing assignments for the course.

## Limitations of Study

To fully interpret the results of this study, two limitations require consideration: (1) the sample attrition, and (2) problems encountered in using Direct Magnitude Estimation. A discussion of these limitations follows.

Of the three hundred fifty-three students who completed the Student Success Survey in March, 1978, only ninetyfive completed the Humor and Climate Questionnaire administered in April, 1978. Sample size ranged from 4 to 18 in individual classes, making it impossible to examine the influence of Humor on Climate and Success in individual classes. However, the intent of this study was to investigate perceived, not absolute, levels of humor. Therefore, it was expected that relationships between the variables should hold constant across sections so that, regardless of section, students who did not perceive humor also did not perceive a positive class climate. Based on this assumption, the data was collapsed, resulting in the sample size of 95. This small sample size might result in less accurate and precise correlations than a larger sample, as well as a larger standard error (Ary, Jacobs and Razavich, 1972, p. 167; Kerlinger, 1973; pp. 127-128).

There are several possible explanations for the high attrition of subjects. First, the Student Success Survey was administered by the researcher during class and required only several minutes for the student to complete. However,

students were required to schedule approximately one-half hour of time outside of class to complete the Humor and Climate Questionnaire. Also, during the week the Questionnaire was being administered, several other studies were being conducted. These studies offered more extra credit to students for not much more of the student's time. It is also possible that students who completed the Survey were satisfied with their grades and did not feel compelled to earn additional credit at the end of the quarter. This explanation implies that the final sample included more anxious, failing or overly grade conscious students than the general population. Finally, instructors were asked by the researcher to announce dates and times to their class when the Questionnaire would be administered. If the researcher had personally presented this information in each class, participation might have increased.

The use of the Direct Magnitude Estimation scale in the Humor and Climate Questionnaire might have biased the results of the data in several ways. First, comments from students who responded to the pretest and previous research (Woelfel, 1974) suggest that students are unfamiliar with this particular scaling technique and find it difficult to respond when the scale is unbounded. To give students practice with this type of scale, four example questions were included in the Questionnaire. Although students discussed their answers to these questions with the researcher prior

to completing the Questionnaire, lack of familiarity and frequent practice with unbounded scales may have resulted in most students setting their own boundaries conservatively. At the same time, some students responded with a number far exceeding the typical responses. These divergent responses would explain the high standard deviations found in Table 1 in Chapter III. In addition, by the researcher arbitrarily designating 10 as the average or typical instructor, little room was left for students to rate the belowaverage instructor. The student could interpret this as a 0-10 range for the below-average instructor and an unbounded range of 10+ for the above-average instructor. An arbitrarily assigned value of 50 might have resulted in a more even distribution of responses.

Another limitation of the scale concerns the wording of the Humor items. The questions in the Humor and Climate Questionnaire refer to Intentional and Appropriate Humor <u>each class period</u>. This implies that an instructor's humor is consistent over time. However, an instructor may not be humorous each class period but still may be perceived, in general, as a humorous instructor. Also, although the questions specifically state <u>each class period</u> there is not enough information to ascertain if a respondent's answers reflect his or her perception of humor over the entire term, the most recent class prior to completing the Questionnaire, or each class period. This problem could be remedied by

administering the Questionnaire several times during the term to obtain the reliability of the responses over time.

## Implications

This study is a beginning effort to relate an instructor's use of humor to classroom climate and student success in acourse. The results (see Figure 3) indicate that:

- Intentional and appropriate humor by the instructor are significantly related to classroom climate:
- (2) Intentional and appropriate humor by the instructor are not significantly related to student success in the course, and;
- (3) Classroom climate is not significantly related to student success in the course.

The strong association found between Humor and Climate merits examination of causality between the variables. The lack of relationship found between Humor and Climate with Success is probably the result of the measure used rather than an accurate indication of the relationship between the variables. Modifications and expansion of this research, as well as pragmatic implications, are discussed below.

Modifications for future research. According to the results of this study, instructor Humor and Classroom Climate are not related to Student Success in a course. As mentioned previously, this lack of relationship is probably due to the difference score used to measure student success. A different operationalization of success would result in a more accurate measurement of the variable. Success could be



Figure 3. Results of Findings

operationalized as the grade on the cumulative final exam. Success could also be experimentally manipulated, as in the Kaplan and Pascoe study (1977). In addition, success could be measured longitudinally by surveying students three to five years after they have taken the course to assess practical ramifications of both the instructor and course content. Whatever operational definition of student success is used should be measured with a scale consistent with those scales used to measure the other variables in the study. Modification of this study with a more precise definition of student success, as suggested above, should provide the link between instructor humor and climate with success.

Expansion of this Research. This study is far from conclusive. While the strength of the correlations between Intentional and Appropriate Humor with Climate suggests that the next step is to measure causality of the variables, several instructor and student characteristics should be included in future research.

Research has shown that cognitive styles greatly influence how people process and respond to information (Miller and Steinberg, 1975, pp. 148-149). This research



suggests that interaction in a classroom will be significantly altered by the amount of dogmatism in an instructor's cognitive style. In addition, the extent to which an instructor is liked and/or perceived to be competent influences classroom climate (Friedrich, Galvin and Book, 1976, pp. 66-67) as well as how well a student performs in a class (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1975, p. 106).

Several student characteristics were also excluded in this study. Previous research shows that if student anxiety is present, an instructor's use of irrelevant or incomprehensible humor may actually increase anxiety (Solomon, Bezdek and Rosenberg, 1963, p. 122; Gilliland and Mauritsen, 1971, p. 754). High student anxiety should then influence the level of interaction the student engages in, thereby affecting class climate. Sex of the student and instructor should also be included in future research. Perceptions of the same-sexed students and instructors will be different than opposite-sexed students and the instructor (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1975, p. 105). This difference in perception may affect the extent to which the student feels comfortable participating in class. Finally, the student's major and grade point average may indicate interest in the subject area and this interest may imply student motivation to do well in the class (McKeachie, 1978, p. 221).



Further research should address the presently unanswered question of causality and include variables such as the instructor's attitude toward teaching, a measure of instructor dogmatism, and their use of humor. These variables should be investigated in conjunction with student perceptions of their instructors on these three traits as well as the student's perceived competence and likeability of the instructor. In addition, the student's motivation to succeed in the course should be assessed.

Pragmatic implications. If the results of future research show causality, the pragmatic implications will be of particular importance. Positive results would suggest that instructors can be taught to use humor as a tool for facilitating interaction in the classroom, resulting in a positive climate. However, because the instructor is responsible for creating the climate (Withall, 1949; Gorman, 1974), it is important that they be taught to use humor that reflects their personality (Guthrie, 1954; Ryans, 1960; Bausell and Magoon, 1972; Costin and Grush, 1973; Romine, Humor is not necessarily the ability to tell jokes. 1974). Humor includes the ability to recognize situations with the potential for humor and respond accordingly (Gilliland and Mauritsen, 1971, p. 754). While it may not be possible to teach specific humor strategies to all instructors, they can be taught to be conscious of cues and to utilize those cues to the class's advantage. This utilization includes

52.



playing off humor generated by a student, introducing humorous stimuli into the class, puns, witticisms, nonverbal behavior, banter and the ability to appreciate as well as generate humor. By teaching a variety of alternative behaviors to instructors, their repertoire of available responses will be increased. This strategy suggests that, with training, instructors can be taught to use humor that is congruent with their personality. If the previously suggested research bears out, instructors taught to use humor should have a significant positive influence on their classroom climate and student success in their course.

Previous research from the sociological perspective has not investigated humor in the context of the college classroom. This study attempted to do so. The issues raised require additional research in order to contribute more definitive information about the relationship and influence of an instructor's humor on classroom climate and student success in the course.



APPENDIX A

Humor and Climate Questionnaire



Name\_\_\_\_\_

Section #

Dear Student:

I am conducting a study of classroom communication in COM 100 classes for my Master's thesis in the Department of Communication. I appreciate your help by answering this questionnaire as accurately as possible.

Before beginning the questionnaire, please wait for instructions. If you have any questions at any time, just ask.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Eileen Berlin


1101110
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Section #

## Sample Items

Please write your answer in the numbered space to the right of each question.

- Assume that the amount of fun the average MSU student has on a weekend is 10. Assume tht 0 represents no fun at all. How much fun do you have on a weekend?
- 2. Assume that the amount the average MSU student studies is 10. Assume that 0 represents no studying at all. How much do you study?
- 3. Assume that the amount the average MSU student enjoys partying is 10. Assume that 0 represents no enjoyment of partying. How much do you enjoy partying?
- 4. Assume that the amount the average person likes below-freezing weather with gusting winds and drifting snow banks is 10. Assume that 0 represents no liking of below-freezing weather with gusting winds and drifting snow banks. How much do you like below-freezing weather with gusting winds and drifting snow banks?

4.\_\_\_\_

1.\_\_\_\_\_

2.\_\_\_\_

3.

56
~ ~

Name

Section #

Please write your answer in the numbered space to the right

of each question.

- Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor says or does something each class period that makes you laugh or smile is 10.
   Assume that 0 represents the instructor saying or doing nothing each class period that makes you laugh or smile.
   How often does your instructor say or do something each class period that makes you laugh or smile?
- 2. Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor says or does something each class period with the intention of making you laugh or smile is 10. Assume that 0 represents the instructor saying or doing nothing with the intention of making you laugh or smile each class period. How often does your instructor say or do something each class period with the intention of making you laugh or smile?
- 3. Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor intends to make you laugh or smile each class period by saying or doing something directly related to the content of the course is 10. Assume that 0 represents the instructor saying or doing nothing with the intention of making you laugh or smile each class period that is directly related to the content of the course. How often does your instructor intend to make you laugh or smile by saying or doing something directly related to the content of the course?
- 4. Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor is humorous is 10. Assume that 0 represents no humor. How humorous is your instructor?

1.\_\_\_\_

2.

3.\_\_\_\_

4.\_\_\_\_\_



- 5. Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor encourages students to express their opinions is 10. Assume that 0 represents no encouragement or discouragement for expressing opinions. How much does your instructor encourage students to express their opinions?
- 6. Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor is receptive to new ideas and others' viewpoints is 10. Assume that 0 represents no receptiveness to new ideas and others' viewpoints. How receptive to new ideas and others' viewpoints is your instructor?
- 7. Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor provides students the opportunity to ask questions is 10. Assume that 0 represents no opportunity to ask questions. How much does your instructor provide students the opportunity to ask questions?
- 8. Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor stimulates class discussion is 10. Assume that 0 represents no stimulation of class discussion. How much does your instructor stimulate class discussion?

5.\_\_\_\_

6.\_\_\_\_

7.\_\_\_\_

8.\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B

Critical Incident Technique and Responses

Think about all of your college classes, past and present. Focus your attention on those instructors you've found particularly humorous. What behavior(s) made them funny?



## Responses

How they carried themselves--how they manipulated their physical characteristics (mannerisms, facial expressions). Spontaneous reactions--came up with things out of the blue (minimal reaction time). Smooth--knew what they were doing and how it was taking effect. Open--their openness let us feel comfortable--giving our emotions a chance to come out (let us be ourselves). Able to get us away from duldrum situation--gave us something to accent the class.

The prof would relate the course material to humorous situations and experiences of his own. Also, when an instructor comes down off the hill; drops the "Dr." label you can associate with and relax, thereby laughing more easily. When the prof uses jokes more on your level, I'm more inclined to consider him someone I can laugh with not at.

Although one of my hardest classes ever--since it is a TV lecture and ultimately very impersonal and rather dull, occasionally there is a fleeting moment of humor. It is usually funny because the prof is so serious his change of expression isn't expected. He does things like: (1) Recently to advertise a dance marathon he began to loosen his tie on TV, roll up his cuffs, unbutton his shirt and remove it--he had on a t-shirt with the appropriate advertising. His behavior was funny becasue it's not expected--I mean how many times does a prof undress in front of the class. Another class seemed funny to me when we were talking about serious economic matters and a joke would be made--it balanced his lecture.

The instructors I found particularly humorous were humorous because of their personality. When most profs get their degrees they concentrate on that and not on their class which left an impersonal attitude in the room and less learning. The rather humorous profs were funny and thus well liked because while teaching they first considered the students and ways to help them learn. They were on a more personal level with the students which makes learning easier and enjoyable. They relate class problems with humorous life problems that make the class laugh.

I can only think of one teacher who I felt was humorous. The reason this teacher was humorous was because she was so young, maybe 25, that she acted just like us kids. Usually when adults act like kids you think they're corny and shouldn't be acting like that. But when this woman behaved like us, it was so natural you had to laugh. I've found two behaviors to make instructors seem humorous.

- Telling an experience of their's that is funny in some way and that same type of experience has happened to me before.
- 2. Actions or behaviors that come across as being bullheaded, sexist, or redneck. I particularly enjoy them when the instructor is attempting to relate rationally to a situation while totally avoiding it (if that makes sense).

The way they made the boring subjects relate to common day experiences or related them to their personal experiences often made them interesting and fun. Facial expressions and gestures with their hands also made them funny. I once had a psychology teacher who related many of the phobias and hysterias that we studied to his patients. Some were very Also when a prof tells a joke that he's heard. funnv. I've also had professors who just seem funny naturally. Thev joke around and get personal with the students. I think the main basics that I find humorous is the way in which certain professors just make gestures and say absurd funny things that relate or even don't to the class subjects.

From what I can recall of the 2 semesters I have been in college I think professors sometimes try to be 20 years younger than they are. A particular psychology teacher who seems to be about 55 years old is constantly cracking dumb jokes and not getting alot of lectures in. I do enjoy a class that is not strictly class <u>but</u> the academic portion should come first. I do like humor but sometimes professors try to overdo it. Other than joking about relevant topics such as sex, economy and the like I can think of no other odd behavior that professors display.

I had a prof whose behavior was alot of joking around when speaking on topics that were of everyday life. It was as though he was embarrassed to speak on the topics. An example for instance is sex. Also since he was and is presently a psychologist he told us about some of the types of patients he had had. He was serious when speaking as though he was speaking to a member of the family of the patient about their problem.

It's been funny if an instructor says the wrong instructions. It's funny when instructions are misprinted in sex education class. In music, it was funny to clap to myself or play recorder to myself because I feel dumb. English instructions on grading a paper was funny because the teacher graded so unfair that we made a joke of 5 wrong a 3.5 and 20 wrong a 3.0. One of the behaviors that made them funny was that he could tell jokes or say statements that I could relate to. I also found his personal style likable so I would find the humorous things he said to be funny. If they were easy going and not completely "hard nose" to the book, they would be more relaxed and able to say things that were humorous. With some profs they were just so strange that I laughed at them. Strange in a way as being weird. Some were humorous in the way they moved about the room. If they had personal things they liked or didn't like, they could express them in a humorous fashion. If they were trying to get a point across and get really excited they appeared funny.

The behavior that made them funny to me is when they started talking about a funny event that happened to them. Also, if they started talking about their childhood, wife or job and sometimes when they try to act young for their age, expressing feelings such as "I'm going to party this weekend."

I think the most important behavior was they put themselves on the same level as the class. They were "down to earth." This made the class feel easy around them and when they did something humorous it seemed to be funnier. It would be like your friends doing something funny. It seems to be funny because you relate to them.

Since I've only had two terms of college classes, it's kind of hard to say. But most people are funny because they admit something about themselves that is universally funny or some incident that relates to class and is funny. Alot of instructors are funny because they admit to feeling the same as the students do about something that we wouldn't apply to them. It is mostly funny when they act out of character of what is expected.

Good humor, mixed with a good teaching technique, makes your good instructors. I mean when you can actually listen to a prof and you <u>like</u> what you hear. I don't mean to say that every line they say should put you on the floor laughing, but it should be clear. There is also a different kind of funny instructor. These are the kind that you laugh at instead of with. There are too many of these kind left. It's all in the person's style and if they can teach me something and make it interesting then that is great.

I believe the attitude one of my instructors had was especially humorous because of his silly, carefree outlook he had on life. Also, he was excellent at combining hilarious sexual jokes throughout his lectures. For example, one day he was discussing sex (this was a Psych course by the way) and the involvement with the egg and casually pulled out an egg and started eating it. Lectures were none-the-less always exciting and full of surprises.

My two most humorous profs were older men. The laughter they caused was due to their experiences. Being older men, they had many experiences.

I had an instructor last term whose humor often made the day go quickly and smoothly. He repeatedly spoke in cliches such as "knows all," etc. (I can't think of anymore examples). He also referred to us as superior students and talked of things that "all MSU students know, of course." Another way to elude to humor was to hint at sex in some of our material. Besides this one instructor, I have not had many other instructors that I could count on for an entertaining class hour - IT SURE IS DULL!!!!

The best instructor I have found to be humorous was my advertising instructor. The reason for this is that he tied the jokes in with certain commercials and products. He is also always joking with people in the class and everyone laughs together. The only reason I believe this is good is because in advertising humor plays an important role.

In the classes I had in which the instructor was particularly humorous, he must have been an excellent lecturer because to stand in front of the class and be able to hold their attention is pretty hard for most because most of the time lectures are boring. A side joke now and then would hold the class's attention. When he can laugh at someone (a student) that cracks a joke or says something dumb, and come right back with a retort, it's good to see.

The thing that good instructors have is a quick sense of humor. That is they are able to say something humorous at the spur of the moment. If they saw someone was really strong they described him as built "like a brick shit-house." My one prof was always doing something like that. He would do something unexpected which would make the class laugh. He had a certain "air" of nervousness about him and his humor seemed to break the tension or the dullness. My COM 100 teacher is a good teacher and very funny. She just always has something funny to say and it makes the class that much more interesting.

The behavior which made the prof funny was usually a comment that was unexpected. The professor is supposed to be the intellectual person who is serious and follows the book. I guess this is a stereotype of what I learned in high school. In one class, the prof was funny because he had no restraints. He said whatever came to his mind which was guick and witty. He would break up the monotonous seriousness of the class by making jokes about the work or the university, etc. In another class, when talking about sexual characteristics and things like that, the lecture hall was usually tense. No one knew if they should The prof would ease the laugh or be mature and be serious. tenseness by saying something funny. In another class, I have a senile old prof. I would never expect to hear some of the things he says from an old guy like him. I'd never expect him to make jokes about sex and drugs but he does. In another class the prof is always quick and witty and fun. She just has a good humor about her. This is very unexpected. Usually I laugh when they say something I never thought they'd say.

I have only had one instructor that was slightly funny. He had a fairly dry sense of humor which is similar to mine. He made his jokes more just in his voice tones and when they really weren't intended. His humor is basically the type I find most funny in people.

Throughout my college experience, I've had many different types of profs. Most of whom were not in the least bit humorous. Actually, I may not be the best of judges because profs that make other people laugh don't necessarily make me The profs that seem to be the funniest are the ones laugh. that are very subtle with their humoristic approach. Profs who think they're comedians are the jokes. A prof who can take a serious matter and spontaneously relate humor is the prof that is actually funny. Some profs are funny because they are so weird. Intellectuals seem to have little idiosyncracies (physical, ex. twitches or mental). This type of person is humorous because he is different. The funniest prof is one that can relate to college students' situations and can point out how ironic, stupid or simple they really are.

They were very natural and down to earth. They spoke on things outside of just the straight material which I was interested in. They would be sarcastic of some things showing that many times the book isn't always correct. They seemed very comfortable and relaxed and taught in a very personable manner. They would teach the same material but make it interesting which made it much easier to learn. The ability of the instructor to use real life experiences that are comical and general. The instructors will tell stories I can relate to. A professor that can stand back and look at reality and laugh at it. He/she is able to take life with a grain of salt. He/she exposes their conceptions of things and thus makes them (the teacher) more human and likable. When a person is likable you are usually more receptive to their ideas. Most of these classes were of a social nature and not something like math or chemistry.

When one of my profs stood in front of the class and danced to some music we were listening to he acted funny. When he lectured he would sometimes also crack jokes about himself or about the topic we were discussing. Also when he described things he would sometimes add little comments of no significance that would disrupt the students' chain of thought and most of the time they were humorous. Finally he would, when you had an appointment with him, try to make you feel so at ease that it was peculiar.

When he lectured he would make funny gestures that coincided with what he talked about. I am speaking of my History prof who mentions people's names like Benjamin Franklin but instead he refers to him as Benjie Baby and to President Carter as the peanut man.

I had a prof who would talk about science and then get caught in a particular subject he couldn't get out of so he would crack jokes to avoid his mistakes.

A humorous event which involved a professor was not necessarily done to be humorous by him but he shaved off his beard about the second to last day of the term and the class's reaction to it was quite funny. I also think it's quite humorous when instructors related their personal life to the class, as what their kids do or what they did when they were in school.

My past communications instructor seemed very humorous. In the process of teaching he made comments in which he aroused the class. During class time and while giving the lesson for the day, he would cover up his mistakes by making a remark that was humorous. He would do that every day whether he made another mistake or not. He always found something to say that made the class laugh. He'd come through the door and start right in his humorous act and from the way the class responded, we must have loved it. Their relationships with the students most of all. Not just one or two students but an appeal to all that might want to participate in discussion before or after class. Teachers that attempted to convey this manner gave an easiness, a feeling throughout which aided humor from both sides. What seemed to be important was that the freedom for anyone, if they like, to respond humorously throughout a class as long as limitations of disruption were viewed.

One prof made the class humorous by acting out or going into the characters of our projects. Another gave lifelike problems that happen to everyone and they were so stupid it was funny. One gave us a backlog of how the university was, way back then and compared it to now.

My history prof makes funny remarks about living conditions of the time and brings out some candid remarks. When he makes a mistake about something, he often comments about it, sometimes bringing laughs from the class. Overall, the thing that made him humorous was that because of the serious nature expected of him, his humor was a surprise.

One of my profs would jump up and down to express points. His behavior was especially bizarre because he was in his 80's. Another prof was from Germany. He would consciously say "How do you . . ." and then use a funny sentence to explain what he wanted to say. But I knew he could have explained it in our words but chose to use a funny sentence instead. Another prof I had was from India. He was very small and could talk very fast. When something was funny he would open his mouth wide and laugh hysterically. Everyone in class would laugh with him because his laugh was so funny.

The most humorous instructor I have had was one who had a very active behavior. He was always dancing around the room and kept the attention of the class at all times. He also had some kind of joke to tell at every class period that would correspond to the lecture. His behavior was very open with the class and he would never hesitate to make cutting comments to people within the class. He also used facial expressions to make a point or in reply to someone's actions or remarks. Another behavior he used was while telling a joke he was able to change the content of his voice and could do impressions of other people. He was also very interesting which helped to make him humorous. Previously I have found my teachers to be funny (sarcastically) when I find they have peculiar habits or idiosyncracies. For example, some of my teachers might have had a funny voice or did funny things with their hands when they were lecturing that they were unaware of. Being genuinely funny to me means when teachers say funny things or make funny gestures. For example, when a teacher swears appropriately I find it humorous because most teachers don't open up and speak their mind. The way the teacher says these expressions determine whether they're humorous or in poor taste. Integrating jokes I always find entertaining as well, or when a teacher makes a mistake and pokes fun at himself.

Most of these instructors were very knowledgeable in their subject so much so that they could make humorous even a true statement. It's not that this true statement was funny but the way they phrased it. It was as if in the midst of laughter you learned something. These statements were usually ironic, hypocritical or just something we never knew before. What also made them funny was their outward gestures. Some constantly walked, some never moved an inch. Their behaviors were always to an extreme. Most of these instructors were very friendly and informal in their attitudes toward teaching. They conducted the class as if it was in their own living room or in the park. They had an air as if they were still a student and were also learning from this experience.

I feel there are two types of "funny" instructors. One is just a humorous person and the other is not trying to be funny but is. The latter being laughing at them rather than with them. A humorous instructor is one who knows his stuff well enough to present it in a humorous manner. I really enjoy these types of instructors because it makes me want to learn more. The humor is constructive and aids in the instruction.

I remember many instructors who <u>tried</u> to be funny by telling jokes and completely flopped. It is more the way something is said or told than what is said that will make me laugh. Spontaneous jokes or actions are quite often the funniest-or at least ones that appear to be spontaneous. If it looks planned my reaction is one of anger and resentment rather than humor. A prof's facial expression and body movements also make them funny. A certain walk or stance often will strike me as funny and if a prof does alot of these, my overall opinion of him will be good. Humorous profs I've had told clever stories to serve as examples for the points they were trying to get across in class. There were no visable behaviors which made them funny, just that they had the ability to keep their classes amused while teaching them at the same time.

Their easy-going attitudes in which they don't take everything too seriously and can laugh things off. I love it when a teacher laughs with the class, sometimes when instructors make funny faces or expressions as they are teaching. When instructors teach in an informal atmosphere where they are free to move about and act things out to their students and do it in a humorous fashion. When they tell jokes at the beginning of class to set things off it is pretty funny.

Their ability to act and hold the class's attention. Many profs use jokes or other distractions to relax the class. A professor is like an actor in many ways; he's on stage, he's transacting with the rest of the audience so he must listen and look for feedback in order to interest and keep class attention. Jokes and humor also encourage feedback. A prof is a unique person and must communicate on a wide level. Therefore, he must encourage class attention and class participation.

One of my prof's outgoing behavior makes him humorous. On the first day of class he sat in the audience as a student. In the middle of the class period he jumped up and started writing on the board. It was amazing.

Their use of words to tell us of their past experiences. One guy just looked funny and had a funny tone of voice so I found many things he said funny.

One of my instructors reminded me of a raisin. I know this is strange but when you're bored during class you begin to use your imagination. He was plump, dark skinned and bald. He looked like a plump little raisin. Another prof had a very sarcastic face that he made after saying something funny. One of his eyebrows moved up and down and he had a smirk on his face. Another prof was sort of old and had long gray hair with a beard and slumped his shoulders when he walked. He also shuffled his feet. I found it rather humorous. One instructor I found particularly humorous because all through the lecture he cracked jokes and made funny comments. He was a riot but then he became a bit perverted and all he talked about was sex. I was very turned off and I didn't even go to class. Another prof I had had such a fantastic personality that everyone loved him. When he wanted you to remember something in particular he would jump up and down and clap his hands to make sure you knew what he wanted. He also cracked jokes throughout the lecture. In a class I have this term, the class laughs at the prof because she is so boring. She has an absolutely monotone voice. It seems like her whole life is science.

Whenever a prof makes fun of the way the school system is run, especially if you know it is true. When they're trying to convey an idea and use a past experience of theirs and you, as the student, have had the same experience. When a mistake is made in the lesson plan and they attempt to cover up or correct the mistake. When a prof makes a mistake and a student catches it and informs him about it. The prof tries to make up excuses for the mistake instead of admitting he's wrong.

Telling stupid jokes that no one laughs at. Talking too fast and getting totally confused. One wore tennis shoes, purple socks, green pants and a blue and red rugby shirt 3 out of 5 days a week. He was about 50 years old too!

The reason why my Humanities professor is humorous is due to his superior analogies to the boring tactics of Humanities. When he talks about what makes a person so naive before learning the social graces, he uses personal examples about his son. The way he used his facial expressions and the tone of his voice in telling the story contributed greatly to making the story more humorous.

There are two different kinds of humor that can be found in instructors. One is genuine humor such as a comediantype teacher who livens up his lectures with jokes and puns. Also he uses real-life experiences which contain some comic element. They can tell funny stories because of the rapport they build with their classes. Another type of humor is the kind that many students see in teachers and it's really making fun of the prof. Maybe by using hand or face expressions or imitating his voice, accent, walk, etc. the teacher may appear funny. I have one teacher who rolls his eyes and shakes his hands when he related humorous incidents and this makes the class crack up. By getting



to know his students a prof can let more of himself out and become just a normal average person who can laugh at himself and with the class.

Most were funny due to particular traits they possessed. Some seemed really uneducated in their fields so they made fools of themselves in front of their classes by constantly making mistakes. One lady teacher was huge (physically) and she reminded me of a whale which I thought to be amusing because I kid myself about my physical size. Another spoke poor English which proved to be funny at many times because no one understood her and she did not understand us. Only one teacher was really gifted at telling jokes. He kept the class amused and interested and therefore he has been my favorite teacher so far.

Being funny has two different sides. One is laughing with the prof and the other is laughing at them. An instructor can do some strange things like pick his nose during class, which are gross but are funny too. Sometimes the instructor wears really funny clothes, like big rubber boots in class, which is funny also. This is laughing at the instructor; the one with a weird behavior. Laughing with the prof is totally different. It makes a subject alot clearer when an outside example is brought in. It makes it more interesting when the example is funny, it's easier to relate to the problem. Profs that use this behavior are more open and seem to relate better to their students.

One instructor was very loud and wild. You could hear him down the hall laughing and telling jokes. He would get the class involved by making us all feel at ease. Another instructor was very dumb. He was very sickly looking and always making mistakes. The class was constantly correcting him. It was funny because we felt that we were smarter than he was.

One of my profs is funny because she has a funny accent. It's Spanish and she pronounces her words in sentences and in speaking funny. She misspells alot of words wrong. She likes to ask silly questions that makes us laugh. Since she has this speaking problem, it makes everybody overflow with laughter.

One instructor that I remember being particularly funny was a fencing instructor that I had. He was 70 years old and had some of the driest humor I have ever heard. He would make fun of you in front of the class but it was even funny to you. He had some stories to tell for everything we talked



about and then a joke to go along with it. Two separate instructors I had I found funny because of their complete clumsiness. One used to take 3-5 minutes of lecture time to put his mike on. He'd swear and just fumble all over. The other prof, I guess the things just happened to him. But they were always funny. One time he was showing a print and rolled it up and it said "Smoke Dope" on it. He was quite surprised.

One particular professor which I laughed <u>at</u> comes to mind. This man was old, with white hair and everything and had a very senile outlook on the world. His mannerisms, coupled with his appearance were enough to bowl you over, let alone add the corny jokes. The professors you can laugh with are very real, level headed, likable people. They have a quick wit about them as well as a kind of charisma which makes you like them. They are easy people to relate to because they relate to you. They are usually outgoing and seem to take a generous outlook towards their students. I think these characteristics all combine to make him or her a likable person. Before you can find someone funny, you have to like them as a person. It's pretty hard to find someone humorous you don't find nice.

I have a professor who is a casual type professor. The reason for his humor was that he was very open with the class and said what he felt. He told several jokes and related stories to his topic. The main source of humor, though, was that he was constantly trying to be interesting so the students could relate. Another prof was a math prof. It wasn't the things she said but what she did. She would write down problems on the board that didn't even relate to what we were studying. She said it was to show us what we were going to have to know.

I had a professor who wore the same suit coat every day through the whole term. What made it so funny was he greased his hair back and would get so much enjoyment out of talking about rocks. He also talked in a squeeky voice. I had another professor who would wear the strangest clothes, like checked pants with a striped shirt. He also in the middle of his lectures would just stop what he was teaching and start talking about sex and how lucky we were to be of this generation. He used to go up to the board to write something and his arm would get stuck in mid-air. I have another professor who looks just like Wally Cox and he's very quiet. He'll start to lecture very quietly and he'll build up his excitment to the point where he's sceaming and yelling and his face is pitch red. Then he'll stop and the whole process will start over again.

I had an anthropology class last term and the prof in there was quite humorous. He was a very pleasant person and fairly quiet. He was serious when he had to be but threw in very subtle but good lines when he saw the need. He did not come right out and tell jokes but instead incorporated them into the factual information given in the lecture. It really added to the learning process. Another instructor I had was humorous only in the sense that he was so stupid he was funny. This gentlemen was fairly old (60) and his sense of humor was warped. He was quite off the wall.

Some of the things I found funny about profs were their mannerisms and their speech. By mannerisms, I mean the way they use their arms and hands in their lectures. The way they walk around and who they direct their lectures to and where they look at the person they're directing to. Some of the things about speech I find funny are the words and phrases they use.

I have had four instructors that have been humorous. The first two have similar characteristics. It may be mean to say but what made them humorous was that they were dorky. The way they conducted their lectures was so unorganized and they just reminded me of total failures. The third one was funny because he put his personality into his lectures. He made jokes about the material we were going over and that made the class alot more interesting. The fourth was a combination of the first three. Although he was not unorganized he did have dorky characteristics which were funny and he also put alot of his personality into his class. It seemed by the end of the term everybody knew him as a warm personal friend.

One of my profs seems to be an easy person to find humor-He'll come to lecture and get situated. He'll then ous. put the mike on his neck. When he does this, it seems like it just weighs him down, his posture slouching even more. He won't say "hello" or any kind of greeting. He'll just start whipping equations off on the overhead projector. Each time he finishes a problem, he'll step back and nod his head like, "Yes, I did the problem all by myself. Now you may applaud." He'll continue on in this manner throughout the lecture. At the end he'll say "thank you," pack up and leave with a little smirk on his face. He is so boring but yet when I happen to go to his lecture all I can do is just laugh. One of my other profs I really enjoy as a teacher and person. But she has funny ways. The first time I had class, it was a joke. She is an older woman. She has grey hair and just wears it down to her neck with two bobby pins on each side of her part. Each class she wears a pair of slacks and turtleneck with a vest of some sort. She always



wears a vest. Plus her hiking boots. I'd say that it was mostly her appearance, I guess, because she has a good mind and always knows the material.

One of my profs is funny because he tries to be. He wanted to be a comedian's writer. So he just says alot of jokes and does funny things in class.

One of my profs was senile. He used to make horrible puns that you couldn't help laughing at. You weren't laughing at the puns but at his feeble attempt to make a joke. He was also funny when he assigned paper topics. He was such a bigot that he let you know whether to choose the pro or con side of issues like gay lib or gun control. He would make a really snide remark about the subject and you knew you would get a bad grade if you had the wrong opinion. We used to laugh at him behind his back for this--also when he repeated himself or got kids' names mixed up.

The funniest prof I have had was an extremely intelligent person but he could not express himself or do two things at the same time, like talk and write. He was always dazed and confused. He reminded me of a stereotype absentminded professor. If someone asked a question of him, his usual response was, "That's a very good question."

I have one very humorous psych teacher. He is that way because of shock techniques he uses on the class. He swears and relates stories not many instructors would. This shock is really funny. My communications teacher is also very funny at times. He relates stories and examples that are very human--that we have also gone through so we laugh with him. The difference between these two is one of shocking and one very warm as he relates to the class. It's hard to define humor. Some people just have a natural flair for it. When people don't and they try to be funny, they only tend to make an ass out of themselves.

In one of my classes, the prof is extremely funny. He makes jokes about the papers we write and on how messed up the university is. He keeps the class interested because he will yell and scream. But his yelling and screaming is not directed towards anyone.



APPENDIX C

Humor and Climate Questionnaire Pretests



Form A

Student Number\_\_\_\_\_ Section Number\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Student:

I am conducting a study of classroom communication in COM 100 classes for my Master's thesis in the Department of Communication. I appreciate your help by answering this questionnaire as accurately as possible.

Before beginning the questionnaire, please wait for instructions. If you have any questions at any time, just ask.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Eileen Berlin



Student Number\_\_\_\_\_ Section Number\_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Items

Please circle the answer which most closely describes how you feel about each item. Please choose among these five responses:

- SA = strongly agree A = agree N = neutral D = disagree SD = strongly disagree
- Passing all my courses at MSU requires very little work on my part.

SA A N D SD

2. I'm known for my ability to add life to any party.

SA A N D SD

3. I love below-freezing weather with gusting winds and drifting snow banks.

SA A N D SD

PLEASE DO NOT CONTINUE UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO



Student Number\_\_\_\_\_ Section Number\_\_\_\_\_

Please circle the answer which most closely describes how you feel about each item. Please choose among these five responses:

SA = strongly agree
A = agree
N = neutral
D = disagree
SD = strongly disagree

1. I laugh or smile at something my instructor says or does each class period.

SA A N D SD

2. My instructor says or does something with the intention of making the class laugh or smile each class period.

SA A N D SD

3. When my instructor says or does something with the intention of making the class laugh or smile, it is related to course content.

SA A N D SD

4. I think my instructor is humorous.

SA A N D SD

5. My instructor encourages students to express their opinions.

SA A N D SD

6. My instructor is receptive to new ideas and others' viewpoints.

SA A N D SD



7. My instructor provides students the opportunity to ask questions.

SA A N D SD

8. My instructor stimulates class discussion.

SA A N D SD

PLEASE DO NOT CONTINUE UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO



Stud	udent Number Section Number			
Plea	ase write your answer in the numbered space	to	the	right
of e	each question.			
1.	What is the average number of times you laudh or smile at something your instruc-			
	tor says or does in each class period?	1.		
2.	Of the number of times you laugh or smile at something your instructor says or does, how often do you think your instructor is intending to make you laugh or smile?	2.		
3.	Of these intended times, how many are directly related to the content of the	3		

PLEASE DO NOT CONTINUE UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO

77
Student Number\_\_\_\_\_ Section Number\_\_\_\_\_

### Sample Items

Please write your answer in the numbered space to the right of each question.

- 1. Assume that the amount the average
  MSU student has fun on a weekend is
  10.
  Assume that 0 represents no fun at
  all.
  How much fun do you have on a weekend?
  1.\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Assume that the amount the average MSU student studies is 10. Assume that 0 represents no studying at all. How much do you study?
- 2.\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Assume that the amount the average MSU student goes to rock concerts is 10. Assume that 0 represents going to no rock concerts. How often do you go to rock concerts?

PLEASE DO NOT CONTINUE UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO



Student Number

Section Number

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Please write your answer in the numbered space to the right

of each question.

- Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor is humorous is 10. Assume that 0 represents no humor. How humorous is your instructor?
- Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor encourages students to express their opinions is 10. Assume that 0 represents no encouragement or discouragement for expressing your opinions. How much does your instructor encourage students to express their opinions?
- 3. Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor is receptive to new ideas and others' viewpoints is 10. Assume that 0 represents no receptiveness to new ideas and others' viewpoints. How receptive to new ideas and others' viewpoints is your instructor?
- Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor provides students the opportunity to ask questions is 10. Assume that 0 represents no opportunity to ask questions. How much does your instructor provide students the opportunity to ask questions?
- Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor stimulates class discussion is 10. Assume that 0 represents no stimulation of class discussion. How much does your instructor stimulate class discussion?

PLEASE DO NOT CONTINUE UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO

Form B

Student Number \_\_\_\_\_ Section Number \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Student:

I am conducting a study of classroom communication in COM 100 classes for my Master's thesis in the Department of Communication. I appreciate your help by answering this questionaire as accurately as possible.

Before beginning the questionnaire, please wait for instructions. If you have any questions at any time, just ask.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Eileen Berlin



Stud	lent NumberSe	ction	Number_		
Please write your answer in the numbered space to the right					
of each question.					
1.	What is the average number of times you laugh or smile at something your				
	period?		1		
2.	Of the number of times you laugh or				
	smile at something your instructor says or does, how often do you think				
	your instructor is intending to make you laugh or smile?		2		
3.	Of these intended times, how many are				
	directly related to the content of the course?		З		
			· · ·		

\_\_\_\_\_

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PLEASE DO NOT CONTINUE UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO



Student Number\_\_\_\_\_

#### Sample Items

Please write your answer in the numbered space to the right

of each question.

 Assume that the amount the average MSU student has fun on a weekend is 10.
 Assume that 0 represents no fun at all.
 How much fun do you have on a weekend?

1.\_\_\_\_\_

2.

Section Number\_\_\_\_\_

- 2. Assume that the amount the average MSU student studies is 10. Assume that 0 represents no studying at all. How much do you study?
- 3. Assume that the amount the average MSU student goes to rock concerts is 10. Assume that 0 represents going to no rock concerts. How often do you go to rock concerts?

3.

PLEASE DO NOT CONTINUE UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO



Student N	umber
-----------	-------

Section Number

Please write your answer in the numbered space to the right of each guestion.

- Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor is humorous is 10. Assume that 0 represents no humor. How humorous is your instructor?
- Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor encourages students to express their opinions is 10. Assume that 0 represents no encouragement or discouragement for expressing your opinions. How much does your instructor encourage students to express their opinions
- Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor is receptive to new ideas and others' viewpoints is 10. Assume that 0 represents no receptiveness to new ideas and others' viewpoints. How receptive to new ideas and others' viewpoints is your instructor?
- Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor provides students the opportunity to ask questions is 10. Assume that 0 represents no opportunity to ask questions. How much does your instructor provide students the opportunity to ask questions?
- Assume that the amount the average or typical instructor stimulates class discussion is 10.
   Assume that 0 represents no stimulation of class discussion.
   How much does your instructor stimulate class discussion?

PLEASE DO NOT CONTINUE TUNIL TOLD TO DO SO

3.

4.

5.

1.

2.



Student Number\_\_\_\_\_ Section Number\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Sample Items

Please circle the answer which most closely describes how you feel about each item. Please choose among these five responses:

- SA = strongly agree A = agree N = neutral D = disagree
- SD = strongly disagree
- Passing all my courses at MSU requires very little work on my part.

SA A N D SD

2. I'm known for my ability to add life to any party.

SA A N D SD

3. I love below-freezing weather with gusting winds and drifting snow banks.

SA A N D SD

PLEASE DO NOT CONTINUE UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO

Student Number Section Number

Please circle the answer which most closely describes how you feel about each item. Please choose among these five responses:

- SA = strongly agree A = agree N = neutral D = disagree SD = strongly disagree
- 1. I laugh or smile at something my instructor says or does each class period.

SA A N D SD

2. My instructor says or does something with the intention of making the class laugh or smile each class period.

SA A N D SD

3. When my instructor says or does something with the intention of making the class laugh or smile, it is related to course content.

SA A N D SD

4. I think my instructor is humorous.

SA A N D SD

5. My instructor encourages students to express their opinions.

SA A N D SD

6. My instructor is receptive to new ideas and others' viewpoints.

SA A N D SD

7. My instructor provides students the opportunity to ask questions.

## SA A N D SD

8. My instructor stimulates class discussion.

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SA A N D SD

# PLEASE DO NOT CONTINUE UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO

APPENDIX D

Descriptive Statistics for Pretest



	Likert		D M E	
Variable	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
General Humor	1.33	.49	8.67	3.85
Intentional Humor	1.25	.41	6.73	3.47
Appropriate Humor	2.07	1.16	5.20	2.70
Overall Humor	1.60	.63	15.67	6.73
Students encouraged to express opinions	1.40	.51	15.67	8.12
Instructor's receptive- ness to new ideas and others' viewpoints	1.47	.83	14.80	6.04
Opportunity to ask questions	1.33	.49	18.87	7.74
Instructor stimulation of class discussion	1.60	.83	51.87	124.39

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Form A of Pretest

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for Form B of Pretest

Variable	Likert Mean S D		D.M.E. Mean Si		ח	
General Humor	1.50	.63	12.50	12.84		
Intentional Humor	1.56	.81	11.43	9.69		
Appropriate Humor	2.25	.68	8.79	8.13		
Overall Humor	1.69	.48	19.38	21.99		
Students encouraged to express opinions	1.44	.51	22.94	22.53		
Instructor's receptive- ness to new ideas and others' viewpoints	1.63	.50	21.63	22.96		
Opportunity to ask questions	1.31	.48	24.75	23.57		
Instructor stimulation of class discussion	1.75	.68	21.19	22.23		

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