Humor Styles in Marriage: How Similar Are Husband and Wife?

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Abstract
Past research found that similar appreciation for humor exists between spouses, but it is not certain whether this similarity between spouses also exists in kindhearted or malicious humor. The present study investigated the similarity of Taiwanese married couples’ humor styles. Participants included 239 couples (mean age = 42.9 years) who had been married to each other for at least 10 years. We used a traditional Chinese edition of the Humor Styles Questionnaire to measure the humor style and clustered participants’ humor styles in order to examine the similarity between spouses. The results show that husbands have higher tendencies toward aggressive (Cohen’s $d = 0.29$, $p < .01$) and self-defeating (Cohen’s $d = 0.35$, $p < .01$) humor styles than wives. Results from multilevel modeling indicate that spouses’ aggressive ($p < .001$, confidence interval = .17, .41) and self-defeating ($p < .01$, confidence interval = .05, .30) humor styles acting as a valid predictor to the other spouses’ negative humor styles. Furthermore, the results show that personal humor styles could be
categorized into four clusters: positive humor endorsers, negative humor endorsers, general humor endorsers, and humor deniers. According to the clusters within spouse pairs, results show that similarities in humor styles exist between spouses ($\chi^2 = 16.73$, $p = .01$). The current study finds that most couples have similar humor styles and that a high proportion of married couples share the same humor clusters.

**Keywords**
Cluster analysis, culture, humor styles, marriage, similarity

**Introduction**

Mate selection and close relationship are interesting topics for researchers and publics. Feingold (1992) conducted meta-analysis and found that some traits were commonly important for men and women, one was being humorous. Humor also serves as a powerful factor in making decisions in relationships (Alberts, 1990; Bippus, 2000; Bressler & Balshine, 2006), such as choosing partners (Buss, 1988; Feingold, 1992; McGee & Shevlin, 2009), interpersonal attraction (Cann, Calhoun, & Banks, 1997), and marriage (Lauer, Lauer, & Kerr, 1990). Humor is not only an indicator of mate selection but also one way to manage marriage. In general, people who have humorous spouses have higher satisfaction of marriage (Bressler & Balshine, 2006; Hall, 2013); spouse’s frequency of using humor is positively correlated with quality marital satisfaction (Campbell, Martin, & Ward, 2008; Campbell & Moroz, 2014; Lauer et al., 1990). Previous studies have focused on the relationship outcomes of humor use (e.g., Campbell et al., 2008). Meanwhile, it has been found that when similarities of humor use were perceived, spouses would become more satisfied with their mate and be much more optimistic on the relationships development in the future (Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra, 2010; Murstein & Brust, 1985).

According to the similarity–attraction hypothesis proposed by Byrne (1971), people tend to make friends with those who have similar personalities compared with people who are randomly paired (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Examples include age, race, attitude, and religion (Rushton & Bons, 2005). Some people even marry others who have the same political attitude and values (Luo & Klohnen, 2005). Recently, Bahns, Crandall, Gillath and Preacher (2017) have confirmed that similarities did influence individual selection of choosing the subject one would like to interact with.

Sense of humor reflects one’s values, needs, and the manners of interaction. The similarities among these elements serve as key factors for choosing an appropriate mate. When two people laugh out loud toward an event based on the similarities of sense of humor, it matches the “I sharing” concepts proposed
by Pinel, Long, Landau, Alexander, and Pyszczynski (2006), that is, experiencing the same experience would strengthen the connection between each other more easily. Additionally, Fraley and Aron (2004) also reported that sharing humorous experiences with others or laugh together would enhance intimacy. In a previous study that investigated the similarities of humor appreciation and close relationships, Priest and Thein (2003) suggested that the sense of humor between husband and wife was alike. Therefore, similarity enhances attraction, and this principle applies to humor sense as well. First impression is great when two people realize that both they were amused by a same joke (Cann et al., 1997). Also, individuals feel spouses to be more attractive if their appreciations of humor resemble (Murstein & Brust, 1985), and marriage satisfaction increases if spouses share humorous experience with each other (Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra, 2010); however, humor is not always intended to be friendly. Sometimes, people use humor to ridicule or tease others, in which case humor is detrimental to interpersonal relationships (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003).

Martin et al. (2003) classified helpful and harmful humor by categorizing humor styles into two dimensions: “self-others” and “positive–negative.” “Self-others” refers to the intrapsychic or interpersonal function of humor. “Positive–negative” humor is relatively benevolent or potentially detrimental. Martin et al. (2003) developed the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) to investigate ways of using humor. These authors identified four distinct humor styles: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating (Martin et al., 2003).

These four humor styles have been shown to predict personal emotion, self-esteem, happiness, and each of the five-factor personality dimensions (Martin et al., 2003). In particular, affiliative and self-enhancing humors are correlated with positive characteristics and emotions. Aggressive and self-defeating humors are correlated with negative characteristics and emotions. The HSQ has been translated into several languages and used in North America, South America, Europe, and Asia. Research has shown that the four humor styles are universally found in the different cultures (Chan, Chen, Cho, & Martin, 2011; Chen & Martin, 2007; Kazarian & Martin, 2006; Taher, Kazarian, & Martin, 2008) and ages (Fox, Dean, & Lyford, 2013).

Recent studies have shown that marriage satisfaction increases when one spouse has a higher tendency toward positive humor, though conflict arises when one spouse has a higher tendency toward negative humor (Butzer & Kuiper, 2008; Hall, 2013). Positive humor brings couples closer and helps them cope with conflict (Cann, Davis, & Zapata, 2011; Hall, 2013). Research has also consistently shown that positive humor styles sustain, but negative humor styles hurt, close relationships (Butzer & Kuiper, 2008; Hall, 2013).
However, no agreement has been reached as to the similarity of humor styles in marriage.

Cann et al. (2011) conducted a study of 82 couples who completed the HSQ. The results showed that humor styles were not related between spouses. Using a novel tool by combining items from three different measures of humor, Saroglou, Lacour, and Demeure (2010) studied five humor styles such as affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, earthy, and self-defeating humor styles and included 146 couples who were married for 10 years or more. The results showed that significant correlations existed between spouses’ aggressive, earthy, and self-defeating humor. However, affiliative and self-enhancing humors were not significantly correlated between spouses. Negative humor styles were correlated, though positive humor styles were not.

Hahn and Campbell (2016) used the HSQ to assess humor styles in couples who had been married for an average of 10 years. Inconsistent to aforementioned studies (Cann et al., 2011; Saroglou et al., 2010), they found husband’s humor style serves as a significant predictor of wife’s humor style, and vice versa, for both positive and negative humor styles. According to their study results, humor styles between husband and wife seem partially correlated.

Up to now, however, whether similarities among various humor styles exist is still in debate. One possible reason for the lack of a convergent conclusion is measurement issues. Instead of using one complete inventory, Saroglou et al. (2010) developed a novel tool by combining items from three different measures of humor. These measures included the HSQ (Martin et al., 2003), the Humorous Behavior Q-Sort Deck (Craik, Lampert, & Nelson, 1996), and the Coping Humor Scale (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983). Martin et al.’s (2003) instrument also included earthy humor styles. However, researchers did not conduct a factor analysis for the five humor styles, and the study failed to provide information regarding construct validity. Therefore, findings cannot be meaningfully compared to other studies.

Sample size is also possibly an influential factor in the results of humor styles studies. G*power was used to conduct power analysis when testing if four types of humor styles as predictors. The result revealed that to find a small effect (0.1) with 0.90 power (α = 0.05), 150 pairs were required (Cohen, 1988; Hahn & Campbell, 2016). Consequently, the power analysis result indicates that though previous studies have recruited over 100 married couples and analyzed data via correlation analysis (Cann et al., 2011; Hahn & Campbell, 2016; Saroglou et al., 2010), the sample size remains insufficient.

Past research has demonstrated the influence of humor styles on marital satisfaction (e.g., Butzer & Kuiper, 2008; Cann et al., 2011; Hall, 2013). However, few studies have assessed the similarity of humor styles between marital partners. The similarity principle of attraction suggests that people tend to choose mates who are similar to themselves, and similar senses of humor are commonly seen among married couples. Since people display humor in various
ways, determining whether humor styles of marital partners are similar may provide important insights into marriage. Interestingly, some studies have found that husbands and wives have similar levels of all four humor styles (Hahn & Campbell, 2016). Others have found that only negative humor styles were related (Saroglou et al., 2010). The present study aimed to evaluate humor styles of Taiwanese married couples with the HSQ—traditional Chinese edition (HSQ-TC, Chan et al., 2011). This research tool is a valid and reliable translation of the original questionnaire (Martin et al., 2003). Cluster analysis was used to examine the similarity between marital spouses’ humor styles through a typological approach. Differences in humor styles between Taiwanese couples in this study and other study results were also compared based on the results of the cluster analysis. This step was performed to examine how marital spouses’ humor styles were correlated and whether the similarity principle applied to humor styles.

Method

Participants

To compare our results with past studies, the present study invited participants using standards from past studies (Hahn & Campbell, 2016; Saroglou et al., 2010): couples married to each other for 10 years or more. To make sure we had a sufficient number of participants, we used G*power 3 to calculate the necessary sample size (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). The result revealed that to find a small effect (0.1) with 0.90 power ($\alpha = 0.05$), 150 pairs were required (Cohen, 1988). Hence, 301 couples were recruited to ensure we would have enough participants.

After deleting missing data and data from separated couples, the present study collected valid data from 239 couples ($N = 478$). The average age of the husbands was 44.7 years (standard deviation ($SD = 5.9$)), and the average age of the wives was 41.2 years ($SD = 5.8$). Data in the present study have a nested structure; participants’ self-reported ratings of humor styles are nested within couple. Hence, the data analytic strategy of present study refers to the multilevel modeling (MLM; Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998) by Hahn and Campbell (2016). The study was approved by the institutional review board of Taipei Medical University. All participants were informed of the procedures and gave their informed consent before the experiment began.

Measures

The HSQ-TC (Chan et al., 2011) contains four humor styles; each humor style is assessed by eight items for a total of 32 items: affiliative (e.g., I enjoy making people laugh), self-enhancing (e.g., My humorous philosophy keeps me from
feeling down or depressed about things), aggressive (e.g., If someone makes a mistake, I will tease him/her about it), and self-defeating (e.g., I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, and faults). Respondents are asked to rate each item based on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). A higher score indicates greater tendency toward a particular humor style. Previous studies in Taiwan have confirmed the reliability of the HSQ-TC (Chan et al., 2011).

With the confirmatory factor analysis, we found that the HSQ-TC had a similar model in studies in Taiwan. The analysis demonstrated that the questionnaire has good model fit and good construct validity. Furthermore, the results of the HSQ-TC measurement, the Big Five Personality Markers, the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire, the Self-Esteem Inventory, and the PhoPhiKat-TC scale are consistent with the past research (Martin et al., 2003). The HSQ-TC has good convergent and discriminant validity.

In the present study, the internal consistency Cronbach’s alpha of affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating humors was .84, .73, .73, and .77, respectively. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated good model fit (e.g., root mean square error of approximation = .07) and four humor styles and similar loadings as past research (Chan et al., 2011; Martin et al., 2003).

**Results**

**Humor styles for husband and wife**

First, differences in humor styles between husband and wife are presented in Table 1. The dependent samples *t* test showed no significant differences between husbands’ and wives’ tendencies toward affiliative humor (*t*(238) = −0.73, *p* = .47, *d* = 0.06) or self-enhancing humor (*t*(238) = 0.09, *p* = .93, *d* = 0.01). Husbands had higher tendencies toward aggressive (*t*(238) = 3.78, *p* < .01, **p** < .01) and self-defeating humor (*t*(238) = 4.07**, *p* < .01, **p** < .01).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humor style</th>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th><em>t</em></th>
<th><em>p</em></th>
<th><em>d</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affiliative</td>
<td>4.68 (0.95)</td>
<td>4.74 (0.98)</td>
<td>−0.73</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-enhancing</td>
<td>4.46 (0.85)</td>
<td>4.45 (0.83)</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>2.77 (0.82)</td>
<td>2.53 (0.83)</td>
<td>3.78**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-defeating</td>
<td>3.00 (0.88)</td>
<td>2.70 (0.86)</td>
<td>4.07**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SD: standard deviation.

*Note: **p < .01.*
and self-defeating humor ($t(238) = 4.07, p < .01, d = 0.35$). Both husbands ($t(238) = 23.546, p < .01, d = 2.30$) and wives ($t(238) = 28.058, p < .01, d = 2.61$) showed higher tendencies toward positive humor than negative humor.

In addition, correlations of individual humor style were also analyzed (see Table 2). For both husband and wife, positive correlations were found between the two positive humor styles of their own ($ps < .01$) as well as between the two negative humor styles of their own ($ps < .01$). Husbands’ tendency toward aggressive humor was significantly negatively correlated with affiliative ($r = -.21, p < .01$) and self-enhancing humor ($r = -.35, p < .01$). However, husbands’ self-defeating humor tendencies were not correlated with own positive humor style, including affiliative humor ($r = .03, p = .649$) or self-enhancing humor ($r = .12, p = .084$). Wives’ results differed from husbands’ lay in that wives’ self-defeating humor and own affiliative humor were positively correlated ($r = .13, p = .048$).

### Similarity of humor styles between marital spouses

Since data in the present study have a nested structure, MLM was therefore utilized to evaluate the similarity of humor styles between husbands and wives (Campbell & Stanton, 2015; Cook & Kenny, 2005). Participants’ self-reported ratings of four humor styles (Level 1) are nested within couple (Level 2). Husbands’ and wives’ self-reported ratings of four humor styles were set as predictors.

Table 3 displays the results from multilevel models showing the prediction effects of spouses’ humor styles to the other spouses’ humor styles. The results showed that when setting one spouse’s aggressive humor style and self-defeating humor style as predictive variables, it could positively predict the other spouse’s aggressive humor style and self-defeating humor style, respectively. Contrarily, insignificant prediction effect was reported when setting one spouse’s affiliative humor style or self-enhancing humor style as predictors. That is to say, a significant association was linked across the two negative humor styles within couples. However, such pattern was absent for positive humor styles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Correlation of humor styles within husbands and wives.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Husband</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Affiliative humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-enhancing humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Aggressive humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self-defeating humor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01.
Cluster analysis of humor styles

To examine humor style types between husbands and wives, we used a similar typological approach as previous research (Chang, Chen, Hsu, Chan, & Chang, 2015; Galloway, 2010). First, we standardized humor styles with z scores and conducted K-means cluster analyses to identify humor style clusters. Consistent with Chang et al.’s (2015) findings, we also obtained four clusters. Positive humor endorsers ($n = 111$, 23.2%) were high on self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles but were low on aggressive and self-defeating humor. Negative humor endorsers ($n = 165$, 34.5%) were high on aggressive and self-defeating humor styles but were low on self-enhancing and affiliative humor. General humor endorsers ($n = 86$, 18.0%) were high on all humor styles except aggressive humor. Humor deniers ($n = 116$, 24.3%) had low tendencies toward all four humor styles. The results are shown in Figure 1. We then performed a cross-tabulation of spouses’ humor styles and conducted a McNemar’s test to examine the similarity of humor clusters within couples (see Table 4). A strong relationship existed between humor patterns in husbands and wives ($\chi^2 = 16.73, p = .01$).

Among husbands who were positive humor endorsers, 36.2% of their wives are also positive humor endorsers. This percentage is insignificantly higher than those of negative (24.7%), general humor endorsers (25.0%), or humor deniers (23.8%). For husbands who were negative humor endorsers, 43.0% of their wives are also negative humor endorsers. This percentage is significantly higher than those found for positive (19.1%) and general humor endorsers (13.9%). Among general humor endorser husbands, 34.0% of their wives were positive humor endorsers and 36.1% were general humor endorsers. These percentages were higher than those of negative humor endorsers (14.0%) and humor deniers (12.7%). Among husbands who were humor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spouses’ humor style</th>
<th>Husband’s humor style as predictor</th>
<th>Wife’s humor style as predictor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>$SE$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliative</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-enhancing</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-defeating</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. $r = \sqrt{\left(t^2/(t^2 + df)\right)}$ (see Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2007). SE: standard error; CI, confidence interval.

***$p < .01$; ****$p < .001$.  

Cluster analysis of humor styles
deniers, 34.9% of their wives were also humor deniers. This percentage is higher than that found for positive (10.6%) and negative humor endorsers (18.3%).

Among positive humor endorser wives, 32.0% of their husbands were general humor endorsers. This proportion was higher than that of humor deniers (9.4%). Among wives who were negative humor endorsers, 55.6% of their husbands were also negative humor endorsers. This percentage was higher than that of general humor endorsers (26.0%). Among wives who were general humor endorsers, 36.1% of their husbands were also general humor endorsers. This proportion was higher than that of negative humor endorsers (6.9%). Among wives who were humor deniers, 41.5% of their husbands were also humor deniers. This finding was higher than the percentage of general humor endorsers (16.0%).

The adjusted standardized residual was computed cell-by-cell, and the expected value was 1.96. The results showed that the adjusted standardized residuals were higher than the expected values of cells of negative (3.5) and general (2.4) humor endorsers as well as humor denier couples (2.8). This finding indicates that people and their spouses usually have the same humor styles. The adjusted standardized residual was slightly lower than the expected value among positive humor endorser couples (1.6) but higher than that of general humor endorser husbands and positive humor endorser wives (2.5). This finding indicates that positive humor endorsers usually married spouses with similar humor tendencies, even if their spouses sometimes used negative humor.

Figure 1. Four clusters of humor styles (z-scores).
Table 4. Cross-tabulation of husbands’ and wives’ humor styles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wives’ humor styles</th>
<th>Positive humor</th>
<th>Negative humor</th>
<th>General humor</th>
<th>Humor deniers</th>
<th>Total % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>% within husband’s humor styles</td>
<td>% within wife’s humor styles</td>
<td>Adjusted standard residual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36.2^A</td>
<td>26.6^ab</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.1^A</td>
<td>12.5^ab</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34.0^A</td>
<td>32.0^b</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.6^A</td>
<td>9.4^a</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24.7^A</td>
<td>35.9^ab</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43.0^B</td>
<td>55.6^b</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.0^B</td>
<td>26.0^a</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.3^A,B</td>
<td>32.1^a,b</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25.0^A</td>
<td>14.1^ab</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.9^A</td>
<td>6.9^b</td>
<td>-2.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36.1^A</td>
<td>26.0^a</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25.0^A,B</td>
<td>17.0^a,b</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor deniers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.8^A</td>
<td>23.4^ab</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28.6^A,B</td>
<td>25.0^A,b</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.7^B</td>
<td>16.0^b</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34.9^B</td>
<td>41.5^a</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

McNemar–Bowker $\chi^2 = 16.73$, $p = .01$. A and B were significantly different between wife and husband humor types (in the column), $p < .05$. a and b were significantly different between husband and wife humor types (in the line), $p < .05$.

Boldface indicates the adjusted standard residual of the couple is the same clusters of humor styles.
Discussion

**Conclusion and implications**

The present study investigated humor styles in married Taiwanese couples to answer two questions. First, the differences of used humor styles between spouses and the correlations of individual humor style were examined through *t* tests and correlation analysis. The similarities and differences between the present study and past research were therefore comparable. Second, whether one spouse’s humor style can be predicted by the other spouse’s humor style, and the humor endorsers between spouses were examined through MLM and cluster analysis to disclose the similarities of humor styles of married couples.

The results showed that husbands have higher tendencies toward using negative humor than wives. Individuals have tendencies toward similar styles of humor. For instance, people who have high tendencies toward affiliative humor also have high tendencies toward self-enhancing humor. People who have high tendencies toward aggressive humor also have high tendencies toward self-defeating humor. This finding was consistent with the past research (Chan et al., 2011; Chen, Watkins, & Martin, 2013; Martin et al., 2003).

Inconsistent with the past Western studies, wives’ tendencies toward affiliative and self-defeating humor were found positively correlated in this study. However, these two styles of humor have different attributes, one being positive humor and the other being negative humor. One possible explanation may result from the collectivism, which is much more valued in Asian society. If one desire to fit in communities as a close member, he/she may act as more tolerant and keep a low profile (Hofstede, 1980; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, for the primary purpose of maintaining relationships, Eastern people tend to interact with others in a manner avoiding being shamed themselves or insulting others (Gao, 1998). Therefore, self-defeating humor may act a different role in Asian culture compared to Western culture.

Although self-defeating humor is to make oneself inferior to others, it is also a common communication tool for self-expression to Asians (Daidohji & Hwang, 2009), especially for Chinese females. Chen et al. (2013) have indicated that Chinese females are characterized by the behavioral pattern of protecting or promoting the images for others primarily than for themselves. Because both affiliative and self-defeating humor serve as functional tools for maintaining interpersonal harmony (Daidohji & Hwang, 2009), it might be reasonable to explain why Chinese females tend to use affiliative and self-defeating humor. Self-defeating humor, regardless of the damage it may cause on oneself, is utilized for Chinese females in order to benefit social relationships as well as affiliative humor style. Findings from the present study suggest that in different cultures, different dimensions of humor may be inconsistent with the definition proposed by Martin et al. (2003).
As for the similarity of humor styles between husband and wife, results from MLM indicated that spouses’ negative humor styles acting as a valid predictor to the other spouses’ negative humor styles. Although husbands use aggressive and self-defeating humor more frequently than wives, spouses are similar in their tendencies to use aggressive and self-defeating humor. When one is more likely to use aggressive and self-defeating humor, his/her spouse is also more likely to use aggressive and self-defeating humor.

On the other hand, our cluster analysis revealed consistencies in the humor styles of husbands and wives, regardless of the type of humor endorsers. Spouses generally belonged to the same clusters of humor styles. Spouses of positive humor endorsers are mostly positive or general humor endorsers. Spouses of negative humor endorsers are mainly negative humor endorsers. General humor endorses typically had spouses who were positive or general humor endorsers. Humor deniers generally had spouses who were humor deniers. It was found that couples were more likely to be of the same humor type than of different humor types. Almost 50% of negative humor endorsers had spouses who were negative humor endorsers, which is consistent with the results of Hahn and Campbell (2016).

There are two possible reasons for the similarity in humor styles between couples. First, according to the similarity–attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971), similarity may enhance attraction. When choosing partners, people not only consider humorous personalities but also the similarity of humor styles between themselves and potential partners. Bressler, Martin, and Balshine (2006) found that receptivity to certain humor styles is also important to attraction. A relationship will be more attractive and interesting when the partners have similar styles of humor.

The second reason is that the couples recruited in the present study are those who have been married more than 10 years. Hence, the similarity between the couples may be due to assimilation. A study by Hunter, Fox, and Jones (2016) found that people learned affiliative humor from others after some time together. Therefore, their affiliative humor became more similar than when they first met each other. In the research on the changes in personality traits of couples, the attitudes, emotions, and other traits become more alike after being together for a long time (Anderson, Keltner, & John, 2003; Davis & Rusbult, 2001). After being together for a long time, the humor styles of married couples become similar so that they have the same humor styles.

Generally, humor styles are similar between Taiwanese and Western people. However, correlations among the four humor styles do not agree with past research. Correlations between self-defeating and other humor styles particularly conflicted with past research. The Chinese meaning of self-defeating humor may differ from Martin et al.’s (2003) definition. Further investigation of cultural differences in humor styles is important. Past studies have shown that there are no consistent results in the humor styles of married couples (Cann et al.,
Different from past research that used four types of humor styles individually to conduct correlation test or regression analysis, the present study used a more comprehensive perspective (i.e., integrate four self-reported ratings of humor styles into a personal humor style cluster through cluster analysis) to examine whether married couples belong to the same cluster of humor styles.

The present study found that most couples have similar humor styles based on a division into four humor styles and that there is a high proportion of married couples who share the same humor styles compared to married couples with different humor styles. With cluster analysis, we found similarity among married couples. Future research could further investigate the reason for the similarity and the influence of the similarity of humor styles, which may be a potential topic.

**Limitations**

The present study has several limitations. First, due to the participants in this study were married couples for years, we cannot draw any inference regarding how their humor styles changed from the beginning of their marriages. It is possible that humor similarity might be taken into consideration when choosing an appropriate mate. Or, humor style might become more similar between spouses due to the learning from shared daily events and life experiences. More empirical studies of the similarity between humor styles are needed, particularly longitudinal studies.

Second, the present study used a test and a self-report questionnaire as research tools but lacked any other source of information, such as observations by the spouse. It may lead to the results from the present study are the appearances with social expectation of his/her own, rather than the actual behaviors or used humor styles when he/she interact with his/her spouse, thus contributing a confirmation bias. To investigate the humor styles of couples, it would be more objective to investigate the humor styles that spouses perceive from each other.

Third, the present study did not collect demographic information from the participants, such as marital satisfaction. Hence, it is uncertain that the similarities in humor styles are related to the duration of marriage or satisfaction. Thus, we recommend that future studies assess newly married couples over time to determine how humor styles change along with marital satisfaction as well as the influence to marital satisfaction according to humor similarities.

**Author’s Note**

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