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The purpose of this study was to gain insight and understanding into the humor experience in collegiate sport. The specific purpose of this study was to determine the styles of humor used among male collegiate basketball players, the uses humor serves for them, and the perceived effects of humor used within male collegiate basketball teams. Also, the relationship of the styles and uses of humor to team cohesion was determined. The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was used to measure the humor styles used among athletic team members (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larson, Gray, & Weir, 2003). The Uses of Humor Index (Graham, Papa, & Brooks, 1992) was used to measure the uses of humor among athletic team members. Questions regarding specific effects of humor attempted to develop an understanding of specific positive and negative effects of humor usage in sport, as well as determine the overall frequency of positive and negative effects of humor. The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) was used to measure the perceptions of team cohesion among athletic teams (Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985).

The data analyzed in this study was collected on 79 male collegiate basketball players representing six institutions. The results of this research found humor usage to be mainly positive, with positive humor being reported with more frequency than negative humor in group settings. The male collegiate basketball participants reported higher scores on the positive styles of humor than on the negatives styles of

humor. Likewise, results revealed that positive and expressive affect humor was reported with more frequency than negative affect humor. Additionally, results revealed that the positive effects of humor were reported with more frequency than the negative effects of humor. Correlations showed that the affiliative style of humor was positively correlated with the ATG-T, GI-T, and GI-S cohesion scales. The self-enhancing style of humor was positively correlated with the GI-S cohesion scale. The positive affect and expressiveness affect functions of humor were positively correlated with the humor effect of enhance team cohesion.

The results are encouraging for sports professionals, because results suggest that humor is being used mostly in the positive forms that are proposed to lead to positive outcomes. Additionally, results suggest that positive styles and functions of humor may have a positive impact on team cohesion.

THE EXAMINATION OF HUMOR USAGE AND ITS  
RELATIONSHIP TO COHESION IN MALE  
COLLEGIATE BASKETBALL

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Although laughter is a universal language understood by all individuals, humor is a difficult term to define and even more difficult to study (Olsson, Backe, Sorensen, & Kock, 2002). For purposes of this research, humor is defined as a message intended to be interpreted as funny (Lynch, 2002). This message can be presented in verbal or behavioral form (Dewitte & Verguts, 2001). For example, humor can come in such forms as jokes, sarcasm, practical jokes, put-downs, or wisecracks. Whether the message is considered humorous depends on the context and individual perception (LaFollette & Shanks, 1993). One individual may not consider a message as humorous, while a second individual may perceive the same message as humorous. This dual reaction leads to the notion that humor can function to unify individuals, to differentiate groups from one another, for control and enforcement, for resistance and separation, or for clarification (Meyer, 2000). The function of the humorous message depends on the context and the individual perception.

Humor literature presents identification, clarification, differentiation, control/enforcement, and resistance as the broad functions of humor (Lynch, 2002).



An alternative model of humor functions is that of Graham, Papa, and Brooks (1992) who describe the functions of humor as positive affect, negative affect, and expressiveness functions of humor. The specific functions of positive affect humor include being playful, making light of situations, and developing friendships. Graham et al. state that the uses of humor in the positive affect functions relate to ways to offer inclusion, which fits the affiliative function of humor described by Lynch (2002). There is a paradox that usually occurs simultaneously that while one group strengthens their identification, the other becomes differentiated and excluded from the group (Meyer, 2000). Thus, the uses of humor in the positive affect function may also fit the differentiation function described by Lynch (2002).

The specific functions of negative affect humor include demeaning and belittling others, saying negative things, and putting others in their place. Graham et al. state that the uses of humor in the negative affect function relate to control, fitting the control/enforcement function identified by Lynch (2002). Meyer indicates that resistance humor simultaneously functions as control/enforcement humor by building and enforcing the beliefs of the resistance groups. Therefore, the uses of humor in the negative affect function may also fit the resistance function identified by Lynch (2002).

The specific functions of expressiveness humor include self-disclosure and expressing feelings. Graham et al. state that the uses of humor in the expressiveness function relate to giving and receiving information, which fits with the clarification

function identified by Lynch (2002). These functions and uses of humor have yet to be studied in the sport world. This research seeks to determine if the specific uses of humor identified by Graham et al. (1992) hold true in the sports world. The Uses of Humor Index (UHI), which was developed by Graham et al. (1992) to measure the positive, negative, and expressiveness functions of humor, will be used to measure the functions of humor used among athletic team members in this study.

In addition to the specific functions mentioned previously, individuals tend to use humor in styles that are meant to enhance the self and to enhance relationships with others (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003). Martin et al. propose that self-enhancing, affiliative, self-defeating, and aggressive styles of humor are the result of the functions individuals want served by humor usage. The humor styles are related in beneficial or detrimental ways to people's use of humor in their everyday lives. Affiliative and self-enhancing styles of humor are considered potentially beneficial and positive, while aggressive and self-defeating styles of humor are considered detrimental and negative. Affiliative humor involves funny sayings and actions that are used to amuse others, facilitate relationships, and reduce interpersonal tension. Self-enhancing humor involves a humorous outlook on life that allows individuals to maintain a humorous outlook even in the face of stress or adversity. Aggressive humor involves and relates to the use of sarcasm, teasing, ridicule, derision, put-downs, or disparagement humor. Self-defeating humor includes self-disparaging humor, where the user attempts to say or do funny things at

their own expense. This research seeks to determine if these styles of humor are used in sport. The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) developed by Martin et al. (2003) will be used to measure the humor styles used among athletic team members.

Psychological research on the benefits of humor provides a foundation for studying humor in sport psychology research. Humor has been documented to produce the psychological benefits of reducing anxiety, tension, stress, depression, and loneliness, while improving self-esteem, restoring hope and energy, and providing a sense of empowerment and control (Berk, 2001; Szabo, 2003; Vilaythong, Arnau, Rosen, & Mascaro, 2003). Humor may provide similar psychological benefits to individuals involved in sport.

In addition to the psychological benefits, humor can have social benefits for individuals (Facinti, 2001). For example, the expanding of an individual's friend base can be a result of the individual becoming more pleasing socially from the use of humor. Joking within groups can help to organize interaction and soften potentially harsh and divisive relationships (Fine & Soucey, 2005). Humor usage helps to smooth conversations and add cohesion among group members. Group humor creates a separation from other groups and secures the conformity among members. The group is kept cohesive and separate from others because the jokes tend to be grounded in the shared experiences of the members.

Humor could be a way to study social and psychological aspects of sport, as well as be a helpful element to intervene during stressful encounters (Snyder, 1991).

The stress and tension resulting from competitive sport provides an opportunity for inclusion of humor research or interventions. The outcome of the competition is not predetermined, causing ambiguities, paradoxes, and incongruities. Humor is an element that flourishes within ambiguities, paradoxes, and incongruities. Humor may thrive because it constitutes an incongruity and provides a relief from the serious and structured aspects of sport competition that cause stress. Humor may also thrive in sport because it helps to reduce anxiety in stressful situations.

The negative effects of humor are also applicable to sport and sport psychology research. Humor can be a method for enhancing self-esteem in sport. However, this self-esteem boost is often at the expense of disparaging others. Disparaging humor is defined as jokes that denigrate, belittle, or malign a particular person or social group (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). Disparaging humor can create a sense of superiority over the individual or team being made fun of. Ethnic and gender-based humor can reinforce negative stereotypes and racist and sexist behaviors. Coaches' perceptions of humor may lead to other negative consequences. Coaches may view humor as horseplay and a distraction from the main performance goals of the athletes.

Group cohesion may be positively influenced by humor (Romero & Pescosolido, 2008). Team cohesion can lead to a climate for team success (Turman, 2003). Cohesion is important in sport because performance among sport teams may falter due to a lack of cohesion and because cohesive teams have supportive

environments, fewer threats to team members' self-esteem, and members feel responsibility towards their groups (Carron & Burke, 2004). Enhanced group cohesion can lead to enhanced group commitment, lower turnover, enforcement of group norms, improved communication, and ultimately factors that can increase group productivity. Additionally, reduction of social distance, assimilation of members into group, and higher levels of trust are each associated with group cohesion. Team cohesion has also been found to have a strong relationship to success in sport (Carron, Bray, & Eys, 2002).

Humor can impact cohesion because humor can serve the purpose of uniting individuals (Lynch, 2002; Meyer 2000). Meyer and Lynch state that humor that functions for identification helps to build and increase in-group cohesiveness. Commonly held norms and perceptions are validated when humor functions as identification. Properly used humor is proposed to enhance group cohesion. More specifically, the affiliative style of humor is proposed to have positive implications upon group cohesion (Martin et al. 2003). Affiliative humor is used to maintain group identity and cohesiveness. Affiliative humor involves funny sayings and actions that are used to amuse others, facilitate relationships, and reduce interpersonal tension. Klein and Kuiper (2006) state that the use of affiliative humor can add to a users' continued acceptance by group members, help maintain social support, facilitate harmony in the group, and lead to an increase group pride.

The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) developed by Widmeyer, Brawley, and Carron (1985), will be used to measure cohesion among athletic team members. The GEQ, which is widely used in sport and exercise psychology, measures cohesion along two dimensions, group-individual and task-social. Task cohesion refers to achieving objectives, while social refers to developing and maintaining social relationships and activities (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 2002). Thus, the GEQ provides scores for four types of cohesion; individual attractiveness to the group (ATG-T), individual attractions to the group social (ATG-S), group integration-task (GI-T), and group integration-social (GI-S). In this study with collegiate athletes, the relationships between the styles of humor and cohesion will be explored, as well as the relationship between cohesion and the uses of humor.

Humor in sport is an undeveloped research area in sport and exercise psychology. Research from other areas suggests that humor has positive psychological and social benefits, but we know little about the actual humor experience in sport. To date, I have yet to come across research examining the humor experience in sport. Theories and models of humor are from communication and counseling literature. Research is needed to determine whether this literature on humor can be generalized into the sports arena. Literature on humor theories, models, and valid measures is limited, and that limited work has not been extended to examine humor in sport. Meaningful sport specific research on humor is necessary if sport psychology professionals are to gain an understanding of the essence and experience

of humor in the sport world. Such studies may enhance the positive experience of humor in the sport world, and may ultimately lead to interventions that serve the purpose of helping athletes in such areas as coping with the stress and increasing team cohesion.

### Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to gain insight and understanding into the humor experience in collegiate sport. The specific purpose of this study is to determine the styles of humor used among collegiate athletes, the uses humor serves for them, and the perceived effects of humor used within male collegiate athletic teams. Also, the relationship of the styles and uses of humor to team cohesion will be determined.

The possible roles and benefits of humor combined with the absence of research on humor in the sports world provide the basis for this research. There is a vast amount to learn regarding the humor experience in sport. Using the theories, functions, and styles in basic humor literature as a guide, this research emphasizes individual perceptions and experiences of the collegiate athlete to develop a better understanding of the humor experience in sport. Because no evidence exists in the literature to support the credibility and dependability of the humor theories, functions, and styles in the sports world, it is the intention of this researcher to examine the proposed functions and styles with a sample of male collegiate basketball players. By using a survey method with current collegiate athletes, this research will provide a

depiction of the humor experience in collegiate sport. The sample is limited to male collegiate basketball players and focuses on their perceptions of the humor experience. Using the theories, functions, and styles of humor as a guide, this exploration of the humor phenomenon seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What styles of humor measured by the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) are used among male collegiate basketball players?
2. What functions measured by the Uses of Humor Index (UHI) does humor serve among male collegiate basketball players?
3. Using humor literature as a guide, what are the perceived effects of humor for male collegiate basketball players?
4. What is the relationship between the styles of humor measured by the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) used among male basketball players and team cohesion?
5. What is the relationship between the functions measured by the Uses of Humor Index (UHI) that humor serves among male collegiate basketball players and team cohesion?

#### Expected Outcomes

Reiger (2004) and Martin et al. (2004) suggest that positive functions of humor may be more prevalent than negative functions within group settings. Therefore, it is assumed that positive functions of humor will be reported with more frequency than



negative functions and effects in the current study. There is no literature to suggest that any particular style of humor would be reported with more frequency than others.

Affiliative and self-enhancing styles of humor are considered potentially beneficial and positive (Martin et al., 2003). The specific humor uses of being playful, making light of situations, and developing friendships are considered to function for positive affect (Graham et al., 1992). Cohesion is a positive trait for teams, with positive implications (Carron & Burke, 2004). Therefore, the researcher expects affiliative humor, self-enhancing humor, being playful, making light of situations, and developing friendships to be positively related to each other and to cohesion. Humor is proposed to be especially beneficial in reducing social distance and having social benefits (Romero & Pescosolido, 2008; Klein & Kuiper, 2006). Therefore, the researcher expects positive affect humor to have stronger positive relationships to the social aspects of cohesion, individual attractions to the group social (ATG-S) and group integration-social (GI-S), than the task aspects.

Aggressive and self-defeating styles of humor are considered detrimental and negative (Martin et al., 2003). The specific humor uses of negative affect humor include demeaning and belittling others, saying negative things, and putting others in their place, which function for negative affect (Graham et al., 1992). Therefore, the researcher expects aggressive humor, self-defeating humor, demeaning and belittling others, saying negative things, and putting others in their place to be positively related to each other. The researcher expects aggressive humor, self-defeating humor,

demeaning and belittling others, saying negative things, and putting others in their place will each be negatively related to cohesion.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Humor is shared and understood by all individuals, and humor has many potential benefits for individuals and groups in sport. This chapter reviews literature relevant to the purpose of this research - to gain insight and understanding into the humor experience in collegiate sport. Drawing mainly from communication and counseling disciplines, the review begins first with the basic theories, functions, and styles of humor. The review then provides literature pertaining to humor's potential benefits for individuals and groups. Finally, the review ends with sections on humor benefits in sport, sport and humor literature, and a summary.

#### Humor Theories

Within humor literature, three theories are dominant. Superiority theory, relief theory, and incongruity theory emerge as the accepted major theories in humor research today (Lynch, 2002; Meyer 2000). Researchers argue that none of these theories can explain all aspects of humor, but each theory may help explain specific instances of humor.

Incongruity theory, most closely associated with Kant, operates on the notion that humor occurs when something is inconsistent with an expected environment

(Lynch, 2002; Meyer 2000). The incongruity involves the combination of two or more elements that one would not perceive as belonging together (Dewitte & Verguts, 2001). Lynch posits that Incongruity Theory is cognitively based because the individual has to perceive that there is an inconsistency between what is occurring during an event and what is normal for the event. Meyer posits that the incongruity must be a surprise and non-threatening in order to be considered humorous. A joke will lose its humor factor when one already knows the punch line, or feels threatened or offended by what occurred. Meyer states that incongruity humor can happen in numerous situations because it is unexpected. Bloopers (e.g., tripping over a ball, passing to the wrong teammate) would be a common form of incongruity humor in the sports world (Snyder, 1991). In terms of Incongruity theory's potential to use with sport, it does not appear that the theory holds much potential for research in sport. The theory is mainly an explanation of how someone could produce humor. Athletes and those working in sport settings (i.e., coaches, athletic trainers) can possibly refer back to this theory if they are trying to determine ways to produce humor.

Superiority theory, most closely associated with Thomas Hobbes, operates on the notion that humor is used to demonstrate superiority over others (LaFollette & Shanks, 1993). This may take the form of ridiculing others or self-derision (Lynch, 2002; Zillman & Stocking, 1976). Regardless of the method, superiority is the cruelest form of humor. Superiority humor is often unpleasant for its targets, and

laughter produced is often associated with a triumph over another or laughing at the inadequacies of others (Lynch, 2002). Meyer posits that superiority theory can be used for social correction, where one is disciplined by laughter if they step outside of societal norms. On the other hand, Lynch posits that superiority humor can be used as resistance when one does not believe in societal norms.

Superiority theory could take many forms in sport. Trashing laughter and finding humor and joy in the defeating of an adversary are forms of superiority humor (Lynch, 2002). In sport this can take place during “trash talk” with an opponent, or when laughing at an opponent after winning a competition. Self-derision may occur when athletes make fun of themselves for bad plays or bloopers (Snyder, 1991). Superiority for social correction could occur when a coach disciplines an athlete through laughter as a result of the athlete not following the rules or running the correct plays.

Superiority humor is negatively-based. The theory is relevant for sport because it portrays how humor is used in a negative manner in sport. Those using superiority humor in their athletic settings may produce jokes that denigrate, belittle, or malign a particular person or social group (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). Those types of jokes may lead to discriminative attitudes, values and behavior among users (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). With those negative implications, athletes and those working in sport settings should be discouraged from using humor that stems from a superiority perspective due to the negative effects for its targets.

Relief theory proposes that humor is applied to reduce tension or stress (Lynch, 2002; Meyer, 2000). Meyer states that laughter serves to reduce tension and increase trust between individuals according to this theory. Physiologically speaking, laughter from humor helps to ease muscle tension. Lynch states that this humor theory is named relief because there is a release of nervous energy, which helps to relieve tension. Lynch implies that the release of nervous energy can reduce arousal as well as increase arousal. The nervous laughter can assist in uncomfortable situations. There is a healing quality to relief humor, because built up tension is allowed to be released.

The amount of stress placed on athletes could make relief humor applicable for athletes (Gilbert, Gilbert, & Morawski; 2007; Kimball & Freysinger, 2003). In stressful times during sport, humor can be used to decrease arousal. During boredom and periods of low arousal, humor can be used to increase arousal levels and enhance mood (Berk, 2001). Arousal management is beneficial because elite athletes have been found it necessary to be able to cope with anxiety and regulate their arousal levels during competition (Gould & Diefenbach, 2002).

Relief theory humor is positively-based and relevant for sport psychology due to the psychological benefit of tension relief that is produced from proper usage of humor. Relief theory is the most relevant humor theory for practical applications in sport psychology. Ultimately, athletes and those working in sport settings may want

to encourage humor that stems from relief theory due to the positive effects that may result from its usage.

Superiority and relief theory are more relevant for study in sport. Incongruity humor is typically unplanned, thus being less useful in practical applications in sport. Superiority theory humor and relief theory humor tend to occur for a purpose, making them more viable for the study of sport humor. Superiority theory humor is negatively based, while relief theory humor is a positively based. The current study seeks to understand the positive and negative effects of humor, making superiority and relief theory the most relevant theories to the research purposes.

#### Humor Functions

The review of literature indicates that humor serves several broad functions. Lynch (2002) and Meyer (2000) present identification, clarification, differentiation, control/enforcement, and resistance, as the broad functions of humor. Identification and clarification are considered positive functions, while differentiation, control/enforcement, and resistance are considered to be negative functions.

The identification function of humor serves the purpose of uniting individuals (Lynch, 2002; Meyer 2000). Meyer and Lynch state that identification humor helps to build and increase in-group cohesiveness. This can be an important function for sport due to the impact on team cohesion. Cohesion is important in sport because performance among sport teams may falter due to a lack of cohesion and because cohesive teams have supportive environments, fewer threats to team members' self-

esteem, and members feel responsibility towards their groups (Carron & Burke, 2004). Commonly held norms and perceptions are validated when humor functions as identification. Additionally, Meyer posits that speakers bring the audience to more of an equal relationship level when using humor with an identification function.

Identification is a positive function of humor. The identification function could also be one of the most applicable for interventions in sport psychology. The encouragement of the identification function of humor in sport may help sports teams to become more cohesive units with each member feeling as though they are a valuable addition to the team.

The clarification function of humor serves to describe and further clarify one's position (Lynch, 2002). Views, positions, and issues can be clarified in a creative manner that can be useful rather than hurtful. Lynch posits that humor used in a clarifying manner can help to clarify rules and norms without the punishment or humiliation feature of control or resistance type humor. Clarification humor functions to help all understand, as where differentiation, identification, control, and resistance humor can leave individuals feeling left out or embarrassed.

Clarification is a positive function of humor. Individuals in sport could use humor in a clarifying manner when others are having trouble comprehending what is being taught. Clarification humor may possibly be appropriate for intervention usage in the sports world due its proposed positive effects upon teaching and helping individuals understand better during communication (Lynch, 2002).



The differentiation function of humor is on the opposite end of the spectrum as the identification function of humor. There is a paradox that usually occurs simultaneously that while one group strengthens their identification, the other becomes differentiated and excluded from the group (Meyer, 2000). Differentiation humor may divide groups by power structure, gender, nationality, race, or religion (Lynch, 2002). Individuals must be careful that others do not feel excluded when humor is applied in settings.

Differentiation is a negative function of humor. Differentiation humor causes a divide. Lynch suggests that prejudice may often be the result. Sport should be a place of inclusion and unity, with as little division as possible. Thus, differentiation humor should not be encouraged in sport because it is a form of superiority humor that intentionally leaves an individual or a group feeling like they are at a lower status than others.

The Control/Enforcement function of humor serves to enforce social norms, thus implementing a control function over the target audience (Lynch, 2002; Meyer 2000). Power becomes a major notion when the sender uses humor to teach and enforce social norms. Lynch mentions that those who deviate from the norms of the in-group can be controlled by being ridiculed. With that notion in mind, Lynch implies that control/enforcement humor has an identification function added as well.

Control/enforcement is a negative function of humor. As in superiority humor, those using humor for control and enforcement in their athletic settings may

produce jokes that denigrate, belittle, or malign a particular person or social group (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). This function of humor should not be encouraged because it is a form of superiority humor that has a punishing effect upon its targets.

The resistance function of humor acts in an opposing manner to the control/enforcement function. The resistance function suggests that humor is used to resist and separate from the norms of another group (Myer, 2000). Meyer indicates that resistance humor simultaneously functions as control/enforcement humor by building and enforcing the beliefs of the resistance groups.

Resistance humor is often negatively-based and is used to offset a power struggle. Resistance humor can disrupt relationships between athletes and coaches, or interfere forming positive bonds in sport (Snyder, 1991). Thus, the resistance function of humor should not be encouraged in sport.

Reiger (2004) lends support for the five functions of humor being served in group settings. Specifically, Reiger examined the functions humor serves within families. Using in-depth interviews and observation, the study examined six families (30 participants). Twelve participants were adults (age 33-85) and 18 were children (age 2-21).

The results revealed that humor served the functions of releasing negative emotions, a means of learning and problem solving, a form of communication, preventing others from engaging in putdown, an expression of freedom, building of optimistic freedom, and a playful spirit. These results fit with each of the functions

presented by Meyer (2000) and Lynch (2002). A means of learning and problem solving fits into the clarification function of humor because of its teaching, clarifying, and communication aspects. The releasing of negative emotions fits with relief theory because of its relaxing and tension relief aspects. A means of connecting fits into the identification and differentiation functions of humor because of its bonding of groups while separating from other group aspect. An expression of freedom fits into the control/enforcement and resistance functions because of its feeling in control and freedom from social constraints aspects. While each of the five functions proposed by Lynch (2002) and Meyer (2000) were found in the study, an emphasis was placed on the positive functions of humor. Specifically, an emphasis was placed upon humor functioning for positive things for the self and others during stressful periods, and when experiencing negative emotions. The results suggest the notion that in a group setting (such as sport) positive functions of humor may occur with more frequency than the negative functions.

An alternative model of humor functions is that of Graham, Papa, and Brooks (1992) who describe the functions of humor as positive affect, negative affect, and expressiveness functions of humor. The specific functions of positive affect humor include being playful, making light of situations, and developing friendships. Graham et al. state that the uses of humor in the positive affect functions relate to ways to offer inclusion, which fits the affiliative function of humor Lynch (2002). There is a paradox that usually occurs simultaneously that while one group strengthens their

identification, the other becomes differentiated and excluded from the group (Meyer, 2000). Thus, the uses of humor in the positive affect function may also fit the differentiation function described by Lynch (2002). The specific functions of negative affect humor include demeaning and belittling others, saying negative things, and putting others in their place. Graham et al. state that the uses of humor in the negative affect function relate to control, fitting the control/enforcement function identified by Lynch (2002). Meyer indicates that resistance humor simultaneously functions as control/enforcement humor by building and enforcing the beliefs of the resistance groups. Therefore, the uses of humor in the negative affect function may also fit the resistance function identified by Lynch (2002). The specific functions of expressiveness humor include self-disclosure and expressing feelings. Graham et al. describe that the uses of humor in the expressiveness function relate to giving and receiving information, which fits with the clarification function identified by Lynch (2002).

Martin, Rich, and Gale (2004) support the notion that positive and negative functions of humor are found in group settings, with positive humor found more frequently than negative humor. Martin et al. examined the types of humor used between organizational managers and subordinates. The sample consisted of 106 participants (70 males and 36 females). Participants completed the Uses of Humor Index (UHI) to determine types of humor used between managers and subordinates. The UHI measures positive affect, negative affect, and expressiveness types of

humor. Positive affect humor includes playful, making light of the situation, and developing friendship. Negative affect humor includes demeaning and belittling others, saying negative things, and putting others in their place. Expressiveness humor includes self-disclosure and expressing feelings. Items on the UHI are measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always).

Results revealed that positive and expressive humor were reported significantly more frequently than negative humor. Positive humor was reported with a mean of 19.77, expressiveness humor was reported with a mean of 19.37, and negative humor was reported with a mean of 13.01 (25 was the highest possible score). These results support the notion that positive forms of humor may be used more frequently in groups than negative forms of humor.

While the functions listed in literature (identification, clarification, differentiation, control/enforcement, stress relief, and resistance) may assist researchers in understanding humor and sport, the functions have yet to be studied in the sport world. The work by Reiger (2004) suggests that each of the functions would be found in group settings, such as sport. Additionally, Reiger et al. (2004) suggest that the positive affect, expressiveness, and negative affect uses of humor would also be found in group settings, such as sport. Additionally positive functions and uses of humor may be more prevalent than negative functions and uses within group settings (Reiger et al. 2004). These functions and uses of humor have yet to be studied in the sport world. This research seeks to determine if the specific uses of humor identified

by Graham et al. (1992) hold true in the sports world. The Uses of Humor Index (UHI), which was developed to measure the positive, negative, and expressiveness functions of humor, will be used to measure the functions of humor used among athletic team members (Graham et al., 1992).

### Humor Styles

The function of humor can be heavily influenced by style in which it is presented. Individuals tend to use humor in styles that are meant to enhance the self and to enhance relationships with others (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003). Martin et al. developed the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) as a result of examining the functions served by humor. Martin et al. propose that self-enhancing humor, affiliative, self-defeating humor, and aggressive humor are a result of the functions individuals want served by humor usage. Self-enhancing and affiliative humor are proposed to lead to positive effects, while self-defeating and aggressive humor are proposed to lead to negative effects.

Self-enhancing humor is proposed to have mostly positive implications for individuals, as well as on groups (Martin et al. 2003). Martin et al. (2003) describes self-enhancing humor as humor that allows individuals to maintain a humorous outlook even in the face of stress or adversity. Self-enhancing humor can be a coping and healthy defense mechanism, which can help the individual avoid negative emotions while still possessing a realistic perspective on stressful and aversive situations.

Klein and Kuiper (2006) describe the positive impact self-enhancing humor may have in group settings. Self-enhancing humor can promote and help maintain personal psychological well-being, as well as enhance an individual's self-worth. The personal psychological well-being can help individuals to appear more confident and self-assured, which in turn helps the individual appear to have more leadership qualities. This enhanced appearance can enhance the individual's position within a group. The increase in self-confidence and self-worth may also lead to better social adjustment, more positive opinions in social groups, and may lead to an increase in prosocial behaviors.

Affiliative humor is proposed to have mostly positive implications for individuals, as well as for groups (Martin et al. 2003). Martin et al. states that affiliative humor involves funny sayings and actions that are used to amuse others, facilitate relationships, and reduce interpersonal tension. This form of humor has the ultimate goal of increasing group cohesiveness and one's social attraction to others. Affiliative humor is non-hostile and remains within the tolerance levels of society or a particular social group. Affiliative humor puts others at ease, brings a sense of self-acceptance, and adds to the acceptance of others. Affiliative humor has been associated with higher self-esteem, relationship satisfaction, cheerfulness, and positive moods and emotions (Klein & Kuiper, 2006).

Klein and Kuiper (2006) describe the positive impact affiliative humor may have in group settings. Affiliative humor is used to maintain group identity and

cohesiveness. Affiliative humor can also lead to exclusion of others that are not part of the group. The use of affiliative humor by individuals helps them to be more prosocial and well-adjusted within the group. Continued use of affiliative humor can add to a user's continued acceptance by group members, help maintain social support, facilitate harmony in the group, and increase in-group pride. Additionally, the use of affiliative humor can reinforce a desirable position for the individual within the group and make social interaction more comfortable and safe.

Self-defeating humor includes self-disparagement, where the user attempts to say or do funny things at their own expense (Martin et al. 2003). Self-defeating humor is proposed to have negative implications for individuals, as well as on groups. The user allows themselves to become the "butt" of others attempts at humor. The targeted individual laughs along while they are being ridiculed and disparaged by others. Users of this form of humor may possess or appear to possess low self-esteem, be depressed, show anxiety, and show emotional neediness.

Klein and Kuiper (2006) describe the negative impact self-defeating humor may have in group settings. Users of self-defeating humor may have not learned how to use adaptive humor styles within group settings and thus are less likely to develop and maintain friendships and peer acceptance. The disparagement from the self and others may leave the individual feeling victimized. The victimization can contribute to the individual's rejection and continued rejection from social groups. As a result, the individual may identify with a lowered social status and self-worth. The



individual may continue to use self-defeating humor within a group to try to gain acceptance, but ultimately frequent use of self-defeating humor works in an opposing manner to group unity and acceptance for the individual. This style is applicable to sport because it portrays the detrimental effects humor can have if individuals consistently use humor in this style among their respective teams.

Aggressive humor is the use of sarcasm, teasing, ridicule, derision, put-down, or disparaging humor (Martin et al., 2003). Aggressive humor is proposed to have negative implications for individuals, as well as on groups. Aggressive humor may involve the manipulation of others due to its implied threat of ridicule. Users of aggressive humor have no regard for the potential negative outcomes of its use. Humor used in this fashion is likely to hurt or alienate others. Aggressive humor is a form of superiority humor because it elevates a person or group over another person or group.

Klein and Kuiper (2006) describe the negative impact aggressive humor may have in group settings. On the positive side, Aggressive humor can be used to increase the support of the user within the group if the humor does not exceed the socially accepted limits within the group. However, aggressive humor mostly holds negative implications. Aggressive humor is a contributor to peer victimization. Aggressive humor can be used to exclude individuals from the group when aimed towards an individual. The user of aggressive humor may manipulate the group by damaging another's reputation while simultaneously entertaining the crowd.

Excessive use of aggressive humor and routine use of aggressive humor (that steps outside of socially accepted boundaries of a group) can lead to lowered social status and tainted reputations within a social group. Continued use may also lead to eventual exclusion and rejection of the user from a social group.

Chen and Martin (2007) studied the relationship between the four styles of humor and mental health. The study used the HSQ, the Coping Humor Scale, and the Symptom Checklist 90 with a sample of 354 Chinese university students (65% female, 35% male). The HSQ and the Coping Humor Scale were used for collecting humor styles data. The Symptom Checklist 90 was used to assess mental health over the dimensions of somatization, obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism.

The results revealed that the four humor styles were related to mental health. Affiliative and self-enhancing humor were related to good mental health, while aggressive and self-defeating humor were related to poor mental health. Self-enhancing and coping humor showed significant negative relations to almost all the subscales and the General Symptomatic Index (GSI) of the SCL-90. Self-defeating humor showed significant positive correlations with most of the psychological symptoms. Affiliative humor showed weak negative correlations with subscales on the GSI of the SCL-90. Aggressive humor showed weak positive correlations with subscales on the GSI of the SCL-90. The results support the notion that affiliative

and self-enhancing humor have positive implications for its users, while aggressive and self-defeating humor have negative implications (Martin et al., 2003).

Research shows that the four humor styles are influenced by personality traits (Saroglou & Scariot, 2002). Saroglou and Scariot wanted to determine the relationship of the four humor scales with personality traits and self-esteem. The study used the Humor Styles Scale, the Big Five bipolar scale, and the Self-Esteem Inventory with a sample of 94 high school students (72 women and 15 men).

The results revealed that the humor styles were related to personality in different fashions. Self-enhancing and affiliative humor were positively related to agreeableness, openness, and self-esteem. Aggressive humor was negatively related to agreeableness and conscientiousness. Emotional stability was negatively related to emotional stability, conscientiousness, security in attachment, and self-esteem. The results suggest that personality may be the best predictor in determining which humor styles are used by individuals.

Adding to the functions and styles presented, Olsson, Backe, Sorensen, and Kock (2002) conducted research to examine individual perceptions of humor functions and effects. To determine humor perceptions, Olsson et al. used a qualitative interview method with 20 Swedish participants, nine men and eleven women, ranging in age from 17-75. Participants were questioned in regards to their perceptions of the functions of humor and about what humor meant to them. Participants' perceived humor functioned in the categories of possibilities/obstacles or

in the category of weapons/protection. Possibilities and protection were positive functions. Obstacles and weapons were negative functions. Good humor was perceived to bring happiness, which participants felt could produce opportunities. Negative and insensitive humor was perceived to give rise to obstacles and build walls. Laughter was portrayed as a weapon when laughing at someone. In opposing fashion, laughter was considered protection when laughing with others because it created a psychological defense system. For sport, it appears that professionals should promote humor that can lead to possibilities and protection. In opposing fashion, professionals should deter athletes from using humor that functions to give rise to obstacles or using humor as a weapon against others. Research in the sport is needed to determine if the possibilities/obstacles and weapons/protection categories hold true for the sport humor experience.

There is no literature to suggest that any particular style of humor would be reported with more frequency than others in sport. Research suggests that personality may be the best predictor in determining which humor styles are used with the most frequency by individuals (Vassilis & Scariot, 2002). Research is currently needed to determine if the proposed styles of humor hold true in the sports world and to determine if certain styles of humor are more prevalent with athletes.

#### Benefits of Humor

The possible psychological and social benefits are the foundation for humor research and application in sport psychology. While research has shown humor to

have psychological benefits, there is still a void in research in determining what benefits humor may possess for the sports world.

The psychological benefits produced by humor center around humor's positive impact on stress and emotion. The impact on stress is relevant to study in sport due to collegiate athletes facing such stressors as not having enough time to complete daily tasks, controlling coaches, social inequality, pressure to succeed, pressure to attain academic success, gender and racial stereotypes, injury, pressure to learn new skills and plays, and lack of social support (Kiball & Freysinger, 2003). Berk (2001) posits that emotional responses to stressful situations can include fear, shame, embarrassment, anxiety, tension, stress, depression, loneliness, escape, anger, hostility, and low-self esteem. Humor may be able to reduce the impact of these negative reactions. Berk posits that humor has been documented to produce the psychological benefits of reducing anxiety, tension, stress, depression, and loneliness, improving self-esteem, restoring hope and energy, and providing a sense of empowerment and control.

Literature does support humor as having psychological benefits. Positive effects on anxiety, mood, and hope are examples of humor benefits found in research studies. Szabo (2003) conducted research to determine the affective benefits produced by 20 minutes of humor and a 20-minute aerobic exercise activity. Participants were 22 male and 17 female University students. Each participant completed an exercise condition, a humor condition, and a control. The conditions were completed at 1-

week intervals, with participants being blind to which condition they would partake in before each intervention. Participants jogged for 20 minutes at a self-selected pace during the aerobic exercise condition. Participants watched 20 minutes of a famous comedian's performance during the humor condition. Participants watched a 20 minute neutral video about the evolution of life during the control condition. The Spielberg State Anxiety Inventory (SSAI) was used to measure state anxiety and the Subjective Exercise Experience Scale (SEES) was used to measure psychological mood states. Participants completed the SSAI and the SEES five minutes before and five minutes after each condition.

The results revealed that humor showed positive effects on anxiety and mood. Humor was shown to have comparable or stronger effects on anxiety and mood compared with aerobic exercise. In fact, the humor effects may have been stronger than demonstrated because the mood scale was specifically designed for measuring exercise-related changes in mood.

Research shows that humor can possibly increase one's sense of hope (Vilaythong, Arnau, Rosen, & Mascaro, 2003). Examining 180 undergraduates, Vilaythong et al. sought to determine if humor could play a role in improving psychological and physical well-being, and to determine if having a high sense of humor was related to individuals possessing a high sense of hope. Participants in the control group watched a 15-minute neutral video, while the experimental group watched a 15-minute comedy video. The procedure included the participants

completing the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS), then completing the College Chronic Life Stress Survey (CCLSS). Next they wrote about a recent stressful event and completed the Snyder State Hope Scale (SSHS). Afterwards, the selected video was shown, followed by participants completing the Self-Assessment Mankin (SAM) and then the SSHS for the second time.

Results revealed that the experimental group showed significantly higher state hope scores than the control group, thus providing support for humor being a positive influence on hope. Additionally, high sense of humor was found related to high sense of hope. The results further support humor as an element that can lead positive psychological benefits.

#### Group Humor Effectiveness Model

Humor used in groups can also have positive effects. The *Group Humor Effectiveness Model* (GHEM) is a model in humor literature that goes into detail regarding how humor may have a positive impact when used in group settings. Romero and Pescosolido (2008) developed the GHEM to explain how humor may have a positive impact in groups and ultimately lead to increased group effectiveness. Romero and Pescosolido suggest that humor can impact group productivity because of the positive effects humor can have on group cohesiveness, creativity, and stress reduction. The GHEM is based upon the effects of positive humor on productivity, individual development, and team viability. The model only accounts for positive humor within groups, and does not account for negative humor (e.g., failed humor,

put-downs, misinterpretations). The model proposes that humor used in groups can positively influence group productivity, communication, leadership, collective cognitions, learning, group viability, group cohesion, and reduced turnover.

### *Group Productivity*

The first reason that humor may positively influence group productivity is due to the positive impact humor can have upon communication. Humor can influence communication by reducing resistance through the creation of positive affect, and by enhancing the persuasiveness in a message. The positive affect can lead to more attentiveness from listeners, leading to less repetition and fewer further explanations for clarification. The use of humor fosters a more open environment, which can help individuals feel encouraged and safe to speak their minds, regardless of status levels. The increased communication leads to the proposition that humor promotes increased quantity and quality of communication within groups, which in turn can increase group productivity.

The second reason that humor may positively influence group productivity is due to the positive impact humor has on leadership. Leaders can manage group emotions with humor, in hopes of increasing group performance. The leader can manage group emotions by using humor in a smoothing fashion, avoiding confrontation. The management of group emotions through humor leads to the proposition that humor promotes enhanced group productivity.



The third reason humor may positively influence group productivity is due to the impact humor has on collective cognitions. Humor, such as joking and teasing, serves as a foundation of group culture. A group's values, beliefs, and expectations can be communicated through the use of humor. Appropriate behavior can be taught and reaffirmed through humor usage, with inappropriate forms of behavior being discouraged through use of humor. Humor in groups leads to shared interpretations that create a sense of equality among group members. The collective cognitions of the group encourage the development of strong performance oriented groups, which may help to increase group productivity.

Collective cognitions can lead to shared goals. Positive humor can lead to enhanced commitment to group goals because of the positive influence on in-group communication, positive perceptions of psychological safety, and by its positive impact on group member relationships. The reduced social distance and psychological safety due to humor allows members to express emotions and values, enabling the group to come to a consensus on goals. The increased level of consensus and acceptance of group goals is proposed to lead to increased group productivity.

### *Group Learning*

Humor may positively influence group learning due to the impact humor has on psychological safety. Psychological safety makes for the shared belief that members of a group or team can feel safe and secure in interpersonal risk taking. This safety leads to enhanced trust, communication, sense-making, and rapport.

These positive increases can in-turn lead to reduced stress and anxiety within the group. Humorous material receives greater attention from listeners. Thus, the GHEM model proposes that group humor produces the perception of psychological safety, which leads to higher levels of learning in the group.

### *Group Viability*

Group viability pertains to the ability of a group to continue working as a group over time. The first reason that humor may positively influence group viability is due to the positive impact humor can have upon positive affect within a group. The positive affect as a result of humor can lead to higher levels of self-efficacy and superior job performance among group members. Humor leaves individuals feeling good, which can then lead to positive emotions being associated with the group. The manipulation of emotions through humor usage within the group helps to support group viability.

Group cohesion is the second reason that humor may positively influence group viability. Enhanced group cohesion can lead to enhanced group commitment, lower turnover, enforcement of group norms, improved communication, and ultimately factors that can increase group productivity. Additionally, reduction of social distance, assimilation of members into group, and higher levels of trust are each associated with group cohesion. Successful humor is proposed to increase group cohesion and assist in creating a sense of group identity, thus lending to the support of group viability.

Reduced turnover is the third reason that humor may positively influence group viability. Humor is likely to leave group members satisfied with their workplace. Humor usage in the workplace is related to less stress on the job, more positive emotions at work, and positive relationships with group members and group leaders. Thus, humor is proposed to lead to less voluntary employee turnover, leading to the support of group viability.

Fine and Soucey (2005) lend support to humor having positive effects for groups. They posit that joking within groups can help to organize interaction and soften potentially harsh and divisive relationships. Humor used in groups helps to smooth conversations and add cohesion among group members. They state that group humor creates a separation from other groups and secures the conformity among members. The group is kept cohesive and separate from others because the jokes tend to be grounded in the shared experiences of the members. Members feel safe when using humor because jokes are meant to be senseless and ridiculous. Thus, the joker is not held accountable for the implications of the remarks or actions because jokes are supposed to be senseless and ridiculous.

Avolio, Howell, and Stock (1999) conducted research to determine if humor could have an impact on performance. The study sought to determine if humor use by leaders could positively impact performance. The study also sought to determine what leadership styles would humor have the most impact upon. The sample for the study consisted of 115 leaders in management positions, and 322 respective

followers. Participants worked for a large Canadian financial institution. Followers completed surveys to measure leadership styles and use of humor. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was the chosen measurement for leadership style. The MLQ measures the extent to which leaders are considered transformational leaders, contingent reward leaders, or laissez-faire leaders. The humor survey measured the frequency that leaders used humor to take the edge off periods of stress, to turn an argument in their favor, to make followers laugh when they are too serious, for amusing stories to diffuse conflict, and to make friends of opposition. Performance was measured by unit performance and performance appraisal. Unit performance represented the progress of the manager and followers of completing targeted goals for the year. Performance appraisal was the manager's measure of overall performance.

Results revealed that humor had a positive, direct relationship with performance. First, active leadership (transformational or contingent) was positively related to humor usage. Inactive leadership (laissez-faire) was negatively related to humor usage. Transformational leadership was significantly related to humor usage and to individual and unit performance. These findings are important because they show that humor may have a possible positive influence on group performance.

#### Humor Benefits in Sport

Humor can be beneficial to those involved in sport on an individual and a group level. On an individual level humor is associated with higher self-esteem,

relationship satisfaction, cheerfulness, and positive moods and emotions (Klein & Kuiper, 2006). These traits can be beneficial in the sports world for keeping athletes and coaches level-headed and feeling positive about their sporting environment. Humor also helps to manage stress (Lynch, 2002). Controlling stress levels is important because athletes face stressors due to not having enough time to complete daily tasks, controlling coaches, social inequality, pressure to succeed, pressure to attain academic success, gender and racial stereotypes, injury, pressure to learn new skills and plays, a lack of social support (Kiball & Freysinger, 2003).

Humor can assist with team cohesion in sport (Snyder, 1991). Creating a cohesive team in sport is relevant because performance among sport teams may falter due to a lack of cohesion. A lack of connection to team members can lead to social loafing and self-handicapping strategies, bringing about decreases in performance (Carron & Burke, 2004). Cohesive teams have a better chance for success because cohesive teams have supportive environments, fewer threats to self-esteem, responsibilities for negative outcomes are shared, and members feel responsibility towards their groups (Carron & Burke, 2004). By using humor to create cohesive units, some of the mentioned negatives from lack of team cohesion may be avoided.

Humor can bring about a sense of self-acceptance and the acceptance of others, helping to increase team cohesion (Klein & Kuiper, 2006). Humor could be implemented with teams during certain phases of group development to assist with the development process. Groups tend to develop in the stages of forming, storming,

norming, performing, and adjourning (Carron, Hausenblas, & Eyes, 2005). Humor could be used to assist teams in group development during the forming and storming stages. Carron et al. state that individuals try to become familiar with each other and establish bonds during the forming stage. Humor could be useful during this stage due to its ability to help with building rapport and organizing interaction (Franzini, 2001; Fine & Soucey, 2005). Carron et al. state that tension and conflict arise between team members during the storming phase. Humor could be useful during this stage due to its ability to reduce tension and bring happiness (Olsson, Backe, Sorensen, & Kock, 2002).

Humor may have positive implications for coaches. Coaches could use humor to help describe and further clarify their points (Lynch, 2002). Coaches using humor in a clarifying manner can clarify rules and norms without expressing punishment or humiliation (Lynch, 2002). The clarifying humor can be used by coaches to help facilitate, moderate, enforce team rules, keep team members in line, and supervise their teams; all which are important roles for a coach (Bloom, Stevens, & Wickwire, 2003).

#### Impact on Cohesion

Group cohesion may be positively influenced by humor (Romero & Pescosolido, 2008). Cohesion is important in sport because performance among sport teams may falter due to a lack of cohesion, there are fewer threats to team members' self-esteem, and members feel responsibility towards their groups in

cohesive environments (Carron & Burke, 2004). Enhanced group cohesion levels can lead to enhanced group commitment, lower turnover, enforcement of group norms, improved communication, and ultimately factors that can increase group productivity. Additionally, reduction of social distance, assimilation of members into group, and higher levels of trust are each associated with group cohesion.

Team cohesion is important because it may lead to a climate for team success (Turman, 2003). Carron, Bray, and Eys (2002) found cohesion to have a positive relationship to team success. Carron et al. sought to determine team perceptions of task cohesiveness and team success. A total of 294 intercollegiate and club basketball and soccer players partook in the study, 154 females and 140 males. There were 18 basketball teams and nine soccer teams analyzed in the study. The task dimensions of the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) were used to measure cohesion. Team success was measured through the teams winning percentages during regular season games.

The results revealed cohesion and team success to have a strong positive relationship. Additional results revealed that perceptions of task cohesiveness were relatively consistent throughout members of the same team. The results support the notion that cohesion may have a positive impact upon sport performance.

Humor may impact cohesion because humor has the capability of uniting individuals (Lynch, 2002; Meyer 2000). Properly used humor is proposed to enhance group cohesion. Meyer and Lynch state that humor that functions for identification

helps to build and increase in-group cohesiveness. Specifically, the affiliative style of humor is proposed to have positive implications upon group cohesion (Martin et al. 2003). Affiliative humor is used to maintain group identity and cohesiveness. Affiliative humor involves funny sayings and actions that are used to amuse others, facilitate relationships, and reduce interpersonal tension. Klein and Kuiper (2006) state that the use of affiliative humor can add to a users' continued acceptance by group members, help maintain social support, facilitate harmony in the group, and lead to an increase group pride.

Research has documented the impact of humor on cohesion. Turman (2003) found humor to have a positive impact upon team cohesion. Turman sought to identify behaviors and strategies that coaches used to impact team cohesion. With a sample of 12 male Division I collegiate athletes, Turman used an in-depth interview approach to determine coaching behaviors that had an influence upon team cohesion. Interview questions were centered on coaching behaviors and strategies that had an impact upon developing team cohesion and unity. Interviews were conducted at the beginning and end of practices throughout the season.

Results revealed several behaviors that had positive influences upon team cohesion and several behaviors that had negative influences upon team cohesion. Inequity and the use of ridicule and embarrassment were viewed as having negative influences upon team cohesion. The use of sarcasm and teasing, bragging up the abilities of other athletes, the use of motivational speeches, discussion about the



quality of opponents, the use of athlete directed techniques, team prayer, and showing dedication were viewed as possessing positive influences upon team cohesion. The use of sarcasm and teasing is relevant to the current study. Sarcasm and teasing included the use of sarcasm, ridicule, joking, and teasing of athletes. Each are forms of humor, thus supporting the notion that humor may have a positive influence upon team cohesion.

Cohesion in sport is most often measured along two dimensions, group-individual and task-social in sport psychology. The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) which assesses cohesion on these dimensions is most often used to measure cohesion among athletic team members (Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985). The GEQ provides scores for four types of cohesion along the two dimensions; individual attractiveness to the group-task (ATG-T), individual attractions to the group social (ATG-S), group integration-task (GI-T), and group integration-social (GI-S) (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 2002). ATG-T refers to individual team member's perceptions of their personal involvement with the group's task, productivity, goals, and objectives. ATG-S refers to individual team member's perceptions of their personal acceptance and social interactions with the group. GI-T refers to individual team member's perceptions of the similarities and bonding of the team around the group's task objectives. GI-S refers to individuals team member's perceptions of the similarities and bonding of the team as a whole around the group as a social unit. In this study with collegiate athletes, the relationships between the

styles of humor and cohesion will be explored, as well as the relationship between cohesion and the uses of humor.

### Sport and Humor Literature

To my knowledge, research has yet to be conducted to reveal how humor operates within the sports world. Snyder (1991) presents the only literature found in this review describing how humor may operate within the sports world. Snyder gives a depiction of how humor and sport are intertwined. Snyder reveals the possible positives and negatives of sport humor, and their implications for the social world of sport. Snyder indicates that there are several instances where players may put stress upon themselves, but with a different viewpoint, the situations can be portrayed as funny or ridiculous (i.e., mistakes & bloopers). Humor can be a beneficial element to competitive situations because the ultimate goal of humor is intrinsic satisfaction, fun, amusement, and physical and mental stimulation.

Snyder (1991) describes how competition produces tension, and why humor can thrive in those tense atmospheres. Having a winner and loser in each competitive situation creates individual and team tension, accompanied by physical and mental exertion. The outcome of the competition is not predetermined, causing ambiguities, paradoxes, and incongruities. Humor is an element that flourishes within ambiguities, paradoxes, and incongruities. Humor can thrive because it is an element that constitutes an incongruity and provides a relief from the serious and structured aspects of sport competition that causes stress. Humor can also thrive in sport

because it helps to reduce arousal in stressful situations and to elevate arousal when bored. Thus, humor can be extremely beneficial in helping players reach their optimal level of arousal and tension (in fact, Snyder indicates that humor in sport is seen most during periods of boredom or elevated tension).

Snyder (1991) indicates that humor can be used as a method to enhance team cohesion. Snyder implies that team members, especially team leaders because of their influence, can use humor as a means of promoting team harmony. Performance wise, humor can boost team morale in deprived and repressed situations. When groups face the pressure of winning, then humor can also be used to keep the group loose. Humor within the group may provide momentary relief from stressful situations or provide relief when a group is faced with an intense task.

Humor can also have negative consequences among groups and in sport. Snyder (1991) mentions the negative implications that may arise from the use of humor during sport. Humor can be a method for enhancing self-esteem in sport. However, this self-esteem boost is often at the expense of disparaging others. Disparaging humor is defined as jokes that denigrate, belittle, or maligns a particular person or social group (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). Snyder indicates that one must be careful when using disparaging humor in sport since disparaging humor creates a sense of superiority over the individual or team being made fun of. Snyder also states that sport participants should be weary of using ethnic and gender based humor

because those types of humor can reinforce negative stereotypes and racist and sexist behavior.

### Summary

The current study seeks to examine the humor usage of collegiate athletes in an effort to develop a better understanding of the humor experience in sport. Positive affect, negative affect, and expressiveness are mentioned as the broad functions of humor (Graham, Papa, & Brooks, 1992). Self-enhancing, affiliative, self-defeating, and aggressive are the broad styles of humor (Martin et al., 2003). The styles and functions of humor have yet to be studied in the sports world. The goal of this research is to determine if the styles and functions of humor mentioned in communication literature are found in the sports world, and to gain insight upon the perceived effects of humor usage. Literature suggests that each of the functions will be reported by the male collegiate athletes (Reiger, 2004). Additionally, Reiger (2004) suggests that positive functions of humor may be more prevalent than negative functions within group settings. Specifically related to sport, the results of the researcher's pilot studies in 2007 and 2009 revealed that athletes reported positive functions with more frequency than negative functions. The results of the 2009 pilot study also revealed that the positive styles of humor were reported with more frequency than the negative styles. Given the research, it is assumed that positive styles, functions, and effects of humor will be reported with more frequency than the negative styles, functions, and effects in the current study. This research gives insight

and understanding about the humor experience in sport. In addition, the findings may help those individuals involved in sport explore their humor usage in an effort to ultimately use humor to the benefit of sport participants.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

The purpose of this research was to gain insight and understanding into the humor experience in collegiate sport. The specific purpose of this study was to determine the styles of humor used among collegiate athletes, the uses humor serves for them, and the perceived effects of humor used within male collegiate athletic teams. Also, the relationship of the styles and uses of humor to team cohesion was examined. Surveys were used to determine if the styles and uses of humor identified in the literature hold true for sport, as well as help explore the relationship between humor and team cohesion among collegiate male basketball players. The remainder of this chapter conveys information on the following: the selection of participants, measurements, data collection process, and data treatment.

#### Participants

The participants in this study were male student-athletes that were participating on an intercollegiate basketball team. The researcher limited study participants to athletes that were participating on collegiate teams in North Carolina in order to collect data from a specific geographical region. Through contacts with athletic directors and coaches at each institution, the researcher obtained 79 student-

athlete participants to complete the survey. Participants were drawn from six institutions, with 31 participants representing a Division I institution, 27 representing a Division II institution, 10 representing a Division III institution, and 11 representing a NAIA institution. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 24 years, with 31 freshman, 11 sophomores, 25 juniors, and 12 seniors. The racial composition of the sample comprised 42 African-Americans, 23 Whites, three mixed, two Hispanics, one Asian, and eight not reporting a race. Playing status revealed 32 regular subs, 28 starters, 19 that rarely play. In order to be a participant in the study, the athletes must have met the following criteria:

- Be a male athlete at least 18 years of age.
- Current member of a collegiate basketball team.
- Academically eligible for sport participation

#### Measurements

The main measures in this study were questionnaires that assess humor styles, functions, and effects, and a measure of group cohesion. All questionnaires were included in a survey packet (see appendix D). Before completing the humor measures, participants were asked to complete a short demographics questionnaire. Questions were used to obtain basic demographic information (age, education classification, institution, division, years on team, race, and playing time information). The survey packet took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

### *Humor Styles*

The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was used to measure the humor styles used among athletic team members (Martin et al., 2003). The HSQ consists of 32 items with each question being a self-descriptive statement about one's particular uses of humor. Respondents rate the degree to which each statement describes them on a Likert-type scale rating from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree).

The HSQ has four scales: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating. Each of the four scales has eight items. A total score for each scale is calculated by summing the stated items. Scores on each scale range from a low of eight, with the highest possible score on each dimension being a 56. The higher the score on each subscale, the greater the individual identifies that particular dimension with their respective team. The four scales have Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients ranging from .82 to .88 (Martin et al., 2002). Significant positive correlations were found between each of the four scales and peer ratings of the corresponding items to provide evidence for the validity of the HSQ scales (Martin et al., 2003). Participants answer questions on the scale as to how they relate to their specific athletic environment.

### *Humor Functions*

A pilot study was conducted in 2007 to determine if the broad functions of humor held true in collegiate sport. In the pilot study, student-athlete participants indicated (by circling) which of the broad functions humor served within their athletic



settings. Identification, control, differentiation, resistance, clarification, mood enhancement, and stress relief were the possible functions of humor usage within athletic settings.

Six of the 16 participants circled that humor served at least one of the possible functions or uses of humor mentioned in the survey. The identification, control, differentiation, clarification, mood enhancement, and relief functions were reported at least once. Resistance was not reported as a possible function or use of humor within the participants' athletic settings. Identification, enhanced mood, and stress relief functions were reported the most. Six of the six participants that reported a function circled identification, enhanced mood, and stress relief as functions of humor usage within athletic settings. Control was identified twice as being a function of humor usage within athletic settings. Differentiation and clarification were each identified once as being a function of humor usage within athletic settings.

The pilot results are important in that athletes reported that humor served five (identification, control, differentiation, clarification, mood enhancement, and stress relief) of the broad functions listed. While the pilot study worked in determining if the functions of humor in counseling literature held true in sport, a change was made in the data collection process to more specifically determine athletes' perceptions of the functions and uses humor serves in their athletic settings.

The Uses of Humor Index (Graham et al., 1992) was used to more specifically measure the functions and uses of humor among athletic team members. The UHI

consists of 11 items, with each question being a self-descriptive statement about one's particular functions and specific uses of humor. Respondents rate the degree to which each statement describes them on a Likert-type scale rating from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always).

The UHI has three scales: positive affect, negative affect, and expressiveness, reflecting Graham et al.'s proposal that humor functions for positive affect, negative affect, and expressiveness. The three functions fit the broad functions of humor (Lynch, 2002). The positive affect scale contains 3 specific uses of humor, the negative affect scale contains 3 specific uses of humor, and the expressiveness contains 5 specific uses of humor. Items on the scale represent what humor producers use humor for. Positive affect humor includes playful, making light of the situation, and developing friendship. Negative affect humor includes demeaning and belittling others, saying negative things, and putting others in their place. Expressiveness humor includes disclosing difficult information, allowing others to know me, letting others know likes/dislikes, avoid telling others about me, and expressing my feelings. A total score for each scale is calculated by summing the stated items. The higher the score on each subscale, the greater the individual identifies with that particular use of humor. The reliability of the four scales have Cronbach alphas ranging from .78 to .85 (Graham et al., 1992). Instructions asked participants to answer questions as to how they relate to their specific athletic environment.

### *Effects of Humor*

Additional questions were asked to obtain a greater understanding of the effects humor has in collegiate sport. In the 2007 pilot study, collegiate athletes were asked on separate questions to rate the frequency of negative and positive effects of humor usage in their athletic settings using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Humor was reported as having significantly greater positive effects than negative effects. Humor perceived as having negative effects was reported within the almost never to seldom range (closest to the almost never range). Humor perceived as having positive effects was reported within the occasionally to often range (closest to the occasionally range). The current study attempts to develop a greater understanding of humor's perceived effects among athletic teams.

In the current study, questions on the effects of humor attempted to develop an understanding of specific positive and negative effects of humor usage in sport, as well as determine the overall frequency of positive and negative effects of humor. Two questions addressed the overall effects of humor on the individual athlete and the team with a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (very negatively) to 5 (very positively). Ten questions addressed specific positive and negative effects of humor 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The effects of humor were taken from humor literature, which states that humor can relieve or create stress and tension (Lynch, 2002), enhance team cohesion (Meyer, 2000), create dissention or separation (Lynch, 2002), develop team identity (Romero & Pescosolido, 2008), create a distraction or

diversion (Snyder, 1991), raise spirits/moods (Szabo, 2003), improve performance (Romero & Pescosolido, 2008), interfere with performance (Szabo, 2003), and increase effort/play harder (Romero & Pescosolido, 2008). Finally, two open-ended items asked participants about types of humor and examples that have positive effects, and negative effects, and a final item asked for any other comments regarding humor in sport.

### *Team Cohesion*

The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) was used to measure the perceptions of team cohesion among athletic teams (Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985). The GEQ was chosen because it is one of the most widely used measures of cohesion in sport psychology. The GEQ stems from the definition of cohesion. Cohesion is defined as “a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs” (Eys, Carron, Bray, & Brawley, 2007). The GEQ consists of four subscales; individual attractiveness to the group (ATG-T), individual attractions to the group social (ATG-S), group integration-task (GI-T), and group integration-social (GI-S). ATG-T refers to one’s perceptions of their personal involvement in task aspects of the team. ATG-S refers to perceptions of one’s involvement in social aspects of the team. GI-T refers to one’s perceptions of unity the team possesses in relation to task aspects. GI-S refers to one’s perceptions of the degree of unity the team possesses in relation to social aspects.

The GEQ consists of 18 items using a 9-point Likert-type scale, ranging from one to nine (one would be strongly disagree and nine would be strongly agree). The reliability of the four scales have Cronbach alphas ranging from .64 to .76 (Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985).

### *Survey Packet*

In summer 2009, a pilot study with players from two recreational kickball teams (n = 15) completed a survey packet with all the main measures (HSQ, UHI, Humor Effects, and GEQ). Participants completed the packet in about 20 minutes and had no problems with items on any of the measures. The resulting scores were similar to those found in Reiger (2004), where participants reported higher scores on positive styles and functions of humor than on negative functions and styles.

Appendix C has details on the pilot study and the results.

### Procedures

Prior to collecting data for the study for the current study, the investigator received approval from the UNCG IRB. Data collection was conducted during the fall of 2009. Coaches and athletic directors were contacted personally or by e-mail to request permission to contact team members to participate in the study. Participation was voluntary. The surveys were hand delivered to athletes by the researcher in a group setting at the athletes' respective schools. The group settings were set up at a pre-determined time by the athletes' respective coaches. Participants were informed of the intent of the study in a cover letter and provided written informed consent

before completing the surveys. The survey was completed after the reading and signing of the consent form. All participants were assured of their rights in compliance with IRB rules and regulations, including confidentiality, anonymity, and right of withdrawal. Upon completion, participants turned in their surveys to the researcher. Consent forms and questionnaires were stored in a file cabinet in the researcher's home office.

### Analysis of Data

The specific purpose of this study was to determine the styles of humor used among collegiate athletes, the functions humor serves for them, and the relationship of styles and functions to team cohesion. The HSQ was used to measure the styles of humor. Each of the four scales on the HSQ has eight items. The affiliative humor scale contains items 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 29. The self-enhancing humor scale contains items 2, 6, 10, 14, 18, 22, 26, and 30. The aggressive humor scale contains items 3, 7, 11, 15, 19, 23, 27, and 31. The self-defeating humor scale contains items 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, 28, and 32. A total score was obtained for each scale by summing positively stated items and the reverse scoring of the negatively stated items. Scores on each scale range from a lowest possible of eight, with the highest possible score on each dimension being a 56. The higher the score on each subscale, the greater the use of that style of humor.

The GEQ consists of 18 items using a 9-point Likert-type scale, ranging from one to nine (one would be strongly disagree and nine would be strongly agree).

There are four items in the ATG-T dimension, five items in the ATG-S dimension, five items in the GI-T dimension, and four items in the GI-S dimension. Higher scores indicate higher levels of cohesion for each of the four scales.

The UHI has three scales: positive affect, negative affect, and expressiveness. The positive affect scale has 3 items, the negative affect scale has three items, and the expressiveness scale has five items. For each of the functions, participants rate how often humor functions in that particular manner using a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). The higher the number, the greater the individual perceives humor to be used for that particular function. A total score for each scale is calculated by summing the stated items. The higher the score on each subscale, the greater the individual identifies that particular dimension with their respective team.

The humor effects section of the survey assessed the perceived effects of humor. Each item is associated with a specific positive or negative effect of humor. The higher the score on each question, the greater the individual identifies that particular dimension as an effect of humor has with their respective team.

Descriptive analysis (means, standard deviations, frequencies) was used to examine scale scores from the HSQ, UHI, and GEQ and items from the effects survey. Also, within-subjects/ repeated measures ANOVA was used to determine differences in relative usage among the four styles of humor and among the three uses of humor.

Correlations were used to examine relationships among styles, functions, and effects of humor. Multiple regression was used to address the relationship of the styles and functions of humor to team cohesion. Specifically, the four HSQ scores were predictors of each of the four GEQ scores to examine the relationship between humor styles and team cohesion. The three UHI scores were used as predictors to examine the relationship of humor functions and team cohesion.



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this research was to gain insight and understanding into the humor experience in collegiate sport. The specific purpose of this study was to determine the styles of humor used among collegiate athletes, the uses humor serves for them, and the perceived effects of humor used within male collegiate athletic teams. Also, the relationship of the styles and uses of humor to team cohesion was determined. This chapter presents the major findings related to the research questions. First descriptive results for the main variables are presented to address the first three research questions and determine the styles, functions, and effects of humor. Then, results of correlational analyses are presented to address the last two research questions and determine the relationship of styles and functions of humor to cohesion.

#### Results of Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive results for cohesion are presented first, followed by sections that present the results for styles of humor, functions of humor, and effects of humor and address research questions 1 to 3.

#### *Team Cohesion*

Before calculating team cohesion scores, internal consistency reliability coefficients

were examined for each of the four subscales. The initial reliability coefficient for the ATG-S subscale was low (.59), but was improved when one item from the ATG-S subscale was deleted (“Some of my best friends are on this team”). The final reliabilities for the GEQ were .59 for the ATG-T scale, .62 for the ATG-S scale, .74 for the GI-T scale, and .82 for the GI-S scale (see Table 1). The mean item scores was 7.16 on the ATG-S scale, 6.92 on the ATG-T scale, 6.68 on the GI-T scale, and 6.67 on the GI-S scale (see Table 1). All scores were above the mid-point (4.5) of the 9-point scale, indicating high levels of cohesion on all four scales.

Table 1

*Descriptive Data for GEQ*

Cohesion	n items	alpha	Alpha	Mean Per Item	Standard Deviation
ATG-S	4		.62	7.16	1.65
ATG-T	4		.59	6.92	1.46
GI-T	5		.74	6.68	1.51
GI-S	4		.82	6.67	1.74

*Styles of Humor*

Research question one addressed styles of humor. The initial reliabilities for three of the four scales were low, and to achieve acceptable reliability, five items from the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) were deleted. Two items from the affiliative scale were deleted (“I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself” and “I usually can’t think of witty things to say when I’m with other people”) to raise the

reliability from .64 to .72. One item from the self-enhancing scale was deleted (“If I am feeling sad or upset, I usually lose my sense of humor”) to raise reliability from .75 to .77. Two items from the aggressive scale were deleted (“Sometimes I think of something that is so funny that I can’t stop myself from saying it, even if it is not appropriate for the situation” and “People are never offended or hurt by my sense of humor”) raising reliability from .61 to .70. The final reliabilities for the HSQ were .72 for the affiliative scale, .77 for the self-enhancing scale, .70 for the aggressive scale, and .66 for the self-defeating scale (see Table 2). Participants reported higher scores on the positive styles of humor than on the negative styles. The mean item scores were 6.16 on the affiliative scales, 5.14 on the self-enhancing scale, 3.75 on the aggressive scale, and 3.13 on the self-defeating scale (see Table 2). A within subjects/ repeated measures ANOVA revealed that the four styles differed significantly,  $F(3,234) = 218.34$ ,  $p < .001$ , and follow-up contrasts revealed that the means for each style differed from each other. The affiliative style of humor mean score was significantly higher than the other styles of humor. The self-enhancing style of humor was significantly higher than the aggressive and self-defeating mean score. The self-defeating mean was significantly lower than the other three styles of humor.

Table 2

*Descriptive Data for HSQ*

Style	n items	alpha	Alpha	Mean	Per Item	Standard Deviation
Affiliative	6		.72	6.16		.80
Self-Enhancing	7		.77	5.14		.95
Aggressive	6		.706	3.75		1.06
Self-Defeating	8		.668	3.13		.92

*Humor Functions*

The second research question addresses functions of humor. The initial reliability was low (.62) for the expressive subscale. To achieve acceptable reliability, one item from the Uses of Humor Index (UHI) in the expressive subscale was deleted (“I use humor to avoid telling others about me”). Reliabilities for the UHI were .71 for the positive affect scale, .67 for the expressive affect scale, and .90 for the negative affect scale (see Table 4). Participants reported higher scores on the positive functions of humor than on the negative functions. The mean item scores were 3.89 on the positive affect scale, 3.26 on the expressive affect scale, and 2.20 on the negative affect scale (see Table 3). The within subjects/ repeated measures ANOVA revealed a significant difference among functions,  $F(2,156) = 122.66$ ,  $p < .001$ , and follow-up contrasts revealed that the means for each function differed from each other. The negative function score was significantly lower than the expressiveness and positive score, and the expressiveness score was significantly lower than the positive score.

Table 3  
*Descriptive Data for UHI*

Function	n items	alpha	Alpha	Mean Per Item	Standard Deviation
Positive	3		.71	3.90	.68
Expressiveness	4		.67	3.26	.66
Negative	3		.90	2.20	.93

### *Effects of Humor*

The third research question addressed effects of humor. The first three items on the effects measure asked how much humor was used and overall ratings of positive or negative effects on the individual and the team. As table 4 shows, scores were high on the 5-point scale. The means were 4.28 for how much humor is used, 3.75 for effects of humor on the athlete personally, and 3.75 for effects of humor on the team. The remainder of the effects measure asked about 10 specific effects of humor. As table 4 shows the positive effects of humor were reported with more frequency than the negative effects of humor. The positive effects reported means were within the sometimes to often range. Specifically, means were 4.00 for humor's ability to raise spirits/mood, 3.75 for enhance team cohesion, 3.72 for relieve stress and tension, 3.60 for develop a team identity, 3.29 for improve performance, and 3.14 for increase effort/play harder. The negative effects of humor reported means were within the rarely to sometimes range. Specifically, means were 2.54 for humor's ability to create a distraction or diversion, 2.25 for interfere with performance, 2.15 for create stress and tension, and 2.15 for to create dissention or separation reported a mean of 2.15 (See Table 4). The within subjects/ repeated measures

ANOVA revealed a significant difference among the humor effects,  $F(9,702) = 51.642$ ,  $p < .001$ , and follow-up contrasts revealed that the most of the humor effects differed from each other. Enhance team cohesion and relieve stress did not significantly differ, relieve stress and tension and develop identity did not significantly differ, improve performance and increase effort/play harder did not significantly differ, interfere with performance and create stress and tension did not significantly differ, interfere with performance and create dissention or separation did not significantly differ, and create stress and tension and create dissention or separation did not differ.

Table 4

*Descriptive Data for Effects of Humor*

Effect	Mean	Standard Deviation
Overall Humor Usage	4.28	.70
Team	3.75	.85
You	3.75	.87
Raise Spirits/Mood	4.00	.92
Enhance Team Cohesion	3.75	.80
Relieve Stress and Tension	3.72	.71
Develop Identity	3.60	.85
Improve Performance	3.29	.95
Increase Effort/Play Harder	3.14	1.14
Create Distraction	2.54	.94
Interfere with Performance	2.25	.95
Create Stress and Tension	2.15	.89
Dissent or Separation	2.15	.85

## Correlations

Pearson correlations were run to determine relationships among the scores of cohesion, style of humor, functions of humor, and effects of humor (see Appendix E for all correlations). To address research questions four and five, correlations of humor styles, functions, and effects with cohesion are presented.

### *Humor Styles and Cohesion*

To address research question four, correlation between the four humor styles scores and the GEQ scores were examined. The affiliative style of humor was positively correlated with the ATG-T, GI-T, and GI-S cohesion scales. The self-enhancing style of humor was positively correlated with the GI-S cohesion scale (see table 5).

*Multiple Regression Results.* Stepwise multiple regression was run with the four humor styles as predictors of each of the four cohesion scores. Results showed the affiliative style of humor was the only significant predictor of the ATG-T, GI-T, and GI-S cohesion scale scores. For the ATG-T scale, the stepwise regression revealed that the affiliative style of humor was significant a significant predictor ( $R = .309$ ;  $F(1,77) = 8.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). For the GI-T scale, the stepwise regression revealed that the affiliative style of humor was significant a significant predictor ( $R = .329$ ;  $F(1,77) = 9.35$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). For the GI-S scale, the stepwise regression revealed that the affiliative style of humor was a significant predictor ( $R = .245$ ;  $F(1,77) = 4.94$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 5

#### *GEQ and Humor Styles Correlations*

Cohesion	Affiliative	Self-Defeat	Aggressive	Self-Enhance
ATG-S	.131	-.040	.012	.129
ATG-T	.309*	-.017	.059	-.002
GI-T	.329*	-.007	.211	.169
GI-S	.245*	-.144	.016	.233*

\*Significant at the  $p < .05$  alpha level



### *Humor Functions and Cohesion*

To address research question five, correlations of the humor functions with the GEQ scores were examined. The subscales of the UHI were not significantly correlated to the subscales of the GEQ (see table 6). Similarly, multiple regression analyses revealed that the functions of humor were not significant predictors of the ATG-T, ATG-S, GI-T, or the GI-S cohesion scale scores.

Table 6

#### *GEQ and Functions of Humor Correlations*

Cohesion	Positive	Expressive	Negative
ATG-S	.019	-.063	-.071
ATG-T	-.054	-.034	-.057
GI-T	.181	.168	.003
GI-S	.194	.035	-.094

### *Humor Effects and Cohesion*

Although no specific research question addressed the relationship between humor effects and cohesion, those relationships were explored. The ATG-T cohesion scale was positively correlated with humor overall effects on the individual personally and on the team, and with humor's ability to raise spirits/mood. The ATG-T cohesion scale was negatively correlated with the humor effects of creating stress and tension, create dissention or separation, create a distraction or diversion, and interfere with performance. The GI-T cohesion scale was positively correlated with humor's effects on the individual personally and on the team, and the specific humor effects of relieve stress and tension, enhance team

cohesion, develop a team identity, raise spirits/mood, improve performance, and increase effort/play harder. The GI-T cohesion scale was negatively correlated with the humor effects of create stress and tension, create dissention or separation, create a distraction or diversion, and interfere with performance. The GI-S cohesion scale was positively correlated with humor's effects on the individual personally and on the team, and the specific humor effects of relieve stress and tension, enhance team cohesion, develop a team identity, raise spirits/mood, improve performance, and increase effort/play harder. The GI-S cohesion scale was negatively correlated with the humor effects of create stress and tension, create dissention or separation, create a distraction or diversion, and interfere with performance. The ATG-S cohesion scale was positively correlated with humor's affects on the team, and the humor effects of enhance team cohesion and raise spirits/mood. The ATG-S cohesion scale was negatively correlated with the humor effects of creating stress and tension, create dissention or separation, and interfere with performance (see table 7).

Table 7

*GEQ and Humor Effects Correlations*

Scale/Item	ATG-T	GI-T	GI-S	ATG-S
Overall	-.196	-.173	.168	-.059
Athlete Personally	.241*	.419*	.383*	.159
Team	.342*	.541*	.480*	.276*
Relieve Stress	.203	.408*	.346*	.123
Create Stress	-.397*	-.535*	-.363*	-.292*
Enhance Cohesion	.126	.474*	.444*	.314*
Create dissention	-.346*	-.519*	-.536*	-.351*
Develop Identity	.194	.439	.437*	.388*
Create Distraction	-.278*	-.345	-.253*	-.201
Raise Spirits/Mood	.230*	.420	.422*	.318*
Improve Performance	.107	.376	.531*	.211
Interfere Performance	-.378*	-.440*	-.386*	-.282*
Increase Effort	.125	.161	.234*	.124

\*Significant at the  $p < .05$  alpha level

*Comparisons*

As exploratory analysis, scale score comparisons by categories were examined (i.e., division, race, class year, playing status). There were no differences by race, division, class year, or playing status on the scales of the humor measures (Humor Styles Questionnaire, Uses of Humor Index, and Humor Effects Questionnaire) or on scales of the cohesion measure (Group Environment Questionnaire).

### *Open Ended Questions*

Participants were asked what types of humor have mostly positive effects on themselves and their team. Of the 79 participants, 69 answered the question. Answers were not very descriptive, but included such replies as jokes and short stories, happenings and events, making fun of someone, the coach, movies, imitations, sarcasm, and trash talk. Of the 69 participants that answered the question, 28 participants referred to jokes and short stories, 22 participants referred to happenings and events, 21 participants referred to making fun of someone, 10 referred to the coach, four referred to movies, two referred to imitations, one referred to sarcasm, and one referred to trash talk. Making fun of someone and trash talk stand out because they are negative forms of humor (see Appendix F).

Participants were also asked what types of humor have mostly negative effects on themselves and their team. Of the 79 participants, 58 answered the question. Again, answers were not very descriptive, but included such replies as making fun of someone, ability and effort, sarcasm, other team members or other team, taking things too seriously or the wrong way, being offended, overly repetitive with humor, criticism, playing during practice, having bad timing, not being seriousness enough, and trash talk. Of the 58 participants that answered the question, 26 referred to making fun of someone, 10 referred to ability and effort, three referred to sarcasm, three referred to other team members or other team, two referred to taking things too seriously or the wrong way, two referred to being offended, going too far or overly

repetitive with humor, one referred to criticism, one referred to playing during practice, having bad timing, one referred to not being seriousness enough, and one referred to trash talk (See Appendix F).

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to gain insight and understanding into the humor experience in collegiate sport. The specific purpose of this study was to determine the styles of humor used among collegiate athletes, the uses humor served for them, and the perceived effects of humor used within male collegiate athletic teams. Also, the relationship of the styles and uses of humor to team cohesion was determined. The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was the instrument used to assess humor styles. The Uses of Humor Index (UHI) was the instrument used to assess the uses of humor. An additional questionnaire examining specific humor effects was used to assess the effects of humor. The Group Environment questionnaire (GEQ) was the instrument used to assess team cohesion. The surveys helped determine if the styles and uses of humor identified in the literature hold true for sport, as well as helped explore the relationship between humor and team cohesion among collegiate male basketball players.

The participants in this study (n=79) were male student-athlete basketball players that were participating on a collegiate basketball teams at six institutions in North Carolina. Descriptive analyses were used to determine humor style usage, the

functions that humor serves, and the perceived effects of humor. Correlations and multiple regression were run to examine relationships of the styles, functions, and effects of humor. The research questions, findings, and discussion are summarized in the following.

Question 1: “What styles of humor measured by the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) are used among male collegiate basketball players?”

Participants reported higher scores on the affiliative and self-enhancing styles of humor than on the aggressive and self-defeating styles of humor. The within subjects/ repeated measures ANOVA revealed that the means for each style differed significantly from each other. The affiliative style of humor mean score was significantly higher than the other styles of humor. The self-enhancing style of humor was significantly higher than the aggressive and self-defeating mean score. The self-defeating mean was significantly lower than the other styles of humor. The results of this research support the findings by Reiger (2004) and those in the 2009 pilot study that revealed that the positive styles of humor were reported with more frequency than the negative styles. Results are encouraging because Martin et al. (2003) proposed that self-enhancing and affiliative humor lead to positive effects, while self-defeating and aggressive humor are proposed to lead to negative effects. The results of the styles of humor used are also positive in relation to potential outcomes from humor style usage. Olsson, Backe, Sorensen, and Kock (2002) found positive humor was perceived to bring happiness and produce opportunities, while negative and

insensitive humor was perceived to give rise to obstacles and build walls. With this research showing more positive than negative humor style usage, the results suggest that humor used by the participants will lead to more positive outcomes than negative outcomes.

Question 2: “What functions measured by the Uses of Humor Index (UHI) does humor serve among male collegiate basketball players?”

Results revealed that positive and expressive humor were reported significantly more frequently than negative humor. The within subjects/ repeated measures ANOVA revealed that the means for each function differed significantly from each other. The negative function score was significantly lower than the expressiveness and positive score, and the expressiveness score was significantly lower than the positive score. The results of this research support the notion of Martin, Rich, and Gale (2004) that positive and negative functions of humor are found in group settings. More encouraging, however, is that the results of this research with male collegiate basketball players support the findings by Martin, Rich, and Gale (2004) and those in the 2009 pilot study that revealed that the positive uses of humor were reported with more frequency than the negative uses of humor. These results support the notion that positive forms of humor may be used more frequently in groups than negative forms of humor (Reiger, 2004).

Question 3: “Using humor literature as a guide, what are the perceived effects of humor for male collegiate basketball players?”



The results revealed that the effects of humor were reported with more frequency than the negative effects of humor. The positive effects reported means within the sometimes to often range. Humor's positive ability to raise spirits/mood, enhance team cohesion, relieve stress and tension, develop a team identity, improve performance, and increase effort/play harder were each reported with more frequency than the negative effects. The negative effects of humor reported means within the rarely to sometimes range. Humor's negative effects of create a distraction or diversion, interfere with performance, create stress and tension, and to create dissension or separation each reported lower frequency than the positive effects. Results are encouraging that the positive effects were reported with more frequency than the negative effects. However, the fact that participants reported that humor does rarely to sometimes lead to negative effects makes it important for humor users to use caution and good judgment when deciding to use humor. Humor has been documented to produce the psychological benefits of reducing anxiety, tension, stress, depression, and loneliness, improving self-esteem, restoring hope and energy, and providing a sense of empowerment and control (Berk, 2001). This research supports the notion that humor can produce positive effects, as well as extends the research findings into the sports world.

Question 4: "What is the relationship between the styles of humor measured by the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) used among male basketball players and team cohesion?"

The affiliative style of humor was positively correlated with the attractiveness to the group-task (ATG-T), group integration-task (GI-T), and group integration-social (GI-S) cohesion scales. The results suggest that the use of affiliative humor could be a method to increase team cohesion.

Additionally, the affiliative style of humor showed significant positive correlations with the aggressive and self-enhancing styles of humor, the positive and expressive affect functions of humor, and the humor effects of relieving stress and tension, enhancing team cohesion, raise spirits/mood, and improving performance. The affiliative style of humor was negatively correlated with the humor effects of create stress and tension, create dissention or separation, create a distraction or diversion, and interfere with performance. The results suggest that using the affiliative style of humor in athletic settings will lead to positive outcomes. Results support the notion by Martin et al. (2003) that affiliative humor is proposed to lead to positive effects.

The self-enhancing style of humor was positively correlated with the group integration-social (GI-S) cohesion scale. It does not appear that self-enhancing humor enhances all aspects of team cohesion, but only social group integration.

Additionally, the self-enhancing style of humor showed significant positive correlations with the positive and expressive affect functions of humor, and the humor effects of relieve stress and tension, raise spirits/mood, and improving performance. The correlations with effects suggest that using the self-enhancing style of humor in

athletic settings will lead to positive outcomes. This supports the notion by Martin et al. (2003) that self-enhancing humor is proposed to lead to positive effects.

The aggressive style of humor did not show positive correlations with team cohesion. This is not unexpected because Martin et al. (2003) proposed that aggressive humor leads to negative effects. Additional correlations showed that the aggressive style of humor was positively correlated with the negative affect function of humor, humor's effects on the individual personally and on the team, and the humor effects of develop a team identity and raise spirits/mood. The results suggest that the use of aggressive humor would not be a method to enhance team cohesion. The results also suggest that the aggressive style of humor should be used with caution because it is positively correlated with the negative affect function of humor. However, where Martin et al. (2003) proposed that aggressive humor leads to negative effects, this research did not find aggressive humor to be positively related to any of the negative effects. Instead surprisingly, aggressive style of humor was related to the positive humor effect of developing a team identity and raising spirits/mood.

The self-defeating style of humor did not show positive correlations with team cohesion. The results suggest that the self-defeating style of humor could not be used to enhance team cohesion. This is not unexpected because Martin et al. (2003) proposed that self-defeating humor leads to negative effects. Additional correlations showed that the self-defeating style of humor was positively correlated with the

humor effects of create dissention or separation and interfere with performance. The additional correlations suggest that self-defeating humor should be avoided due to correlations with only negative effect items. The results support the notion that self-defeating humor is proposed to lead to negative effects (Martin et al., 2003).

Question 5: “What is the relationship between the functions measured by the Uses of Humor Index (UHI) that humor serves among male collegiate basketball players and team cohesion?”

The positive, negative, and expressiveness affect functions of humor were not significantly correlated with the cohesion scales. However, the positive affect and expressiveness affect functions of humor were positively correlated with the humor effect of enhance team cohesion. It could be the participants perceived positive and expressive affect humor can have a positive effect on team cohesion as a whole but do not recognize effects on the specific types of cohesion measured by the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ). The results are unclear in determining if the functions of humor could be used to enhance team cohesion. Deeper analysis, such as an interview method would be needed to further explain the relationship between the functions of humor and team cohesion.

The functions of humor did show correlations with the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) scales and certain humor effects. The positive affect function of humor was positively correlated with the affiliative and self-enhancing styles of humor, the expressive affect function of humor, humor’s effects on the individual

personally, and the humor effects of relieve stress and tension, enhance team cohesion, raise spirits/mood, and improve performance. The positive affect function of humor was negatively correlated with the humor effects of create dissention or separation within the team and create a distraction or diversion. The results suggest that positive affect humor can be encouraged in athletic settings due to its positive correlations to positive styles of humor and positive effects of humor.

The expressive affect function of humor was positively correlated with the aggressive and self-enhancing styles of humor, the positive affect function of humor, and the humor effects of relieve stress and tension, enhance team cohesion, raise spirits/mood, improving performance, and increasing effort/play harder. The results suggest that the expressive affect humor can be encouraged in athletic settings due to its positive correlation to positive styles of humor and positive effects of humor. However, the results also suggest that the use of expressive affect humor should be monitored due to its positive correlation with the aggressive style of humor.

The negative affect function of humor was positively correlated with the aggressive style of humor, and the humor effects of create dissention or separation, create a distraction or diversion, and interfere with performance. Results support the notion that negative humor can lead to negative outcomes (Olsson, Backe, Sorensen, and Kock, 2002). The results suggest that negative affect humor should not be encouraged in athletic settings due to its positive correlation to a negative style of humor and negative effects of humor.

### Additional Findings

Participants were asked how much humor is used in their athletic settings, the effects of humor on the team, and the effects on the athlete personally. Humor was shown to be used in the often to always range (closer to often) in the athletic settings. The rationale for studying humor in sport is reinforced due to the high frequency that humor is reported to be used. The effects on the athlete personally and the team were found to be between the neutral and mostly positive range (closer to the mostly positive range). The results suggest that the use of humor could be encouraged in athletic settings as a result of its positive effects on team members.

Participants were asked what types of humor have mostly positive effects on themselves and their team. Answers were not very descriptive, but included such replies as movies, jokes and short stories, making fun of someone or the self, humor from or about the coach, about happenings or events, sarcasm, imitations, and trash talk. The replies were affiliative in style, support the suggestion of Martin et al. (2003) that affiliative style humor can lead to positive effects. Making fun of someone or the self and trash talk stand out because they are negative forms (aggressive and self-defeating style) of humor (see Appendix E).

Participants were also asked what types of humor have mostly negative effects on themselves and their team. Again, answers were not very descriptive, but included such replies as making fun of someone, sarcasm, taking things too seriously or the wrong way, talking about others ability or effort, being offended, criticism, horseplay

during practice, having bad timing, going too far or overly repetitive with humor, and trash talk (See Appendix E). The responses fall mainly into the category of aggressive style of humor. Thus, support is given to the suggestion of Martin et al. (2003) that aggressive humor can lead to negative effects.

When numbers permitted, scale score comparisons by categories were examined (i.e., division, race, class year, playing status). However, there were no differences on any of the humor styles, functions, or effects, or the scales of cohesion. Although no differences were found in this study, more research is needed to determine if and how context (i.e., locker room and game settings) and athletes' characteristics (i.e., playing status) influence uses and effects of humor.

### Implications

This research holds several implications for coaches and sport professionals regarding athletes' usage of humor in the sports world. First, coaches should stress athletes using humor in the affiliative style for positive outcomes. This research showed that the affiliative style of humor had positive correlations to the positive humor effects of relieving stress and tension, enhancing team cohesion, raise spirits/mood, and improving performance. Additionally, the affiliative style of humor was negatively correlated with the negative humor effects of create stress and tension, create dissention or separation, create a distraction or diversion, and interfere with performance. This research suggests that humor used in the affiliative style should be

encouraged because of its positive correlations with positive effects and its negative correlations with negative effects.

Second, coaches should allow athletes to use humor in the self-enhancing style. This research shows that self-enhancing style of humor had positive correlations with the positive and expressive affect functions of humor, and the humor effects of relieve stress and tension, raise spirits/mood, and improving performance. Additionally, self-enhancing humor did not show significant positive relations with any of the negative effects of humor.

Third, coaches should try to control athletes' use of aggressive and self-defeating humor. Aggressive humor should be used with caution because it was found positively correlated with the negative affect function of humor, and to be the major source of the types of humor that athletes felt have mostly negative effects on athletes and their team. However, the research is inconclusive because this research did not find aggressive humor to be positively related to any of the negative effects, instead, aggressive humor was positively related to the positive humor effects of developing a team identity and raising spirits/mood. Self-defeating humor should be controlled because it was found positively correlated with the negative humor effects of create dissention or separation and interfere with performance.

Lastly, in relation to enhancing team cohesion, this research suggests that coaches should allow athletes to use the affiliative and self-enhancing styles of humor, as well as humor that functions for positive and expressive affect. The affiliative style of



humor was positively correlated with the individual attractiveness to the group-task (ATG-T), group integration-task (GI-T), and group integration-social (GI-S) cohesion scales, as well as the humor effect of enhancing team cohesion. The results strongly imply that the use of affiliative humor could be used to increase team cohesion. The self-enhancing style of humor was positively correlated with the group integration-social (GI-S) cohesion scale. It does not appear that self-enhancing humor enhances all aspects of team cohesion, but could be used to enhance group integration on the social level.

The positive and expressiveness affect functions of humor were not significantly correlated with the cohesion scales. However, the positive and expressiveness affect functions of humor were positively correlated with the humor effect of enhance team cohesion. Thus, the results suggest that positive and expressive affect humor may be encouraged to enhance team cohesion as a whole, but not necessarily any one specific area of team cohesion presented by the scales of the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ).

#### Limitations of the Study

This research study includes limitations that may have impacted the data analysis, findings, and conclusions. The limitations have been considered and are addressed in the section titled recommendations for future research and practice.

The main limitation is the sample. The research findings are only representative of male collegiate basketball players in this research study. The

findings do not represent all collegiate athletes. Responses specific to that of the male collegiate basketball players in this research may not be representative of female collegiate athletes. Also, findings are only representative of male collegiate basketball players in the state of North Carolina and may not be representative of collegiate athletes in other states throughout the nation. The sample included male collegiate basketball players at NCAA Division I, II, III or NSCAA institutions and may not be representative of male collegiate basketball players in other divisions, or even all male basketball players in these divisions. There are a vast number of male collegiate basketball players. Responses specific to the male collegiate basketball players in this research study may not be representative of male collegiate basketball players throughout the nation.

Another major limitation is in the humor measures. The measures stem from communication literature and were not tested in the sport world before this study. It could be that items could be added to the HSQ or UHI that are a better fit for assessing humor styles and humor functions in sport. Additionally, it could be that some items could be deleted that are not relevant for assessing humor styles and functions in sport.

#### Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

This exploration of humor usage in collegiate men's basketball has produced significant findings in the research area of humor and sport. However, this research scratches the surface of knowledge as this is initial research in humor and sport.

There is potential to extend this area of research in several meaningful directions in order to gain deeper insight into issues regarding humor and sport. Therefore, the following recommendations for future research are suggested based on the findings of this investigation.

First, a similar study should be conducted with a considerably larger and more diverse sample of athletes to allow comparisons of geographical regions (e.g., states in the east, west, north, and south), across different sports, and with male and female collegiate athletes. Additional numbers will allow deeper humor analyses across players' playing status, race, class year, division, and gender.

Second, a study should be conducted using interview and observation methods to delve further into the answers of the participants. The interviews should seek to gather deeper data about how the styles and functions of humor relate to cohesion, as well as gain more descriptive data about what types of humor have positive and negative effects upon the team and individual team members. Observational data should be gathered as a check of the data gathered from interviews, as well as to gain greater understanding of actual instances of humor.

Third, a study should be conducted analyzing coaches' use of humor. The study should use surveys, interviews, and observation to gather data about coaches' styles and functions of humor, as well as how the styles and functions relate to cohesion.

Lastly, a study should be conducted that delves into the context of humor usage. Data on the humor styles and functions should be analyzed in relation to the context of the locker room, on road trips, during practice, and during games. It may be that findings would change in relation to the context.

### Conclusions

The results of this research support the findings by Reiger (2004) and those in the 2009 pilot study where positive humor was reported with more frequency than negative humor in group settings. The male collegiate basketball participants reported higher scores on the positive styles of humor (affiliative and self-enhancing) than on the negative styles of humor (aggressive and self-defeating). Likewise, results revealed that positive and expressive affect humor was reported with more frequency than negative affect humor. Additionally, results revealed that the positive effects of humor were reported with more frequency than the negative effects of humor. The results are encouraging for sports professionals, because it appears that humor is being used mostly in positive forms that are proposed to lead to positive outcomes.

The affiliative style of humor was positively correlated with the individual attractiveness to the group-task (ATG-T), group integration-task (GI-T), and group integration-social (GI-S) cohesion scales. The self-enhancing style of humor was positively correlated with the group integration-social (GI-S) cohesion scale. The positive affect and expressiveness affect functions of humor were positively

correlated with the humor effect of enhance team cohesion. The results are encouraging for sports professionals, because it appears that positive styles and functions of humor may have a positive impact on team cohesion.

While the results of humor usage among the male collegiate basketball players in this study are mainly positive, more research in the area of humor and sport is still needed before concluding that humor leads to positive outcomes in sport.

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## Appendix A

### Pilot Study 2007

The purpose of this pilot study was to determine the occurrence and prevalence of humor usage within athletic team settings. A secondary intent was to determine how humor is used in positive and negative manners within these athletic team settings. The following study questions were addressed in the study:

1. What types of humor occur within athletic settings?
2. What functions of humor occur within athletic team settings?
3. What are the negative and positive effects of humor usage within athletic settings?

### Participants

Participants in this study were members of an athletic team at a Division I state institution in North Carolina. There were 16 participants (12 females and four males) representing seven sports (7 in women's soccer, 2 in men's soccer, two in baseball, 2 in women's tennis, 1 in women's golf, 1 in volleyball, and 1 in softball). In order to be a participant in the study, the student athletes had to be at least 18 years of age. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 24 years-of-age. There were six freshman student-athletes, five sophomore student-athletes, three junior student-athletes, and two senior student athletes.

## Procedures

Prior to collecting data for the study, the investigator received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The athletic director and assistant athletic director were contacted personally by the researcher for their assistance in gaining access to potential student-athletes. The survey ( see Appendix B) was hand delivered by the Student Advisory Committee of Intercollegiate Athletics organization to the student-athlete participants. Participation within the study was voluntary. Participants were informed of the intent of the study in a cover letter sent along with the questionnaire. All participants were ensured of their rights in compliance with proper human protocol, and ensured their confidentiality, anonymity, right of withdrawal, and provided signed informed consent.

Data collection began in January 2008 and concluded in March 2008. Participants were asked to complete a survey related to humor use within athletic settings. Upon completion, participants turned in their surveys to the assistant athletic director, who passed the data to the investigator.

## Results and Discussion

Six of the 16 participants circled that humor served at least one of the possible functions or uses of humor mentioned in the survey. The identification, control, differentiation, clarification, mood enhancement, and relief functions were reported at least once. Identification, enhanced mood, and relief functions were reported the most, with six of the six participants circling identification, enhanced mood, and relief

as functions of humor usage within athletic settings. Control was identified twice as being a function of humor usage within athletic settings. Differentiation and clarification were each identified once as being a function of humor usage within athletic settings. Resistance was not reported as a possible function or use of humor within the participants' athletic settings.

Table 1

*Descriptive Data for reported functions of humor*

Function	Times Reported
Identification	6
Stress Relief	6
Mood Enhancement	6
Control	2
Clarification	1
Differentiation	1
Resistance	1

\*Six of the 16 participants reported at least one function of humor. Six was the highest number reported of any one function.

Overall, there were more positive than negative functions reported. Relief, identification, and enhanced mood were reported the most, and each is a positive function of humor. Although control and differentiation were only reported twice and once respectively, sport psychology practitioners and individuals in authoritative positions should be aware that humor occurs in this manner within athletic settings and try to discourage humor functions in the respective manners.

The pilot study provided information for the functions of humor being reported in sport, and the results suggest positive functions of humor are more prevalent in athletic settings. However, the yes/no circling response provided little information on the relative importance of the different functions. To more accurately determine the perceived frequency of each function, the function measure in the current study will include a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

Types of humor used by athletes were measured for frequency in the pilot study. Occurrence was recorded for how often participants perceived blue humor, jokes, wisecracks, and sarcasms/put-downs are used within their athletic settings using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Wisecracks reported the highest usage, with a mean of 4.00, followed by jokes and practical jokes which reported a mean of 3.8125, by blue humor which reported a mean of 3.7188, and by put-downs/sarcasm humor which reported a mean of 3.6875. The means of each type of humors' usage lied in-between seldom and occasionally (each closest to occasional usage). The One-Way ANOVA computed to determine if there were significant differences between the humor usage among the humor users reflected an F-value of .265, and was not significant at the .05 alpha level. Therefore, statistical analysis documented that the student-athlete participants reported no significant differences on their perceptions of types of humor used.

The pilot study provided information for the types of humor being reported in sport. However, the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) is a validated instrument that

should provide a better understanding of the styles/types of humor used in athletic settings.

The negative and positive effects of humor usage were measured for frequency using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Negative effects reported a mean of 2.19, while positive effects reported a mean of 4.25. The dependent t-test computed to determine if there were significant differences between the frequency of negative and positive effects of humor usage within athletic settings reflected a t-value of 8.716, which was significant at the .05 alpha level. Therefore, humor was reported as having significantly greater positive effects than negative effects.

Humor perceived as having negative effects was reported within the almost never to seldom range (closest to the almost never range). It is encouraging that humor rarely has negative effects. Humor that had positive effects was reported within the occasionally to often range (closest to the occasionally range).

The current study will attempt to gain further knowledge into the positive and negative effects of humor. In the pilot study, the negative and positive effects of humor were measured in general. The current study will be more specific by asking how humor affects the individual athlete and the team using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (very negatively) to 5 (very positively). Delving further into the positive and negative effects, the current study will use ten questions to address specific positive or negative effects of humor 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

## Appendix B

## Pilot Study 2007 Questionnaire

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO*****CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT***

Project Title: Humor Usage within Athletic Settings

Project Director: Nich Hester

**Participant's Name (Print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES:**

You will be asked to complete a survey related to how you perceive humor usage within your athletic settings. The questions allow you to describe how humor is used within your particular athletic settings (i.e., practice, games, locker room, road trips, around teammates/coaches). There are no right or wrong answers so please feel free to elaborate freely in your responses. Upon completion, participants will turn in survey to student researcher for recording of data. The survey should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

**RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:**

There are no potential risks or discomforts for participants in the study.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS:**

The results from the study should prove to be informative and possibly provide more clarity for sport psychology consultants, coaches, and other professionals working in the field of athletics in determining ways that humor should and should not be used within athletic settings.

By signing this consent form, you agree that you understand the procedures and any risks and benefits involved in this research. You are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw your consent to participate in this research at any time without penalty or prejudice; your participation is entirely voluntary. Your privacy will be protected because you will not be identified by name as a participant in this project.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research involving people follows federal regulations, has approved the research and this consent form. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project can be answered by calling Mr. Eric Allen at (336) 256-1482. Questions regarding the research itself will be answered by Nich Hester by calling (336) 414-7034. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to you if the information might affect your willingness to continue participation in the project.

By signing this form, you are agreeing to participate in the project described to you by Nich Hester.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Humor in Sport

**AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GENDER (CIRCLE):**      MALE                      FEMALE

**COLLEGE SPORT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CLASS (CIRCLE):**    FRESHMAN   SOPHMORE   JUNIOR              SENIOR

## Humor Study Questions

Purpose: To investigate the function of humor use within collegiate sport.

Humor is a verbal message or behavior intended to be funny. For example, humor can come in such forms as jokes, sarcasm, practical jokes, put-downs, wisecracks. Additionally humor can function to unify individuals, differentiating groups from one another, for control and enforcement, for resistance and separation, or for clarification.

The following questions allow you to describe how humor is used within your particular athletic settings (i.e., practice, games, locker room, road trips (way to and back from games), around teammates/coaches). There are no right or wrong answers so please feel free to elaborate freely in your responses.

How often is humor used within your locker room settings (circle)?

Never            Almost Never            Seldom            Occasionally            Often

Describe a typical example(s) of how humor is used within your locker room settings?

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How often is humor used within your practice settings (circle)?

Never            Almost Never            Seldom            Occasionally            Often

Describe a typical example(s) of how humor is used within your practice settings.

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How often is humor used within your game settings (circle)?

Never      Almost Never      Seldom      Occasionally      Often

Describe a typical example(s) of how humor is used within your game settings.

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How often is humor used during road trips on your way to or back from games (circle)?

Never      Almost Never      Seldom      Occasionally      Often

Describe a typical example(s) of how humor is used during road trips on your way to or back from games.

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How often do you use humor within your athletic settings (circle)?

Never      Almost Never      Seldom      Occasionally      Often

How often does your coach use humor within your athletic settings (circle)?

Never      Almost Never      Seldom      Occasionally      Often

How often do your teammates use humor within your athletic settings (circle)?

Never      Almost Never      Seldom      Occasionally      Often

Is there anyone else who uses humor within your athletic settings?

(Give title/position of person \_\_\_\_\_)

How often does this person(s) use humor within your athletic settings (circle)?

Never      Almost Never      Seldom      Occasionally      Often

**Use the following definitions to answer the next group of questions:**

Blue Humor: not appropriate for the public speaker. Humor based on easily offensive subjects like making love, body parts, and bodily functions.

Joke: short story ending with a funny climactic twist.

Practical Joke: a joke put into action. The trick is played on another person and the humor comes from what happens.

Wisecrack: any clever remark about a particular person or thing. Wisecracks are quick wordplays about a person.

Sarcasm/Put-downs - a sharply ironical taunt; sneering or cutting remark

How often is blue humor typically used within your athletic settings?

Never            Almost Never            Seldom            Occasionally            Often

How often are jokes typically used within your athletic settings?

Never            Almost Never            Seldom            Occasionally            Often

How often are practical jokes typically used within your athletic settings?

Never            Almost Never            Seldom            Occasionally            Often

How often are put-downs/sarcasm typically used within your athletic settings?

Never            Almost Never            Seldom            Occasionally            Often

How often are wisecracks typically used within your athletic settings?

Never            Almost Never            Seldom            Occasionally            Often

**Below are possible functions or uses of humor within your athletic settings.**

**Circle all that relate to your particular athletic settings.**

- Identification - Serves the purpose of uniting individuals, helps to build and increase team cohesiveness
- Control - Serves to enforce social norms, thus implementing a control function and demonstrate superiority over others
- Differentiation - To differentiate or exclude from the group
- Resistance - Used to resist and separate from the norms of another group
- Clarification - Serves to describe and further clarify one's position
- Enhance Mood - To raise and uplift the team's spirits, to bring about a good feeling atmosphere
- Relief - applied to reduce tension or stress

How often does humor have negative effects within your team settings?

Never      Almost Never      Seldom      Occasionally      Often

Give an example of humor that has negative effects.

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How often does humor have positive effects within your team settings?

Never      Almost Never      Seldom      Occasionally      Often

Give an example of humor that has positive effects.

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Is there anything else you would like to add concerning the frequency of humor, effects of humor, functions of humor, or humor usage in general within your athletic settings?

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## Appendix C

### Pilot Study 2009

The purpose of this study was to pilot the measures and procedures for the proposed study on humor and sport. In this pilot study, the styles of humor, the uses of humor, and the perceived effects of humor were examined with recreational kickball players.

#### Methods

Participants in this study were members of a YMCA recreational kickball team in North Carolina. There were 15 participants, 10 males and 5 females. In order to be a participant in the study, the athletes had to be at least 18 years of age. The participants' ages ranged from 29 to 43 years-of-age.

Prior to collecting data for the study, the investigator received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The executive director of the YMCA was contacted personally by the researcher for their assistance in gaining access to the kickball players. The survey (see Appendix D) was hand delivered by the student researcher to the participants. Participation within the study was voluntary.

Participants were informed of the intent of the study in a cover letter sent along with the questionnaire. All participants were ensured of their rights in compliance with proper human protocol, and ensured their confidentiality, anonymity, right of withdrawal, and provided signed informed consent.

Data collection took place in August 2008. Participants were asked to complete a survey packet related to team cohesion and humor usage within athletic settings. Upon completion, participants turned in their surveys to the student investigator.

### *Measures*

The survey packet included the measures to be used in the current study and described in Chapter III. The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) was used to measure the perceptions of team cohesion among athletic teams (Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985). The GEQ consists of four subscales; individual attractiveness to the group (ATG-T), individual attractions to the group social (ATG-S), group integration-task (GI-T), and group integration-social (GI-S). The GEQ consists of 18 items using a 9-point Likert-type scale, ranging from one to nine (one would be strongly disagree and nine would be strongly agree) (see Table 1).

*Humor Styles.* The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was used to measure the humor styles used among team members (Martin et al., 2003). The HSQ includes two positive scales, affiliative and self-enhancing, and two negative scales, aggressive and self-defeating. The HSQ consists of 32 items with each question being a self-descriptive statement about one's particular uses of humor. Respondents rated the degree to which each statement describes them on a Likert-type scale rating from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree).

*Humor functions.* The Uses of Humor Index (Graham et al., 1992) was used to measure the functions and uses of humor among athletic team members. The UHI consists of 11 items, with each question being a self-descriptive statement about one's particular functions and specific uses of humor. Respondents rated the degree to which each statement describes them on a Likert-type scale rating from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). The UHI has three scales: positive affect, negative affect, and expressiveness,

*Effects of humor.* Questions on the effects of humor included two questions that addressed the overall effects of humor on the individual athlete and the team and ten questions that addressed specific positive and negative effects of humor with a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Using the 5-point scale, participants rated how often they perceived humor to effect them or the team in relieving stress and tension, creating stress and tension, enhancing team cohesion, creating dissention or separation within the team, developing a team identity, creating a distraction or diversion, raising spirits/mood, improving performance, interfering with performance, and increasing effort/playing harder.

### *Results*

The results revealed that the positive styles, functions, and effects of humor were reported with more frequency than the negative styles, functions, and effects of humor. The resulting scores were similar to those found in Reiger (2004), where participants reported higher scores on positive styles and functions of humor than on

negative functions and styles. Pearson correlations were run to determine relationships among the scales of cohesion, styles of humor, and functions of humor (see Table 5). Due to small sample size, few correlations were statistically significant. Tables one to five provide descriptive for the pilot study.

Table 1

*Descriptive Data for GEQ*

Cohesion	Mean Per Item	Standard Deviation
ATG-T	8.05	.97
GIT-T	6.59	1.53
GI-S	6.4	1.66
ATG-S	6.4	1.64

Table 2

*Descriptive Data for HSQ*

Style	Mean	Standard Deviation
Affiliative	42	7.42
Self-Enhancing	38.13	5.52
Aggressive	29.73	8.01
Self-Defeating	29.2	7.49



Table 3

*Descriptive Data for UHI*

Function	Mean Per Item	Standard Deviation
Positive	3.75	.79
Expressiveness	3.33	.97
Negative	2.69	1.16

Table 4

*Descriptive Data for Effects of Humor*

Effect	Mean	Standard Deviation
Team	4.13	.64
You	4.00	.76
Cohesion	4.07	.80
Raise Mood	3.93	.88
Relieve Stress	3.87	1.06
Identity	3.60	1.12
Increase Performance	3.60	1.12
Effort	3.40	1.35
Distraction	2.80	1.08
Decrease Performance	2.40	1.18
Create Stress	2.33	.98
Separation	2.27	1.16

Table 5

*Significant Correlations Among Scales*

Correlating Scales	Correlation
GI-S, Aggressive	.541
GI-T, Affiliative	.544
Self-enhancing, Aggressive	.645
Aggressive, Self-Defeating	.660
Aggressive, Negative	.665
Self-Defeating, Negative	.633





9. For me this team is one of the most important social groups to which I belong.  
 1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9  
 Strongly            Strongly  
 Disagree            Agree
10. Our team is united in trying to reach its goals for performance.  
 1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9  
 Strongly            Strongly  
 Disagree            Agree
11. Members of our team would rather go out on their own than together as a team.  
 1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9  
 Strongly            Strongly  
 Disagree            Agree
12. We all take responsibility for any loss or poor performance by our team.  
 1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9  
 Strongly            Strongly  
 Disagree            Agree
13. Our team members rarely party together.  
 1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9  
 Strongly            Strongly  
 Disagree            Agree
14. Our team members have conflicting aspirations for the team's performance.  
 1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9  
 Strongly            Strongly  
 Disagree            Agree
15. Our team would like to spend time together in the off season.  
 1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9  
 Strongly            Strongly  
 Disagree            Agree
16. If members of our team have problems in practice, everyone wants to help them so we can get back together again.  
 1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9  
 Strongly            Strongly  
 Disagree            Agree
17. Members of our team do not stick together outside of practices and games.  
 1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9  
 Strongly            Strongly  
 Disagree            Agree



## Humor Styles Questionnaire

People experience and express humor in many different ways. Below is a list of statements describing different ways in which humor might be experienced. Please read each statement carefully, and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it.

**Answer the questions as to how they relate to your particular athletic setting.**

Please respond as honestly and objectively as you can. Use the following scale:

Totally Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Totally Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1.	I usually don't laugh or joke around much with other people.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2.	If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself up with humor.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3.	If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4.	I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5.	I don't have to work very hard at making other people laugh -- I seem to be a naturally humorous person.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6.	Even when I'm by myself, I'm often amused by the absurdities of life.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7.	People are never offended or hurt by my sense of humor.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8.	I will often get carried away in putting myself down if it makes my family or friends laugh.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9.	I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10.	If I am feeling upset or unhappy I usually try to think of something funny about the situation to make myself feel better.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Totally Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	When telling jokes or saying funny things, I am usually not very concerned about how other people are taking it.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	I laugh and joke a lot with my friends.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	My humorous outlook on life keeps me from getting overly upset or depressed about things.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	I do not like it when people use humor as a way of criticizing or putting someone down.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	I don't often say funny things to put myself down.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17.	I usually don't like to tell jokes or amuse people.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18.	If I'm by myself and I'm feeling unhappy, I make an effort to think of something funny to cheer myself up.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19.	Sometimes I think of something that is so funny that I can't stop myself from saying it, even if it is not appropriate for the situation.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20.	I often go overboard in putting myself down when I am making jokes or trying to be funny.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21.	I enjoy making people laugh.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22.	If I am feeling sad or upset, I usually lose my sense of humor.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Totally Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Totally Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I never participate in laughing at others even if all my friends are doing it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. When I am with friends or family, I often seem to be the one that other people make fun of or joke about.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I don't often joke around with my friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. It is my experience that thinking about some amusing aspect of a situation is often a very effective way of coping with problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. If I don't like someone, I often use humor or teasing to put them down.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. If I am having problems or feeling unhappy, I often cover it up by joking around, so that even my closest friends don't know how I really feel.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I usually can't think of witty things to say when I'm with other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I don't need to be with other people to feel amused -- I can usually find things to laugh about even when I'm by myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. Even if something is really funny to me, I will not laugh or joke about it if someone will be offended.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. Letting others laugh at me is my way of keeping my friends and family in good spirits.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## ***USES OF HUMOR INDEX***

**Circle to indicate the degree to which you use humor to fill each specific question. Answer the following questions as they relate to your particular athletic setting.**

*I Use Humor To....*

1. **Make light of a situation**  
 1 Almost Never    2 Rarely    3 Sometimes    4 Often 5 Almost Always
2. **Help Develop friendships**  
 1 Almost Never    2 Rarely    3 Sometimes    4 Often 5 Almost Always
3. **Be playful**  
 1 Almost Never    2 Rarely    3 Sometimes    4 Often 5 Almost Always
4. **Disclose difficult information**  
 1 Almost Never    2 Rarely    3 Sometimes    4 Often 5 Almost Always
5. **Allow others to know me**  
 1 Almost Never    2 Rarely    3 Sometimes    4 Often 5 Almost Always
6. **Let others know likes/dislikes**  
 1 Almost Never    2 Rarely    3 Sometimes    4 Often 5 Almost Always
7. **Avoid telling others about me**  
 1 Almost Never    2 Rarely    3 Sometimes    4 Often 5 Almost Always
8. **Express my feelings**  
 1 Almost Never    2 Rarely    3 Sometimes    4 Often 5 Almost Always
9. **Demean and belittle others**  
 1 Almost Never    2 Rarely    3 Sometimes    4 Often 5 Almost Always
10. **Say negative things to others**  
 1 Almost Never    2 Rarely    3 Sometimes    4 Often 5 Almost Always
11. **Put others in their place**  
 1 Almost Never    2 Rarely    3 Sometimes    4 Often 5 Almost Always

## Humor Effects Questionnaire

**1. Overall, how does humor used in your athletic setting affect you personally (circle)?**

1 Very Negative      2 Mostly Negative      3 Neutral      4 Mostly Positive      5 Very Positive

**2. Overall, how does humor used in your athletic setting affect your team (circle)?**

1 Very Negative      2 Mostly Negative      3 Neutral      4 Mostly Positive      5 Very Positive

**For each of the following possible effects of humor, please circle to indicate how often humor has this effect upon you or your team:**

1. **Relieve stress & tension**

1 Never      2 Rarely      3 Sometimes      4 Often      5 Always

2. **Create stress & tension**

1 Never      2 Rarely      3 Sometimes      4 Often      5 Always

3. **Enhance team cohesion**

1 Never      2 Rarely      3 Sometimes      4 Often      5 Always

4. **Create dissention or separation within the team**

1 Never      2 Rarely      3 Sometimes      4 Often      5 Always

5. **Develop a team identity**

1 Never      2 Rarely      3 Sometimes      4 Often      5 Always

6. **Create a distraction or diversion**

1 Never      2 Rarely      3 Sometimes      4 Often      5 Always

7. **Raise spirits/mood**

1 Never      2 Rarely      3 Sometimes      4 Often      5 Always

8. **Improve Performance**

1 Never      2 Rarely      3 Sometimes      4 Often      5 Always

9. **Interfere with Performance**

1 Never      2 Rarely      3 Sometimes      4 Often      5 Always

10. **Increase effort/play harder**

1 Never      2 Rarely      3 Sometimes      4 Often      5 Always

11. What types of humor have mostly positive effects on you or your team?  
(Please explain and give an example if you can)

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12. What types of humor have mostly negative effects on you or your team?  
(Please explain and give an example if you can)

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13. Please add anything else on types of humor used or humor's effects in your athletic settings?

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## Appendix E

## All Correlations

*GEQ Correlations*

Scale/Item	ATG-T	GI-T	GI-S	ATG-S
ATG-T	1.00	.508*	.488*	.532*
GI-T	.508*	1.00	.631*	.535*
GI-S	.488*	.631*	1.00	.639*
ATG-S	.532*	.535*	.639*	1.00
Affiliative	.309*	.329*	.245*	.131
Self-Enhancing	-.002	.169	.233*	.129
Aggressive	.059	.211	.016	.012
Self-Defeating	-.017	-.007	-.144	-.040
Positive	-.054	.181	.194	.019
Expressive	.034	.168	.035	-.069
Negative	-.057	.003	-.094	-.071
Overall	-.196	-.173	.168	-.059
Athlete Personally	.241*	.419*	.383*	.159
Team	.342*	.541*	.480*	.276*
Relieve Stress	.203	.408*	.346*	.123
Create Stress	-.397*	-.535*	-.363*	-.292*
Enhance Cohesion	.126	.474*	.444*	.314*
Create dissention	-.346*	-.519	-.536*	-.351*
Develop Identity	.194	.439	.437*	.388*
Create Distraction	-.278*	-.345	-.253*	-.201
Raise Spirits/Mood	.230*	.420	.422*	.318*
Improve Performance	.107	.376	.531*	.211

Scale/Item	ATG-T	GI-T	GI-S	ATG-S
Interfere with Performance	-.378*	-.440	-.386*	-.282*
Increase Effort	.125	.161	.234*	.124

\*Significant at the  $p < .05$  alpha level

*HSQ Correlations*

Scale/Item	Affiliative	Self-Enhancing	Aggressive	Defeating
ATG-T	.309*	-.002	.059	-.017
GI-T	.329*	.169	.211	-.007
GI-S	.245*	.233*	.016	-.144
ATG-S	.131	.129	.012	-.040
Affiliative	1.00	.439*	.321*	.089
Self-Enhancing	.439*	1.00	.174	.153
Aggressive	.321*	.174	1.00	.201
Self-Defeating	.089	.153	.201	1.00
Positive	.390*	.491*	.221	.183
Expressive	.296*	.333*	.095	.100
Negative	.086	.118	.607*	.218
Overall	-.028	.134	-.045	-.139
Athlete Personally	.223*	.115	.331*	.070
Team	.253*	.051	.350*	-.076
Relieve Stress	.296*	.278*	.106	-.124
Create Stress	-.298*	.007	-.120	.209
Enhance Cohesion	.227*	.129	.192	-.056
Create dissention	-.273*	-.029	.058	.346*
Develop Identity	.128	.106	.249*	-.081
Create Distraction	-.264*	-.009	.067	.210
Raise Spirits/Mood	.413*	.343*	.270*	-.032
Improve Performance	.248*	.223*	.102	-.133
Interfere with Performance	-.236*	.013	.079	.271*
Increase Effort	.212	.143	.147	-.083

\*Significant at the  $p < .05$  alpha level

*UHI Correlations*

Scale/Item	Positive	Expressive	Negative
ATG-T	-.054	.034	-.057
GI-T	.181	.168	.003
GI-S	.194	.035	-.094
ATG-S	.019	-.063	-.071
Affiliative	.390*	.296*	.086
Self-Enhancing	.491*	.333*	.118
Aggressive	.221	.095	.607*
Self-Defeating	.183	.100	.218
Positive	1.00	.451*	.126
Expressive	.451*	1.00	.100
Negative	.126	.100	1.00
Overall	.147	-.063	-.014
Athlete Personally	.386*	-.006	.172
Team	.177	.045	.138
Relieve Stress	.421*	.298*	.001
Create Stress	-.113	.094	.041
Enhance Cohesion	.366*	.240*	.059
Create dissention	-.312*	-.049	.228*
Develop Identity	.205	.043	.105
Create Distraction	-.266*	.137	.222*



Scale/Item	Positive	Expressive	Negative
Raise Spirits/Mood	.500*	.294*	.035
Improve Performance	.236*	.324*	-.028
Interfere with Performance	-.122	-.081	.315*
Increase Effort	.053	.269*	-.063

\*Significant at the  $p < .05$  alpha level

*Overall Correlations*

Scale/Item	Overall Usage	Effects Personally	Effects Team
ATG-T	-.196*	.241*	.342*
GI-T	-.173*	.419*	.541*
GI-S	.168	.383*	.480*
ATG-S	-.059	.159	.276*
Affiliative	-.028	.223*	.253*
Self-Enhancing	.134	.115	.051
Aggressive	-.045	.331*	.350*
Self-Defeating	-.139	.070	-.076
Positive	.147	.386*	.177
Expressive	-.063	-.006	.045
Negative	-.014	.172	.138
Overall	1.00	.012	.076
Athlete Personally	.012	1.00	.741*
Team	.076	.741*	1.00
Relieve Stress	.080	.366*	.401*
Create Stress	.075	-.453*	-.561*
Enhance Cohesion	.007	.489*	.499*
Create dissention	.058	-.353*	-.416*
Develop Identity	.035	.460*	.486*
Create Distraction	.117	.399*	-.283*

Scale/Item	Overall Usage	Effects Personally	Effects Team
Raise Spirits/Mood	.020	.392*	.481*
Improve Performance	.070	.266*	.308*
Interfere with Performance	-.50	.314*	-.494
Increase Effort	.128	.129	.243

\*Significant at the  $p < .05$  alpha level

## Appendix F

## Open-Ended Responses

## Question #11

What types of humor have mostly positive effects on you or your team? (Please explain and give an example if you can)

<u>Participant id</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	“Movies.”
2	“Borat.”
4	“Movies, Girls.”
5	“Kermit Sanders.”
6	“Good Jokes, poking at teammates when they know we are kidding.”
7	“Sanders.”
8	“Sarcasm.”
9	“Borat.”
10	“Humor among ourselves. We joke about each other a lot.”
11	“Fun, jokes.”
12	“Joking about messing up a play because it will make that person more relaxed the next time.”
13	“Jokes about something that happened that day/weekend or something funny in practice.”
14	“Joking on mistakes but not in a harmful way, more in an encouraging way.”

<u>Participant id</u>	<u>Response</u>
15	“We joke around what happened in practice. To make the situation better and more relaxed.”
16	“When someone messes up and you laugh at them, yell and complain about it.”
17	“When we start to poke fun of others on the team and go back and forth with it.”
18	“People are real funny and tell stories about themselves. We joke about what people do and just have fun.”
19	“Enhance team cohesion, enhance spirits mood, and relieve stress and tension.”
20	“Making side comments to lift somebody up, if someone makes a bad play, just say something to lift their spirits.”
21	“When we are in the café are out somewhere just cracking jokes and having fun.”
22	“Jokes that everyone will laugh at, not putting someone down, imitating comedians.”
23	“Whenever you are joking about going hard in practice or the competitive jokes.”
24	“Helps us bond as a team and allows to laugh and share one’s feelings. We usually just joke around with each other or joke about another team we are playing if something happens in the game.”
25	“Humor by coach. When he jokes it lets us know his mood.”

<u>Participant id</u>	<u>Response</u>
26	“Small jokes about what someone did during practice that was funny or embarrassing. Like getting dunked on or air-balling.”
28	“Making jokes, laughing, and having fun have the most positive effect.”
29	“When everybody laughs at something that happened to somebody else.”
30	“If I have a wide open lay-up, I would do something crazy before making the shot so people can laugh.”
31	“When us or a coach jokes about how hard someone is playing to make us play harder (motivational humor).”
32	“Sometimes joking raises up our atmosphere.”
33	“When someone makes a joke pointing out something funny about a teammate, but not to the point to where the person feels left out of team bonding.”
34	“Mainly when teammates encourage you to do better and try harder.”
35	“Coach laughing during practice.”
36	“Humor on a good play someone makes. For example if someone on my team dunks on someone on the other team.”
37	“Humor with post-practice. We often joke about funny situation that either a teammate or coach experienced during practice.”

<u>Participant id</u>	<u>Response</u>
39	“Joking with my fellow teammates about mistakes or how unknowingly we often end up segregated.”
40	“Basketball trash talk.”
41	“Humor before practice to raise spirits.”
42	“If someone messes up we can make a joke about it then fix the mistake.”
43	“Talking about each other’s skills.”
44	“Ones that help someone get better but also lets them know they did something wrong like saying “don’t worry man you will get it next time.”
45	“When someone falls down or gets dunked on its funny but it makes that person and everyone else play harder so it wouldn’t happen to them.”
46	“Talking about the way someone does a drill – teasing.”
47	“When coach tells a joke to make the player feel comfortable.”
48	“Before practice when talking about some players tendencies in practice or in games.”
49	“Laughing at someone who makes a mistake will prevent it from happening again.”
50	“We often joke about the things that coach says after he has finished yelling at us.”
51	“We laugh at the coach a lot.”

<u>Participant id</u>	<u>Response</u>
52	“If someone was to make a mistake we joke about it, and it makes it seem like it is no big deal.”
54	“Just telling jokes in general or past experiences we have gone through.”
55	“Regular humor, where we all are in the locker room, sit around and joke with one another.”
56	“Humor that takes place in the locker room or on the court”
57	“Telling jokes or funny stories.”
58	“When we make fun of our coach and the way he talks. Allows us to come together as a team.”
59	“Joking around in the locker room. This helps with the team bonding and the togetherness.”
60	“Teasing each other about different things.”
61	“Sometimes we make impersonations of the coach to keep everyone laughing”
62	“The conversations in the locker room usually gets the team members closer to each other. Teasing others on what they did on court.”
63	“Telling Jokes or funny stories.”
65	“Joking about other situations.”
66	“Tease so much people don’t want to mess up.”



<u>Participant id</u>	<u>Response</u>
67	“We make fun when players mess up therefore players play better.”
71	“Positive humor.”
72	“If someone is messing up. Teammates joke a little about it and we joke it in a good way and it gives positive energy.”
73	“Mocking the coach.”
75	“Humor on Performance makes team play harder.”
77	“Jokes.”
78	“Jokes, we all joke on each other and that brightens the mood.”
79	“Personal Jokes about how someone plays.”

## Question #12

What types of humor have mostly negative effects on you or your team? (Please explain and give an example if you can)

<u>Participant id</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	“About athletic ability.”
6	“Putting others down.”
8	“Sarcasm.”
9	“Poking fun if anything.”
11	“Criticism, Sarcasm.”
12	“Joking about other people’s personal life.”
13	“Take them to far, mouthing the other player or teammate.”
14	“Criticizing someone’s skills or effort in a humorous way. Ultimately embarrassing them”
15	“Only if someone keeps doing it.”
16	“When someone messes up and you laugh at them, yell and complain about it.”
17	“When we start to make fun of each other because some people take it in the wrong way.”
18	“If you joke about a certain person and they do not like it.”
19	“Create stress & tension, separation within the team, interfere with performance.”
21	“When teammates talk down on other teammates and they become offended.”

<u>Participant id</u>	<u>Response</u>
22	“Teammates try to fry each other and someone takes it personally.”
23	“The talking junk about someone’s game.”
25	“People playing during practice. It distracts and does not make us better.”
26	“Ragging on someone’s physical features or girlfriends.”
27	“Talking about that person off the court.”
28	“Humor used at the wrong time hurts us.”
29	“When people team up and make fun of one person.”
30	“Someone makes a good move on me and people laugh.”
31	“When we are playing bad and someone is joking not taking it serious (playful humor).”
32	“Sometimes joking makes us feel free (like not serious).”
33	“Ragging on one person too much and pointing out things that maybe the person cannot help.”
34	“When your teammate or coach downs how you play.”
35	“Players talking bad about the next player’s success.”
36	“When someone is talking about someone’s game. Like if I had 3 points in a game and someone had 20 points and they joked on how much better they are than me.”
37	“Humor against a teammate that is having a bad day. Practice did not go well and other teammates are constantly making fun of them.”

<u>Participant id</u>	<u>Response</u>
38	“Joking about someone’s weakness on the court.”
40	“Basketball trash talk.”
41	“Joking around and laughing when things are going badly.”
42	“If someone makes the same mistake over and over again they tend to get picked on.”
43	“Talking about others skills and past schools.”
44	“Ones that put someone down. Telling someone they suck.”
45	“When someone keeps messing up a play over and over again its funny at first but after a while it ain’t.”
46	“Bring someone’s confidence down.”
47	“The humor where some players are showing up, or calling out another player.”
48	“When teammates belittle other teammates performance in games or practice.”
50	“When we joke about personal things for example if someone makes a mistake and they get in trouble over it they do not want to joke about it.”
51	“Teasing maybe.”
55	“Hidden humor where a person may say a joke about another player making the team laugh, and not knowing it is hurting that players feelings.”
56	“Things that bring down the team.”

<u>Participant id</u>	<u>Response</u>
59	“Personal jokes about someone’s performance can become personal.”
62	“If the jokes get to personal, or if someone’s already having a bad day you should not joke around with him.”
64	“Poking fun of others playing styles or weaknesses
65	Talking about other’s basketball ability.”
66	“Teasing people for missing shots or anything that gets under their skin, or going overboard.”
67	“In games when players get dunked on it becomes a joke.”
68	“Humor about a players playing time or personal life or anything about the team.”
69	“Laughing because of players mistakes, we should lift our teammates up.”
71	“Negative humor.”
72	“When people make fun of personal stuff of the people.”
73	“Joke about each other.”
77	‘Jokes.’
78	“Jokes, sometimes they tend to touch feelings.”
79	“Sarcastic remarks.”

## Question #13

Please add anything else on types of humor used or humor's effects in your athletic settings?

<u>Participant id</u>	<u>Response</u>
9	"Poking fun at one another."
12	"Humor is a good tool in creating comfortability and relaxation."
14	Our team has funny members and we wouldn't be the same without the humor."
21	"Humor helps time go by faster when your sitting around bored."
22	"Most humor usually gets our mind off the stress of the season, effects us positively."
26	"There is a lot of tension and pressure on us and humor helps us relax."
29	"It is usually funny and harmful."
37	"Environmental humor- laughing about things on a way to a party, getting something to eat or anything funny that occurred on away from sports."
40	"Past memories."
42	"Mostly humor is great for the team. It's a positive way to get the message across."
43	"Talking about play time."
45	"Poking fun at someone's jump shot or the way they play on the court."

<u>Participant id</u>	<u>Response</u>
48	“Can be beneficial to use before practice to enhance other players’ moods and spirits before a hard practice.”
49	“We laugh at everything.”
50	“When we are beating another team and we talk trash to them on the court that brings us together.”
65	“Should be used correctly.”
67	“It lightens the mood.”
78	“We just like to laugh.”